

# Multi-school catchment areas in Paris : What results after three years ?

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In an attempt to reduce social segregation among the capital's middle schools (*collèges*), Paris city and educational authorities have been experimenting with a new method for assigning students to public schools since the start of the 2017 school year : multi-school catchment areas. This system consists of defining catchment areas common to several middle schools that are geographically close but have contrasting social profiles. The objective is to broaden the catchment areas of the middle schools to rebalance their social recruitment. Two distinct methods were tested for assigning students to the three two-school catchment areas set up in the 18th and 19th *arrondissements* of the capital : "alternating ascent" (*montée alternée*) and regulated choice of school. The results of the first three years of experimentation (2017 to 2019) are encouraging. Two of the three catchment areas have achieved their social diversity objective with a clear decrease in students enrolling in private schools. In the third catchment area, after initially disappointing results, the disparities in social composition between the two middle schools began to narrow in the third year of the experiment and enrolment at private schools declined. Beyond Paris, multi-school catchment areas are a promising avenue for promoting social diversity in public secondary education when the population density is sufficiently high and the urban social fabric sufficiently diversified to allow for social mixing of school populations, as is the case in Paris.

- From the start of the 2017 school year, three two-school catchment areas were set up in the 18th and 19th *arrondissements* of the capital, involving about 1,000 students each year when they enter sixth grade (the first year of middle school).
- Two methods were used to assign students to the middle schools in the merged catchment areas : "alternating ascent" (Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area) and regulated choice of school (Bergson-Pailleron and Curie-Philippe catchment areas).
- In the Berlioz-Coysevox and Bergson-Pailleron catchment areas, social diversity increased significantly in the sixth grade and the rate of avoidance to private schools decreased from 15% to 30% between 2016 and 2019.
- In the Curie-Philippe catchment area, the scheme led to a 20% decrease in avoidance for private schools between 2016 and 2019, but its effects on social diversity have been more modest.



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The results of the international PISA survey regularly remind us that France is one of the OECD countries where the social background of students most strongly determines their academic performance at age 15. At the same time, several studies and reports have highlighted the very high level of social segregation that characterizes secondary schools in France, particularly in its *collèges*. This state of affairs leads us to question the role of school segregation in deepening social inequalities and how in-group favoritism in schools can create an obstacle to learning to live together.

The inability of the French system for student allocation (*la carte scolaire*) to ensure social diversity in middle schools is nowhere more apparent than in Paris, where the concentration of a socially heterogeneous population in a small area, the abundance of schooling and the central place of private education generate some of the highest levels of school segregation in France.

Faced with this observation, city and educational authorities in Paris have been experimenting with a new method for assigning students to public middle schools since the start of the 2017 school year : multi-school catchment areas. This system consists of defining catchment areas common to several middle schools that are geographically close but have contrasting social compositions. The goal is to rebalance the social recruitment of middle schools whose catchment areas are merged. This initiative is part of the broader framework of the program launched by the Ministry of National Education at the end of 2015 to strengthen social diversity in middle schools by relying on initiatives that federate the educational community across 20 pilot territories.

In January 2017, the Council of Paris voted to create three two-school catchment areas. The pairs involved in this experiment, starting at the beginning of the 2017 school year, are Hector Berlioz and Antoine Coysevox (18th *arrondissement*), Marie Curie and Gérard Philipe (18th), and Henri Bergson and Édouard Pailleron (19th) middle schools. Each year, nearly 1,000 students were assigned to these middle schools using two different methods : "alternating ascent" and regulated choice of school.

At the beginning of 2016, our team began a scientific collaboration with the City of Paris and the Académie de Paris to evaluate the capacity of multi-school catchment areas to rebalance the social composition of the middle schools concerned and to quantify the behavioral reactions induced by the different variations of this system. The results presented in this policy brief are taken from the evaluation report on the first three years of the experiment (from start of school year, 2017 to 2019)<sup>1</sup>.

