



# How Whites and Blacks Perform In Jefferson County Public Schools

By Richard G. Innes



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# State of the School District:

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# State of the School District:

## *How Whites and Blacks Perform in Jefferson County Public Schools*

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### Executive summary

One of the most important tenets of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 is that all children can learn, regardless of race or economic status. However, during the 18 years since KERA's enactment, serious questions have arisen regarding the performance of Kentucky's public schools in meeting that goal for all children, especially black students.

This analysis examines two sets of data that compare white-student performance with that of black students in Kentucky's largest school system, the Jefferson County Public Schools. This district encompasses the city of Louisville and a considerable area surrounding it. The district holds the state's largest number of black students; 48.5 percent of all black students in Kentucky attended Jefferson County Public Schools during the 2006-07 school year.

The analysis shows:

- Blacks remain well behind academically in the key subjects of reading and mathematics.
- In a significant number of Jefferson County schools – 47 out of the 120 schools with usable data on reading and 44 out of 120 for math – the gap between white and black students is widening.
- Graduation rates remain extremely low for significant numbers of blacks – especially black males – in the majority of Louisville's public high schools. Using a graduation-rate estimation formula created by Johns Hopkins University, black males in only three of the 19 high schools in the study had graduation rates equal to or greater than the statewide graduation rate for all students. The graduation rate also is low for black females and even for white students in these 19 schools. Two of these schools reported abysmal graduation rates of less than 60 percent, qualifying them as “dropout factories” using the Johns Hopkins formula. In both of these Jefferson County schools, the graduation-rate estimates using the Johns Hopkins formula fell well below 50 percent for whites and blacks of both sexes.

Efforts to improve education, especially for black students, have failed to produce anything close to acceptable results in Jefferson County. The continued poor performance discussed in this report shows the need for aggressive action.

Blacks remain well behind academically in the key subjects of reading and mathematics.

## **Academic achievement gaps**

### ***Analyzing the gaps***

The analysis of math and reading achievement gaps for whites and blacks uses the Kentucky Department of Education's No Child Left Behind Excel spreadsheet databases for 2004 through 2007.<sup>1</sup>

These spreadsheets show proficiency rates for both groups from the Kentucky Core Content Tests in reading and mathematics, administered annually as part of the state's Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, called CATS.

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do not benefit  
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The analysis involved only schools that consistently reported data for both races for all years included in the study. Unfortunately, some schools did not possess full information due to factors such as realignment of school zones or missing data related to Kentucky's unusually high NCLB requirements for the number of minority students that must attend a school before scores can be reported. However, even though schools with missing data are not included, a rich sample of 120 schools still remains. The sample includes significant numbers of elementary, middle and high schools.

Following the analysis of the white-to-black score gaps for each year, the study used a standard statistical process known as "linear regression analysis" to determine the average annual change in those gaps. The results from the regression analysis were applied to each school's 2007 gaps to calculate the number of years needed to close the gap – if the gaps are closing.

The study ranked schools based on the time needed to close gaps given current trends. It separated the schools into three main categories: schools that should close a gap within 10 years, schools closing the gap but needing more than 10 years and schools with a widening gap.

### ***Gaps worth closing***

Black students do not benefit if achievement gaps in their schools close only because whites also perform poorly. Therefore, following the initial spreadsheet sorting into three groups, the study sorted the group that would close its gap in less than 10 years into two subgroups:

- The first subgroup contains schools where whites score at or above the Jefferson County district average for whites in math or reading
- The second subgroup's whites score below average in the referenced academic subject.

### ***Keeping the findings in context***

The need to rely on the CATS Kentucky Core Content Tests for source data limits this study. Recent research by the Bluegrass Institute – using the National Assessment of Educational Progress as a reference measure of rigor – shows the CATS assessments have consistently experienced a lowering of grading standards since the tests began in 1999.<sup>2</sup>

The worst case of all appears in fourth-grade reading, where CATS, on average, now scores students as "Proficient" when the national test ranks them below the "Basic" level, which denotes only partial mastery of the skill.

