

KERA UPDATE

July 2003

About The Kentucky Education Reform Act

#71

Kentucky's 2002 NAEP Reading Is FLAT #2: Evidence - Exclusion Inflates Scores!

The 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading results released on June 19th, and the official report from the federal government says Kentucky's 4th and 8th grade reading scores show no statistically significant change between 1998 and 2002.

There is another remarkable fact in this new report. For only the second time in recent NAEP history, Kentucky didn't post a big increase in exclusion of students with learning disabilities (SD) on a 4th grade NAEP test. And, for the second time, Kentucky's 4th grade scores didn't have a statistically significant change, either.

Kentucky's exclusion rate also stayed fairly level on the most recent NAEP 4th grade math assessments for 1996 and 2000. Kentucky didn't have a statistically significant score change on these two math assessments, either.

Thus, a trend in Kentucky's NAEP scores has become apparent. **Basically, Kentucky's NAEP scores don't make statistically significant changes unless they are accompanied by increased exclusion of students with learning disabilities.**

Let's examine the NAEP math results. As the table below shows, between 1992 and 1996 Kentucky posted a 5-point increase in scores, but this was accompanied by a 100 percent increase in exclusion of SD. Then, from 1996 to 2000 exclusion rose again, but only by 2 more points. With this lower exclusion increase, Kentucky's scores stayed statistically flat.

It's a little more challenging to analyze Kentucky's 4th grade NAEP reading trend because NAEP changed its testing and reporting procedures after 1998. The original 1992 to 1998 reading test protocol didn't allow any testing accommodations for SD. In the 2002 NAEP report, that changed; the reported scores included results for students who did get accommodations. Thus, the reading table below is split into two sections. Still, the trend is quite evident. Between 1992 and 1994, Kentucky's exclusion rate remained stable, and the scores didn't change significantly, either. Then, Kentucky posted one of the largest jumps in exclusion rates ever seen on any NAEP, a whopping 250% increase. The state posted a big score increase in the 1998 NAEP, but **was this a real improvement or just a statistical glitch because a lot more of Kentucky's weakest students simply didn't even take the NAEP?**

make any real change, either. So, there is now mounting evidence that the only reason Kentucky got that big reading score jump in 1998 and the math score jump in 1996 is because exclusion increased. Apparently, there was little, if any, real education improvement.

This has important consequences for KERA. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) cites NAEP trends as an indication that Kentucky's school assessment program is reliable and KERA is working. Thanks to the new NAEP data, it is now evident that KDE's use of the NAEP is questionable. Despite KDE's claims, in the few recent cases where the state didn't get an unfair benefit from exclusion increases, NAEP says we made no discernable progress.

The discussion above is particularly relevant to CATS. Since its 1999 inception, Kentucky's CATS assessment showed continuous elementary school reading and math progress. Now, we have enough NAEP data to say that CATS does not paint an accurate picture at the elementary level.

Of course, as previous *Updates* have discussed, CATS also showed progress in the state's high schools. Mirroring the NAEP evidence for elementary schools, there is significant evidence from other tests such as the ACT college entrance test and the Armed Forces Qualification Test that says CATS isn't painting an accurate picture of progress for our high schools, either. Clearly, something is wrong with CATS and change is needed.

And, something seems clearly wrong with NAEP, too. Why is it that when Kentucky's exclusion doesn't change, NAEP scores don't really change, either?

NAEP Grade 4 Math

	1992	1996	2000
Kentucky Score	215	220	221*
Kentucky Exclusion Rate	3%	6%	8%

An answer to this important question now seems apparent with the newest NAEP scores for Kentucky. Under the new NAEP reporting

NAEP Grade 4 Reading

	Not Accommodated			Accommodated	
	1992	1994	1998	1998	2002
Kentucky Score	213	212*	218	218	219*
Kentucky Exclusion Rate	4%	4%	10%	7%	8%

scheme, where testing accommodations are now permitted, Kentucky's exclusion rate didn't change much from 1998 to 2002, but the scores didn't

* Score change not statistically different from previous testing year