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Kentucky students are not behind Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, or the nation

After receiving questions regarding the Kentuckians Advocating for Reform in Education's television commercials and website text we researched the data, and this post shares our findings.

The information presented by KARE in commercials [here](#) and [here](#) and website text [here](#) invites serious misunderstandings. No matter your position on charter schools, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and the nation are not doing better than Kentucky on the student performance measures KARE presents.

Fourth-Grade Reading

KARE's commercials cite 2011 NAEP results showing:

- 65% of Kentucky students reading below the proficient level.

That figure is correct, but Kentucky is not scoring behind the states with charter schools listed in the KARE commercial. Instead, the same assessment shows:

- 67% of Indiana students reading below the proficient level.
- 66% of Ohio students reading below the proficient level.
- 74% of Tennessee students reading below the proficient level.
- 68% of students nationwide reading below the proficient level.

Fourth grade reading results do not show Kentucky scoring behind the states listed in the KARE commercial

African-American Eighth Grade Reading

KARE's commercials also cite 2011 NAEP results showing:

- 42% of Kentucky African-American students reading below the basic level.

Again, that does not mean Kentucky students are at a disadvantage compared to the states KARE cites for comparison. The same assessment shows:

- 41% of Indiana African-American students reading below the basic level.
- 42% of Ohio African-American students reading below the basic level.
- 52% of Tennessee African-American students reading below the basic level.
- 42% of African-American students nationwide reading below the basic level.

Graduation Rates

KARE's commercials and website do not give a source for the claim that 25% of Kentucky high school freshmen will not graduate on time. If they add a reference, PrichBlog will be happy to report on how other states compare.

As a first analysis, though, the federal calculations of all states' average freshman graduation rates estimate that for ninth graders from fall 2005 who should have graduated in 2009:

- 23% of Kentucky freshmen did not graduate on time.
- 25% of Indiana's freshmen did not graduate on time.
- 20% of Ohio's freshmen did not graduate on time.
- 23% of Tennessee's freshmen did not graduate on time.
- 24% of freshmen nationwide did not graduate on time.

Other NAEP Results

KARE's website shows some additional NAEP results not included in the commercials. In context, those results show Kentucky tied or ahead of the country and the other three states far more often than Kentucky is behind.

SUBJECT	GRADE	GROUP	KY	US	IN	OH	TN
PERCENT PROFICIENT AND ABOVE (A HIGHER PERCENTAGE IS A GOOD THING)							
Reading	Fourth	African-American	19	16	13	13	11
Reading	Eighth	All	36	32	32	37	27
Reading	Eighth	Low Income	25	18	19	21	17
Math	Fourth	Low Income	26	24	31	30	19
Math	Eighth	All	31	34	34	39	24
Math	Eighth	African-American	12	13	11	12	9
PERCENT BELOW BASIC (A LOWER PERCENTAGE IS A GOOD THING)							
Reading	Fourth	African-American	48	51	56	54	59
Reading	Fourth	Low Income	39	48	45	43	52

Adding Science to the Mix

The KARE site does not share any of Kentucky's 2009 NAEP science results. Here's an important snapshot of Kentucky students results related to the jurisdictions mentioned in KARE's commercials, further clarifying that Kentucky public schools are not falling behind the comparison group.

SUBJECT	GRADE	GROUP	KY	US	IN	OH	TN
PERCENT PROFICIENT AND ABOVE (A HIGHER PERCENTAGE IS A GOOD THING)							
Science	Fourth	All	45	32	35	41	33
Science	Fourth	African-American	15	10	9	10	8
Science	Fourth	Low Income	30	16	21	20	20
Science	Eighth	All	34	29	32	37	28
Science	Eighth	African-American	16	8	8	6	6
Science	Eighth	Low Income	23	14	17	20	14

To restate the main point, whatever the merits of charter schools, Kentucky students are not being left behind the students of Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and the nation.

Source Notes: NAEP data downloaded from the [Data Explorer](#) on January 24, 2012. AFGR results downloaded from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) on January 24, 2012.

Posted by Susan Perkins Weston at 3:53 PM