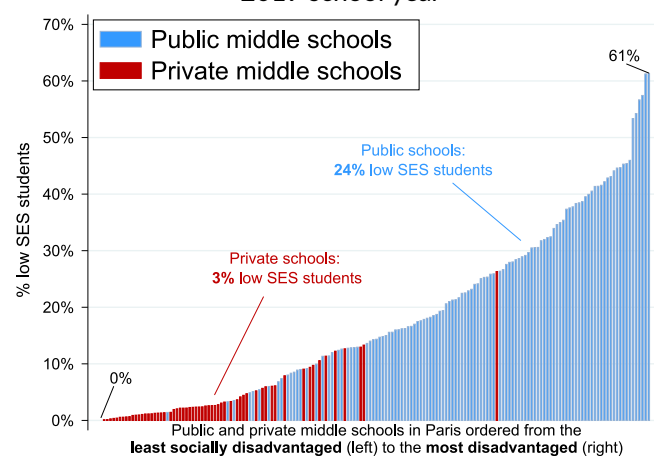
## Paris : Capital of social segregation in middle schools

For the purposes of this study, we were allowed to work with a very rich set of administrative data made available by the Académie and the City of Paris (see Box 1). These data make it possible to draw up a precise inventory of social segregation in Parisian middle schools and to measure its various components.

### Some of the highest levels of segregation in France

In 2019-2020, the 174 middle schools in the capital were home to nearly 85,000 students, 35% of whom were in the contracted private sector. Parisian middle schools are characterized by extreme levels of segregation : While only 16% of Parisian middle school students come from disadvantaged socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds (i.e., they are the children of blue-collar workers or people without a job), this proportion varies from 0% in the most privileged middle school in the capital to 61% in the most underprivileged middle school (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Proportion of students from disadvantaged social categories by middle school in Paris, start of the 2019 school year



Interpretation : At the start of the 2019 school year, the most disadvantaged middle school in the capital was a public *collège* enrolling 61% of students from disadvantaged social categories.

Notes : Each bar of the graph corresponds to one of the 174 public or private middle schools under contract in the capital and indicates the proportion of disadvantaged SES students (parents in blue-collar jobs or out of work) who were enrolled in this school at the start of the 2019 school year. Public schools are represented by blue bars and private schools by red bars.

Source : Student database of the Académie de Paris, calculations by the authors.

The social contrast between public and private middle schools is striking : While the latter (in blue on the graph) receive on average nearly 24% of disadvantaged SES students, the former (in red) only have 3%. Social segregation between Parisian middle schools is not, however, limited to a public-private divide. It is also very marked between public middle schools, where the proportion of disadvantaged students varies between 1% and 61%. Nationally,

1. The report can be consulted online at the address provided at the end of this policy brief. The analysis of the results of the first year of the experimentation led to the publication of an earlier IPP policy brief (Grenet and Souidi, 2018). Some figures may have changed marginally due to updated data used for the study.

### Box 1 : Data used for the evaluation

To measure the impact of multi-school catchment areas on social diversity and school avoidance, the study relies mainly on individual data from the student database of the Académie de Paris (BEA), which annually lists all students enrolled in public and private middle schools under contract in the capital since the start of the 2011 school year. In addition to information on the school and class attended, these administrative files indicate the social background of each student, which is measured by the socioeconomic category (SES) of the parent or legal guardian, and their home address. We were authorized to work from an anonymized version of this data, so as to be able to compare the social composition of the schools involved in the experiments with the social composition of their respective catchment areas, and thus very precisely measure the rate of avoidance of public schools. The catchment area of each pupil (whether they are educated in their catchment area's public school, in a public school outside the catchment area, or in a private school) is identified by crossing the geolocated addresses of the students with the catchment boundaries of the schools, which were provided by the School Affairs Department of the City of Paris. The social composition of each catchment area is calculated from information collected on the SES of the parent or legal guardian of all students residing in the catchment area.

The timespan of the collected data (2011-2019) is sufficiently large to analyze the evolution of social diversity and school-choice behavior over the past decade and thus highlight the possible impact of the changes brought about by the experiments conducted since the start of the 2017 school year. In the two-school catchment areas of Bergson-Pailleron and Curie-Philipe, the Académie de Paris administrative data were supplemented with information collected as part of the regulated choice procedure used in these areas. The matching of these data with the records made at the start of the school year makes it possible to assess the capacity of this procedure to achieve its objective of social diversity, and to compare the diversity observed at the end of the assignment with that recorded at the start of the school year.

Parisian middle schools are the most segregated in France, ahead of the middle schools of Versailles and Lille.

