

# A tale of two D11 schools

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# The problem

Colorado children who live in poor neighborhoods do not receive the “thorough,” “uniform,” and “gratuitous” education that the General Assembly promises with Article IX, Section 2.

The Colorado Constitution states:

**Section 2. Establishment and maintenance of public schools.** The general assembly shall, as soon as practicable, provide for the establishment and maintenance of a **thorough** and **uniform** system of free public schools throughout the state, wherein all residents of the state, between the ages of six and twenty-one years, may be educated **gratuitously** (Article IX: Education, 1876).

# Case Study: the best and the worst of D11

In the proceeding slides, we will ponder the statistics of the lowest ranked and highest ranked elementary schools in Colorado Springs, CO School District 11.

We will then consider how this might be remedied.



Photo credit: [www.peacerun.org](http://www.peacerun.org)

# Where in the world is Colorado Springs?

- D11 is the urban school district in Colorado Springs, CO
- Colorado Springs population: 445,830
  - 25% of this population (approx. 111,000) are school-aged (under 18)
  - D11 has 30,000 children
- Colorado population: 547,770
- United States population: 318.9 million

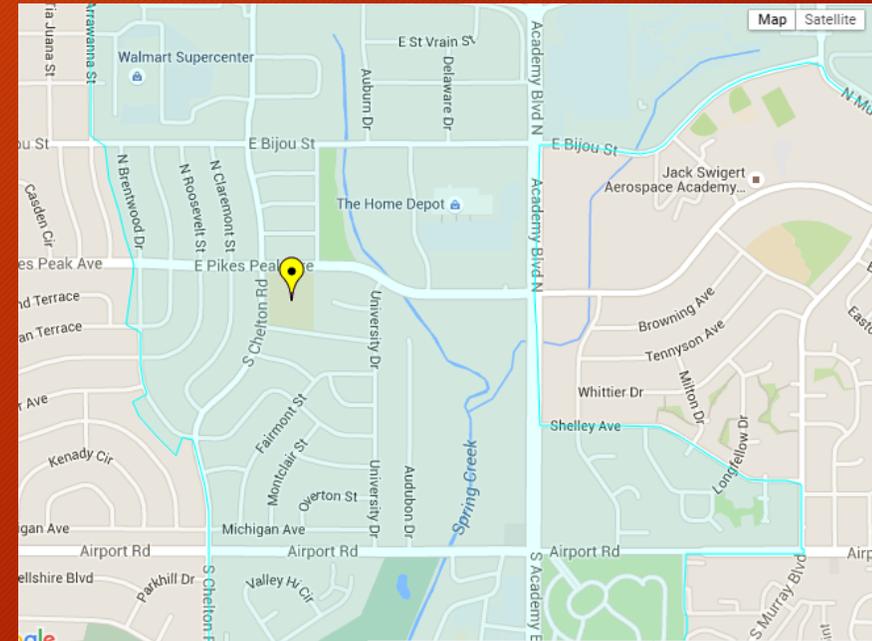
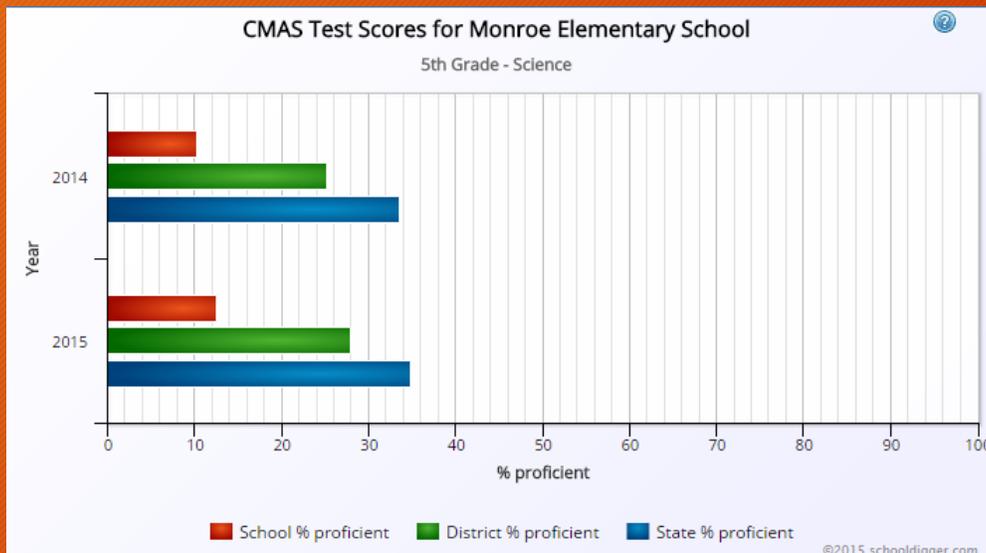