Thus, in the following analysis, keep in mind that the proficiency rates quoted may contain high levels of inflation in comparison with what students really need to succeed in college and the workplace.



## Reading achievement gaps in Louisville, statewide

### Statewide results

The 2007 statewide white-to-black reading-proficiency gap, 19.65 points, is slightly less than Jefferson County's 22.5-point gap. However, the state is making much slower progress at reducing the gap. Based on the trends for 2004 through 2007, the state will not close the white-to-black reading gap on the Kentucky Core Content Tests during the next century.

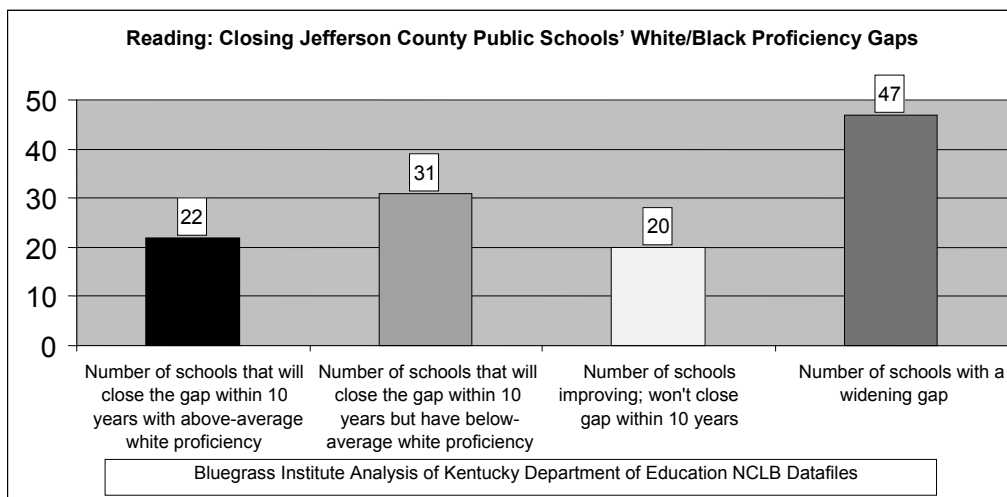
### Districtwide results

Averaged across all Jefferson County schools, the reading gap is closing very slowly – a rate of less than a point a year. Given the considerable reading proficiency gap reported for 2007 of 22.5 points, the district overall will not close its white-to-black reading gap during the next quarter-century.

### Individual school results

Figure 1 provides a breakdown of some key reading-gap findings for individual schools in Jefferson County.

**Figure 1**



Given the considerable reading proficiency gap reported for 2007 of 22.5 points, the district overall will not close its white-to-black reading gap during the next quarter-century.

Only 53 of 120 schools in the study are likely to eliminate reading gaps during the next decade. However, not all these schools really do an exemplary job just because data shows their gaps closing.

Of these 53 schools, only 22 reported white-proficiency rates in 2007 greater than Jefferson County's district average. In the other 31 schools, while the gaps are closing, the white-proficiency rate that blacks need to reach to close the gap falls below the district's white average. Thus, even though the gaps are closing at a reasonable rate in 31 of the 53 schools, this provides no guarantee that blacks (or whites, for that matter) in these schools will reach acceptable reading-proficiency rates anytime soon.

Another 20 schools are closing the reading gap very slowly and likely will not eliminate it during the next 10 years. In fact, one school in this group, King Elementary School – given its current trends –

needs more than a century to close its white-to-black reading performance gap. Three other schools will need more than half-century. More than half of this group of 20 schools needs at least 20 years to close these gaps.