Another characteristic feature of Parisian education is that social segregation among public middle schools is manifested on a very fine spatial scale (see Figure 2a) : About half of the social segregation among these *collèges* comes from segregation between schools located in the same *arrondissement*.

### Residential segregation and flight to private schools

There are three main components of social segregation between middle schools : residential segregation, which determines the social composition of public schools because of their catchment boundaries (students are assigned to their local school according to their address); enrollment in private schools, which mainly concerns the more privileged social categories; and exemptions and classes with a specific intake (music, dance, sport, etc.), which allow some students to enrol in a public school outside the catchment area of their residence.

In Paris, differences in the social composition of the catchment areas of public middle schools account for almost half of the social segregation between middle schools (see Figure 2b). Another half comes from enrollment in the private sector, which deprives Parisian public schools of nearly half of the students from the most privileged SES backgrounds. Enrollment in a public school outside the catchment area, on the other hand, contributes only marginally to social segregation between middle schools, insofar as exemptions benefit both students from privileged

backgrounds and students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Avoidance of local public schools accentuates the differences in social composition between sometimes neighboring public schools. These gaps, which originate in the underlying residential segregation, are considerably amplified in *arrondissements* such as the 13th, 14th, 17th, and 18th. In this context, expanding the catchment areas of public schools appears to be an important lever for strengthening social diversity in the capital's middle schools.

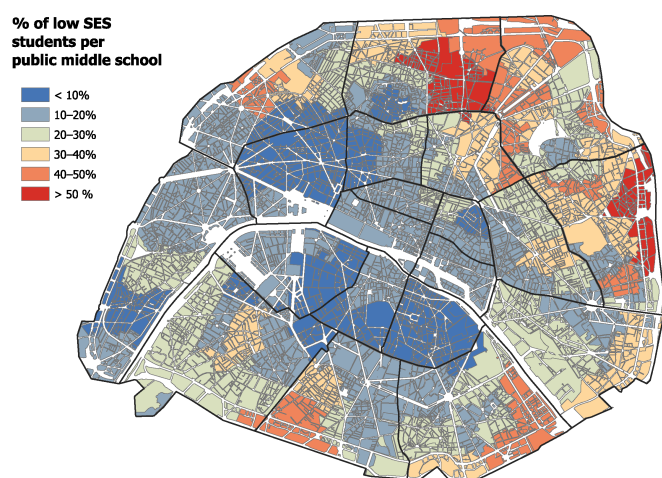
### Three dual catchment areas set up at start of 2017 school year

Experimentation with multi-school catchment areas in Paris was announced in November 2016. At the end of a consultation phase, the Council of Paris voted on January 30, 2017 to approve an experiment with three two-school catchment areas in the 18th and 19th *arrondissements* of the capital from the start of the 2017 school year.

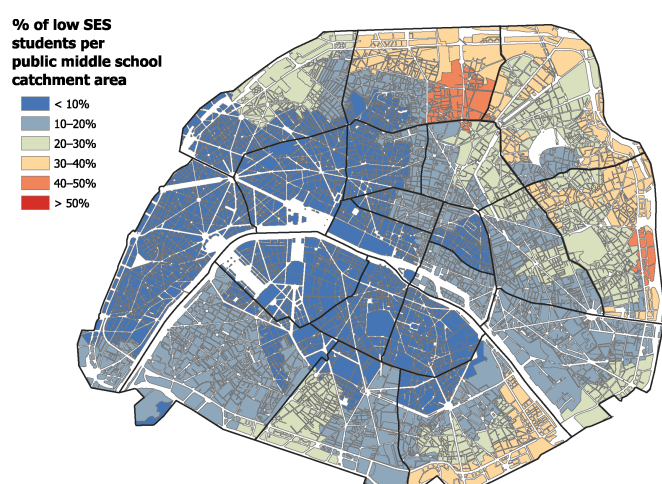
The methods of assigning students were left to the discretion of the monitoring committees set up to involve all stakeholders in each of the dual catchment areas. The Berlioz-Coysevox monitoring committee opted for the "alternating ascent" procedure. In the Bergson-Pailleron and Curie-Philipe catchment areas, a regulated choice procedure was preferred.

