

# PROGRESS, BUT NOT ENOUGH PROGRESS

A BRIEFING PAPER FROM THE COUNCIL FOR BETTER EDUCATION

Kentucky has made important progress in student performance, and pride in that progress is justified.

However, that progress is slower than state statutes and state regulations require, and current results do not deliver what our Constitution promises for each and every child. Results are especially inadequate for students from low-income families, students from ethnic minorities, and students with disabilities.

As a commonwealth, Kentucky must face those facts and strengthen its work to deliver for all students.

## PROFICIENCY BY 2014

Kentucky's Constitution specifies that "The General Assembly shall, by appropriate legislation, provide for an efficient system of common schools throughout the State." That is, our state legislature must create as system that offers an adequate education to each and every child in Kentucky. In *Rose v. Council for Better Education*, in 1989, our Supreme Court ruled that many children were not receiving the adequate education our Constitution requires.

Proficiency by 2014, measured by the CATS assessment, is now Kentucky's standard for moving toward providing that adequate education for all. The Kentucky Board of Education officially set that timetable to implement rules set by the General Assembly in 1990 and 1998.

Kentucky is not moving at a pace to deliver on those expectations.

## SCHOOLS PROJECTED TO MISS THEIR 2014 GOALS

Based on progress through 2006, the Kentucky Department of Education projects that in 2014:

- 382 schools will meet their full proficiency goals.
- 513 will qualify as progressing toward a score of 80, but fall short of overall proficiency.
- 134 will need state assistance based on low student performance.

If those projections hold, those schools above 80 will have made a substantial step forward for most students—but they will not be delivering the quality of education to which every Kentucky child is entitled.

## SCHOOLS NOT MEETING THEIR 2006 GOALS

In the most recent CATS results available:

- 51% of all schools met their goals for the 2004-06 cycle.
- 68% of elementary schools met their goals for 2004-06.
- 68% of middle schools missed their goals for the cycle.
- 79% high schools fell short for the same period.

Kentucky schools, districts, and statewide leaders can see positive growth in those results, but they can also see that improvement must be faster in the future to be complete by 2014.

## STUDENTS NOT REACHING CATS PROFICIENCY

Behind those overall numbers, thousands of students did not meet the proficient standard in 2006.

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade, nearly 29,000 students and 60% of those tested were not proficient in reading. Those students are the first class born after the *Rose* decision gave us a clear definition of what we must deliver.

*The Council for Better Education, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation whose members include 164 of Kentucky's 176 public school districts. For more information, please contact CBE President Roger Marcum at (270) 699-2529 or [roger.marcum@marion.kyschools.us](mailto:roger.marcum@marion.kyschools.us).*

In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, more than 14,000 and 30% were not proficient in reading. Those children will graduate in 2014. They should be the first class to move out into the world fully proficient.

CATS results for other subjects and tested grades show that even larger numbers fall short:

	Subject	Number of Students Below the Proficient Level in 2006	Proportion of Students Below the Proficient Level in 2006
Fourth Graders (born 1995-96)	Reading	14,465	30%
	Science	20,433	43%
	Writing Portfolio	20,020	42%
	On-Demand Writing	45,149	95%
Fifth Graders (born 1994-95)	Mathematics	20,972	43%
	Social Studies	18,973	39%
	Arts & Humanities	35,344	73%
	Practical/Vocational	18,604	38%
Seventh Graders (born 1992-93)	Reading	18,545	37%
	Science	28,758	57%
	Writing Portfolio	34,436	69%
	On-Demand Writing	42,862	85%
Eighth Graders (born 1991-92)	Mathematics	33,427	66%
	Social Studies	30,008	59%
	Arts & Humanities	26,657	52%
	Practical/Vocational	31,013	61%
Tenth Graders (born 1989-90)	Reading	28,875	60%
	Practical/Vocational	25,932	62%
Eleventh Graders (born 1988-89)	Mathematics	25,932	62%
	Science	25,673	61%
	Social Studies	24,965	59%
	Arts & Humanities	22,399	53%
Twelfth Graders (born 1987-88)	Writing Portfolio	24,100	63%
	On-Demand Writing	32,845	86%

To be clear, those results are better than past years, and the same test results show that many of our students are approaching the proficient mark even if they are not yet there. Those improvements deserve celebration, so long as the celebration does not hide the need for added work.

## HIGH SCHOOL PROGRESS BY GROUP

In CATS reports, an Academic Index combines student assessment results in seven Core Content subjects into a single number on a 0-140 scale. It is the most complete single number showing results for varied students groups. An Academic Index of 100 for a school or group means that the average student in that school or group is proficient.