# Colorado Springs demographics

- White: 70.7%
- Hispanic/Latino: 16.1%
- African American: 6.3%
- Two or More Races: 5.1%
- American Indian/Alaskan native: 1.0%
- Asian: 3.0%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.3%
- High school graduate or higher: 93%
- Bachelor's degree or higher (>25 yrs old): 36.3%
- Veterans: 52.5%
- Per capita income: \$29,062
- Median household income; \$53.962
- Persons below poverty level: 13.7%

# Monroe Elementary

- Last among 37 ranked elementary schools in Colorado Springs School District No. 11
- Bottom 6% of Colorado state rankings
- 900th of 956 Colorado public elementary schools



School Boundary data source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2014

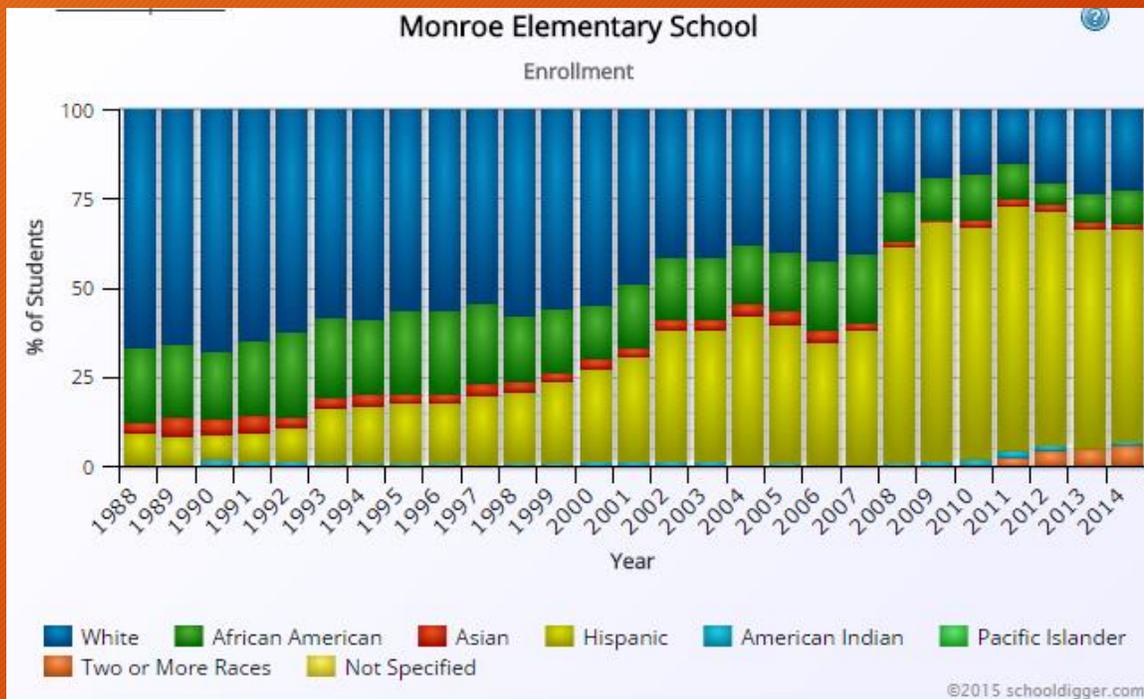
# Monroe Elementary Demographics

White	African American	Asian	Hispanic	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Not Specified	Total
108	46	7	286	5	0	28	0	480

