Kentucky Public Schools: The Teacher Breakdown

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) reports basic statistical information about the public schools in Kentucky. There are 1,243 public schools in Kentucky including schools of all ages, Preschool through High School. As of August 18, 2007, the KDE reported 42,683 public school teachers in the state of Kentucky. In theory, if the public school teachers were divided evenly among the 1,243 schools in the state, there would be approximately 34 teachers at each school. The Department of Education also reported statistics on the race and gender of Kentucky public school teachers. Of the 42,683 teachers in the state of Kentucky 96 percent are white Caucasian (that’s 40,976 of the 42,683 public school teachers in the entire state) the remaining 4 percent (1,707) of Kentucky public school teachers are of various minority groups – not specified in the report. This means that 33 of the theoretical 34 teachers in Kentucky public schools are Caucasian and the 34th teacher is of an unspecified minority group. Additionally, 79 percent (33,720) of Kentucky’s public school teachers are female and only 21 percent (8,963) are male. Again applying these numbers to the theoretical 34 teachers per school scenario, 27 teachers in each school are female and only 7 are male.

For me, these statistics were shocking. Is Kentucky’s public education program really that static? As I analyzed the given information I reflected on what it meant for the students in the Kentucky public school system. Through my training in Education, I have learned that students connect and form close bonds with their teachers, especially in the elementary school years. Part of the teachers’ role is to serve as positive role models to their students. In many cases, teachers are the only positive role model in a student’s life.
Common experience tells us that humans connect with other humans who have similar interests, goals, and backgrounds. The same is true for bonds that are formed between teachers and their students. Having very little diversity in gender and ethnicity in the public school faculty limits the connections that children can make with their teachers. Statistically, there is a very good chance for a student to pass through their public education ‘career’ without having a male teacher or a teacher of a minority group. Without this exposure to diversity, students will be at a serious disadvantage when they enter the ‘real world’ further down the road.