



# Moving On: Student Mobility and Affordable Housing



## Student mobility affects:

*Learning*

*Teaching*

*Mobile Students*

*Stable Students*

*School Performance*

## In Louisville Metro Neighborhoods with high student mobility there are:

*High rates of families with excessive rent burdens*

*Low homeownership rates*

*Low median family incomes*

**February, 2004**

**Author: Valerie Salley, J.D.**

## Mobility and Housing

The availability of safe, decent, and affordable housing has a direct effect on student and school success. The most mobile students in Louisville Metro are also the students who live in the Metro Districts with the highest housing cost burdens, spending more than 50 percent of their family incomes on housing. These students also live in Metro Districts with the lowest rates of homeownership, the lowest median family incomes, and highest poverty rates.<sup>1</sup>

Student mobility is the measure of student turnover. While some school moves are positive due to families moving to better housing or parents securing better employment, other moves do not hold improved circumstances for children.

For low-income children, most school moves are due to housing, school, or family-related problems. Housing problems include eviction or landlord/tenant issues, a search for cheaper rent, or a search for a safer neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

In the 2002-03 school year, more than 10 percent (9,681) of the 95,084 Jefferson County public school students changed schools after their school year began. Among mobile students, over half (5,000) also moved from their primary residences at least one time. Of those with school and residential moves, 30 percent moved residences more than once. For these students, the door to school has become a revolving one.

## Impact on Learning

How much students move into and out of schools can negatively affect their academic success, social skills, and behavior.<sup>3</sup>

While the effects on any one of these areas of development can hinder a student's ability to learn, the cumulative effect can be highly detrimental. As might be expected, mobility's impact on learning is more pronounced for students with other sources of instability in their lives. Changing schools is most harmful to students who move more than once during the year, to those whose families live on very limited resources, and to those in single-parent families.<sup>4</sup>

## Summary of Findings

During the 2002-03 school year, among Jefferson County public school students:

- *More than 1 in 10 students moved from the school in which he or she began the school year.*
- *Each school day, approximately 78 students moved to a new school while about 40 of those students changed both schools and home addresses.*
- *Students receiving free or reduced priced school lunches were more than twice as likely as students in higher income families to experience multiple housing moves during the school year.*
- *More than 8 in 10 students who moved schools and homes received free or reduced priced school lunch;*
- *Seventy-one percent of students who moved schools and addresses live in single-parent homes, as compared to fifty-two percent of non-movers.*
- *While 36 percent of all students are African American, 55 percent of students who moved schools and addresses are African American.*
- *Nearly half (43 percent) of students who moved schools and addresses now live in five Metro Council Districts.*
- *As a group, those students who moved schools and homes more than once during the year scored an average of 10 academic index points lower on the Kentucky Core Content Reading Test than students who had only one school move.*

## What is measured?

There is no consistent regional or statewide measure for student mobility in Kentucky or Indiana.

For purposes of this report, student mobility measures “in-mobility” for individual schools in Jefferson and surrounding counties.<sup>i</sup>

“In-mobility” measures the rate of new students who enter school after the school year has begun.

*Formula:*

$$\text{Student Mobility} = \frac{\text{Re-entries}^{\text{ii}}}{\text{Total student enrollment}}$$

This is the student mobility formula used by the Jefferson County Public Schools to calculate student turnover.

i. Student mobility rate does not measure students leaving schools, or “out-mobility”.

ii. Students starting school after October 1 through the end of the school year.

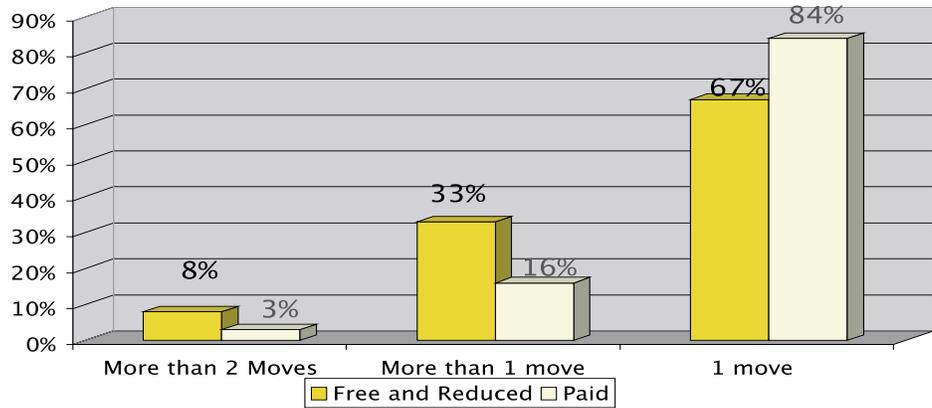
## Scope of research

**School** data—  
Student mobility rates by individual schools for Jefferson and surrounding counties.

**Student** data—  
Jefferson County by:

- Number of moves
- Student Race
- Free/Reduced/Paid School Lunch Status
- Family Structure
- Metro Council District

