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GRADUATION AND STUDENT READINESS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE IN LATEST UNBRIDLED LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY RESULTS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – The number of students graduating from high school and considered college/career-ready continues to increase, according to data released today by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).

In 2015, the college/career readiness rate jumped to 66.8 – up from 62.5 percent last year and 54.1 percent in 2013. The four-year graduation rate is up as well to 87.9 percent – from 87.5 percent in the 2013-14 school year.

“Kentucky schools are to be congratulated for their continued progress on graduating more students with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in the 21st century,” said Interim Education Commissioner Kevin C. Brown. “The gains we are seeing are the result of a lot of hard work by our teachers, administrators, and our students with the support of parents, community members and our education partners.”

The percent of students scoring at the proficient and distinguished levels has increased in nearly every subject and at every grade level as compared to 2012, the first year of the K-PREP assessments. However, scores remained relatively flat in the past year.

“While we would like to see big gains in achievement every year, it is not uncommon to see some ups and downs from year to year. Overall, we are moving in the right direction from where we started,” Brown said.

However, students in groups that have historically had achievement gaps continue to lag behind their peers across multiple content areas and grade levels.

“KDE is in the process of addressing these persistent gaps by assisting schools and districts in the development of plans to meet the needs of all students and reduce novice student performance,” Brown said. “This is not only about compliance with state and federal law, but is a moral imperative about reaching each child. By focusing on the individual needs of students we will not only reduce achievement gaps, but also improve achievement for all students.”

The numbers of schools and districts performing at the highest levels are up from last year. A total of 704 schools and 120 districts are classified as either proficient or distinguished.

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Also, ten of the state's 36 lowest-performing schools, known as Priority Schools, made enough improvement over the past three years to exit Priority status. Those schools are:

- Bryan Station High School, Fayette County
- Greenup County High School, Greenup County
- Waggener High School, Jefferson County
- Knox Central High School, Knox County
- Lawrence County High School, Lawrence County
- Lee County High School, Lee County
- Lincoln County High School, Lincoln County
- Newport High School, Newport Independent
- Perry County Central High School, Perry County
- Trimble County High School, Trimble County

Three schools, all in Jefferson County, entered Priority status:

- Byck Elementary
- Roosevelt Perry Elementary
- Moore Traditional School

Priority Schools receive resources and are assigned education recovery staff from the state to assist them in their turnaround efforts.

To make it easier to determine how schools compare, for the first time KDE has produced a simple ranking of schools and districts based on their overall scores for 2013-14 and 2014-15. These scores reflect all the same components and are comparable. Instead of a percentile, a simple rank is displayed. The comparison file can be found under accountability in the supplemental data section of [KDE Open House](#).

This is the fourth year the state has reported results from Kentucky's Unbridled Learning for All Assessment and Accountability System.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Unbridled Learning: College/Career-Readiness Accountability model is based on the Kentucky Board of Education's strategic priorities: Next-Generation Learners, Next-Generation Instructional Programs and Support and Next-Generation Professionals. In 2014-15, accountability is based only on the components of the Next Generation Learners and Next-Generation Instructional Programs and Support.

In April, the Kentucky Board of Education voted to delay the addition of Next-Generation Professionals until the 2016-17 school year.

Various component scores in each area are calculated and weighted to produce an overall score for that measure.

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This year, as in the past, public schools and districts earned points, on a scale of 0 to 100, based on how well they did on the five Next-Generation Learner components:

- **Achievement** – student performance on tests in reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing (science is not part of accountability at the elementary and middle school levels in 2014-15)
- **Gap** – performance (percentage of proficient and distinguished) of students who are members of traditionally underperforming groups (ethnic minorities, special education, poverty and limited English proficiency) compared to the goal of 100 percent proficiency in all subject areas
- **Growth** – individual student's score compared to the student's academic peers to determine if typical or higher levels of growth have occurred in reading and mathematics
- **College/Career-Readiness** – high school graduates who successfully meet an indicator of readiness for college and/or careers
- **Graduation Rate** – the percentage of on-time graduates as measured by a Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Formula

Next-Generation Learner Component Scores ¹							
	Year	Achievement	Gap	Growth	College/Career Readiness ²	Graduation Rate	Total Score ³
Elementary	2012	69.6	40.5	60.4	n/a	n/a	57.3
	2013	69.9	42.1	59.9	n/a	n/a	57.6
	2014	72.6	45.4	59.8	n/a	n/a	59.3
	2015	69.2	42.6	59.8	n/a	n/a	57.5
Middle	2012	67.4	37.9	60.4	44.1	n/a	53.5
	2013	69.0	39.9	59.9	47.2	n/a	54.9
	2014	70.6	41.9	59.9	47.8	n/a	55.9
	2015	66.8	38.0	59.9	43.9	n/a	53.1
High	2012	56.7	28.9	58.5	51.9	77.8	54.8
	2013	60.7	33.7	57.2	60.8	86.1	59.6
	2014	62.0	35.1	56.3	72.4	88.0	62.8
	2015	62.4	36.4	57.1	78.9	88.9	64.8

¹ These figures represent point totals, rather than percentages.