**Figure 2 – Social composition of Parisian public middle schools and their catchment areas, start of the 2019 school year**

(a) Proportion of disadvantaged SES students by **public middle school**



(b) Proportion of disadvantaged SES students by **catchment area**



Interpretation : These two maps show the catchment areas of the 114 public middle schools in the capital. The top map shows the share of disadvantaged SES students (parents in blue-collar jobs or without a professional activity) among the students enrolled in each of these middle schools at the start of the 2019 school year. The lower map shows the share of disadvantaged SES students among the students living in the catchment areas of these middle schools (whether or not they attend their local public school).

Sources : Student database of Académie de Paris and City of Paris Department of School Affairs, authors' calculations.

### Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area (18th) : “Alternating ascent”

Although barely 600 meters apart, Hector Berlioz and Antoine Coysevox middle schools had extremely contrasting social profiles before their catchment areas were merged at the start of the 2017 school year (see left side of Figure 3). Berlioz school (part of the priority education network since 2015) had an average of 40% to 60% of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds, while Coysevox school had only 10% to 20%.

The Berlioz-Coysevox monitoring committee opted for a

procedure known as “alternating ascent”. This procedure, which can only be applied in two-school areas, consists of alternating the assignment of sixth-grade entrants to each half of the catchment pair, with students remaining in their assigned school until the end of ninth grade. The objective, in the long run, is that each school will enroll all the students in the dual catchment area in two distinct stages : in even-numbered years, the first school will enroll only sixth- and eighth-grade classes, while the second will enroll only seventh- and ninth-grade classes; in odd-numbered years, the configuration is reversed.

During the first year of the experiment (September 2017), all students living in the Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area and entering the sixth grade were assigned to Coysevox; at the beginning of the 2018 school year, those entering sixth grade were assigned to Berlioz before returning to Coysevox at the beginning of the 2019 school year<sup>2</sup>.

### Bergson-Pailleron (19th) and Curie-Philipe (18th) catchment areas : Regulated school choice

The social contrasts between the middle schools in the Bergson-Pailleron (19th) and Curie-Philipe (18th) catchment areas were not as pronounced as those observed in the Berlioz-Coysevox area. However, these schools have seen their social profiles drift apart since the beginning of the 2010s.

Henri Bergson and Édouard Pailleron middle schools had relatively similar social profiles because of the similar sociological features of their catchment areas. In these two schools, the proportion of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds fluctuated between 40% and 50% before the experiment was set up (see left side of Figure 5). However, the proportion of students from privileged or very privileged social backgrounds was twice as high at Bergson (about 40%) as at Pailleron (about 20%). One of the goals of the two-school catchment area was to rebalance these proportions and to stem the trend of increasing school avoidance in the Pailleron area (from 42% in 2011 to 54% in 2016).

Marie Curie and Gérard Philipe middle schools were both classified as priority education networks (REP) in 2000, due to the historically disadvantaged profile of their students. However, the introduction of a special music class (CHAM) at Marie Curie at the beginning of the 2012 school year, as well as several changes in the zoning of the Curie and Philipe schools, have contributed to a widening of the gap between the social profiles of these two schools : In 2016, the proportion of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds reached 61% in the sixth-grade classes of Philipe school, compared to 30% in Curie

2. Due to the limited capacity of Coysevox school, ninth graders were reassigned to Berlioz school in 2017 and 2019. How these student transfers affected the social mix at Berlioz is detailed in the evaluation report.

## Box 2 : The regulated choice procedure

The regulated choice procedure that was implemented to allocate students entering the sixth grade in the Bergson-Pailleron and Curie-Philippe catchment areas was designed by our team. It is based on a modified version of Gale and Shapley's deferred acceptance algorithm, which is used in many countries to regulate the assignment of students to schools.

To implement the goal of social diversity, students in the catchment area are divided into four income groups based on their parents' family quotient (QF) (or into a separate group if the QF was not provided), which is calculated as net taxable income divided by the number of "fiscal shares" (*parts fiscales*, based on the number of people in the household and the number of dependents). Places in each school are then allocated among the different QF groups to match the distribution observed in the dual catchment area. Students are assigned to the places reserved for their QF group according to the wishes expressed by the families and the priority criteria defined by the monitoring committees set up in each catchment area. If, within a given income group, the number of students wishing to enroll in a school exceeds the number of spaces reserved for that group in the school, priority is given to students with disabilities, then to students with a sibling in the school, and finally to students who live relatively closer to that school than to the other school.