The most disturbing data concerns 47 schools with increasing reading gaps between 2004 and 2007. Specific examples include:

- ***Slaughter Elementary School:*** In 2004, blacks scored almost 20 points better than whites on reading proficiency. By 2007, whites outscored blacks by 12 points. This represents the worst reading-gap change for blacks of any school in the study. Whites in Slaughter don't set a very impressive target for blacks to surpass, either. The white reading-proficiency rate at Slaughter in 2007 stood at 61.36 percent, well below the district's white average of 71.24 percent.
- ***Cochran Elementary School:*** Its trend mirrors Slaughter's. Cochran's black students also outscored whites in the early years included in this study. However, by 2007, Cochran scores shifted to a gap favoring whites by more than 14 points. Compared with Slaughter, whites in Cochran set an even lower proficiency rate bar in 2007, only 57.32 percent – again, far below the district's white average of 71.24 percent.

It should be noted that among the 47 schools in Jefferson County with widening reading gaps, whites and blacks score above the district averages at 15 of these schools. However, the gaps in all but one of these schools are in double digits, indicating the overall gap performance in these schools remains a problem.

The lone exception is Schaffner Traditional Elementary School, where the gap is less than 10 points and where both whites and blacks achieved impressive proficiency rates in 2007. While this school should pay attention to its four-year trend of widening reading-proficiency rates, it certainly continues to perform very well for both races in this subject. However, as the mathematics analysis later shows, Schaffner needs to maintain vigilance with regard to student performance in that subject.

### ***Reading summary***

Overall, in reading, only 22 schools among 120 Jefferson County schools appear to be closing white-to-black reading gaps while presenting a reasonably demanding white-proficiency rate as a target.

In all other cases, either the target white score that blacks need to match to close the gap is low, or the rate of progress is too slow. In the very worst case, which includes 47 of the 120 schools in the study, the reading-proficiency gap actually is widening.

## **Mathematics achievement gaps in Louisville, statewide**

### ***Statewide***

The 2007 statewide white-black math proficiency gap, 21.34 points, is somewhat less than Jefferson County's 26.94-point gap. However, the state is making a bit slower progress at reducing the gap. Based on data through 2007, the state will need nearly a half-century to close the math gap.

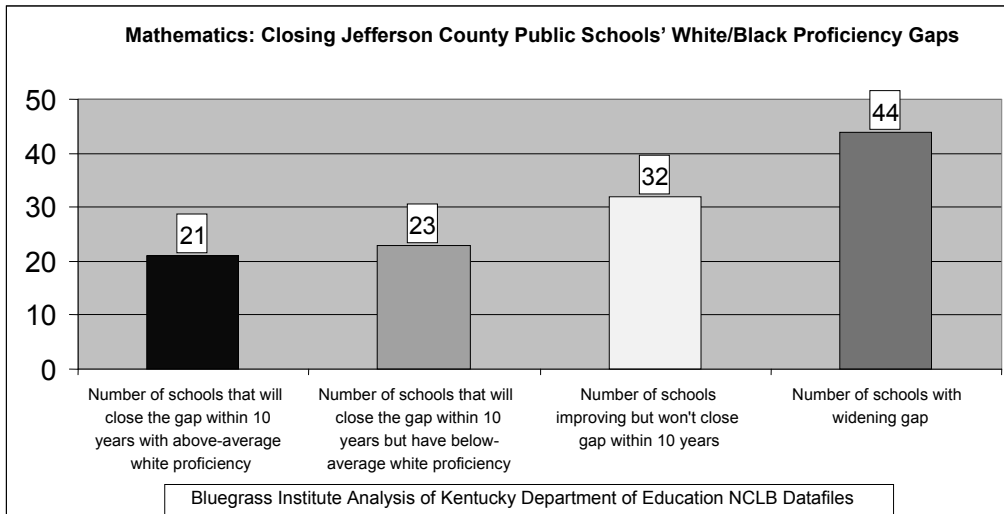
In all other cases, either the target white score that blacks need to match to close the gap is low, or the rate of progress is too slow. In the very worst case, which includes 47 of the 120 schools in the study, the reading proficiency gap actually is widening.

## Districtwide

Averaged throughout all Jefferson County schools, the math gap is closing very slowly – at a rate of less than one point a year. Given the considerable math-proficiency gap reported for 2007 of 26.94 points, the district overall will require approximately 33 years to close this gap.