² College/Career-Readiness (CCR) includes the bonus calculation for accountability. The percentage of high school graduates who are college/career-ready for 2015 is 66.8, while the CCR percentage with the bonus is 78.9.

³ Total Score is calculated using a formula that weights each component.

In the area of Next-Generation Instructional Programs and Support, schools receive points (on a scale of 0-12) for Program Reviews in Arts and Humanities, Practical Living and Career Studies and Writing. This year for the first time, Kindergarten-3 (K-3) Program Review scores are included for elementary schools, where applicable.

Mandated by Senate Bill 1 in 2009, Program Reviews are an ongoing, year-round process where school personnel assess the characteristics of an instructional program on four standards: Curriculum/Instruction, Formative/Summative Assessment, Professional Development and Administrative/Leadership. Program Reviews are designed to ensure schools offer quality learning opportunities in each of the program areas.

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Next-Generation Instructional Programs and Support (Program Review)					
	Year	Arts and Humanities	Practical Living and Career Studies	Writing	K-3
Elementary	2013	6.9	6.7	7.1	n/a
	2014	8.1	8.0	8.2	8.8 ¹
	2015	8.6	8.6	8.7	9.4
Middle	2013	6.8	6.8	7.0	n/a
	2014	8.1	8.0	8.3	n/a
	2015	8.7	8.6	8.7	n/a
High	2013	7.3	7.5	7.0	n/a
	2014	8.3	8.5	8.2	n/a
	2015	8.9	8.9	8.7	n/a

¹ K-3 baseline year data not included in accountability reporting until 2015.

For 2015, the overall score for accountability is calculated using the weighted scores from Next-Generation Learners (77 percent) and Program Review (23 percent).

Weights for Unbridled Learning Components						
	Next-Generation Learners					Next-Generation Instructional Programs and Support
Overall Score	77%					23%
Grade Range	Achievement	Gap	Growth	College/ Career- Readiness	Graduation Rate	Program Review
Elementary	30%	30%	40%	n/a	n/a	100%
Middle	28%	28%	28%	16%	n/a	100%
High	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	100%

While individual measures and components within those measures may be compared from year to year, the overall accountability score cannot be since it is based on different measures.

Schools are rank-ordered by overall score and by level – elementary, middle or high. Districts are rank ordered without dividing by level. Based on their percentile rankings, schools and districts are placed in one of three classifications:

- Distinguished – At or above the 90th percentile
- Proficient – 70th to 89th percentile
- Needs Improvement – Below the 70th percentile

The overall scores associated with percentiles were locked in 2013 as follows:

- Elementary: Proficient 67.2; Distinguished 72.8; School of Distinction 76.0
- Middle: Proficient 65.8; Distinguished 70.2; School of Distinction 72.5
- High: Proficient 70.2; Distinguished 75.4; School of Distinction 77.7
- District: Proficient 66.2; Distinguished 70.5; School of Distinction 71.9

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Number of Schools and Districts by Classification ¹				
School Level	Year	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Distinguished
Elementary	2012	508	148	77
	2013	483	172	75
	2014	371	187	162
	2015	328	196	188
Middle	2012	231	66	36
	2013	210	82	39
	2014	174	86	69
	2015	181	71	75
High	2012	160	46	24
	2013	86	80	65
	2014	88	81	59
	2015	54	82	92
Total Schools	2012	899	260	137
	2013	779	334	179
	2014	633	354	290
	2015	563	349	355
Districts	2012	121	35	18
	2013	88	61	25
	2014	78	55	40
	2015	53	73	47

¹ Starting with 2014, the classifications are based on Next-Generation Learners and Program Reviews, while 2012 and 2013 are based on Next-Generation Learners only.

In order to promote continuous improvement, each school/district has an Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) that it must meet. For the 2014-15 school year, the AMO was a one-point improvement in the overall score.

