

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT POLICIES AND RACE: A COMPARISON OF JEFFERSON COUNTY AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Research Questions

- Given that Jefferson County has a school assignment integration plan, can a difference in the racial distribution of students in schools be noted when compared to Mecklenburg County?
- Is the plan working to achieve its goals of desegregation?
 - Are Jefferson County schools more racially integrated?
 - Can the integration be demonstrated spatially?

Motivation

- Although segregation was deemed unconstitutional more than 50 years ago, many schools across the country remain segregated due to policies in counties and states (1).
- Students in segregated schools are often deprived of the positive outcomes associated with integrated school settings (2):
 - better critical thinking,
 - communication,
 - social skills, and
 - lack of poverty.

Policy Review

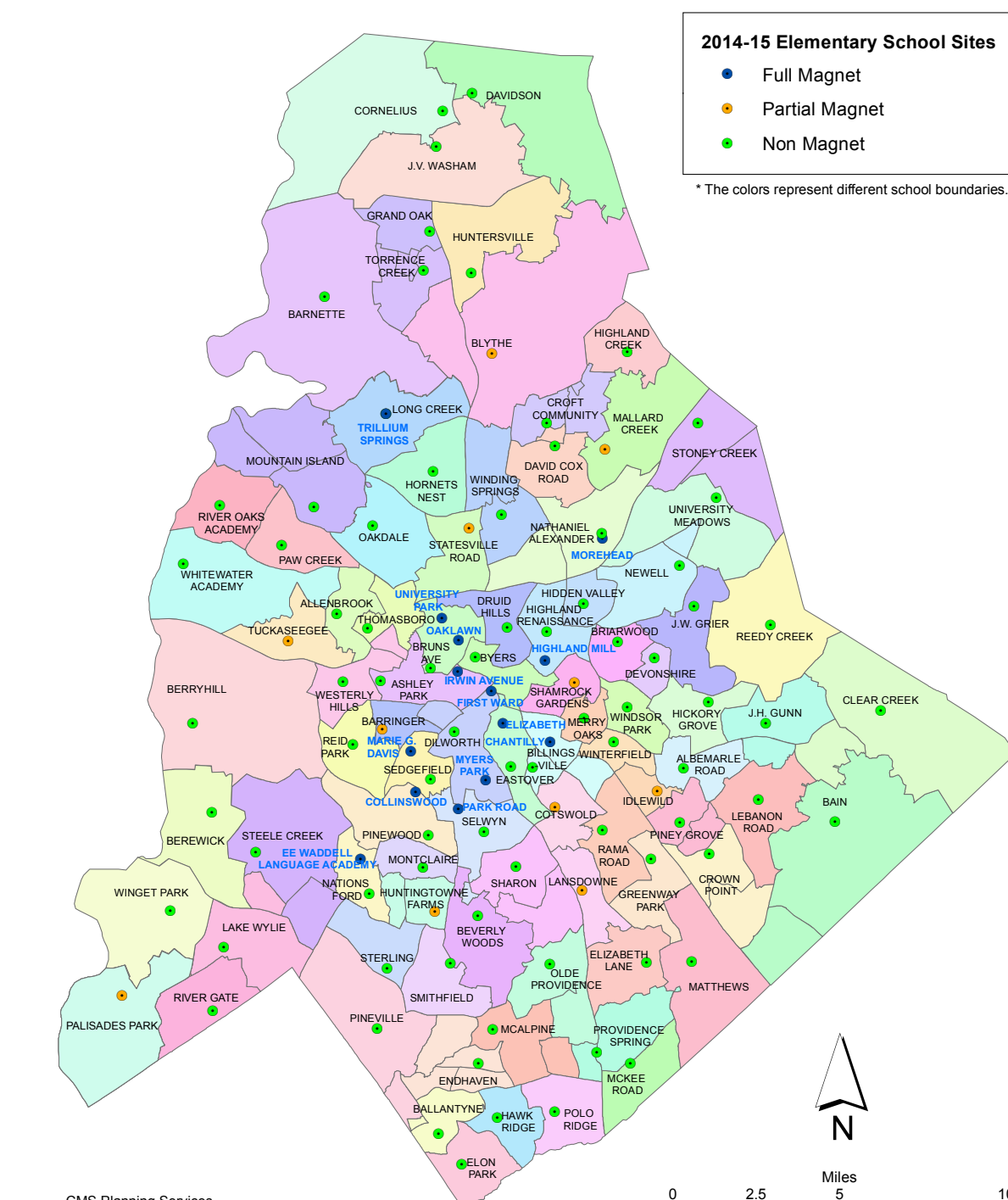
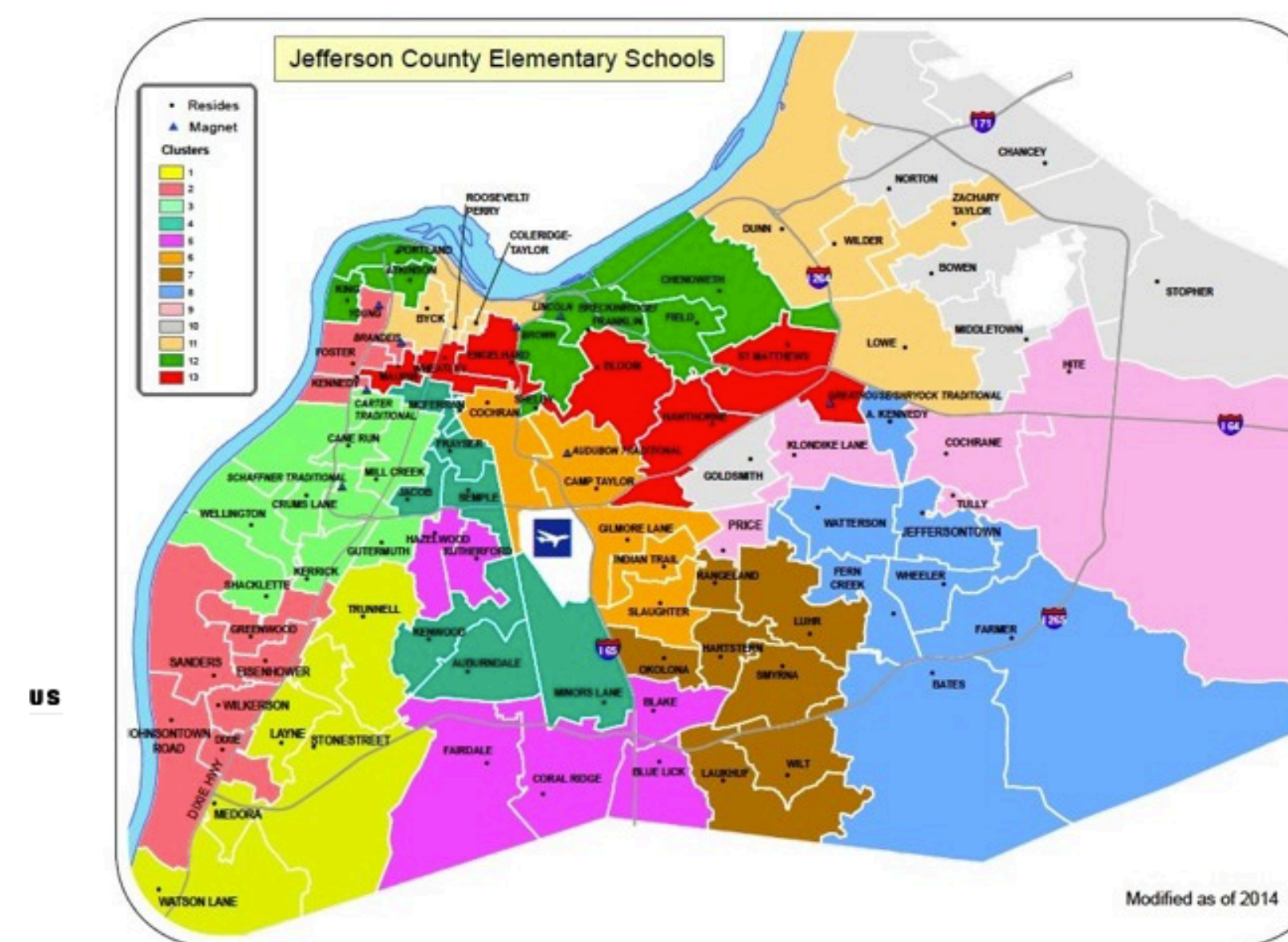
Jefferson County

