1. Title of story/collection of stories/series and the names of people (in the order they should appear) who worked on this story. For a partnership or collaboration, please name each entity that took part in the investigation.:	Failure Factories Cara Fitzpatrick, Michael LaForgia, Lisa Gartner and Nathaniel Lash
2. Date(s) published, aired, or posted.:	8/12/2015. Why Pinellas County is the worst place in Florida to be black and go to public school. http://tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/pinellas-failure-factories/chart-failing-black-students/ 8/14/2015. Failure Factories. http://tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/pinellas-failure-factories/5-schools-segregation/ 8/21/2015. Lessons in fear. http://tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/pinellas-failure-factories/lessons-in-fear-violence/ 9/1/2015. For 31 kids, this is what it's like to go to resegregated schools. http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/pinellas-failure-factories/what-its-like-segregated-school/
3. Topic and synopsis of story or series, including major findings.:	When official rankings in 2014 showed five of the 15 worst schools in Florida were clustered in Pinellas County's black neighborhoods, the local school board should have declared a state of emergency. Instead, board members and other leaders in this mostly white and conservative southern county did nothing, refusing even to acknowledge that black children here were failing at higher rates than black children virtually anyplace else in Florida. Then the Tampa Bay Times picked up the story. What followed was a series that knocked down each and every official excuse for what was besetting black students in Pinellas and laid blame for the problem where it belonged — at the feet of local leaders whose neglect transformed five decent schools into failure factories. Using a combination of data visualization and statistically driven reporting, the newspaper proved: * The School Board created the problem in less than a decade by resegregating schools in the county's black neighborhoods and then breaking promises to support them with added money and resources. * Other Florida school districts face the same social and demographic challenges as Pinellas, but virtually all of them are doing a better job teaching black children. * District leaders fumbled programs meant to make schools safer while violent incidents in the schools spiraled out of control, putting children at risk and guaranteeing most of them would not learn. The Times' stories were based on a foundation of more than 100 separate data analyses. For years, the school district and county leaders had dismissed low minority success in standardized tests as normal — something to be blamed on poverty and demographics — just like everywhere else in America. The Times' deep analysis knocked down that notion, proving statistically that something is uniquely wrong in Pinellas County and showing what years of anecdotal reporting couldn't — that the people we entrust to teach our children were failing them. Among the statistical tests that formed the foundation of our report: * Linear modeling (and corresponding residual analysis) that revealed to what degree factors like poverty and race explained the poor test performance of the schools we were studying. * Standardizing school test results with z-scores to isolate our schools' plummeting performance from the fluctuations caused by changes in how the tests were administered and scored. * Geospatial analysis of school attendance zones and census zones to rule out poverty as the root cause of the failure we documented in south St. Petersburg.

These social science techniques were not detailed in our story. Yet they were essential in allowing us to write about this complicated reality with confidence.
We then performed additional analyses to identify easy-to-understand comparisons and colorful examples that helped us paint a clear, data-driven picture for readers.

4. How the story got started (tip, assignment, etc.).:	This project started with an outlier. Every year our schools reporters covered Pinellas County's standardized test results. Every year they noticed our county's black students falling further and further behind. Both of our Pinellas County schools beat reporters teamed up with a reporter from the Times' investigative team and members of the Times' data team to figure out why.
5. Was your work based in any way on another news organization's previously published or aired report? If yes, please provide the name and publication or air date.:	Our findings were based entirely on our own reporting, which included the use of archives to reconstruct the history of segregation in Pinellas County's schools.
6. Major types of documents used and if FOI requests were needed.:	We filed three dozen records requests with the state of Florida and the Pinellas County school system, spending more than $7,000 on records for this project. Most of these records were provided electronically, and many were combined into larger databases for analysis by our staff. Those records included: * 10 years of standardized testing data * School-level financial reports * District reports and transcripts * Teacher personnel records * Complaints about teachers and subsequent investigations into teaching licenses * The databases detailed in question 13b
7. Major types of human sources used.:	Our reporters surveyed parents or guardians of more than 100 students; more than two dozen teachers; and at least a dozen administrators and education experts.
8. Results (if any).:	A series of officials called for reform in the wake of the Times' reporting. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called the rapid decline chronicled in the Times series a "man-made disaster" and "education malpractice." "What has happened to too many kids, for too long, is unacceptable," he said while visiting one of the five schools highlighted in the Times report. "It's heartbreaking. Part of me wants to cry. Part of me gets very, very angry." He wasn't the only one. The mayor of St. Petersburg said he was "deeply troubled." Multiple members of Congress asked for a federal review, leading to the Florida Department of Education launching an investigation (still ongoing) into how Pinellas schools spend Federal Title I money. Even before the first story published, the district drew up plans to convert three of the five schools into magnets, hoping new programs will attract diversity and better teachers. After the stories ran, district leaders pledged more help for principals at the schools during hiring season and created a program to stabilize and support the schools' teaching ranks. This official response was matched by an outpouring of support from the community. A forum held by the superintendent the week after the story ran was standing-room only. Local businesses including the Tampa Bay Rays major-league baseball team turned out in force to help, investing thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours in the struggling schools.
9. Follow-up (if any).:	No.
10. Advice to other journalists planning a similar project.:	Powerful institutions are quick to dismiss problems like these as sad but inevitable truths, common to impoverished areas. Don't take those dismissals at face value, especially when the problem is of the institution's own making. Through data visualization, social science techniques and extensive analyses, we were able to