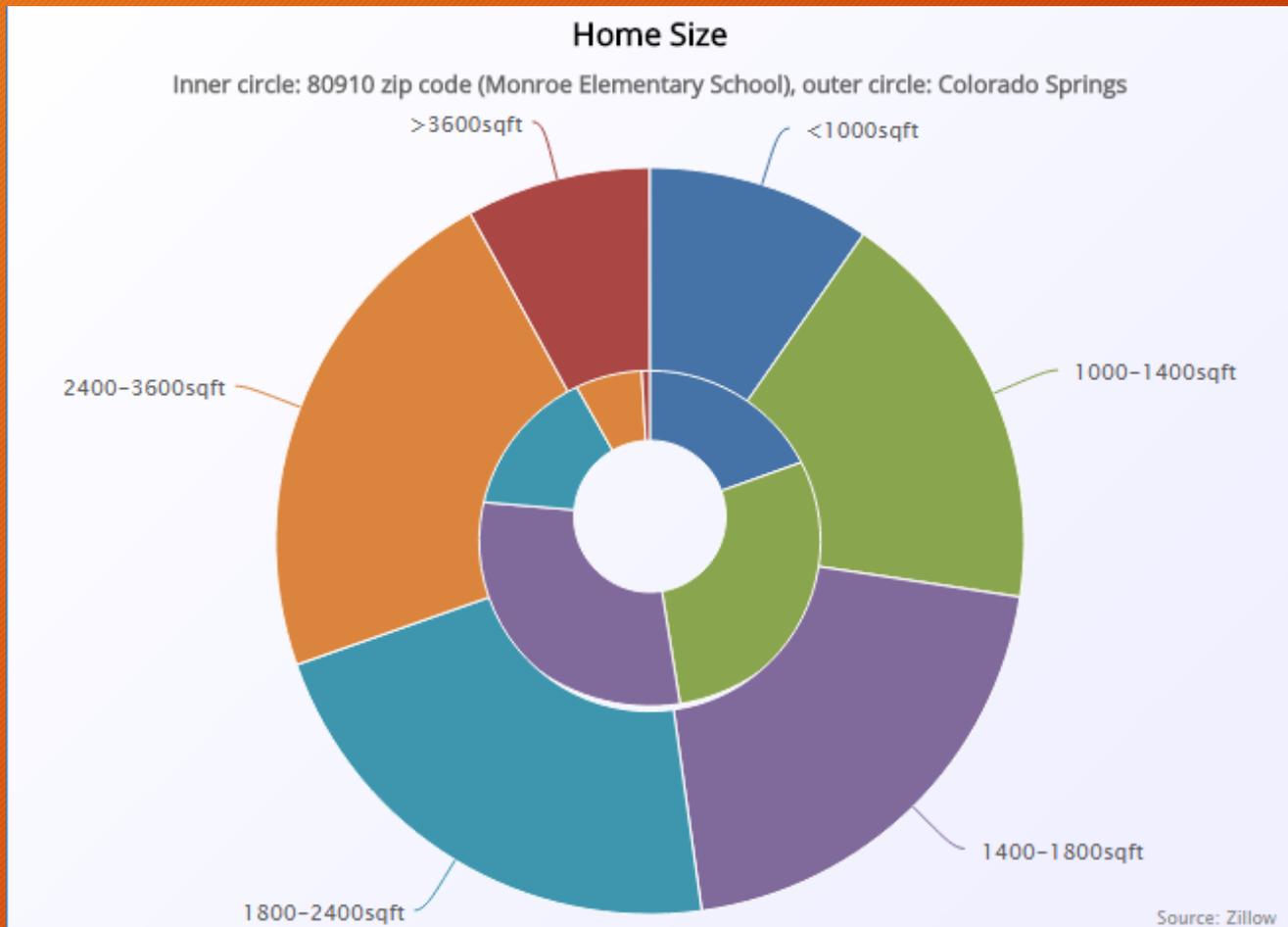
Reminder: Colorado Springs is 70% white in general

Monroe Elementary:

- 22% white, 78% students of color
- 86.7% free/reduced lunch



# Monroe Elementary Neighborhood



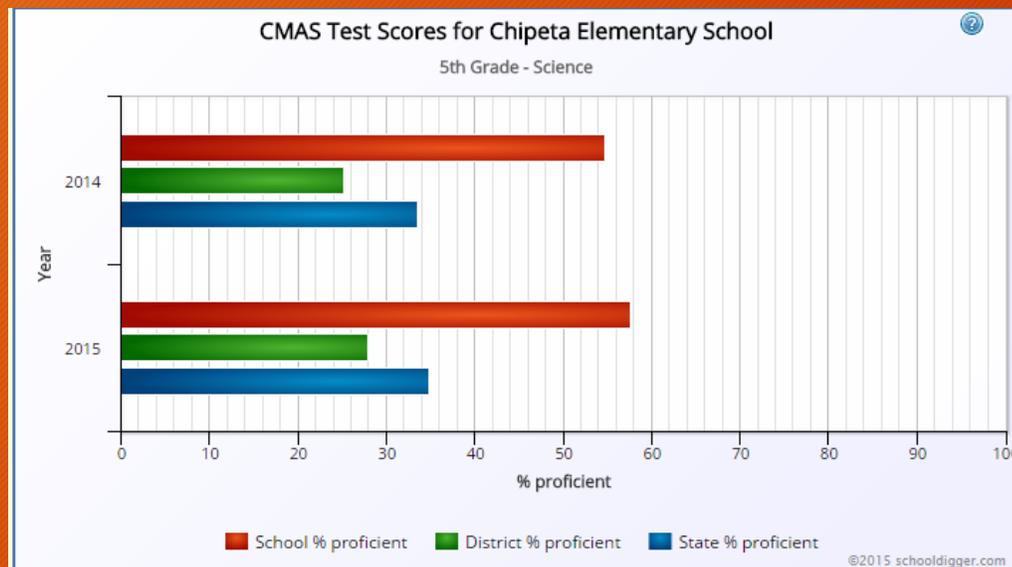
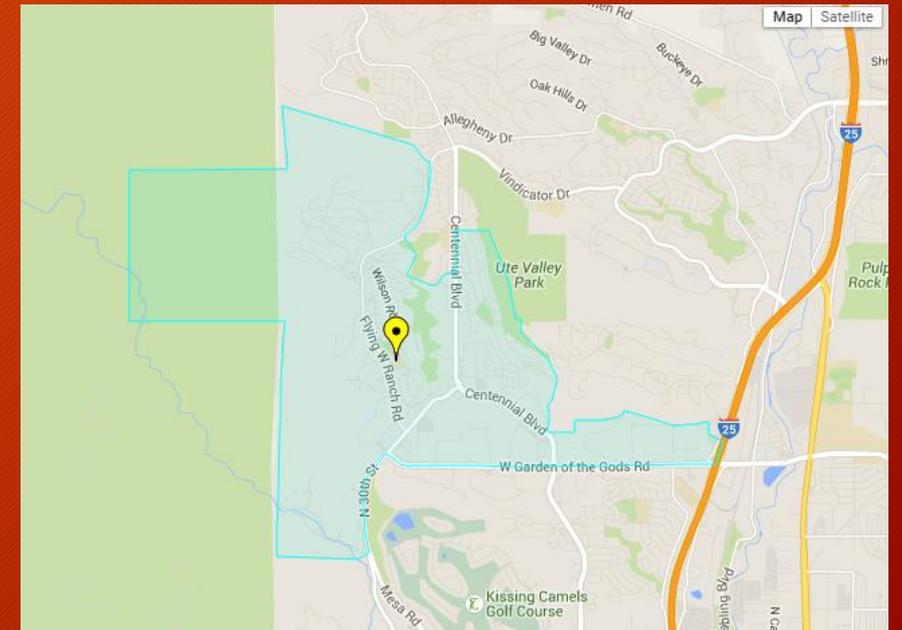
Percentage of homes under 1,400 sqft: 47%

Percentage of homes over 2,400 sqft: 8.1%

Source: Zillow

# Chipeta Elementary

- 1<sup>st</sup> in ranking among 37 ranked elementary schools in Colorado Springs School District No. 11
- Top 5% in Colorado state rankings
- 41st of 956 Colorado public elementary schools



School Boundary data source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2014

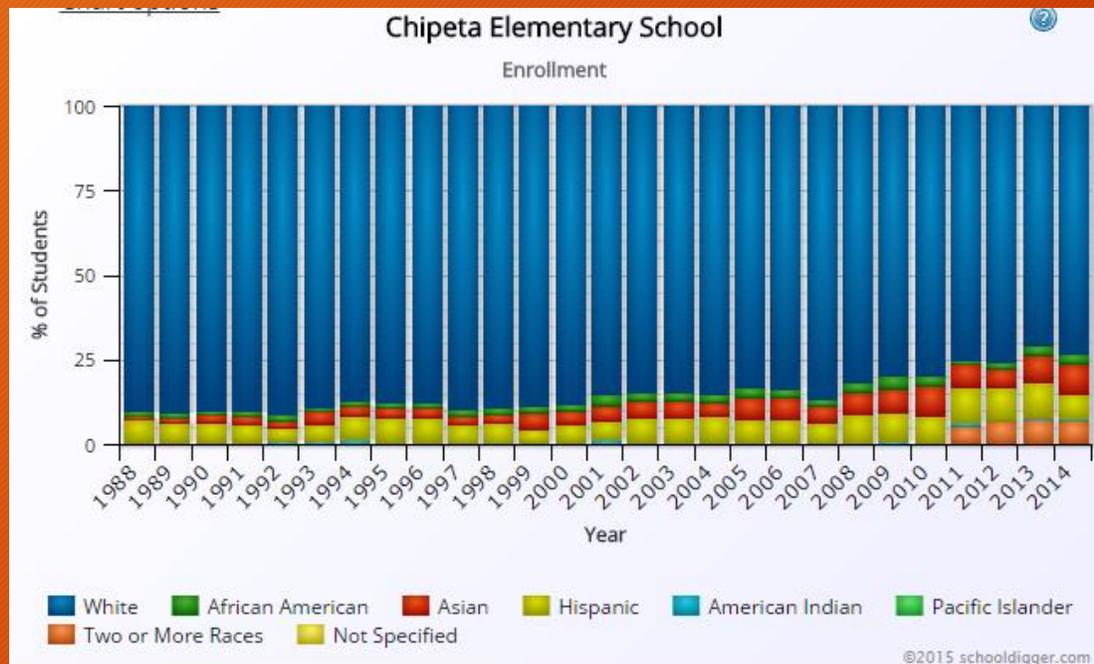
# Chipeta Elementary Demographics

White	African American	Asian	Hispanic	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Not Specified	Total
358	13	45	35	2	1	34	0	488