## Individual school results

Figure 2



Based on data through 2007, the state will need nearly a half-century to close the math gap.

Only 44 of the 120 schools in the study likely will eliminate mathematics gaps during the next decade. However, as was the case for reading, not even all of these schools do an exemplary job just because their gaps are closing.

Of these 44 schools, only 21 had white math-proficiency rates in 2007 exceeding the Jefferson County district average. In the other 23 schools, while the gaps are closing, the score blacks are trying to achieve is below the district average, which is less than 60 percent. Therefore, even though the gaps are closing at a reasonable rate in these 23 schools, no guarantee exists that blacks and whites in these schools will reach acceptable math-proficiency rates any time soon.

Another 32 schools are closing the math gap very slowly but are not on track to eliminate it during the next 10 years. In fact, given current trends, four schools in this group will need more than a century to close white-to-black math performance gaps. Overall, nearly half of this group of 32 schools will take at least 20 years to close the math gap.

As with reading, the most negative situation concerns the 44 schools that actually have a trend of increasing math gaps between 2004 and 2007. And as with reading, examining the math results for individual schools shows more.

Similar to the performance in reading at Slaughter and Cochran Elementary schools, there are examples in math where gaps that once actually favored blacks have been reversed rather sharply. In fact, Cochran has the same situation with its gap in mathematics; a gap that once favored blacks has reversed. Another example is Cane Run Elementary School, where a strong gap in favor of blacks in 2004 reversed to strongly favor white students in just a few years.

Surprisingly, Slaughter Elementary, with its current white-math score almost equal to the district average, isn't seeing a gap increase in math. It is actually on track to close its math gap within the next decade, demonstrating that a school can have a very different performance, depending upon whether the analysis examines the gap in math or in reading. This also indicates that schools need to address gap issues on a subject-by-subject basis.

Among the 44 schools in Jefferson County with widening math gaps, both whites and blacks in 16 schools score above the district averages. However, as with reading, the proficiency gaps in all but one of these schools are in double digits. So overall performance in these schools suffers.

Unfortunately, even the selective magnet, Louisville Male High School, shows an increasing gap in math between its white and black students with 2007 proficiency rates of 85.52 and 61.36 percent, respectively. This gap differs widely from Male's reading performance, where the proficiency rates for 2007 were virtually identical – 93.67 and 95.73 percent, respectively. Thus, even in this prestigious and selective school, double-digit gaps remain a serious issue. Male also shows that the performance of white and black students can vary considerably between subjects.

Unfortunately,  
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Louisville Male  
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between  
its white  
and black  
students

### ***Math summary***

Overall, in mathematics, only 21 schools studied among 120 Jefferson County schools appear to be closing their white-to-black gaps with a reasonably demanding white-proficiency rate as a benchmark.

In all other cases, either the target score for blacks is low or the rate of progress too slow. In the very worst case, the mathematics proficiency gap is widening in 44 of the 120 schools in the study.

### ***Closing comment on gaps***

Unfortunately, Kentucky's current CATS assessment does not assess gaps. It assesses school performance with just one overall score averaged throughout all students and subjects. As a result, the CATS assessment process holds no consequences for poor performance with student subgroups and really does nothing to deal with gaps.

## **High school graduation rates**

### ***Analyzing the rates***

Although NCLB requires states to compute academic-achievement scores separated by race, the law as practiced does not require states to accurately separate graduation rates in the same manner. In fact, NCLB's overall graduation-rate reporting requirements has been severely criticized by many organizations and researchers. A change in federal regulations to address this is pending.<sup>3</sup>

Actually, even the limited NCLB graduation-rate data that Kentucky does report for each school is suspect. This data was officially audited by the Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts in 2006 and found to have significant errors.<sup>4</sup>

The end result is that Kentucky's existing NCLB high school graduation-rate reports fail to provide accurate data overall and do not contain information on how races perform. So, investigating how blacks and whites in Kentucky's schools perform on the critical indicator of graduating from high school requires using other methods.