## Student Mobility by Number of Housing Moves 2002-03 school year Jefferson County



Source: Jefferson County Public Schools, Office of Research and Accountability. N=5,000. Categories are not mutually exclusive: “more than two moves” is included in the “more than one move” category. Students eligible for free lunch live in families with incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty threshold (2003: up to \$23,920 for a family of four). Students eligible for reduced price lunch live in families with incomes between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty threshold (2003: between \$23,921 and \$31,040 for a family of four).

### Impact on Teaching

In this study, student mobility rates in Jefferson County non-alternative schools ranged from .5 percent at Brown High School to 31 percent at Hazelwood Elementary School. (Alternative schools, those that serve students with a high incidence of behavioral problems, had much higher student mobility rates than other schools). In a high mobility school, teachers face integrating new students into ongoing class work and into the social dynamic that has formed among students since the beginning of the school year.

In many cases, a district-wide curriculum helps teachers transition in-coming students. However, as students move from school to school, and experience instability at home, moving into an established group of peers can be difficult. Teachers are left to balance moving forward in the curriculum with the core group of students and slowing the pace of the class to integrate a new student.

### Impact on School Performance

Student mobility affects how schools measure educational outcomes. Under current state and federal mandates, public schools are required to raise the level of achievement for all students. The educational accountability provisions of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) each require that students be assessed on key academic outcomes.

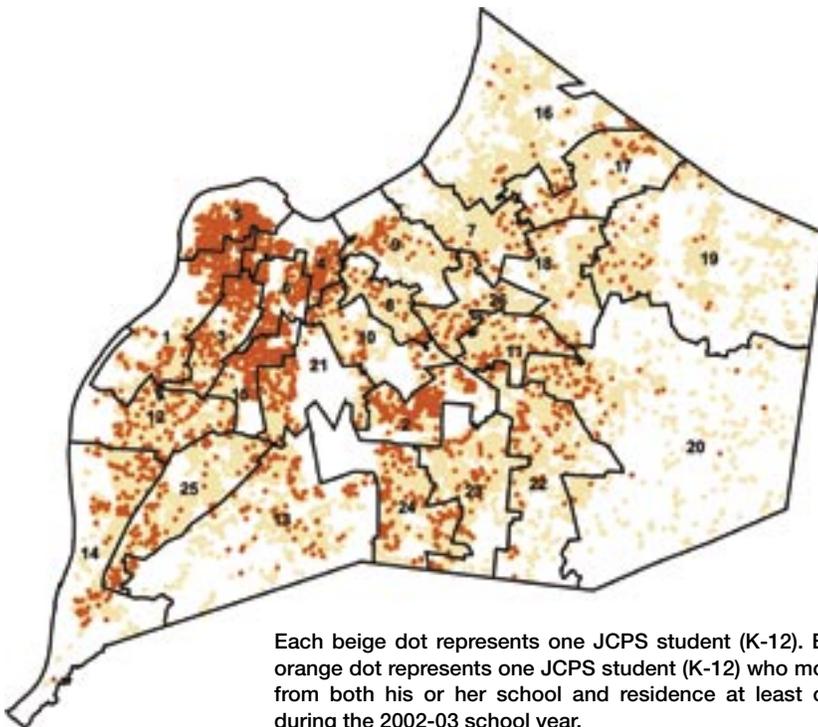
In Jefferson County, students who changed schools multiple times during the year scored an average of 10 points lower on the Kentucky Core Content reading test than students who changed schools only once during the year. At the same time, 39 percent of multiple movers were rated as novice (below grade level) while 31 percent of students with only one school move were rated novice. And, 25 percent of students with a single school change were rated as proficient (above grade level) while just 15 percent of their classmates with multiple school changes were rated as proficient.

Schools with high student mobility are challenged to measure the effectiveness of strategies they implement to improve overall student performance. While low mobility schools work with primarily the same group of students throughout the year, high mobility schools must measure outcomes for many students who are new to the school.

The No Child Left Behind Act recognizes that mobile students’ scores do not necessarily reflect their current school’s performance level. As such, it gives states the option to exempt mobile students’ scores from counting in an individual school’s performance results.<sup>5</sup> However, Kentucky currently includes mobile students’ scores in a school’s overall performance.

