

KERA UPDATE

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#11


Fall 1996 Jefferson County CAT-5 Scores Raise More Questions About KIRIS

Just released CAT-5 scores from Jefferson County, Kentucky's largest school district, add to the confusion about whether KIRIS rewards are going to the proper schools.

CAT-5 is a nationally-normed, standardized achievement test. It uses multiple choice questions to evaluate basic skills against the performance of a selected sample of students from around the country. Scores are reported in several ways including a percentile ranking of each student against the reference group. This allows a simple comparison of a student to a nationally developed average, something KIRIS has never offered.

KIRIS proponents argue that CAT-5 type tests are not revealing of real student capability. Others contend that tests like CAT-5 do a better job of evaluating basic skills such as spelling, punctuation, and many math skills such as addition, subtraction, and mastery of multiplication. These basic skills are something polls repeatedly identify as a major item of importance to both parents and employers.

The listing on the right shows all Jefferson County elementary schools that earned rewards in the 1994 to 1996 KIRIS biennium. Next to each school is listed the changes posted on the CAT-5 between the Fall 1995, and the Fall 1996 administrations. Well over half the schools on this list, 21 of the 37, experienced drops in CAT-5 testing in this interval while their KIRIS grades indicated these schools were doing an outstanding job. In fact, teachers at each of these schools qualified for rewards that will amount to thousands of dollars a piece.

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In addition, a Jefferson County middle school, Brown Middle School, found itself rated in "Crisis" after the last KIRIS results were released and was taken over by the KY Department of Education. That school's CAT-5 results tell a different story, as Brown gained nearly 2 points from 1995 to 1996. Compared to some of the CAT-5 score changes shown at the right, Brown Middle's teachers certainly seem to have a very good reason to question the fairness of KIRIS. Was this school really deserving of takeover? All of this has not been lost on Kentucky Teachers. In a recent 1996 poll by the

Brown Middle's teachers have a very good reason to question the fairness of

highly respected RAND group, fewer than 45% of Kentucky's teachers and principals now feel that KIRIS provides a better view of school effectiveness than more traditional tests such as the CAT-5.

| School | Change |
|--------------|--------|
| Bates | 4.4 |
| Blue Lick | -2.5 |
| Brandeis | -4.8 |
| Byck | -5.0 |
| Carter Trad. | -1.3 |
| Cochrane | -4.6 |
| Coleridge | 13.5 |
| Coral Ridge | 5.0 |
| Crums Lane | -4.7 |
| Fairdale | 0.5 |
| Greenwood | -0.5 |
| Gutermuth | -5.9 |
| Hazelwood | -10.7 |
| Indian Trail | 8.0 |
| Jacob | 4.8 |
| J.F.K. | -9.5 |
| Johnstown R. | 0.3 |
| Kerrick | -3.7 |
| King | 3.1 |
| Klondike Ln. | 0.2 |
| Layne | -6.1 |
| Lowe | -0.9 |
| McFerran | -3.7 |
| Medora | -0.2 |
| Middletown | 8.3 |
| Minors Lake | 1.0 |
| Okolona | -5.5 |
| Price | -17.3 |
| Robera Tully | -5.9 |
| Semple | -4.4 |
| Shacklette | 0.8 |
| Shelby | -3.3 |
| Slaughter | 1.9 |
| St. Matthews | 2.3 |
| Trunnell | 0.4 |
| Wellington | -8.2 |
| Wilder | 3.6 |