## ***The Johns Hopkins Promoting Power Index***

This study uses Johns Hopkins University’s “Promoting Power Index,” or PPI, for its graduation rate analysis because:

- It only requires data on fall enrollment to perform a graduation rate-like calculation. (Technically, the term employed by education researchers for the data we use is “membership.” However, for purposes of clarity, we will use the term “enrollment” in this report.)
- The available data is separated in Kentucky by race at the school level and is available for a number of years.

In the absence of a high quality student tracking system, which Kentucky currently does not have, the PPI likely offers the best estimate available for graduation-rate performance by race in Kentucky. It is the same formula used by the Kentucky Department of Education when reporting to the state Board of Education on graduation rates by race.<sup>5</sup>

Full details concerning the Kentucky Department of Education’s enrollment data used as a source in this report and discussions concerning the PPI calculation are somewhat complicated. That information is found in the companion online Promoting Power Index Excel spreadsheet (found at [www.bipps.org/PPI](http://www.bipps.org/PPI)) for this report. To summarize, the PPI offers a fairly solid, although not perfect, estimate of high school graduation rates. (PPI rates are slightly higher than true rates).

The PPI performs best where significant numbers of students are present and where migration from school to school is relatively low. To control for these factors, this study selected only those schools with larger numbers of black students, requiring at least a double-digit black enrollment for both genders and all years in each school included in the report. The study also performs a standard-statistical process called “regression analysis” using individual-year PPIs from 2004 to 2008. The results from the regression study provide a more accurate indication of each school’s performance than solely examining individual-year data.

### ***Findings***

Table 1 summarizes the results of a regression analysis of the graduation-rate trends during the 2004 to 2008 period for the 19 high schools in the study. Among its findings: White males in Atherton High School are improving their PPI by 3.5 points each year; while black females in the same school are experiencing a decline in their PPI of 1.4 points each year.

In Table 1, names of the two schools making across-the-board improvement in graduation rates – Central and Dupont Manual high schools – are preceded by an asterisk. The names of the six schools failing to make progress in three of the four areas are shaded gray. All negative trends in the PPI are also shaded in gray.

White males  
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a decline in  
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each year.

**Table 1<sup>6</sup>**

**Annual trend in Promoting Power Index (graduation rate)  
Jefferson County public high schools with significant  
black student populations 2003-04 to 2007-08**

| School  | White males | White females | Black males | Black females |
|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Atherton High School                                  | 3.5         | 0.9           | 6.9         | -1.4          |
| Ballard High School                                   | 0.9         | -0.2          | 3.0         | 3.0           |
| Butler Traditional High School                        | 1.0         | -2.1          | -0.6        | -1.1          |
| *Central High School                                  | 5.8         | 2.3           | 9.9         | 1.8           |
| Doss High School Magnet Career Academy                | -0.6        | -4.3          | 5.2         | 1.1           |
| *Dupont Manual High School                            | 1.1         | 0.3           | 0.5         | 2.8           |
| Eastern High School                                   | -3.4        | -3.6          | 1.6         | -2.0          |
| Fairdale High School Magnet Career Academy            | 2.1         | -0.9          | 4.4         | 2.0           |
| Fern Creek Traditional High School                    | 4.3         | -3.0          | -2.8        | 1.2           |
| Iroquois High School Magnet Career Academy            | -0.3        | 0.6           | -2.0        | -4.5          |
| Jeffersontown High School Magnet Career Academy       | 1.3         | -1.0          | -4.2        | 10.4          |
| Louisville Male High School                           | 0.3         | 0.2           | -3.7        | 2.9           |
| Pleasure Ridge Park High School Magnet Career Academy | -0.2        | 0.3           | 0.6         | -3.7          |
| Seneca High School Magnet Career Academy              | -3.4        | -3.0          | 0.2         | -0.3          |
| Shawnee High School Magnet Career Academy             | 2.2         | 4.8           | -11.0       | 3.4           |
| Southern High School Magnet Career Academy            | -1.1        | -1.7          | -1.8        | 8.7           |
| Valley Traditional High School                        | 0.1         | -1.9          | 3.5         | 0.2           |
| Waggener Traditional High School                      | 0.5         | -0.1          | 0.9         | 3.2           |
| Western MST Magnet High School                        | -1.7        | -3.4          | 0.1         | -8.2          |