Looking at average yearly progress from 1999 to 2006, every group improved.

However, very few groups are moving at the rate needed for to reach 100 —proficiency for the average student— by 2014. The groups that are not on track include:

- Female students.
- Male students.
- White students.
- African-American students.
- Hispanic students.
- Students in the federal lunch program.
- Students with disabilities.
- Students without disabilities.

Key achievement gaps are also widening. From 1999 to 2006:

- White students improved more than African-American or Hispanic students.
- Students who did not need free or reduced price lunches improved more than students who did need them.
- Students without disabilities improved more than those with learning challenges.

Here are the numbers showing those trends and results.

	1999 Statewide Index	2006 Statewide Index	Average Improvement Per Year	Projected 2014 Statewide Index
All Students	59.6	73.5	2.0	89.4
Female Students	63.9	77.4	1.9	92.8
Male Students	55.2	69.6	2.1	86.1
White Students	61.1	75.6	2.1	92.2
African-American Students	43.9	55.7	1.7	69.2
Hispanic Students	54.6	62.7	1.2	72.0
Asian Students	73.0	89.6	2.4	108.6
Other Ethnicity Students	59.6	68.5	1.3	78.7
Students in Lunch Program	46.8	61.2	2.1	77.7
Students Not in Lunch Program	63.7	80.9	2.5	100.6
Students without Disabilities	61.6	76.8	2.2	94.2
Students with Disabilities	30.9	45.1	2.0	61.3

These figures show, in yet another way, that Kentucky schools have improved and yet need to improve further and faster in the coming years.

### NAEP PROGRESS FROM 1992 TO 2005

The National Assessment for Educational Progress provides results over a longer period than CATS. NAEP reports student results in four levels —below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced.

In reading, Kentucky 4<sup>th</sup> grade students have moved from 23% proficient or advanced in 1992 to 31% in 2005. Reaching 31% is a valuable step —but 69% scored at the lower NAEP levels of basic or below.

In mathematics, Kentucky 4<sup>th</sup> grade students moved from 13% proficient or advanced in 1992 to 26% in 2005. We doubled the proportion at the top level, and should be proud of that work—but we still have 74% of those tested below the NAEP proficient level.

Also in mathematic, Kentucky 8<sup>th</sup> graders went from 10% proficient or advanced in 1990 to 23% by 2005—leaving 77% below NAEP proficiency.

## NAEP STUDENT GROUP RESULTS

More generally, Kentucky's 2005 NAEP results showed roughly one-third of Kentucky students at or above the NAEP proficiency level overall. That is better than past results, but not what Kentucky needs.

For students from low-income families, African-American students, and students with disabilities, results were still lower, as shown below:

	Reading Fourth Grade NAEP Proficient or Above	Mathematics Fourth Grade NAEP Proficient or Above	Science Fourth Grade NAEP Proficient or Above
All Students	31%	26%	36%
Free and Reduced Lunch Students	22%	16%	26%
African-American Students	15%	9%	13%
Students with Disabilities	14%	12%	22%

	Reading Eighth Grade NAEP Proficient or Above	Mathematics Eighth Grade NAEP Proficient or Above	Science Eighth Grade NAEP Proficient or Above
All Students	31%	23%	31%
Free and Reduced Lunch Students	22%	14%	21%
African-American Students	15%	9%	7%
Students with Disabilities	6%	5%	8%

## CONCLUSION

No one is prouder of recent Kentucky successes in raising student performance than members of the Council for Better Education. That progress, however, is not enough. Faster improvement in the coming years is essential. Our Constitution and the *Rose* decision call for it. Kentucky's future depends on it. Our students deserve it. We must make more progress, more quickly, in the coming years.

### SOURCES

School projections for 2014: Kentucky Department of Education, "Progress Toward Proficiency: Attachment B." April 2007.

Schools missing 2006 goals: Kentucky Department of Education, "Briefing Packet State And Regional Release: CATS Accountability Cycle 2006," September 2006.

Students not reaching proficiency: Kentucky Department of Education, statewide edition of "Spring 2006 Kentucky Performance Report," September 2006.

CATS high school progress by group: Kentucky Department of Education, statewide edition of "Spring 2006 Kentucky Performance Report," September 2006, with projections calculated by Susan Perkins Weston from the KDE data.

NAEP results: "NAEP Data Explorer" at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde/criteria.asp>, used in April 2007.