



Voices From The Heartland

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Making the grade or not— Lake County schools and school corporations

Beginning in the 2002-03 school year, *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) has required schools that participate in the Title I program show annual improvements in the academic achievement of the overall student population and of identified student groups within the general population, including economic background, race and ethnicity, limited English proficiency, and special education. Title I provides additional funding to schools in high-poverty districts.

Under NCLB, schools and school corporations must meet all performance, participation, and attendance/graduation targets for all groups of students, or reduce the number of students not meeting performance targets by 10 percent in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The goal of NCLB is for all students to achieve proficiency in English and mathematics by 2014.

Forty-nine percent of Lake County schools met AYP in 2004 (68 out of 140 schools). Seventy-two schools did not make AYP. All twenty-six schools identified for school improvement because of failure to make AYP for two consecutive years are located in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago. On average, schools in Improvement Status missed the AYP target for 47 percent of student groups tested. The most common target missed was Black students in

English (18 schools), followed by Black students in mathematics (17 schools), and students that qualify for free and/or reduced lunch in English (17 schools) and mathematics (16 schools). Targets for students in need of special education services in English and mathematics were not met by 9 of the 26 schools in Improvement Status. Fifty-two percent of schools in Improvement Status did not make AYP for two of the last three years—48 percent did not make AYP in the last three years.

Eighty-one percent of Lake County school corporations met AYP in 2004 (13 out of 16 schools). Each of the 3 school corporations that did not make AYP—School City of East Chicago, Gary Community School Corporation, and School City of Hammond, was identified for school improvement. School corporations in Improvement Status did not meet the AYP target for an average 24 percent of student groups tested. Math targets for Black students, students that qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, and students in need of special education services were those most commonly missed. Each of the three school corporations in Improvement Status did not make AYP in the last three years.

In general, schools identified for school improvement must receive technical assistance that enables them to specifically address the academic achievement problems that caused the school to be identified for improvement.



Making the grade, continued

- ▶ Status 1—If no AYP is made for 2 consecutive years, students can transfer to another school in the district. Title I funds pay for transportation. Schools with no choice options are encouraged to offer supplemental services like tutoring.
- ▶ Status 2—If no AYP is made for 3 consecutive years, students can transfer to another school and the district must inform parents of students from low-income families of the availability of supplemental services like tutoring. Title I funds pay for the services.
- ▶ Status 3—If no AYP is made for 4 consecutive years, schools must follow School Improvement Year Two requirements, and the district must take at least one of the following corrective actions: replace school staff, implement new curriculum, decrease management authority at the school, appoint an outside expert, and extend the school day or year and/or restructure the organizational structure.
- ▶ Status 4—If no AYP is made for 5 consecutive years, schools must follow School Improvement Year Two requirements, and must plan for the restructuring of the school such as replacing the school staff or entering into a contract with an entity to operate the public school.
- ▶ Status 5—If no AYP is made for 6 consecutive years, schools must follow School Improvement Year Three, and the district must implement the restructuring plan.

Forty-three percent of Lake County schools in Improvement Status are at Status 4. Two schools are at Status 5 and are implementing restructuring plans. Title I funds are used to pay for transportation, professional development, and supplemental educational services to carry out the corrective action.

✱ Cheryl Ward

Community-based organizations in Lake County

According to a 2000 report published by the Urban Institute's Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, *Examining the Nonprofit Sector in Lake County, Indiana: A Spatial Analysis*, there exists a spatial mismatch between the location of community-based groups and the needs of the most disadvantaged residents in Lake County. The report finds that nonprofit organizations are relatively scarce in high poverty neighborhoods—only 1 in 5 is sited in high poverty areas. The locational patterns of nonprofit organizations in Lake County may inhibit the access of low-income residents to goods and services.¹

The report suggests that a thorough examination of program content and organizational structure of these community-based groups is needed to understand more fully their ability to address community needs. Without a clearer understanding of the scope and accessibility of community-based

groups, it is difficult to determine the extent to which they meet the needs of the disadvantaged in high poverty areas. Given what we know about the relationship between locally based assets and community stability and development, it is essential to explore these issues.

Heartland Center is currently working on the production of a mapping of community-based assets in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago to take next steps in a community building strategy for these cities. The mapping, along with a full report is anticipated in 2006.◆

¹ Twombly, Eric C., Carol J. De Vita, and Nadine Garrick. *Examining the Nonprofit Sector in Lake County, Indiana: A Spatial Analysis*, Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy. The Urban Institute, October 2000

Poverty continues to be a critical issue in Lake County

The modest gains in economic growth in Indiana over the last four years have produced little effect on the percent of Hoosiers living in poverty. In fact, the number of poor has increased significantly since 2000. While Indiana's poverty rate is lower than the U.S. rate of 13.1 percent, poverty remains a persistent and troubling issue for just over 10 percent of Hoosiers living at or below the federal poverty line—a mere \$19,484 per year for a family of four.

Conversely, Lake County has experienced a declining poverty rate since 2002—15.7 percent versus 11.2 percent, respectively. Despite these declining poverty rates, the number of poor individuals in Lake County is sizeable—just over 54,000 in 2004, using modest measures.

Heartland Center will soon release the report, *Poverty in Lake County, Indiana—Trends, issues and policy implications*. It will offer an analysis of poverty trends in Lake County, particularly among children and seniors.

While current poverty rates in Lake County are significantly lower than in 2000, there is still a significant proportion of the population who lack the resources necessary to meet even the most modest costs of basic needs including housing, food, health care and childcare.

Economic conditions such as inadequate non-poverty employment opportunities, poor earning performance and high unemployment rates are factors which have an effect on the aggregate poverty in Lake County. Further, there is a wide variation in poverty rates among different demographic groups—particularly age groups.

In Lake County, nearly 18 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in poverty in 2004—greater than the number of poor children statewide. The number of children living in poverty decreased by less than one percent since 2000. Among the children living in poverty, infants and pre-schoolers are more likely than any other group to live in

poverty (25.8 percent versus 14.2 percent, respectively). Children, in addition to comprising the largest group of poor in Lake County, fare worst in terms of poverty related outcomes.

Poverty rates among the elderly have changed significantly over time in Lake County. In 2004, 6.9 percent of elderly persons lived in poverty—a decrease of 4.9 percent since 2002. While the Lake County elderly poverty rate was higher than that of the state in 2000 and 2002, the state elderly poverty rate surpassed the Lake County rate in 2003 and 2004. Elderly poor are more likely to remain poor than any other age group because of limited income in their old age.

Poor families face challenges which make the transition out of poverty difficult. Federal and state governments have instituted a number of income, food, and supplemental programs to assist poor individuals and families become self-sufficient. However, programs are generally underfunded and are vulnerable to elimination.

Poverty is rooted in a wide range of social, economic and cultural causes. The report focuses on economic forces which

contribute to aggregate poverty in Lake County and presents a number of policy options for addressing the needs of individuals seeking self-sufficiency including—

- ▶ Increase living wage standards
- ▶ Employment generation
- ▶ Provision of education and job training opportunities
- ▶ Establish and fully fund income supports
- ▶ Reduce income burden by providing subsidies for housing, healthcare, daycare, and food

The successful implementation of these programs will depend on the nation's political willingness to devote more resources to this issue.

✱ Cheryl Ward



After a decade of decline, the proportion of children living in low-income families is rising again, a trend that began in 2000.

National Center for Children in Poverty
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