



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

No. 15-050

May 13, 2015

MEDIA CONTACT: Nancy Rodriguez

Office: (502) 564-2000, ext. 4610 | **Cell:** (502) 330-5063 | **E-mail:** nancy.rodriguez@education.ky.gov

GRADUATION RATE REPORT RANKS KENTUCKY AMONG THE TOP STATES

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – A recent report on graduation rates calls Kentucky “a beacon to all other states” and lauds the state’s ability to all but eliminate the opportunity gap between low-income students and all other students to graduate on time.

The [2015 Building a Grad Nation](#) report is released annually by the Alliance for Excellent Education, America’s Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University.

Based on 2013 data, the report shows that Kentucky’s overall adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) is 86.1 percent, the tenth highest in the nation. The national high school graduation rate hit a record high of 81.4 percent.

Kentucky is one of only two states that graduate 85 percent or more of its low-income students on time. Even though nearly half of Kentucky’s students are considered low-income, its graduation rate for low-income students is 85 percent, nearly identical to its graduation rate for middle/high-income students and well above the national average for all students. Nationwide, low-income students are graduating at a rate 15 percentage points behind their more affluent peers.

“As a result of Senate Bill 1 (2009), we have made a concerted effort to ensure all of our students not only graduate from high school, but graduate college- and career-ready,” Commissioner Terry Holliday said. “We have worked with districts to identify students earlier who are not on track and then provided supports such as transitional courses in reading and mathematics to get those students back on track for an on-time graduation,” he said.

According to the report, improved graduation rates nationwide have resulted primarily from leadership, reforms, and multi-sector efforts at state, district, and school levels.

“I think you will see the graduation rate continue to climb in Kentucky once students are required to stay in school until they are 18,” Holliday said.

Governor Steve Beshear and First Lady Jane Beshear led an effort to raise the compulsory school age in Kentucky from 16 to 18. All 173 Kentucky school districts adopted a policy to keep students in school until they turn 18. The policy takes effect in most districts starting this fall. In 2013-14, 1.5 percent, or about 4,600 students dropped out of School in grades 7-12.

(more)

Visit our website at <http://www.education.ky.gov>

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/kydeptofed and Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kydeptofed

Among Kentucky students with disabilities, the state does not fare as well. Only about 52 percent graduate on time; there is a 37.2 percent gap in the graduation rate between students with disabilities and those without. Nationally, the graduation rate for students with disabilities hit 61.9 percent in 2012-13.

According to the report, state variations of ACGR data, coupled with differences in state allowances for special education guidelines, contribute to the disparities keeping special education students from reaching their full potential. In addition chronic, negative misperceptions and disciplinary disproportionalities add to the challenge of keeping these students in school and on track to graduate.

“These children are no less important than any others,” Holliday said. “We are working on ways to improve outcomes for students with disabilities including offering more career pathways. We must do a better job ensuring our students with disabilities graduate from high school with an opportunity for success.”

It is estimated that 85 to 90 percent of special education students can meet regular diploma requirements with the right supports.

The GradNation campaign, led by America’s Promise, seeks to raise the national on-time graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and increase postsecondary enrollment and completion. It is estimated that Kentucky needs fewer than 1,900 additional students to graduate on time to meet the campaign’s 90 percent goal.

###