2015 Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) ¹				
	Schools Meeting Goal		Schools Not Meeting Goal	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Elementary	373	52.4	339	47.6
Middle School	129	39.4	198	60.6
High School	168	73.7	60	26.3

¹ Some schools have no AMO due to 2014-15 school reconfiguration and are not reflected in the above table.

If a school/district meets its AMO, graduation goal, and student test participation rate, it may earn an additional designation of progressing.

Number of Schools and Districts Progressing in 2015			
School Level	Needs Improvement/ Progressing	Proficient/ Progressing	Distinguished/ Progressing
Elementary	141	109	122
Middle	56	33	39
High	12	28	39
Total Schools	209	170	200
Districts	10	15	10

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Schools and districts are placed in rewards or assistance categories based on overall score and other data.

Number of Schools and Districts by Rewards and Assistance Category						
School Level	Rewards				Assistance	
	Year	Distinction (95th Percentile)	High-Performing (90th Percentile)	High-Progress	Focus	Priority
Elementary	2012	37	40	n/a	103	0
	2013	30	19	76	102	0
	2014	69	70	73	98	0
	2015	74	44	71	102	2
Middle	2012	18	16	n/a	106	9
	2013	9	13	34	105	9
	2014	39	15	35	103	9
	2015	24	14	34	106	10
High	2012	11	8	n/a	76	32
	2013	11	14	25	75	32
	2014	19	14	23	73	27
	2015	26	7	23	76	17
Total Schools	2012	62	68	n/a	285	41
	2013	49	47	131	282	41
	2014	127	99	131	274	36
	2015	124	65	128	284	29
Districts	2012	8	6	n/a	17	n/a
	2013	3	0	17	17	n/a
	2014	8	6	17	17	n/a
	2015	5	2	17	17	0

School/district rewards categories are:

- **School/District of Distinction**
 - meets its current year AMO, student participation rate and graduation rate goal
 - has a graduation rate above 60 percent for the prior two years
 - scores at the 95th percentile or higher on the overall score
 - for a district – does not have a school categorized as a Focus School or Priority School
- **High-Performing School/District**
 - meets its current year AMO, student participation rate and graduation rate goal
 - has a graduation rate above 60 percent for the prior two years
 - scores between the 90th and 94th percentile on the overall score
 - for a district – does not have any schools categorized as Focus Schools or Priority Schools
- **High-Progress School/District**
 - A Title I or Non-Title I school that:
 - Meets its current year AMO, student participation rate and graduation goal
 - Has a graduation rate above 60 percent for the prior two years
 - Has an improvement score indicating the school is in the top 10 percent of improvement of all non-Title I elementary, middle or high schools as determined by the difference in the two most recent calculations of the overall score.
 - A district that:
 - Meets its current year AMO, student participation rate and graduation goal
 - Has a graduation rate above 60 percent for the prior two years
 - Has an improvement score indicating the district is in the top 10 percent of improvement of all districts as determined by the difference in the two most recent calculations of the overall score.

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School/district **assistance categories** are:

- **Priority School** – a school that has been identified as a “persistently low-achieving (PLA)” school as defined by Kentucky Revised Statute KRS 160.346
- **Focus School**
 - has a non-duplicated student gap group score in the bottom 10 percent of non-duplicated student gap group scores for all elementary, middle and high schools
 - has an individual student subgroup within an assessment grade by level with a score in the third deviation below the state average for all students
 - has a graduation rate that has been less than 60 percent for two consecutive years
- **Focus District**
 - has a non-duplicated student gap group score in the bottom 10 percent of non-duplicated student gap group scores for all districts. Focus Districts are identified annually based on data.

It is possible for a Proficient or Distinguished school or district that would otherwise be in rewards to be a Focus School or District if it has a large achievement gap.

Schools previously identified remain in their assistance status for a minimum of two consecutive years over which time they must demonstrate sustained improvement to exit.

ACCOUNTABILITY COMPONENTS

Achievement

Overall student performance on the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) was mixed in 2015, depending on the grade and subject. At the elementary level, the percentage of students performing at Proficient/Distinguished increased in Social Studies, Writing On-Demand and language mechanics. At the middle school level, the percentage of students performing at the Proficient/Distinguished levels increased in Reading and language mechanics. High Schools also made gains in reading, Writing On-Demand and language mechanics.

