



# Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner  
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## **Making the numbers real**

As we looked more closely at numbers from the Unbridled Learning Accountability System this week, there was much to celebrate. [School report cards](#) showed more students reached college- and career-readiness, more students graduated, reading and math scores improved at elementary and middle school and high school Advanced Placement and ACT results are at all-time highs.

This data is great news, but the numbers do not always tell the full story. This week, I had the opportunity to make those numbers real by visiting two school districts.

My first visit was to Floyd County on Monday night. In 1997, Floyd County was among the lowest performing school districts in Kentucky. A state audit labeled the district as a "ship that had lost its rudder." The district went under state management.

Throughout the last six years, Floyd County has undergone a major metamorphosis. The district has moved from one of the lowest performers to one of the top performers in the state –graduation rates and college/career-readiness rates are among the highest in Kentucky – and every school in the district has achieved distinguished or proficient status.

On Monday night, I witnessed a major celebration in the high school gym –every school in the district was represented by students, parents, school staff, cheerleaders, and bands. I have never seen a celebration of academic achievement like I saw in Floyd County on Monday night. Congratulations to the entire Floyd County team, community, school board, and Superintendent Henry Webb. The pride has been restored in Floyd County and the future is very bright.

Also this week, I visited East Carter High School in Carter County. A few years ago, this school was labeled a priority school and was in the bottom 5 percent of schools in Kentucky. With a lot of hard work by students, staff and the community, the school has moved from the bottom to the top 5 percent in the state. College- and career-readiness rates have climbed from 23 percent to 94 percent. Graduation rates are approaching 100 percent. It was apparent in visiting East Carter that the pride has been restored not only at the high school but throughout the county.

This dramatic turnaround in a short time is not only something to celebrate but also an example for other schools about what is possible. It was my honor to recognize East Carter as a new "hub" school for Kentucky. A hub school is a priority school that has made extraordinary improvement -- one that other schools can visit to learn best practices in improving student learning. We also have hub schools in Pulaski County and Simpson County.

As I read press clippings from across the Commonwealth of Kentucky this week, I saw many communities celebrating the improvements in student learning results. What I saw during these two school visits was the real people behind the numbers. I saw pride in the community, the school, the staff and the students.

At the Floyd County event I heard the Speaker of the House recount the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act with a great deal of pride. What Kentucky educators and students have shown since the passage of KERA in 1990, is that Kentucky can compete with anyone. Kentucky educators and students can achieve at high levels.

We know there remains much work to do, however, we need to take time to reflect on the amazing progress made and the impact the numbers have on student's lives.

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Education Commissioner