Because of the bias induced by the relative distance criterion, this priority criterion was abandoned from the second year of the experiment in favor of another criterion : Within each QF group, after applying the criteria of disability and sibling proximity, it was decided that priority would be given to the student with the lowest QF level (measured in euros).

school (see Figure 6). This finding justified the establishment of a joint catchment area at the start of the 2017 school year.

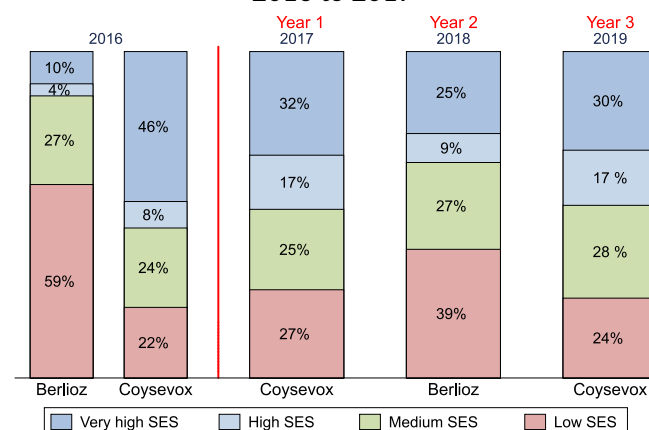
In these two dual catchment areas, the monitoring committees chose a regulated choice procedure based on an assignment algorithm designed by our team (see Box 2). Taking into account the wishes of the parents, this algorithm distributes students between the two schools in such a way that the social composition of each school (measured on the basis of the parents' family quotient) corresponds to the distribution observed in the dual catchment area.

## "Alternating ascent" : More social diversity and less students enrolling in private schools

In the Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area, the "alternating ascent" procedure has significantly increased social diversity in the sixth-grade classes of these two middle schools with diametrically opposed social recruitment (see Figure 3). The progress in social integration was particularly marked in 2017 and 2019, when sixth-grade students from the dual catchment area were assigned to Coysevox : Sixth-grade classes at this school were then attended by approximately 30% of students from very privileged SES backgrounds and 25% of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds, proportions comparable to those observed among sixth-grade students domiciled in the dual catchment area (whether or not these students attend their local school).

The fear that the merging of the Berlioz and Coysevox

Figure 3 – Social composition of sixth-grade classes at Hector Berlioz and Antoine Coysevox middle schools, 2016 to 2019



Interpretation : At the start of the 2016 school year, 59% of the students in the sixth grade at Berlioz and 22% at Coysevox were from disadvantaged SES backgrounds. At the start of the 2017 school year, which corresponds to the first year of experimentation with "alternating ascent" in the Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area, sixth-grade classes at Coysevox middle school were attended by 27% of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds.

Notes : Very high SES : managerial roles, CEOs, intellectual and liberal professions ; high SES : intermediate professions ; medium SES : employees, farmers, craftsmen, retailers ; low SES : blue-collar workers and people without professional activity.

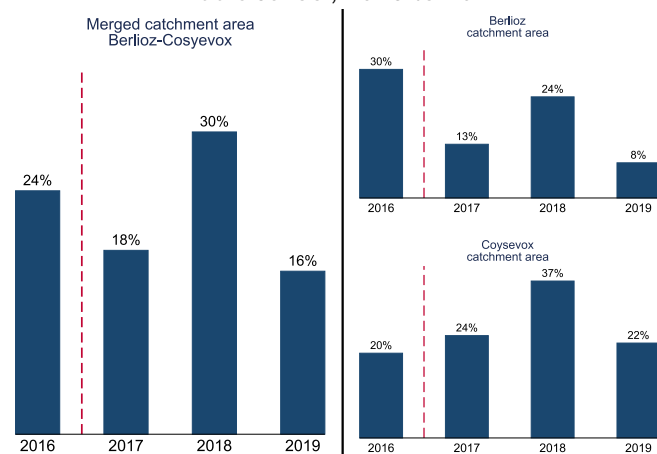
Source : Académie de Paris student database, authors' calculations.

catchment areas would lead to mass flight of privileged social groups into private education has not been borne out. On the contrary, the implementation of the dual catchment area has led to a decline in the rate of flight toward the private sector, from 24% in 2016 to 16% in 2019 (see Figure 4). This drop is explained by a "back to public" phenomenon among higher SES parents in the former Berlioz catchment area, which has more than offset the moderate increase in avoidance of public schools observed among higher SES parents in the former Coysevox catchment area.