Percentage of Students Performing at Proficient/Distinguished Levels				
	Year	Elementary	Middle	High
Reading	2012	48.0	46.8	52.2
	2013	47.8	51.1	55.8
	2014	54.7	53.2	55.4
	2015	54.2	53.8	56.7
Mathematics	2012	40.4	40.6	40.0
	2013	43.9	40.7	36.0
	2014	49.2	44.8	37.9
	2015	48.8	42.8	38.1
Science ¹	2012	68.8	61.8	30.3
	2013	68.5	61.2	36.3
	2014	71.3	64.2	39.8
	2015	n/a	n/a	39.6

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	Year	Elementary	Middle	High
Social Studies		59.8	58.6	39.5
	2013	59.3	59.2	51.3
	2014	58.2	59.4	58.0
	2015	60.6	58.6	56.8
Writing On-Demand	2012	31.7	41.4	43.9
	2013	35.7	43.4	48.2
	2014	38.7	43.7	43.3
	2015	43.8	39.2	50.0
Language Mechanics	2012	49.1	38.4	50.7
	2013	53.7	43.8	51.4
	2014	51.8	40.3	49.9
	2015	55.6	46.1	51.6

In 2010, Kentucky was the first state to adopt more rigorous standards known as the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) in English/language arts and mathematics. The standards are aligned with college expectations and set the minimum for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. Kentucky implemented the KAS in the 2011-12 school year with students first tested on the new standards in spring 2012.

In 2015, public school students in grades 3-8 took K-PREP tests in reading, mathematics, social studies, writing and language mechanics. Their performance is categorized as novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished. Due to the state developing science assessments to align with new science standards implemented in the 2014-15 school year, elementary and middle school students were tested in science in 2015 using only a norm-referenced test, but those scores were not included in accountability.

High school students take K-PREP tests in writing and language mechanics plus end-of-course assessments in English II, Algebra II, Biology and U.S. History.

Gap

Kentucky's goal is 100 percent proficiency for all students. The distance from the goal or gap is measured by creating a student Gap Group – an overall count of student groups that have historically had achievement gaps. Student groups combined in the overall count include ethnicity/race (African American, Hispanic, Native American), special education, poverty (free/reduced-price meal) and limited English proficiency.

To calculate the combined student Gap Group, non-duplicated counts of students who score proficient or higher and are in any of the student groups are added together. This yields a single gap number of proficient or higher students in the Student Gap Group, with no student counting more than one time and all students included in groups being counted once.

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GAP Percentage of Non-Duplicated Gap Group Students Scoring Proficient/Distinguished ¹							
	Year	Reading	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies	Writing	Language Mechanics
Elementary	2012	37.5	30.3	59.4	48.9	23.1	38.6
	2013	37.7	33.8	59.5	49.1	27.4	43.0
	2014	45.1	39.1	62.9	47.7	29.7	42.2
	2015	44.5	38.9	n/a ²	50.4	34.5	45.6
Middle	2012	34.8	28.7	50.1	46.0	30.8	27.6
	2013	39.5	29.0	50.2	47.4	33.5	32.8
	2014	42.2	33.0	53.5	47.5	34.1	29.9
	2015	42.8	31.3	n/a ²	47.2	29.4	35.0
High	2012	38.4	27.9	18.5	26.3	31.6	38.6
	2013	42.7	26.3	23.9	38.7	36.1	39.0
	2014	42.3	27.3	27.0	45.6	31.8	37.4
	2015	43.9	27.4	27.1	44.9	38.0	38.9

¹ Students who are members of one of the individual student groups (African American, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, students with disabilities, free/reduced-price meals and Limited English Proficiency) are included in the non-duplicated gap group.

² Elementary and middle schools students were tested with the Science Stanford 10 norm-referenced test only. A performance level is not assigned and is not part of accountability.

Growth

The growth category uses a Student Growth Percentile, comparing an individual student's score to the student's academic peers. It recognizes schools and districts for the percentage of students showing typical or higher levels of growth in reading and mathematics tests in grades 3-8. At high school, the same model of recognizing student performance uses the ACT PLAN (grade 10) and ACT (grade 11) composite scores in reading and mathematics for comparison. Points are awarded for the percentage of students showing typical or higher growth rate, which is defined as being in the 40th percentile. Because of the statistical basis of the Student Growth Percentile, statewide, the percentage of students scoring at the typical or higher level will be consistent from year to year at approximately 60 percent. At the individual school level, students scoring at typical or higher levels range from 14 percent to 89 percent.

Graduation Rate

A four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is used to determine whether a school/district met its Graduation Rate goal. Beginning in 2013-14, the Graduation component (20 percent at the high school level) of Next Generation Learners is based on a five-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. Both rates are figured similarly: the formula takes the number of students in a high school freshman class and then accounting for those students who move in and out of the system, looks at how many students get a diploma four or five years later.

