



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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PRUITT ISSUES STATE OF K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION REPORT

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) — The state of K-12 public education in Kentucky is strong according to Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt, though he did say there is room for improvement. Today, Pruitt released *The State of K-12 Public Education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky*, a report that highlights statewide educational successes and challenges. With the report as a starting point, Pruitt called on Kentuckians to work together to improve education for all children.

“I believe the public has the right to know the facts on K-12 public education in Kentucky,” said Pruitt, during a news conference at the Kentucky Department of Education. “That is why I am issuing this report and plan to make it an annual event. While much of this information is available on the Kentucky Department of Education website and through the online Kentucky School Report Card, at least once a year it is important to reflect on the data as a whole so that we can be proud of our progress and identify the changes that may be necessary to move our children ahead.”

Pruitt, who started work as the state’s sixth education commissioner a little more than three months ago, said he has been impressed with the professionalism of Kentucky’s educators as well as their passion and commitment to children. He also said his time in Kentucky has given him a chance to take stock of K-12 education, its strengths and areas that are in need of improvement.

“Our work needs to be driven by three things: equity, achievement and integrity. My goal is to build on our accomplishments of the past 25 years to provide each and every child with a world-class education that will lead them to success in their postsecondary endeavors, in the job market and life,” Pruitt said.

The 50-page report provides an overview of strategic areas of education, including teaching and learning, student performance, accountability and school improvement, and district support that includes school funding.

The report also highlights a list of key facts about Kentucky education, including:

- Kentucky’s 4-year cohort high school graduation rate is among the highest in the nation and is first among states that require four years of English and Algebra II for graduation. Additionally, Kentucky graduates a higher percentage of its low income students, on time, than any state in the nation.

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- Kentucky students outperform the nation as a whole at most levels in reading, math and science on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often referred to as the nation’s report card, and have realized greater gains in reading and math in the past decade than students in almost all other states.
- Significantly more Kentucky public high school students are graduating from high school prepared to take entry-level, credit-bearing, college classes without remediation or additional coursework.
- Kentucky ranks 7th in the nation in the percentage of its teachers who hold National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.

The report also includes data from the 2016 [Quality Counts State-of-the-States Report Card](#) produced by *Education Week*, a national publication that focuses on P-12 education.

Kentucky moved up two places in the *Quality Counts* report, which tracks 39 indicators in three areas: chance for success, K-12 achievement and school finance. States earn points based on their performance on the indicators and are assigned grades and a ranking. Before 2015, when the criteria changed for determining the overall score, Kentucky ranked as high as 10th among all states. In 2016, Kentucky received an overall grade of C, the same as the nation, putting it in 27th place, up from 29th place last year. Massachusetts ranked the highest with a B+. The lowest ranking state was Nevada, which earned a D.

	KENTUCKY		NATION		KENTUCKY’S RANK NATIONWIDE	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Chance for Success	C	C	C+	C+	35	35
K-12 Achievement	C-	C-	C-	C-	19	16
School Finance	C	C-	C	C	26	27
Overall Score	C	C	C	C	29	27

“On the surface it may look like Kentucky is stuck in the middle of the pack, but when you dive a little deeper, the state is solidly in the top 10.”

Within the K-12 Achievement Index, Kentucky’s strongest showing is based on its improvement over the past 12 years in 4th-grade scores in math (2nd in the nation with a 13-point gain) and in reading (5th in the nation with a 9-point gain) on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The assessment is given in every state to a random group of students. In addition, Kentucky’s 4th-grade students ranked 9th in the country on the 2015 NAEP reading assessment.

Also, according to the report, Kentucky ranked in the top 10 in the improvement of its graduation rate between 2002 and 2012, putting the state in 6th place nationwide with a 12.2 percent gain.

In addition, the state saw a dramatic increase in the number of high scores on Advanced Placement tests.

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Pruitt said one of the state’s biggest challenges in K-12 achievement is closing the achievement gap. Specifically, the 2016 *Quality Counts* report looked at the gap in performance between students who are eligible for free/reduced- price (F/R) meals – in Kentucky 60 percent of the student population – and those who are not. While a wide achievement gap between low-income students and their wealthier counterparts exists in every state in the nation, the poverty gap is lower in Kentucky than in the majority of states.

2015 COMBINED PROFICIENCY RATES REGIONAL COMPARISON				
	F/R meal non-eligible	F/R meal eligible	Poverty Gap	Ranking
West Virginia	40.2	22.2	18	1
Kentucky	51.6	25.3	26.3	18
Indiana	54.8	27.9	26.9	21
Missouri	49.1	22.1	27	23
Tennessee	49.6	21.6	28.1	29
U.S.	51	20.9	30.1	n/a
Illinois	51.6	20.6	31	39
Ohio	54	21.8	32.2	41
Virginia	54.8	20.7	34.1	46
District of Columbia	56.6	13.3	43.4	51

This year the state put in place a strategy to reduce the number of novice learners and raise achievement for all students, especially in math.

The School Finance category has two subcategories – equity and spending – and presents mixed news for the state. With the exception of one indicator, Kentucky scores in the top 15 of states in equity of school finance with the highest ranking in the relationship between district funding and local property wealth. The state ranks 45th in the country on the actual spending as a percent of the amount needed to bring all students to the median per pupil expenditure level in the state.

In spending, the state received a failing grade – an F. Kentucky’s adjusted per-pupil expenditure (PPE) is \$1,260 less than the national average. However, only 15.8 percent of students go to school in a district with the PPE at or above the national average. Nationally, the number is 41.5 percent.

The Chance for Success index captures the importance of education in a person’s lifetime from cradle to career. Its 13 indicators span a variety of factors including preparation in early childhood, the performance of public schools, and educational and economic outcomes in adulthood. Kentucky ranked lowest, at 35th in this area, primarily due to poverty, employment and the relatively low numbers of adults in the state with more than a high school education.

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On related education issues, Pruitt said the state’s academic standards regular review and revision process is working. More than 4,500 respondents, the majority of whom were educators, weighed in on the English/language arts and mathematics standards during an online challenge last year. The majority – 88 percent – were happy with the standards as currently written, with the remaining 12 percent wanting one or more of the standards moved to a different grade level, rewritten for clarity or broken into multiple standards. A group of educators specializing in each content is reviewing the feedback and will make proposed changes. Among the changes being considered are the addition of calculus as well as cursive writing.

“There will be plenty of opportunity for feedback,” Pruitt said. “With all of the feedback we’ve received to date, there’s no doubt these will be Kentucky’s standards.”

Revisions will be put out for public review before being heard by the Kentucky Board of Education at two of its meetings and the proposed standards will be the topic of a formal public hearing that is part of the regulatory process.

“We must all work together to ensure that every Kentucky child has access to a world class K-12 education and the opportunity for postsecondary education or training that will lead to a good job that pays a livable wage and that will hopefully raise the standard of living in our state,” Pruitt said.

Pruitt said the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, gives Kentucky the ability to decide how best to move its public education system forward.

“We have some great opportunities ahead of us, to continue building on the foundation of public education in Kentucky,” he said. “As we embrace these opportunities, we must stand up for what is right for Kentucky’s kids and not take the easy way out. This will take courage, compromise and understanding.”

A complete copy of the *State of K-12 Education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky* is available online:

<http://bit.ly/StateofEdKY>.

A recording of the entire news conference may be accessed online here:

<http://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/leadership/commissioner/2016/01/state-of-k-12-education-in-the-commonwealth/>

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