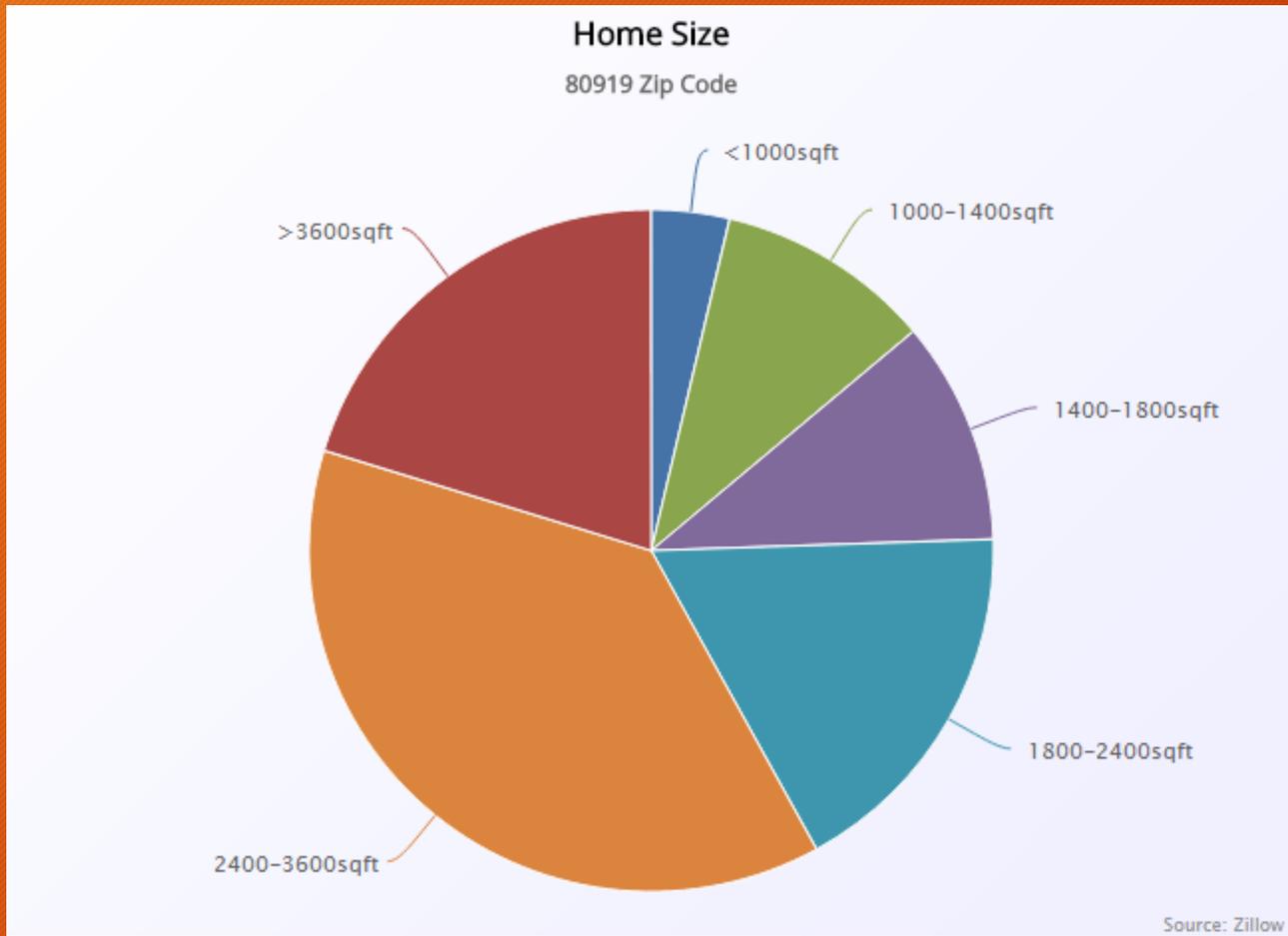
Reminder: Colorado Springs is 70% white in general

Chipeta Elementary:

- 73% white, 27% students of color
- 20.3% free/reduced lunch



# Chipeta Neighborhood

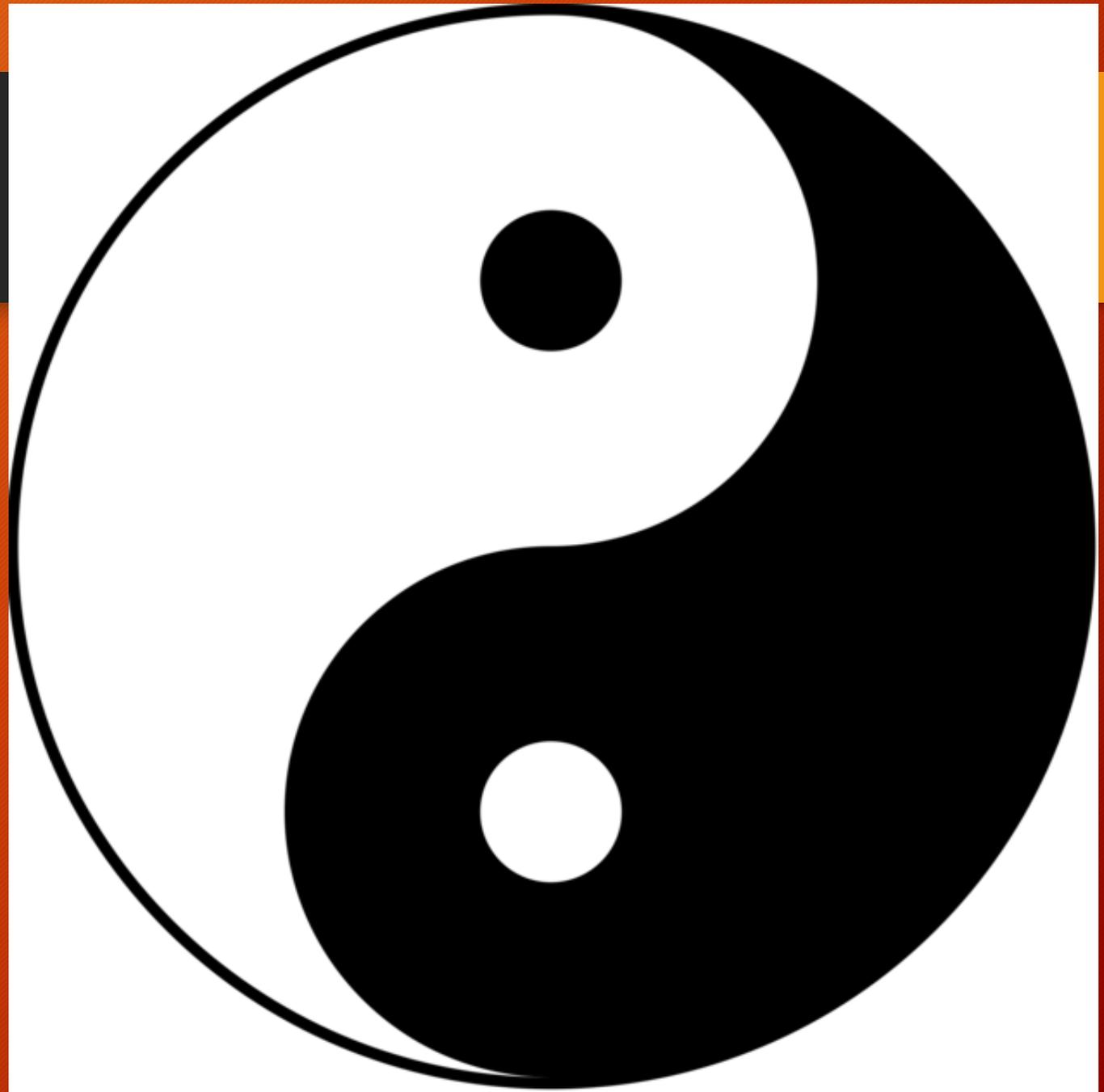


Percentage of homes under  
1,400 sqft: 13.9%

Percentage of homes over  
2,400: 58%

Source: Zillow

What do we make  
of this?



# Social Justice

- “Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.”
  - National Association of Social Workers:  
<http://www.naswdc.org/pressroom/features/issue/peace.asp>

According to the statistics we just reviewed,

Social justice is not served in the Colorado Springs School District 11

# Achievement Gap

The achievement gap is a performance gap that some believe reflects the aptitude of minority students but is in reality, the result of archaic funding mechanisms for education in which property taxes fund neighborhood schools. Furthermore, district lines are often drawn in skewed ways to include this block and that block but not *those* blocks.