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Graduation Rate			
	Year	Four-year Adjusted Cohort	Five-year Adjusted Cohort
High School	2013	86.1	n/a
	2014	87.5	88.0
	2015	87.9	88.9

College/Career-Readiness

The cornerstone of the Unbridled Learning Accountability model is college/career-readiness.

Since 2012, the college/career-readiness rate among Kentucky high school graduates has skyrocketed from 47.2 percent to 66.8 percent in 2015 – up more than four percentage points in just the past year. That translates into 12,500 more students graduating from high school over the past four years ready to enter college or postsecondary career training programs without having to take expensive remedial courses for which they do not earn credit.

College/Career-Readiness (CCR) Rate						
Year	Number of Graduates ¹	College-Ready	Career-Ready	College and Career Non-Duplicated Total Count	Percentage of Graduates (College- and/or Career-Ready) ¹	Accountability Points with Bonus
2012	43,121	18,766	3,429	20,366	47.2%	51.9
2013	43,879	21,673	5,158	23,756	54.1%	60.8
2014	43,722	24,322	7,865	27,308	62.5%	72.4
2015	43,942	25,683	9,107	29,332	66.8%	78.9

¹ Includes those who earn a high school diploma or alternate high school diploma

- **College-Ready** – graduates who met the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) Systemwide Benchmarks for Reading (20), English (18), and Mathematics (19) on any administration of the ACT; also students who passed a college placement test like ACT COMPASS or Kentucky Online Testing (KYOTE).
- **Career-Ready** – graduates who met benchmarks for Career-Ready Academic – Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) or ACT WorkKeys; and Career-Ready Technical – Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment (KOSSA) or received an Industry-Recognized Career Certificate. Graduates that have met both career-ready benchmarks are included in each respective column, which could result in the same student being counted in multiple columns.
- **College and Career Non-Duplicated Total Count** – includes only individual graduates who received a high school diploma or certificate of attainment and are college-ready or career-ready. Graduates with a diploma could have met both college-ready and career-ready benchmarks. Graduates with an alternate diploma must have met the readiness standards on the Alternate K-PREP assessment Transition Attainment Record (TAR). This is not a total of the college-ready and career-ready columns.
- **Accountability Points with Bonus** – includes percentage of graduates college- and/or career-ready plus half-point bonus for graduates meeting both college-ready and career-ready technical benchmarks.

ACT DATA (public school juniors)

Since 2008, as mandated by KRS 158.6453, all Kentucky's public school juniors participate in the ACT, which assesses English, mathematics, reading and science and is scored on a scale of 1 to 36. The cost of the exam is paid for by state funds.

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ACT Subject Area Scores Kentucky Public School Juniors								
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
English	17.3	17.3	17.7	18.0	18.4	18.4	18.7	19.0
Mathematics	18.1	18.2	18.2	18.5	18.8	18.9	19.2	18.9
Reading	18.5	18.4	18.8	19.0	19.0	19.4	19.6	19.8
Science	18.7	18.5	18.7	19.0	19.1	19.5	19.6	19.3
Composite	18.3	18.2	18.5	18.8	19.0	19.2	19.4	19.4
Total Tested	42,922	43,495	44,391	44,053	44,516	43,960	44,055	45,626

Additionally, the percentage of students meeting Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education benchmarks on the ACT is up nearly 10 percent in English, more than four percent in mathematics and more than six percent in reading since the state first started administering the test to all juniors in 2008.

Percentages of Kentucky Public School Juniors Who Meet CPE Benchmarks for College-Level Readiness								
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13¹	2013-14	2014-15
English	45.5%	45.4%	48.6%	49.5%	52.2%	53.1%	55.9%	55.3%
Mathematics	33.9%	33.7%	36.1%	36.2%	38.6%	39.6%	43.5%	38.1%
Reading	41.3%	37.8%	41.6%	39.8%	41.9%	44.2%	47.1%	47.4%

¹ Starting in 2012-13, the percentage of Kentucky public school juniors who meet CPE benchmarks include Kentucky Alternate Assessment students (Transition Attainment Record).

For more details, including the data broken down by student group, visit the [School Report Card](#) on the Kentucky Department of Education's [website](#). These electronic report cards provide a wealth of information about each school and district including test performance, teacher qualifications, student safety, parent involvement and much more. State level data also is available. The School and District Report Cards were established by statute KRS 158.6453, and regulation 703 KAR 5:140. Additionally, the Report Cards must incorporate the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

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