evaluate and dismiss each of these tired excuses, forcing our community to restart the conversation and its leaders to look at what they had done wrong.

11. Difficulty, uniqueness of effort, or other special circumstances related to this subject.:

Not everybody loved the series. In a community where racial tensions have boiled over every few decades, racist elements pushed back. Reporters Fitzpatrick and LaForgia, a married couple with two small children, had details of their home mortgage and traffic citation histories posted on the Internet. Soon after, someone had a subscription to Ebony magazine delivered to their home.

12. Length of time taken to report, write and edit the story.:

This project was reported, written and edited over an 18 month period.

13 a. Did you extensively use any Internet sources? If so, please list address(es) and explain how the site(s) was useful.:

* School testing and demographic data from the Florida Department of Education, fldoe.org.
* Records released pursuant to legal agreements in the case Bradley, et al. v. Pinellas County School Board, et al., including records released by Pinellas County's District Monitoring and Advisory Committee. http://www.pcsb.org/Page/477

13 b. Did you obtain or build any electronic databases? If you obtained data, what was its name and source? What was the cost? If you created your own database(s), what records did you use?:

As said in question 6, our story was built on numerous public records, many of which we requested in electronic format and built into databases. Those records included:
* Multiple databases detailing teacher experience and employment history over the last decade, totaling 2.5 million records.
* The results of teacher certification tests taken over the last two decades.
* More than 1 million records showing Pinellas County discipline referrals over nearly a decade
* Florida School Public Accountability Reports, scraped from http://doeweb-prd.doe.state.fl.us/eds/nclbspar/
* School demographic data, provided by the state
* A unique dataset, created by the state at our reporters' request, detailing the number of students who passed both math and reading exams in 2014 at every school in the state.
* School-level financial reports (provided as PDFs and converted to spreadsheets by our staff).
Data reporters for the Times wrote custom Python code to join these databases together, producing a detailed portrait of each school's demographics, teaching corps and historical test performance. We wrote more than 10,000 lines of Python code to produce that database, which grew to contain more than 10 million records.
We also created a structured database that reporters used to capture more than 60 interviews with parents of children in our schools. Those structured interviews both informed our reporting and ultimately allowed us to present an interactive narrative detailing those kids' experiences (For 31 kids, this is what it's like to go to resegregated schools).

13 c. Did you have difficulties with the data itself? How did you overcome them?:

Analyzing Florida's standardized tests over time is challenging. The state frequently overhauls how tests are structured and scored, creating natural fluctuations in performance that have little to do with student achievement. We used a variety of statistical techniques, including standardizing with percentile ranks and z-scores, to compensate for those problems.

13 d. Was any analysis done? If so, what?:

Extensive analysis was essential to our story, as detailed in question #3.

13 e. Was data analysis done by your own staff or was outside assistance used? Who?:

All analysis was performed by reporters on the project and members of the Times' data team.

13 f. What specific software did you use?:

Excel, Access and PostgreSQL for basic analysis. Python, Django and Pandas for data modeling and statistical exploration.