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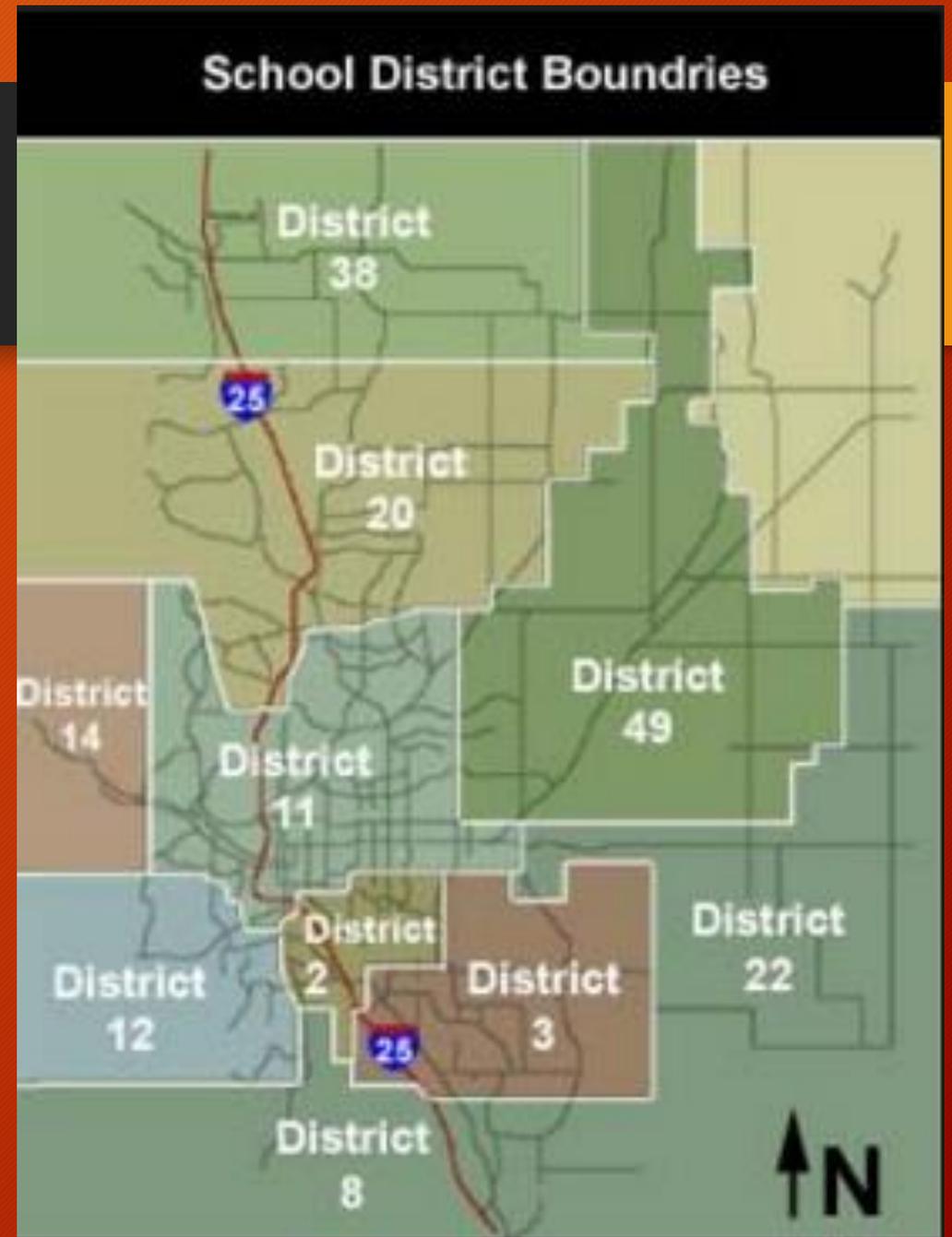
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Colorado's Schools: The Great Divide?

“The most significant difficulty with compromise between uniformity and local variation hinges on the fact that half the monies involved come from the property tax.” (Brown, n.d.)

Nonetheless...

*Why aren't these lines straight?*



# The problem

- Shockingly, there is actually no legislative mandate for equitable education in Colorado.
- This was confirmed in 1982 when the Colorado Supreme Court held that the language of the constitution does not require equal educational expenditures (Education Law Center, 2015).
- Legal challenges in the last few years have used the “thorough and uniform system of free public schools” language in the Colorado Constitution to argue for funds to repair dilapidated school buildings (Giardino v. Colorado State Bd. of Educ.)

# The problems continue: Lobato v. State

“After a five-week trial, the court ruled in favor of plaintiffs, in 2011, holding that the State had failed to provide a “thorough and uniform” system of public schools, as required by the state constitution, and was also violating the constitution’s mandate for local control of education.

