

Public Schools Divided by Race

continued ▲ from Front

"This is exciting enough to bring them back into the cluster." Since "suddenly Jefferson is not failing its AYP" with the reconfiguration, she has had success signing up students from other struggling areas.

Jefferson administrators argue that the return of public single-sex education to Portland has nothing to do with race, but rather seeks to make up for the different ways that girls and boys learn.

Young Men's Academy Administrator Willie Holmes says, "Boys in general, white, black, whatever, perform under girls after the fourth grade."

Lora cites research that sees fewer girls taking leadership positions.

"We don't want to be stealing students from other schools, but we're starting a movement," she says.

Trillium teacher Kirk Ellis argues his school is so different from Jefferson that the two schools don't compete.

Few students transfer between Trillium and Jefferson, but both schools are responding to the same

research. Holmes says, "Charter schools just looked at the same research we did."

Trillium Director Stephanie Hinkle agrees that "the research has shown a preference to smaller learning communities" that have recently multiplied in Portland. She says that the increasing racial segregation of these communities is "one of the most frightening trends

of the past 15 years...we just want to be another option."

Although Portland's neighborhoods have desegregated to some degree, Hinkle thinks the increasing school segregation is due to cultural preferences. "I'm the wrong person to speak for the African American community," she says, "but there are some families that look for a more top-down approach

to education."

Jefferson's Phoebe Tyeskey suggests charter schools "may not be offering programs that are of interest to African American students."

Holmes sees "a passionate hate for Jefferson; whether it's racist or not, it's definitely a stereotypical view of the young men and women

in the community."

Some view the situation through-out Portland's schools as representative of a larger problem.

Williams says, "If a neighborhood wants to commit itself to multiculturalism and desegregation, it needs to focus not only on the schools, but also on the kind of society we want to become."

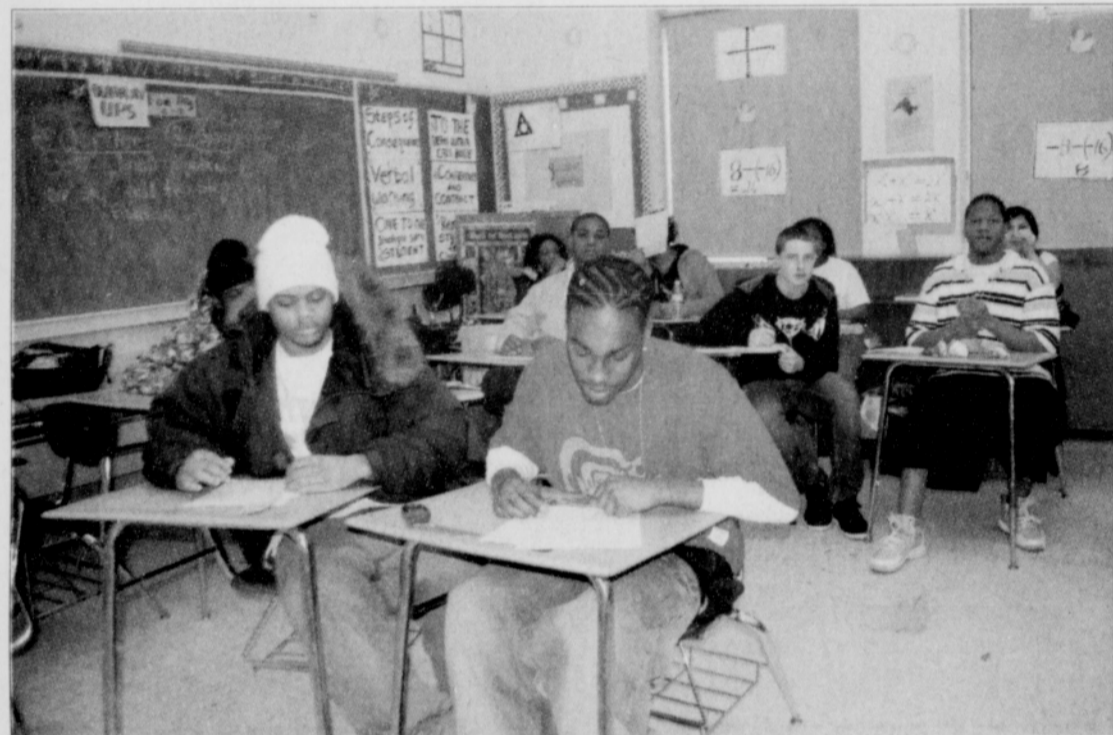


Aurora Lora, Jefferson Young Women's Academy administrator.



Students from the Trillium public charter school gather on pavement outside of class for an informal fencing practice. The school is located just south of Killingsworth Street on North Interstate Avenue, a site that once housed Interstate Rentals.

PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER



A math class at Jefferson High School has mostly African American students. The school's 68-percent black population is almost an exact opposite of nearby Trillium, a public charter school with a 66 percent white student population.

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