\* School shows across-the-board improvement in PPIs for all student groups  
School name shaded in gray indicates declines in PPI for three of four student groups in that school  
Numbers shaded in gray are negative

While no school in the study shows a declining PPI trend in all four areas (white male, white female, black male and black female), a number of schools are improving in only a single category.

While no school in the study shows a declining PPI trend in all four areas (white male, white female, black male and black female), a number of schools are improving in only a single category. The names of these low-performing schools, shaded in gray in Table 1, include Butler, Eastern, Iroquois, Seneca, Southern and Western Magnet high schools.

While Central High School is making progress in the PPI for all gender and race groups, the school still faces challenges. For example, its ACT composite-score averages in recent years remain quite low, only 16.9 in 2007 – significantly lower than the statewide average ACT Composite of 20.5.<sup>7</sup> Very low ACT scores and the fact that ACT participation rates for Central’s senior classes have fallen in recent years could point to social-promotion issues. More research is needed in that area. (Another Central challenge is discussed below.)

Of course, given the generally low PPIs in most of these schools during the 2007-08 school year, any further decline would be unacceptable.

The most recent PPIs available are shown in Table 2. Data required to compute a districtwide and statewide PPI for the 2007-08 school year has not yet been released. The data for both in Table 2 is for the previous year.

**Table 2<sup>8</sup>**

**2007-08 Promoting Power Indexes (graduation rates) Jefferson County public high schools with significant black student populations, and 2006-07 overall PPIs for the Jefferson County district and Kentucky**

| School  | White males | White females | Black males | Black females |
|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Atherton High School                                  | 93.8        | 81.7          | 63.5        | 41.3          |
| Ballard High School                                   | 108.2       | 96.1          | 55.8        | 70.6          |
| *Butler Traditional High School                       | 91.7        | 88.6          | 71.8        | 79.0          |
| Central High School                                   | 64.3        | 44.0          | 87.7        | 89.0          |
| Doss High School Magnet Career Academy                | 61.0        | 51.0          | 60.8        | 60.9          |
| *Dupont Manual High School                            | 91.3        | 91.8          | 88.6        | 100.0         |
| Eastern High School                                   | 72.6        | 78.8          | 59.8        | 50.6          |
| Fairdale High School Magnet Career Academy            | 58.9        | 68.5          | 42.1        | 44.1          |
| Fern Creek Traditional High School                    | 71.3        | 60.6          | 40.7        | 60.4          |
| <b>Iroquois High School Magnet Career Academy</b>     | 36.6        | 44.3          | 38.5        | 44.0          |
| Jeffersontown High School Magnet Career Academy       | 63.3        | 72.7          | 31.6        | 63.6          |
| Louisville Male High School                           | 77.8        | 87.5          | 58.5        | 84.4          |
| Pleasure Ridge Park High School Magnet Career Academy | 63.3        | 71.6          | 47.1        | 65.1          |
| Seneca High School Magnet Career Academy              | 59.6        | 67.9          | 49.5        | 57.6          |
| Shawnee High School Magnet Career Academy             | 38.2        | 57.1          | 37.7        | 69.8          |
| Southern High School Magnet Career Academy            | 55.3        | 62.6          | 45.5        | 76.2          |
| <b>Valley Traditional High School</b>                 | 32.7        | 45.0          | 42.4        | 36.2          |
| Waggener Traditional High School                      | 73.6        | 73.1          | 55.7        | 60.8          |
| Western MST Magnet High School                        | 36.5        | 37.9          | 63.1        | 55.9          |
| <b>Jefferson County PPI 2006- 2007</b>                | <b>66.1</b> | <b>76.9</b>   | <b>53.4</b> | <b>64.8</b>   |
| <b>State PPI 2006- 2007</b>                           | <b>69.1</b> | <b>78.1</b>   | <b>63.1</b> | <b>71.3</b>   |

Only six of the 19 schools escape the ‘dropout factory’ category for black males.

