



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday



August 3, 2012

Changes in Proficiency Percentages: A State-Level View

As I have shared in presentations and webcasts over the past few months, Kentucky's adoption of the Common Core Standards in English/language arts and mathematics, coupled with the new Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) assessments tied to those standards, will lead to proficiency rates among students that are lower than what we've seen previously in the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT).

Staff in KDE's Office of Assessment and Accountability have provided a state-level [look](#) at potential changes in the percentages of students scoring at proficient on the state reading and mathematics assessments.

Although these data represent a broad view of potential dips in proficiency percentages, you also can get a sense of how your high schools will perform by looking at the percentage of students meeting the Council on Postsecondary Education's ACT [benchmarks](#) (18 in English, 19 in math and 20 in reading). The higher the percentage of students meeting those benchmarks, the higher your likely overall rates of proficiency. Grades 3-8 may conduct similar projections by looking at the [EXPLORE](#) proficiency rates. Please remember that the projections are only estimates, and the actual proficiency rates will not be available until results are reported in October.

Science and social studies data are based on the 2007 Kentucky Core Content for Assessment 4.1; therefore, distributions of proficiency will be similar to those in 2011.

We are sending this projected proficiency chart out so that local superintendents, principals and teachers will not be surprised when the actual results are reported in October. As commissioner, I am working to communicate with all stakeholders about these significant changes. Our partners at the [Prichard Committee](#) and the [Kentucky Chamber of Commerce](#) also have been working hard for over a year to communicate these changes.

As local superintendents and principals estimate what their results will be, it is important to remind your teachers, parents, students and community members of a few important points.

- These results cannot be compared to previous results, since we are assessing students on a different standard. The previous standard was basic proficiency on math and reading. The new standard is college and career readiness.
- We made the change to college and career readiness due to the competitive global economy that was the basis of 2009's Senate Bill 1, which required KDE and the Kentucky Board of Education to provide new standards and assessments that are internationally benchmarked.
- The results of the Kentucky assessments are more closely aligned to results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP](#)). Those results report proficiency at a much higher level than most state tests. Being proficient on NAEP is similar to our new college- and career-ready proficiency. One could say that proficiency on NAEP and the new K-PREP is similar to getting a B or B+ and being advanced/distinguished is similar to an A.

Our intent in raising the standard is to help more students prepare for a competitive employment atmosphere. Currently, we project that over 60 percent of jobs in the future will require some training beyond high school. This means that students must be better prepared for college-level work and career-entry requirements. We should not dwell on trying to compare previous years' data with the new results. We should focus on what we need to do to help more students be competitive, which means Kentucky will be more competitive.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.