

KERA UPDATE

October 2001

About The Kentucky Education Reform Act

#57

New CATS Credibility Crisis: Inflated Scores, Deflated Goals, Part 2

New CATS merely hides a faltering education program.

KERA Updates 55 and *56* discussed two aspects of the inflation in Kentucky's new CATS assessment in comparison to the old KIRIS assessment. *Update 55* examined a rescaling scheme for CATS that resulted in some **incredible score boosts for individual subjects**. *Update 56* explained how **the effective Kentucky goal had been lowered from 100 to something less than 80**. Now, using new data released by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) in early October, this update will farther expand on the **tremendous inflation in overall scores** that occurred during the transition from KIRIS to CATS.

The graphs below tell the tale. The tremendous jumps in total accountability scores that occurred between the end of KIRIS and the first year of the recently rescored CATS are simply unbelievable. For elementary and high schools, the one-year boosts between the 1997-98 to 1998-99 school years equate to all the progress made during the six one-year intervals from 1991-92 to 1997-98 under KIRIS! For middle schools, the jump is even more incredible, running **THREE TIMES** the

total score improvement during all the KIRIS years!

Not only that, but trends in the old KIRIS scores make it plain that performance was starting to stagnate in elementary and middle schools after 1994-95. Only high schools were continuing to improve, albeit at a very slow rate. Quite simply, even using its own assessment, by 1998 Kentucky education was stagnating well below the old goal of 100.

Now, along comes New CATS. Suddenly, elementary and middle schools get tremendous boosts in scores. In addition, their performance stagnation seems to have ended, as well. High schools receive a somewhat lower inflation bonus. So, both the elementary and middle schools now outscore the high schools. Thus, New CATS not only creates miraculous performance growth, but it radically inverts school rankings.

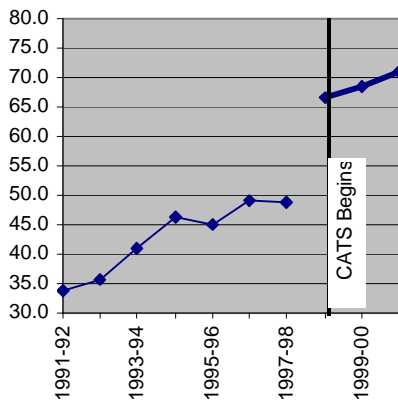
By the way, KDE claims the comparisons presented here are invalid. That's nonsense. If New CATS is incompatible

with the old KIRIS, why did KDE keep the same 0 to 140 scoring scale? Why did KDE keep the same "official" goal of 100? And, how can New CATS suddenly makes us appear **MUCH** closer to KDE's goal while other testing for Kentucky generally indicates scant, if any, progress has been made in the past decade?

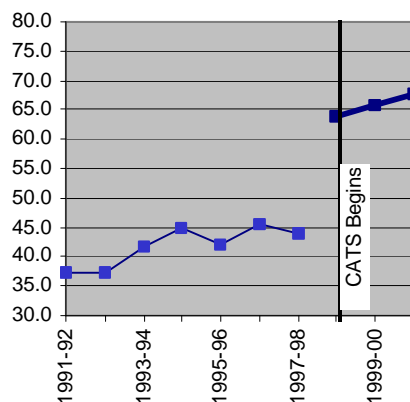
Also, don't forget the message from *Update 56*— not only is New CATS grossly inflated, but the **effective goal** actually has been chopped from 100 to something less than 80. Schools that score above that reduced level cannot receive sanctions. They can, however, get rewards.

So, don't be fooled. The graphs make it obvious. New CATS is just an unconvincing cover-up for a faltering education program. Clearly, New CATS' credibility is in real trouble.

**KIRIS and New CATS Accountability Indexes by Year
Elementary Schools**



**KIRIS and New CATS Accountability Indexes by Year
Middle Schools**



**KIRIS and New CATS Accountability Indexes by Year
High Schools**