Progress on social diversity was less spectacular in the se-

cond year of the experiment (2018) when, in sixth-grade classes at Berlioz middle school, about 25% of students were from highly privileged SES backgrounds and 39% of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds. This weaker performance can be explained in part by the unfavorable situation facing the parents of students who entered the sixth grade that year : At the start of the 2018 school year, eighth and ninth-grade classes at Berlioz school only enrolled students from the former Berlioz catchment area, with a very disadvantaged social profile. This likely caused apprehension among the parents of future sixth graders and led some of them to turn to private education. The increase in avoidance of public schools observed in 2018 remains moderate, however, when we take the situation that prevailed before the experiment as a reference, with the rate of flight towards private education standing at 30% in 2018 (compared to 24% in 2016).

**Figure 4 – Berlioz and Coysevox catchment areas :**  
Proportions of sixth-grade students enrolled in a private middle school, 2016 to 2019



Interpretation : At the start of the 2016 school year, 24% of students living in the Berlioz-Coysevox dual catchment area were enrolled in a private middle school at the start of the sixth grade. Among students domiciled in the Berlioz catchment area, this proportion was 30%. Among students living in the Coysevox catchment area, the proportion was 20%.

Source : Académie de Paris student database, authors' calculations.

Finally, a concern expressed during the implementation of the experiment was that parents who had "played the game" by enrolling their child in their assigned school at the beginning of the sixth grade (Coysevox in 2017 and 2019, Berlioz in 2018) might reconsider their choice by deciding, at the beginning of the next school year, to enroll their child in a private school, or even by moving home to avoid the public school in the catchment area. This hypothesis is invalidated by tracking the cohorts of students who entered the sixth grade in 2017 and 2018 : The social diversity observed at the start of the sixth grade remained remarkably stable as students progressed through the higher grades, both among those who entered Coysevox school in 2017 and among those who entered Berlioz school in 2018. The social diversity enabled by "alternating ascent" was thus sufficiently persistent to have a lasting effect on the school environment of the students

concerned.

Although "alternating ascent" brought the social profiles of Berlioz and Coysevox middle schools considerably closer together, the system did not succeed in perfectly balancing their social compositions at the end of the first three years of experimentation, as avoidance of public schools was more marked when the students "ascended" to Berlioz rather than Coysevox. Although this asymmetry is largely explained by situational factors (the presence of single-sex classes at Berlioz in 2018), we cannot rule out the possibility that it will persist in the future, in a mitigated form, as long as the differences in the perception of the two schools by parents of students have not been fully resolved. To limit these undesirable effects, an alternative solution might be to enroll sixth and seventh graders in the historically privileged school (Coysevox) before transferring them to the historically disadvantaged school (Berlioz) for the eighth and ninth grades.

## Regulated choice : Mixed results

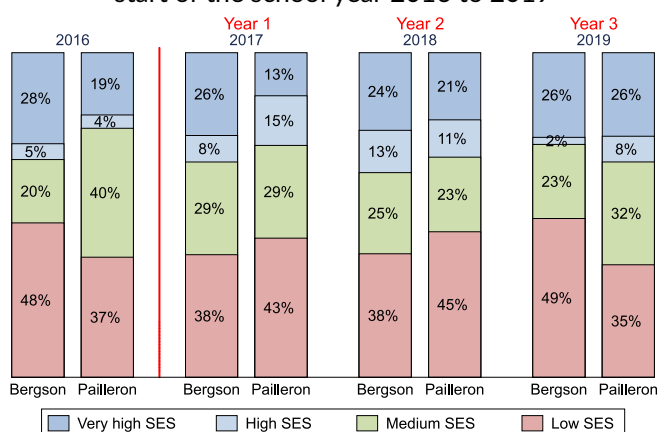
Improvements in social diversity in the two dual catchment areas using regulated choice were not as great as in the Berlioz-Coysevox area, because the middle schools involved in the experiment were less socially polarized. While the procedure worked satisfactorily in the Bergson-Pailleron catchment area, its effects were more disappointing in the Curie-Philippe area.

