

KERA UPDATE

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Kentucky's "Richest" Schools — How Their KIRIS Scores Compare to the

A November 4th article, "Both Rich and Poor Schools Test Well, Analysis Shows", in the Louisville Herald-Leader newspaper highlights the hazards of trying to use KIRIS scores to develop an accurate picture of education in Kentucky. The table to the right shows the "rich" high schools from the Herald-Leader's article with both their 1996 KIRIS scores and their change in scores on the ACT Composite from 1994 to 1996. The "rich" category was determined by the Herald-Leader from the percentage of students on the reduced or free lunch plan.

A number of problems are immediately evident from this list. Using the agreement table at the bottom right, it is apparent that KIRIS and ACT for these schools show quite different results. While KIRIS shows only 2 schools in Decline, ACT shows 11 schools with lower scores. In addition, trends for the two tests often varied, sometimes strongly. Half the list showed improvement on one test while declining on the other. Even the results for the two schools in Decline varied widely — Boone County's ACT rose 0.6 points while Highlands dropped 1.0 points.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to do a similar comparison with the "poorest" schools in the Herald-Leader's list. While the "richest" category included many high schools, the 52 poorest schools were all elementary schools, except for one middle school. There is no widely-used test in Kentucky, except for KIRIS, for these schools. With KIRIS' accuracy in question, true performance for these schools remains a mystery.

High School	KIRIS Classification	ACT Comp Change	Agreement
Beechwood	Improving	-0.2	-
Highlands	Decline	-1.0	+
Rowan County	Reward	0.2	+
Frankfort	Improving	-0.7	-
Fleming County	Improving	-1.0	-
Trigg County	Reward	0.6	+
Ryle	Reward	0.9	+
Connor	Reward	0.7	+
South Oldham	Reward	-0.5	-
Dixie	Reward	0.5	+
Boone County	Decline	0.6	-
Paintsville	Improving	0.1	+
Woodford County	Improving	-0.2	-
Greenwood	Reward	0.4	+
Western Hills	Improving	-1.0	-
Lone Oak	Improving	0.4	+
Ballard	Successful	-1.1	—
Russell Ind.	Improving	0.0	+
Heath	Successful	0.9	+

ACT Score Change, 1994 to 1996, Verses KIRIS Score Categories

KIRIS Score	Drop Over -1.0	-0.6 to -1.0	-0.1 to -0.5	0 to 0.5	0.6 to 1.0	Over 1.0
Crisis	++	+	+	-	-	—
Decline	+	+	+	-	-	—
Improving	—	-	-	+	+	+
Successful	—	-	-	+	+	+
Reward	—	-	-	+	+	++