



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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KENTUCKY'S LOWEST-PERFORMING SCHOOLS MAKING GAINS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Kentucky's lowest-performing schools are making promising progress on increasing student achievement, the Kentucky Board of Education learned at its meeting today.

Based on 2012-13 Unbridled Learning Assessment and Accountability System results, of the 41 schools named as Priority or Persistently Low-Achieving (PLA) Schools -- identified as being in the bottom 5 percent of schools in the Commonwealth:

- 6 schools scored in the Distinguished category, the highest of all performance categories
- 8 schools scored in the Proficient category
- 19 schools were categorized as Progressing (met annual measurable objective, student participation rate and graduation rate)

Other highlights include:

- 11 of the 41 schools had overall scores above the state average
- 36 of 41 schools met their Annual Measureable Objective
- 21 of 41 schools achieved their College- and Career-Readiness (CCR) targets
- One school (Leslie County High School) progressed out of Priority status

"The results show it is possible to turnaround low-achieving schools," said Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday. "These schools are focused on doing what is best for kids and ensuring their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be college- and career-ready. The improvement we're seeing is a testament to the outstanding leadership and diligent work of teachers, principals, students and parents," Holliday said.

While Holliday is positive about the gains being made, he acknowledged there are still a number of Priority Schools that continue to need assistance. The Kentucky Department of Education is currently performing diagnostic reviews in the lowest-performing schools to determine what needs to happen to turn the schools around. Staff reported that several schools have recently replaced their principals and are starting to see results.

"Leadership makes a difference," Holliday said "These schools need strong leadership, a strong council and on-site support for math and literacy," he said.

(more)

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Through the state, each Priority School is assigned Educational Recovery (ER) staff -- an Educational Recovery Leader to mentor the principal, an Educational Recovery Specialist for English/language arts and another specialist for mathematics to work with teachers as they improve instruction and teaching strategies in these two critical areas.

State general funds from different sources have been used to support this work; however no state funds are currently appropriated to support the school turnaround program.

“We need to be sure there is funding to support continuing efforts for improvement in these schools,” said board member Mary Gwen Wheeler. “We cannot give up on these schools.”

The Kentucky Board of Education requested more than \$8 million for school improvement in its 2014-16 biennial budget request. Holliday said staff will lobby for these funds and mentioned that sequestration did not have as large of an impact on school improvement funding as had been feared.

Initially, 41 Kentucky public middle and high schools were identified as Priority Schools or Persistently Low-Achieving schools, based on criteria in KRS 160.346.

With the closing of one school (Monticello Independent, which merged with Wayne County in 2013), and the exiting of Leslie County High School due to student improvement, there are 39 Priority Schools in the 2013-14 school year. KDE did not identify any new Priority Schools for the current school year.

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