### Bergson-Pailleron catchment area : Objectives achieved

In the Bergson-Pailleron catchment area, the regulated school choice procedure led to a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in the two middle schools and, following the example of the phenomenon observed in the Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area, it also led to a significant decline in the flight to private schools. During the 2011-2016 period, between 35% and 40% of parents domiciled in the Bergson and Pailleron catchment areas chose private schooling at the start of the sixth grade, but this proportion dropped to 25% at the start of the 2017 school year, before rising slightly (to 31%) during the second and third years of the experiment, without however reaching the levels observed prior to the introduction of the dual catchment area. This phenomenon helped stem the erosion of sixth-grade enrollment that threatened to lead to the closure of one of the two schools : Between 2016 and 2019, sixth-grade enrollment increased by 6% at Bergson and 25% at Pailleron.

While the regulated choice procedure has not succeeded in ensuring a perfectly homogeneous distribution of stu-

**Figure 5 – Social composition of sixth-grade classes at Henri Bergson and Édouard Pailleron middle schools, start of the school year 2016 to 2019**



**Interpretation :** At the start of the 2016 school year, 48% of sixth-grade students at Henri Bergson and 37% at Édouard Pailleron were from disadvantaged SES backgrounds. At the start of the 2017 school year, the first year of experimentation for the Bergson-Pailleron catchment area, these proportions were 38% and 43% respectively.

**Source :** Académie de Paris student database, authors' calculations.

dents according to their parents' SES each year, it has nevertheless made it possible to rebalance the social composition of the two middle schools (see Figure 5), by increasing the share of students from privileged or very privileged SES backgrounds at Pailleron from 23% in 2016 (compared with 33% at Bergson) to 34% in 2019 (compared with 28% at Bergson).

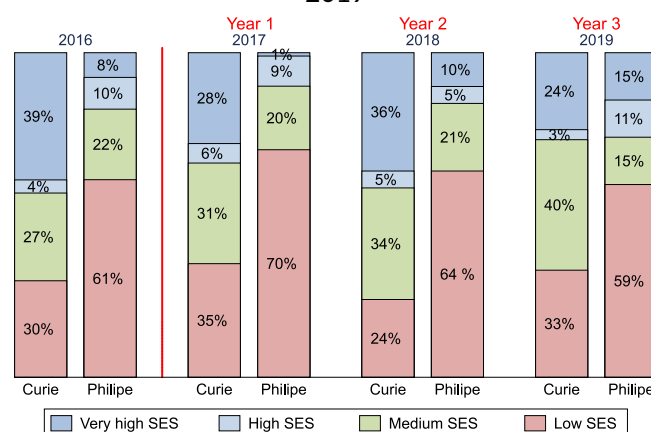
### Curie-Philippe catchment area : Limited impact on social diversity

Like the other two dual catchment areas implemented at the start of the 2017 school year, the Curie-Philippe catchment area led to a significant decrease in flight towards private schooling at the start of the sixth grade, which fell from 35% in 2016 to 28% in 2019.

In this catchment area, however, the regulated choice procedure did not produce the expected effects from the point of view of social diversity, particularly in the first two years of experimentation (see Figure 6). The differences in social composition between the two middle schools did not narrow significantly between 2016 and 2018, with the share of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds remaining twice as high at Philippe (between 60% and 70%) as at Curie (between 25% and 35%).

Several structural difficulties explain this disappointing result and can be used to identify avenues for improvement. The first set of factors can be found in the regulated choice procedure itself. Cross-referencing the data from the assignment procedure with the data from the start of the school year revealed that some of the social imbalance observed at the start of the school year was already present once the allocation had been done, even

**Figure 6 – Social composition of sixth-grade classes at Marie Curie and Gérard Philippe middle schools, 2016 to 2019**



**Interpretation :** At the start of the 2016 school year, sixth-grade classes at Marie Curie and Gérard Philippe had 30% and 61% of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds respectively. At the start of the 2017 school year, the first year of experimentation for the Curie-Philippe catchment area, these proportions were 35% and 70% respectively.

**Source :** Académie de Paris student database, authors' calculations.

though the composition of the two schools was balanced according to the parents' income level. This paradox is due to the fact that a high proportion of participants (between 30% and 60%, depending on the year) did not provide proof of family income and that some of the criteria used to determine student priorities introduced social biases, which hindered the procedure's ability to equalize the social recruitment of the two schools after allocation. The differences in social composition between the Curie and Philippe schools were considerably amplified by avoidance behavior between the allocation and the start of the school year, as parents from very privileged SES categories whose children were assigned to Philippe school opted en masse for private education.