- 1975:** Kentucky Board of Education mandates a race-based busing system to promote desegregation.
- 2007:** *Meredith vs. Jefferson County Public School* : Deemed unconstitutional to integrate schools solely on the basis of race. A new plan that aspires to create integrated clusters on the basis of income, family education level, and percent whiteness was developed and is currently in place.

Mecklenburg County

- 1971** *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*: The Supreme Court's first metropolitan wide desegregation decision.
- 2002:** Racial based integration ended. Public schools began to re-segregate and have remained so to present times. Students are assigned to schools solely based on geographic location.

Jefferson County Elementary School Clusters (3)



Mecklenburg County Elementary School Assignments (4)

Data and Method

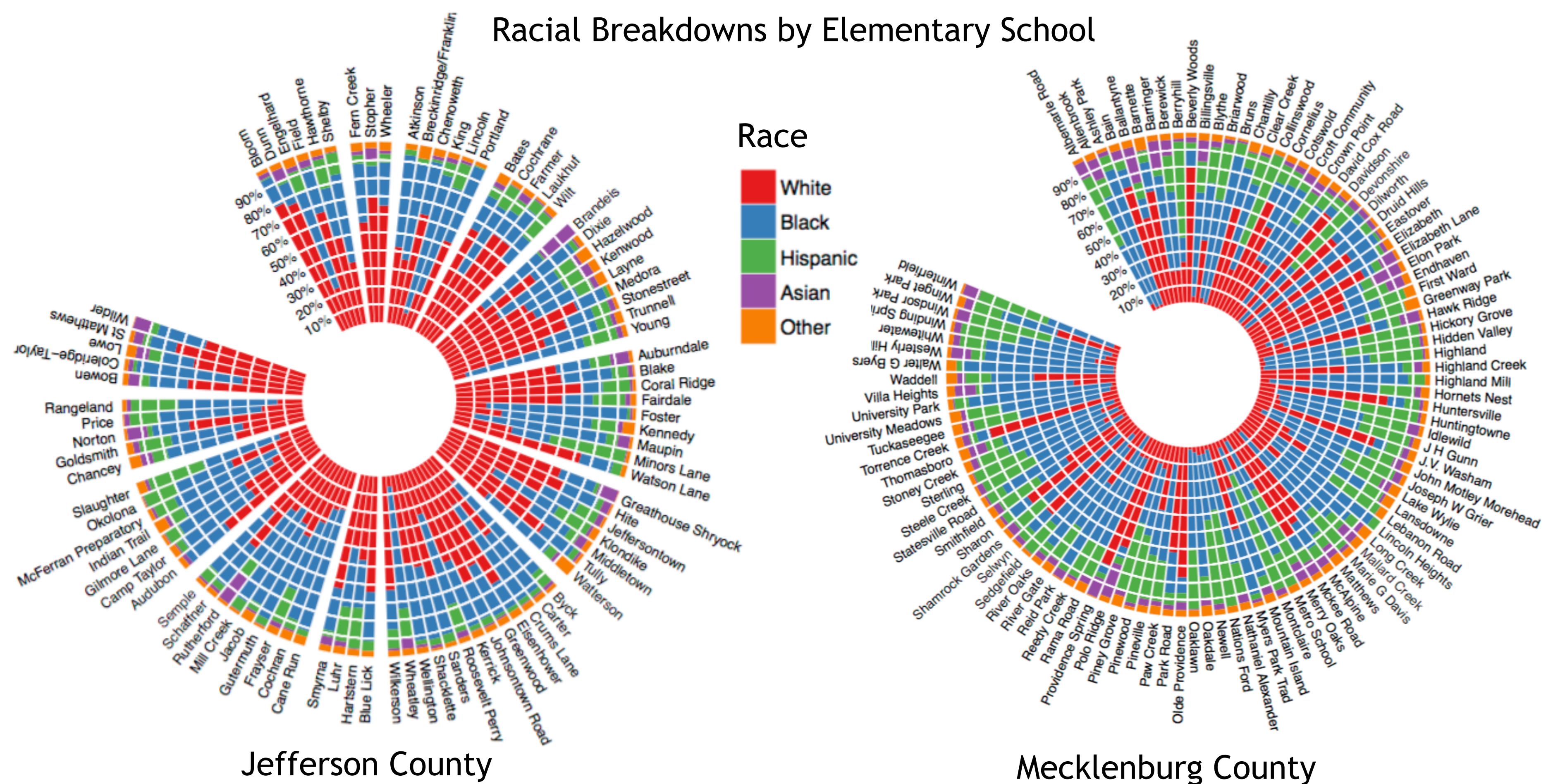
Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)

- Kentucky and North Carolina
 - Jefferson and Mecklenburg Counties
- Academic Year Fall 2013
- Elementary public school grades 3-5
 - 88 in Jefferson County
 - 103 in Mecklenburg County

Descriptive Analysis

- Polar histograms depict the racial breakdown, as a percentage, for the Jefferson County and Mecklenburg County school districts. Each bar on the charts represents an individual elementary school within the respective county.
 - In the Jefferson County chart, the schools are grouped into the 13 clusters that the school assignment plan denotes.
- Spatial correlation graphs display the proportions of White and Black students. Each point represents a school in its respective county, and the size of the point aids in visualizing the proportions.

Racial Breakdowns by Elementary School



Discussion

- A comparison of the polar histograms shows that Jefferson County schools appear to be more integrated than Mecklenburg County Schools.
 - Percentages of each racial group remain relatively consistent across schools.
- Jefferson County schools are less likely to be dominated by a single racial group, whereas in Mecklenburg County, minority-majority schools are frequent.
- The spatial graphs show that in both counties, where Whites are prevalent, Blacks are sparse and vice versa.
 - In Jefferson County, the city of Louisville schools are largely populated with minorities, while the outer suburbs are populated by whites.
 - A similar effect is observed in Mecklenburg schools near the city of Charlotte.
- In conclusion, the Jefferson County integration plan has not fully broken down racial segregation in schools, especially in urban areas, and a more comprehensive policy must be created to do so.