The State appealed to the Colorado Supreme Court, and in a brief 2013 decision that ignored the facts adduced at trial, the Court overruled the lower court on both constitutional claims.” (Education Law Center, 2015)

# A nation in decline

“The US must make improving educational support for low-income students a priority, insist the researchers at the Southern Education Foundation. Otherwise, the trends of the last decade will be a prologue for a nation not at risk, but a nation in decline” (Kasperkevic, 2015)



Photo Credit: <http://www.theguardian.com/money/us-money-blog/2015/jan/17/public-school-students-poverty-report>

# Fixing the problem: equal funding

In states and countries where equity reform has been fully adopted, the achievement gap closes.

- Connecticut, USA
  - 4<sup>th</sup> graders rank 1<sup>st</sup> in reading and math by 1998 despite increasing numbers of new immigrants and poverty. Only Singapore students ranked higher than CT students in science scores internationally.
  - This is a result of the 1977 Horton V. Meskill case in which the CT supreme court invalidated state education finance system because unequal property tax funding. >30% of CT students are African-American; they outrank their peers nationally indicating that the problem is not the students. The problem is school quality, which is remediated by equitable funding (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

# Fixing the problem: Early childhood education

## “Winning or losing the lottery of birth”

- Parenting matters: single-parents and broken families do not afford as much cognitive stimulation and/or emotional support for children. These are measured by time spent reading to children and engaged in family support activities like eating meals together.
- “The proportion of American children under the age of 18 with a never-married mother grew from less than 2 percent in 1968 to over 12 percent in 2006. The fraction of American children under age 18 with only a single parent (i.e., never married or divorced) has grown from 12 percent to over 27 percent during this period” (Heckman, 2011)
- America is one of the only industrialized nations to lack a formalized and national conception of early childhood education.
- As a result, student experience prior to kindergarten entry affects achievement.
- This is an economic issue, not just a social justice issue

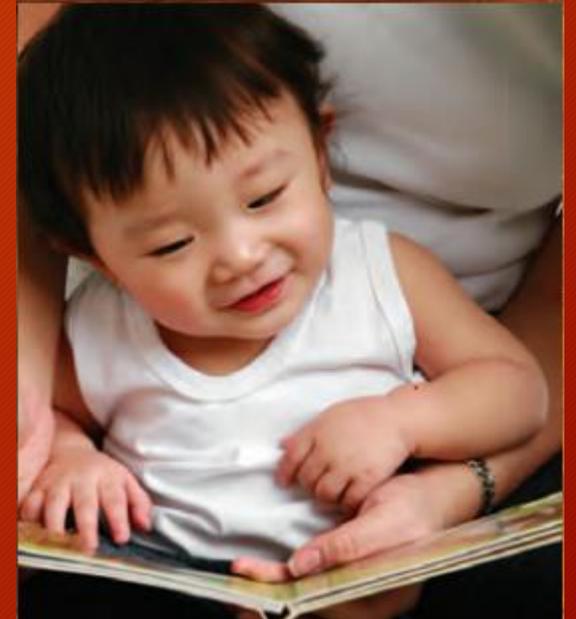


Photo credit:  
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ920516.pdf>

# Fixing the problem: Cultural competence training for teachers

## “Teaching other people’s children”

- The American teaching force is homogenous, made up primarily of white, middle class women for whom English is the primary language.
- The American student population increasingly defies this identity.
- Cultural competence training is needed to improve teaching through compassionate understanding of diversity as unique and honored, rather than challenging, problematic, and needing to be fixed.
- Diversification of the teacher population is necessary.

(Gomez, 1994)

# Fixing the problem: professionalizing teaching

Finland has the most educated citizenry in the world despite increases in diversity.

- Teacher education is paramount to equitable education.
- Teacher certification is related to student achievement. All teachers should be certified, just as other professions require specific educational attainment (eg. lawyers, medical professionals)
- Educated teachers have more cognitive resources with which to develop curricula and lessons that engage the whole child.
- On-going professional development affords working professionals the opportunity to hone their skills and understand changing student demographics

(Sahlberg, 2012)

# Monroe and Chipita elementary schools revisited

The statistics for Monroe and Chipita elementary schools are opposite of each other.

- Monroe Elementary: Low income, high diversity, low achievement
- Chipita Elementary: high income, low diversity, high achievement
- Colorado's first step: **Redraw the district lines!!!** If nothing else, at least make fair boundaries in districts to avoid apartheid school demographics
- Colorado's second step: Legislatively require equity in education
- Colorado's third step: Educate the young children
- Colorado's fourth step: Educate the educators

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"A right delayed is  
a right denied."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



Message to Colorado  
Springs School  
District 11:

Don't let our  
children suffer the  
tragedies of their  
color and poverty.