\* School achieved PPIs above statewide average for all student groups.

When a school’s PPI for any student group falls below the Johns Hopkins’ “dropout factory” level, the name is shaded in gray. Schools which have “dropout factory” PPIs for all four student groups are shown in white letters on black background. Numbers in gray fall below the Johns Hopkins’ “dropout factory” level of 60 percent

In reviewing Table 2, it should be noted that the current overall statewide PPI for all students of all races and both sexes in 2006-07 was 73 percent. Also, because Johns Hopkins declares PPIs less than 60 percent indicative of “dropout factories,” rates less than 60 percent are shaded gray in Table 2.<sup>9</sup>

Examination of Table 2 shows that gray shading dominates the data cells for black males in Jefferson County’s public schools. Only six of the 19 schools escape the “dropout factory” category for black males. Furthermore, a significantly low number of cells in the table lack “dropout factory” shading

Analysis of data in Tables 1 and 2 reveals a major and surprising finding: Throughout the 19 Jefferson County high schools with significant black enrollment, white females show the most negative PPI trend over time, although their current PPIs tend to be higher than for other student groups.

Among the 19 high schools examined, 12 have a trend of decline in their PPI for white females. In sharp contrast, only seven of the 19 schools show a decline in white male PPIs, a finding repeated for black males and black females. While it is desirable for the PPIs for all student groups to eventually

become equal, lowering the white female PPI to the lower levels of the other student groups clearly is not the right way to achieve this goal.

But some more encouraging information also appears in Table 2.

Butler Traditional and Dupont Manual high schools managed to completely avoid becoming “dropout factories” in 2007-08 for both genders and races. While Butler’s graduation rates for blacks mean the school still loses more than one in four of these students, the school proves that much better results than those typically found in Louisville’s high schools can be achieved. This stands in stark contrast to Iroquois and Valley Highs, where across-the-board “dropout factory” labels apply.

Butler’s graduation rates for blacks ... proves that much better results than those typically found in Louisville’s high schools can be achieved.

The analysis also shows that:

- Iroquois High School shows a 2007-08 black male PPI of only 38.5 percent, and the regression analysis from Table 1 shows that the incredibly low rate is further decreasing
- Iroquois black females and white males also have decreasing PPIs.
- Iroquois white females are improving their graduation rate. However, it will take many years – at current trends – for the school to escape the “dropout factory” PPI even for this group of students.

The data begs a question: Why do white male and female trends differ at Iroquois?

Note that during the last complete CATS biennium, which offers consistent data to previous years (2004-05 and 2005-06 school years)<sup>10</sup>, Iroquois was rated “Progressing - Drp,” which rendered the school immune from state-supported sanctions and from extra help to improve. Yet, the “Drp” flag indicates the school did not meet its dropout rate target. However, because the school was considered part of the CATS “Progressing” category, no penalty was assessed and no assistance offered to improve this school’s very low dropout performance. This even though the school’s 2005-06 School Accountability Index of 57.4 ranks among the lowest in Jefferson County.

Shawnee High School also shows very strong differences in trends by sex and race:

- Black males have the worst trend in the PPI of any high school in the study, but for white males, the school shows improvement over time.
- The 2007-08 PPI for Shawnee’s whites is still very low. For white females, Shawnee shows improvement in the PPI and improvement for black females, whose PPI exceeds all white PPIs.

Why do Shawnee’s black males get left behind?

Note that Shawnee drew a “Progressing - Drp, Nov” from CATS in 2006. Shawnee scored even lower than Iroquois with a 2005-06 CATS School Accountability Index of only 54, the lowest of any Jefferson County High School. Nevertheless, this school also escaped CATS sanctions and received no assistance from the CATS program due to its “Progressing” score.



