

KERA UPDATE

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New Youth Unemployment Data Raise Sharp Question — Is KERA

Kentucky students must compare favorably to kids from other states — It's the law.

In 1989, the Kentucky Supreme Court delivered a landmark ruling that declared the entire public school system in the state was unconstitutional. The court declared a new system would be required, one that would allow Kentucky children to compare favorably with children from other states. One year later, in a response to the Court's decision, the Kentucky Legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Echoing the Court, the opening paragraphs of the enacted legislation say a Kentucky student will acquire "skills to enable him to compete favorably with students in other states."

Despite clear mandates that Kentucky children will compare favorably, it is becoming terribly apparent that quite the opposite is happening.

New youth unemployment data shows Kentucky's trend bucks both the region and the nation.

Recently obtained federal data on youth unemployment data shows Kentucky's young adults are falling behind the region in the ability to hold a job.

As the graph shows, Kentucky kids used to do much better than the regional rate of unemployment. In fact, during 1992 and 1993, years when the United States was in an economic decline, Kentucky's young adults fared much better than the average of their peers in Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Tennessee. However, during the past three years, that favorable position has deteriorated considerably. During 1996, a year when general unemployment for all age groups both

nationally and in Kentucky reached remarkable lows, the unemployment rate for Kentucky youngsters hovered

If KERA is to supposed help our kids compete with our neighbors, the goal is being missed.

The youth unemployment rates prove the glowing results from KIRIS about our kids "transistion to adult life" simply cannot be true.

Difference Between Kentucky Youth Unemployment Rate (16 to 19 Year Olds) and Average for Kentucky's Neighboring States

