

KERA UPDATE

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#7

Kentucky's First Biennium "Decline" Schools — How Their KIRIS Scores

The table at right lists high schools from a February 8, 1995, article in the Louisville Courier-Journal that were rated in "Decline" in the first KIRIS Biennium. This was the lowest KIRIS score awarded in the First Biennium.

All of these schools should have received services from Distinguished Educators to improve their performance in the Second Biennium.

The table shows the high schools' 1994-1996 KIRIS Second Biennium scores and their change in scores on the ACT Composite from 1994 to 1996.

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. For 8 of the 14 schools listed (57 percent), the KIRIS Second Biennium classification does not agree with the trend on the ACT. In some cases, like Whitesburg, the disagreement is quite pronounced.

Schools on this list with identical KIRIS classifications also had dramatically different ACT results. For example, both Corbin Independent High School and Whitesburg received KIRIS "Reward" ratings, but their ACT scores moved dramatically in very opposite directions. Also, "Improving Category Two" schools had ACT changes ranging from -0.7 to +0.4. In fact, of 7 schools classified in Rewards, 4 showed decline on the ACT over the same rating period!

The performance tabulated here also raises questions about the real impact of

High Schools That Were in Decline in First KIRIS Biennium with Current Performance

High School	1996 KIRIS Classification	ACT Comp Change	Agreement
Breathitt	Improving - 2	-0.7	-
West Carter Count.	Improving - 2	0.2	+
Corbin Ind.	Reward	1.2	++
Estill County	Improving - 2	0.4	+
Gallatin County	Improving - 2	-0.6	-
Jackson County	Decline	-0.1	+
Leslie County	Improving - 2	-0.5	-
Fleming Neon	Reward	-0.6	-
Whitesburg	Reward	-1.2	—
Livingston Central	Reward	0.5	+
Paducah Tilghman	Reward	-0.1	-
Rockcastle	Reward	-0.4	-

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	—	-	-	+	+	++

Distinguished Educators. It appears that they can raise a school's KIRIS scores at least slightly. Whether that translates into improved performance on other important tests like the ACT appears questionable. Also unknown is whether these schools could have posted similar results without the Distinguished Educator. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do a

similar comparison with Kentucky Middle and Elementary schools that were rated "Decline" in the First Biennium. 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.