1. Metropolitan Housing Coalition. *State of Metropolitan Housing Report*, University of Louisville, Urban Studies Institute. 2003.
2. Kids Mobility Project. *A Report from the Kids Mobility Project*. Hennepin County (MN) Office of Planning and Development and Community Corrections. 1998.
3. Rumberger, Russell W. “The Causes and Consequences of Student Mobility.” *Journal of Negro Education*, v. 72, no. 1. Winter, 2003.
4. Scanlon, E., & Devine, K. “Residential Mobility and Youth Well-being: Research, Policy and Practice Issues.” *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, vol. 28, no. 1. 2001.
5. Weckstein, Paul. “Accountability and Student Mobility Under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act.” *Journal of Negro Education*. v. 72, No. 1. Winter, 2003.

**5,000 Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) students moved both schools and addresses at least once (2002-03 school year)**



Each beige dot represents one JCPS student (K-12). Each orange dot represents one JCPS student (K-12) who moved from both his or her school and residence at least once during the 2002-03 school year.

**Louisville Metro Council Districts ranked by percent of JCPS students who moved schools and addresses during 2002-03 school year**

Metro Council District	Percent JCPS students K-12 who moved schools and addresses	Number JCPS students K-12 who moved schools and addresses
Louisville Metro	5.6	5000
4	11.1	517
6	10.1	320
15	8.9	369
5	8.7	465
1	8.2	464
3	7.3	337
2	7.2	358
9	5.9	104
13	5.2	211
10	4.6	111
12	4.6	170
24	4.6	186
25	4.6	168
21	4.4	146
8	3.8	61
26	3.8	72
14	3.7	147
22	3.5	138
11	3.0	81
23	2.8	96
20	2.7	84
7	2.6	48
18	2.3	47
19	2.3	74
17	2.2	76
16	2.0	55

**Promising Practice**  
St. Paul, Minnesota

The Johnson Achievement Plus Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) is a joint venture between the Amherst H Wilder Foundation (Wilder) and East Side Neighborhood Development Company to demonstrate that neighborhoods, foundations, landlords, schools, businesses, government, private investors, non-profit developers, and service organizations can work together to create family and neighborhood stability and vitality. Family and neighborhood stability would be improved by addressing the quality and affordability of neighborhood housing and strengthening family functioning.

Within one high mobility school, specialized staff work with families to assess their housing needs: emergency, short-term planning, or long-term planning. There is a revolving loan fund for families who are ready to purchase a home.

Goals for this effort include:

- Accelerate and support neighborhood revitalization efforts.
- Improve the housing conditions in the neighborhood and create affordable and quality rental and owner-occupied housing.
- Reduce family and student mobility for families in the Johnson Achievement Plus attendance area.
- Support the Johnson Achievement Plus School in promoting academic achievement by reducing student and family instability.

Information available on-line: [www.esndc.org/community.htm](http://www.esndc.org/community.htm)

For additional data tables, or to download a copy of this report, please visit [www.metropolitanhousing.org](http://www.metropolitanhousing.org).

Source: Data obtained from Jefferson County Public Schools, Office of Research and Accountability.

Note: The map above represents students who moved from both their schools and residences during the school year. While these data show residential moves concurrent with school moves, they do not indicate whether the reason for the school move was housing related.

Map produced by the Urban Studies Institute, Kentucky Population Research, University of Louisville.

## Acknowledgements

The following agencies and individuals contributed data or research support for this issue brief:

### Jefferson County Public Schools

Dr. Robert Rodosky  
Mark McCafferty  
Richard Spayd  
Don Corson  
Susan Egan

### Kentucky Department of Education

Sharon Trivette

### University of Louisville

Michael Price  
Martye Scobee

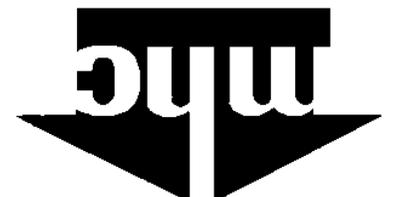
### Minneapolis Public Schools

Elizabeth Hinz

## Metropolitan Housing Coalition Recommendations

- Develop an increased supply of safe, quality, affordable housing in order to create more stability for families;
- Increase housing subsidies for the lowest income renters (e.g. ensure passage of the National Housing Trust) as a way to promote stable housing for families;
- Fund schools, through family resource and youth service centers, to provide parents with financial literacy skills and both short- and long-term housing plans;
- Involve school district staff in planning for major housing development or demolitions within the district; and
- Adopt a consistent standard within the Louisville metropolitan region to measure student mobility.

The Metropolitan Housing Coalition is comprised of over 130 member organizations to advocate for fair, decent and affordable housing for all people in the metropolitan region. Please call 584-6858 for membership information.



METROPOLITAN  
HOUSING COALITION  
P.O. Box 4533  
Louisville, KY 40204-4533  
[www.metropolitanhousing.org](http://www.metropolitanhousing.org)

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Louisville, KY  
Permit No. 1878