

KERA UPDATE

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Kentucky Education Standards Get Failing Grades in New Reports

Four new reports from the Fordham Foundation review education standards for math, science, history, and geography from states all around the country. Each report contains specific comments and analysis of Kentucky education documents. And, these reports make it very clear that Kentucky's education standards fall well below the level of acceptability.

THE MATH REPORT

Kentucky Math Standards - D

States Evaluated - 46

Kentucky's Rank - 26

Math is the only area in the Fordham listings where Kentucky scores above an "F," but this is no cause for rejoicing.

The Fordham math report blasts the *Kentucky Curriculum Framework, Transformations*, as just a guide to instruction rather than a true standards document. Concerning Kentucky's *Core Content*, the report says the items listed under "concepts, skills, and relationships" are "brief and generally inadequate." The report says *Core Content* would have to be augmented by many specifics. *Core Content* was also found to be "...not very helpful to new teachers." The Fordham researchers say **one cannot tell from the *Core Content* whether the content at each grade level is rich or poor.** In addition, the critique says some topics in the *Core Content* might only be appropriate for college level courses.

HOW TO GET THESE REPORTS:

Web Site: edexcellence.net/
Phone: 888-TBF-7474

THE SCIENCE REPORT

Kentucky Science Standards - F

States Evaluated - 36

Science reviewers examined Kentucky's *Core Content* and the Learner Goals and Expectations. The science review team found *Core Content* to be a "...not very successful attempt to fit the sciences into an interdisciplinary relationship with other areas of knowledge...." The report says Kentucky's standards are surrounded by jargon that obscures the structure of science. Theory is slighted, and definitions are virtually absent.

A particularly sharp comment concerns attention to detail. According to the Fordham researchers, the Kentucky documents "...contain far too many typographical errors." This is a particularly chilling comment in light of recent revelations in the Kentucky legislature that the quality of questions on KIRIS tests has not always been acceptable. Is it possible that poor writing is endemic in Kentucky's education documents?

Fordham's review of Kentucky history

THE HISTORY REPORT

(Review Possibly Incomplete)
Kentucky History Standards - F

States Evaluated - 37

Kentucky's Rank - 29

standards has been properly criticized because it apparently only looked at the *Curriculum Framework*. However, the researchers found the *Framework* a challenge to read and assess. The *Framework*, which was the sole guidance to teachers until 1996, was faulted for a lack of required historical content and clear requirement for students to perform historical skills.

This review specifically examined the

THE GEOGRAPHY REPORT

Kentucky Geography Stds. - F

States Evaluated - 38

Kentucky's Rank - 34

Core Content, but reviewers also briefly mention the *Curriculum Framework* and the current and proposed *Program of Studies*. Both of the latter were faulted for absence of geography standards. *Core Content* scored low in a number of areas such as too much jargon, lack of guidance to teachers, poor specification of knowledge and skills, and missing benchmarks. Comprehensiveness and rigor were scored very low for each of the elementary, middle school and high school areas examined.

Fordham's reviewers don't care for Kentucky's standards. But, they also say adequate standards are essential to good assessments. Kentucky legislators must note this as they debate changes to Kentucky Education. It is clear the management program to date has not produced a good product, and changes are needed.