The changes made to the regulated choice procedure made it possible, from the third year of the experiment, to reduce the differences in social composition at the start of the sixth grade : At the start of the 2019 school year, the two schools had comparable proportions of students from privileged or very privileged SES backgrounds (27% at Curie versus 26% at Philippe). However, the system has not succeeded in reducing the over-representation of students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds at Philippe school. One of the structural causes of the lower resistance of this school to the avoidance of privileged SES groups is that, unlike Marie Curie school, which has a special music class (CHAM) composed mainly of students from a privileged social background, Gérard Philippe school cannot count on any such program.

The difficulties of the Curie-Philippe catchment area in immediately rebalancing the social composition of these two REP middle schools with divergent social dynamics highlights the difficulties inherent in the transition from one allocation system to another. In this catchment area, the

combination of a phenomenon of mass flight towards the private sector (which pre-existed the implementation of the joint catchment area) and a strong asymmetry in the educational offer of the two establishments hindered the capacity of the regulated choice procedure to achieve the objective of diversity. While technical adjustments have made it possible to make improvements during the first three years of the experiment, other levers will have to be used to change the perception of the two schools and to rebalance their social composition, starting with the implementation of a more attractive educational offer at Gérard Philipe school.

## Conclusion

The encouraging results of the first three years of the multi-school catchment areas have led the City and the Académie of Paris to continue this experiment beyond the 2019-2020 school year. However, plans to extend the system to other *arrondissements* (10th, 13th and 12th-20th borders) have not been successful, due to strong resistance encountered during local consultations in 2019.

In the Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area, the transition phase to "alternating ascent" was completed at the start of the 2019 school year. These two schools now only enroll double cohorts of students at two levels (sixth/eighth or seventh/ninth grades), which alternate depending on whether the relevant year is even or odd. The main challenge that remains in this catchment area is to resolve the residual differences in social composition that persist between Berlioz and Coysevox, linked to greater avoidance of Berlioz at the start of the sixth grade.

In the Bergson-Pailleron and Curie-Philippe catchment areas, the implementation of the regulated choice procedure will in future be greatly facilitated by the possibility of relying on information relating to the SES category of the parents, instead of the approach based on the family quotient, which posed formidable difficulties throughout the first three years of experimentation. This new approach, which was used for the first time in 2020 to assign entrants to the sixth grade in the catchment areas involved in regulated choice, should make it possible to better balance the social composition of the schools after allocation.

However, these improvements will not be sufficient to guarantee a perfectly balanced distribution of students enrolled in the schools whose catchment areas have been merged, due to the flight to the private sector between allocation and the start of the school year. To achieve this, additional measures will have to be taken, including the implementation of better feedback on pre-registration in private schools.

Beyond Paris, multi-school catchment areas are a viable means of promoting social diversity in public secondary education when, as is the case in Paris, the population density is sufficiently high and the social fabric sufficiently diversified that expanding school catchment areas contributes to the social mixing of school populations. In France, this type of configuration is frequently found in large urban areas. Cities such as Bordeaux, Lille, Marseilles, and Toulouse have very marked social boundaries within their urban areas. However, the suitability of this system will have to be evaluated taking into account the socio-spatial disparities specific to each geographical area.

The ability of multi-school catchment areas to strengthen social diversity in middle schools is not an end in itself and only makes sense if it enables a reduction in educational inequalities in the longer term. From this perspective, one of the main challenges of evaluation in the coming years will be to extend the scope of the analysis to the effects of social diversity on students' skills and educational trajectories.

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The analyses in this policy brief are the sole responsibility of the authors and cannot be attributed to the Académie de Paris, the City of Paris, or the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports.

## References for the study

This policy brief is based on the report "*Renforcer la mixité sociale au collège : une évaluation des secteurs multi-collèges à Paris*", by Julien Grenet and Youssef Souidi, IPP Report No. 31, February 2021. Link : <https://www.ipp.eu/publication/fevrier-2021-renforcer-mixite-sociale-college-evaluation-secteurs-multi-colleges-paris/>