

The untold story about IPS: A national leader in over-diagnosing Black males as mentally retarded

This edition of Evans on Education begins an unprecedented 4 part series on Special Education. Let me preface this series by stating I support IPS. I support the teachers' union. And, I consider myself a critical friend of each. Also, because of the educational politics involved, I have critiqued and will continue to scrutinize charters.

In view of this, the news from the 2010 Schott Foundation report, *Yes We Can*, is worrisome. The reported IPS 2008 graduation rate of 36% for Black males is not good. More astounding was the 26% rate for White males.

Simply put, we have a legitimization crisis. When about 30% of IPS males graduate, something's not working. When students see little reason to invest in their own schools as viable social institutions those institutions become unsustainable.

Yet, there's an even worse situation. With attention on graduation rates, what is not being discussed is more alarming. In the 2006 Schott report, *IPS led the nation in over-diagnosing Black males as mentally retarded (MR) during the 2003-4 school year.* Nationally on average, 3% of Black males are diagnosed as MR (scores below 70-75 in IQ tests), and half (1.5%) are educable. Of the 12,185 Black males in IPS (2003-4) only 183 (on average) would be in special education diagnosed as MR; yet, there were 915, or 7.51%, 5 times the norm. That's 732 students possibly over-classified! See p. 13 of <http://schottfoundation.org/report/public-education-and-black-male-students-2006-state-report-card>

The 2008 Schott numbers (2005-6 school year) are not much better at 6.69%, or 4.5 times the norm; IPS no longer led the nation. Its rank: 5th worst out of 63 districts. According to the foundation's Dr. Holzman, the 2010 Schott report (for 2007-8) *IPS ranked 2nd worst in the nation at 5.96%!*

These numbers raise hard questions. How did this happen? Why IPS? Is it a result of the tyranny of the one-size-fits-all normalcy lingering from the Hoosier legacy of eugenics? And, *Cui bono?*--who benefits from these over-classifications? Do IPS and/or various community agencies gain financially or otherwise from this exaggerated classification--or why else would it continue? To what extent do the many over-diagnosed students feed Indiana's school pipeline to prison scenario? Regardless, this is all very, very troubling.

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Next week Pt 2 A history of special education: Circumventing Brown v. Board