

KERA UPDATE

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Kentucky ACT and SAT Scores Drop Again in 1997 In Relation to US

ACT Scores Drop Farther Behind the National Average — The Third Drop Since KIRIS Testing Began — Recently released ACT scores for 1997 revealed that Kentucky's ACT Composite score dropped again in relation to the national average. While Kentucky's ACT stayed flat at 20.1 for the fifth straight year, the national average went up for the third time during the same five years. The national ACT composite average is now 21.0, almost a point higher than Kentucky's average. Kentucky is now farther behind the national ACT average than any time since 1982.

Recently, the Kentucky Commissioner of Education claimed Kentucky's lackluster ACT scores were caused by the fact that more Kentucky students

are taking the test. This was a surprising assertion. The Kentucky Department of Education has steadily pushed the concept that all children can learn at high levels. Clearly, the idea that more ACT takers would automatically mean lower scores directly conflicts with the Department's often stated position.

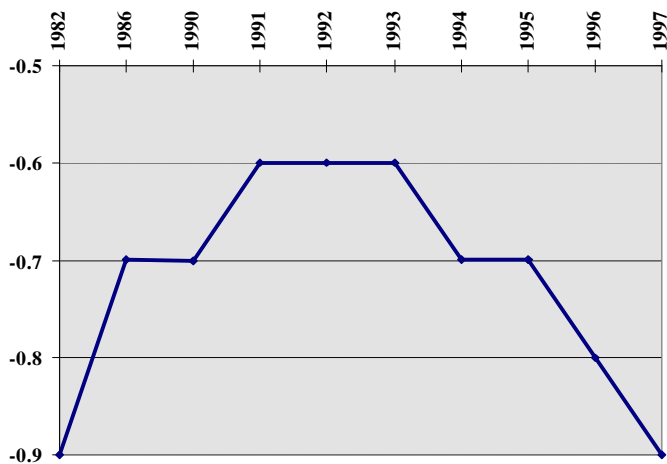
Perhaps more importantly, the Commissioner's excuse is simply not correct. While the number of Kentucky ACT test takers did rise by 11.1% from 1993 to 1997, the national number of students taking the ACT went up almost as much — 9.6%. Clearly, ACT participants in other states have been able to both increase the number of students tested and show improving scores.

Kentucky's SAT Performance

Also Declines — Kentucky's SAT verbal score dropped from 549 to 548. The national average stayed the same at 505. Kentucky's math SAT did rise from 544 to 546; but, the national average went up even faster, from 508 to 511.

Only about 12% of Kentucky's best students take the SAT. As a result, the Kentucky SAT average has always been above the national average. But, the margin has been steadily shrinking since KIRIS began. With the release of the 1997 SAT scores, a well established trend has become evident. Like the ACT situation, Kentucky's SAT performance now has a highly disturbing, long-term track record of decline since KERA began.

Difference Between Kentucky ACT Composite and U.S. Average



Difference Between Kentucky Verbal and Math SAT Scores and National Averages

(All Scores on New Recentered Scale)