This raises very serious questions about the current allocation of remedial assistance resources included in the CATS program. How is it possible to justify the fact that the CATS program does not give this extremely low performing school any extra help?

We discussed Central High School's improving graduation rates earlier, but this school faces another significant issue, highlighted in Table 2. Central showed very good graduation rates for blacks in the 2007-08 school year. But the school's white students didn't fair as well. In fact, Central's white-female rate is so low that it qualifies under the Johns Hopkins' definitions as a "dropout factory."

### ***PPI summary***

While the PPI calculations have some limitations in accuracy, the very low numbers and negative trends reported in this section make it clear that Jefferson County schools are failing to graduate significant portions of their students, most notably black males. Even worse, in many schools, graduation rates have declined, making a bad situation worse.

Schools such as Iroquois and Valley, which have very low graduation-rate performance across the board, should not be allowed to continue in their current configuration. The fact that KERA has not led to significant improvement in these schools long ago shows the law, as implemented, offers little positive impact in a most critical area – getting black students a high school diploma.

### ***In closing***

Jefferson County Schools face a considerable amount of work to raise academic performance and high school graduation rates to acceptable levels. After nearly two decades of KERA, real improvement – especially for the district's black students – remains a long way off.

Kentucky cannot afford schools with low and declining graduation rates, and with low academic achievement. Clearly, as KERA approaches 19 years in force, the trends outlined in this report raise questions about whether the public school system in Kentucky is capable of meaningful reform for all students.

– *Richard G. Innes is an education analyst for the Bluegrass Institute, Kentucky's free-market think tank.*

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## Endnotes

- 1 Logon to the NCLB Excel spreadsheets at:  
<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Testing+and+Reporting+/Reports/No+Child+Left+Behind+ Reports/>  
Click on the link for the year of interest and then click on the link for either “Expanded NCLB Data File number 1” or “Expanded NCLB Data File number 2.” The PDF document, “Expanded NCLB Data File Layout,” contains the legends for the columns in the spreadsheets.
- 2 Innes, Richard G., “CATS in Decline: Federal Yardstick Reveals Kentucky’s Testing Program Continues to Deteriorate,” Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions, Bowling Green, Ky., 2007.
- 3 Logon to the “Notice of Proposed Rulemaking” at: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2008-2/042308a.html>.
- 4 Logon to the 2006 official audit at: [http://www.auditor.ky.gov/Public/Audit\\_Reports/Archive/2006Dropoutreport.pdf](http://www.auditor.ky.gov/Public/Audit_Reports/Archive/2006Dropoutreport.pdf).
- 5 See the “Staff Note” prepared for the Kentucky Board of Education, “Assistance to Schools with High Dropout Rates,” Kentucky Department of Education, February 2008.
- 6 Bluegrass Institute analysis of Kentucky Department of Education membership data. See companion Excel spreadsheet on “Promoting Power Index in Jefferson County Public High Schools with Significant Black Student Membership” for more.
- 7 Logon to Central High School’s ACT scores in the school’s “report card” for 2007, at: [http://www.kde.state.ky.us/oaa/implement/School\\_Report\\_Card/documents/20072008/Jefferson\\_County/Jefferson\\_County\\_Central\\_High\\_School.PDF](http://www.kde.state.ky.us/oaa/implement/School_Report_Card/documents/20072008/Jefferson_County/Jefferson_County_Central_High_School.PDF). The ACT participation rates and scores are in an Excel file created for the Kentucky Office of Education Accountability by the ACT Inc.
- 8 Bluegrass Institute analysis of Kentucky Department of Education membership data.
- 9 Several Johns Hopkins University publications contain this “dropout factory” definition. For an example, logon to: <http://web.jhu.edu/CSOS/images/APhtml>.
- 10 CATS scoring substantially changed after 2006, and the academic scores and overall results generally are not comparable to previous years and trends.

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