In May 2013, the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign launched a series of infographics exposing the harmful effects of mass school closures, including the disparate impact they have on underserved students, the common myths used to justify closures, the cycle of disinvestment that mass school closures contribute to, and finally, the positive alternatives that can actually improve education systems.

These infographics are designed to help you better educate the public on the issue and take action in your communities, with school boards, state legislatures, and in Congress. It’s time for us to support our schools rather than close them. It will take the collective efforts of us all to build the equitable education systems each and every child deserves.

The Color of School Closures
School closures across the country disproportionately hurt Black and low-income students. Here are three of the worst examples, from this year alone:

- **Chicago**: 49 schools closed. 87% Black, 11% Latino, 1% White. 43% of all Chicago students are Black, 44% are Latino, 8% are White.

- **New York City**: 22 schools closed. 53% Black, 41% Latino, 2% White. 30% of all NYC students are Black, 40% are Latino, 14% are White.

- **Philadelphia**: 23 schools closed. 81% Black, 11% Latino, 4% White. 58% of all Philly students are Black, 18% are Latino, 14% are White.

What is the color of school closures in your city? Send us your stories and data. Find solutions at www.otlcampaign.org

Learn more about this infographic: http://bit.ly/color-of-closures

White is defined as “white non-Hispanic.” Low-income students are calculated based on eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Lunch programs. All percentages from the US Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, 2010-11
DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

Most students won’t go to better schools.

When schools close down, students have to go somewhere. The vast majority of them are transferred to receiving schools that are equally under-resourced or worse than the schools that closed.

Closures won’t save the district big bucks.

Closing schools is expensive. Districts pay to:
- Relocate inventory
- Transport students to new schools
- Renovate receiving schools to accommodate new students
- Demolish or fix up (to sell) closed schools

These aren’t empty schools.

Officials often use a “utilization” argument to close schools, but it’s a double standard. A public school with 15-20 students per classroom can be labeled “underutilized,” while private schools just a few blocks away can pride themselves on having small class sizes.

Closures do have a big impact — on everyone.

School closings disrupt whole communities.
- Receiving schools aren’t equipped for an influx of new students, creating a cycle of struggling schools.
- Students must travel through unfamiliar neighborhoods (and sometimes gang territory) to attend new schools.
- Low-income areas and communities of color lose pre-k programs, health clinics and other programs housed in school buildings — exacerbating ongoing waves of foreclosures, declining public housing and job loss.
- Closures are often decided without community input: disempowering parents, students, and educators.

You can’t improve schools by closing them.
Learn about alternatives and take action: www.otlcampaign.org

Learn more about this infographic: http://bit.ly/closuremyths
The Cycle of School Closures

Mass school closures are often the result of deliberate decisions to starve schools of resources and then shut them down for failing to do more with less.

1. Underfunding
On top of recent budget cuts, many schools are funded by local property taxes that leave low-income communities with underfunded schools.

2. Struggle & Closure
When schools are deprived of resources, they can’t provide students with needed supports and opportunities, or meet the high standards set by policymakers. Officials label the schools “underperforming” and close them down.

3. Closure & Transfer
Students transfer to other underfunded schools that face similar struggles, overcrowding, and are at risk of closure.

Students pushed out of charter schools mid-year are sent to local public schools, which have to take them in regardless of capacity or funding.

4. Break the Cycle.
Communities across the country are organizing to stop devastating mass school closures and implement alternatives that help all students.

Let’s break the cycle. Visit www.otlcampaign.org to learn more.

Learn more about this infographic: http://bit.ly/cycle-closures
ALTERNATIVES TO SCHOOL CLOSURES
(Because you can’t improve a closed school.)

**KEY STRATEGIES**

- Well-prepared and effective teachers who can support diverse learners.
- Wraparound academic, social/emotional, & health supports to help students stay on track.
- Positive discipline policies that keep students in school, safe, and learning.
- Engaged parents & communities that are invested in the school’s success and foster partnerships between the school, local businesses, and non-profit.

- Universal access to pre-K so that every child is ready to learn when they enter school and no one starts behind.
- Equitable school funding so that schools in low-income communities can be equipped with resources & supports.
- Expanded Learning Time including after-school programs, internships, and community service.

**EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTS**

- Professional learning opportunities
- Educators: More support staff
- Students & Families: Strong PTAs, Student voice on school board, Student peer mediation groups
- Community: School-based Clinics, Healthcare Providers, Law Enforcement, Local Businesses, Mentoring & Internships
- Policy Makers: Fair education budgeting

**ALTERNATIVES IN ACTION**

- **CINCINNATI, OH COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS**
  - Graduation rates up from 51% in 2000 to 82% in 2010
  - Achievement gap between Black & White students narrowed from 14.5% in 2003 to 1.2% in 2010

- **OAKLAND, CA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**
  - Number of schools with after-school programs rose from 32 to 90
  - 10x more children with access to summer school
  - School-based health clinics

- **EVANSTON, IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**
  - 27% more students meet early literacy benchmarks
  - 79% of 2010 graduates pursued post-secondary education, above state average

- **HARTFORD, CT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**
  - Reading proficiency +12% since 2009
  - After-school programs proven to maintain and improve math, reading, & writing performance

**LEARN MORE & TAKE ACTION:**
www.otlcampaign.org

Produced with generous assistance by the Coalition for Community Schools:
www.communityschools.org

Learn more about this infographic: http://bit.ly/alt2closure