



## Testing and Accountability Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is accountability?**

Kentucky schools/districts are held to high standards for educating children. Accountability is the way we measure their effectiveness—how well they are doing. It also serves as the basis for identifying those schools/districts that may need support to reach their goals. (from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

### **Why do we have a new accountability system?**

In 2009 Kentucky legislators passed Senate Bill 1, which required many changes in the state's public educational system. It did away with the Commonwealth Accountability testing System (CATS), which focused on student proficiency and used a 140-point scale, in favor of a new system that focuses on college and career readiness and ensuring success after high school. At is called Unbridled Learning and uses a **100-point scale** to gauge school and district performance. (from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

### **On what is accountability based?**

Kentucky's Unbridled Learning system is based on multiple measures of school effectiveness. The measures fall into three major categories -- Next-Generation Learners, Next Generation Instructional Programs and Support, and Next Generation Professionals -- and will be phased into the accountability system over the next several years. (from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

### **How will I know how my child is doing on state tests?**

Test results will be reported to parents in mid to late October. You will receive detailed reports on how your child performs on the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Program (K-PREP), end-of-course exams, EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT. Because the standards on which some tests are based are more rigorous than in the past (to ensure students at competitive), scores may decline in the short term, but should show improvement as teachers and students become more comfortable with the standards. (From *A Parent's Guide to Testing in Kentucky*, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/5d355152-b48d-4f13-b8f5-7c200babbd79/0/parentsguidetesting032612.pdf>)

### **When will the K-PREP test results be available?**

K-PREP (grades 3-8 and grades 10-11 on-demand) test results will be reported to parents in mid to late October. Parents will receive an individual report on the achievement of their child, including information that identifies strengths and academic deficiencies. The report will also show school, state and national comparisons. Because the standards on which some tests are based are more rigorous than in the past (to ensure students are competitive), scores may decline in the short ten but should show improvement as teachers and students become more comfortable with the standards. (From *A Parent's Guide to Testing in Kentucky*, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/5d355152-b48d-4f13-b8f5-7c200babbd79/0/parentsguidetesting032612.pdf>)

### **Why are my child's school/district scores lower than previous years?**

The state's adoption of the Common Core State Standards and new Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (KPREP) assessments tied to those standards have raised the bar for student performance in Kentucky.

However, we expect that in the short term this will lead to proficiency rates among students that are lower than what we have seen previously on the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT), perhaps anywhere from a 10-to-40 point drop. Our intent in raising the bar is to help more students be better prepared for college and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. 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. (From Commissioner's Back to School Update August 29, 2012)

Remember that the former Commonwealth Accountability testing System (CATS), used a 140-point scale. The new testing system, Unbridled Learning and uses a 100-point scale to gauge school and district performance. (from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/ronlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

Your child's school may have scored 105 last year but that was on a 140-point scale. This year 105 will not be possible due to that scale now being 100 points.

#### **Can I compare this year's results to last year's results?**

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. Remember that the former Commonwealth Accountability testing System (CATS), used a 140-point scale. The new testing system, Unbridled Learning and uses a 100-point scale to gauge school and district performance. (From Commissioner's Back to School Update August 29, 2012)

#### **Why is the state focused on 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 Senate Bill 1, which required KDE and the Kentucky Board of Education to provide new standards and assessments that are internationally benchmarked. (From Commissioner's Back to School Update August 29, 2012)

#### **How do national test (NAEP) and our state test (K-PREP) results compare?**

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 (see next item).

#### **How will student performance be used for accountability?**

Next-Generation Learners is the main component of Unbridled Learning and is based on many measures of student performance on various tests. Points will be awarded based on how well a school performs on each measure.

- A. Achievement – Just as in the past, elementary and middle school students will be labeled as novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished. Kentucky goal is 100 percent proficiency for all students. At high school, achievement is based on end-of-course exams and an on-demand writing test.
- B. Gap – Schools will compare test results for African-American, Hispanic, Native American, special education, low income and limited English proficiency students, combined into one gap group, to results for other students who aren't in those categories.
- C. Growth – A statistical program will measure how much students' scores are improving from one year to the next.
- D. College/Career Readiness – Schools/districts will provide information about how many students are ready for college and/or careers, based on test scores and certifications earned.
- E. Graduation Rate – Schools/districts will report how many students graduate within four years of high school.

(from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/ronlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

#### **How is school/district accountability determined?**

Based on their main classifications and overall scores, schools and districts will be placed in categories for the

determination of recognition, support and consequences. The categories include: Distinction (95th percentile or higher), Highest Performing (90th - 94th percentile), High Progress (top 10% of improvement), Focus (failing to meet AMO for two consecutive years, high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent for two consecutive years, low scores among individual student gap groups), Priority (Bottom 5 %). All schools/districts must develop, review and revise improvement plans annually. (from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/ronlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

**Will I be able to tell how my school/district is doing compared with others in the state?**

Yes. Scores for the various measures and components are weighted and tallied to produce an overall accountability score from 0 to 100. To encourage continuous improvement, each school and district will have an annual goal to reach – an annual measurable objective (AMO) – based on how much improvement is needed to reach the ultimate goal of 100. Schools and districts also will have goals to reach in achievement, gap reduction, college/career readiness and graduation rate. Overall district scores are ranked in order; overall school scores are ranked in order by level – elementary, middle and high. Based on where they are in the order, schools and districts will fall into one of four main classifications: 1) Distinguished (90<sup>th</sup> percentile), 2) Proficient – (70<sup>th</sup> – 89<sup>th</sup> percentile), 3) Progressing (schools/districts meeting their AMO) and 4) Needs Improvement (remaining districts/schools). All of the information will be reported each year on the School/District Report card. Note that school and district performance cannot be compared with performance under past systems. (from *A Parent's Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky*, KDE, March 2012, available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/nr/ronlyres/c61c881e-0496-48c2-8f13-e9e31d42bd55/0/accountability.pdf>)

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**If we have only one score in the gap component, are we losing sight of the subgroups?**

Schools will receive one score in the gap component of accountability. But on the next page of the School Report Card, you will still receive the subgroup scores for each and every student in the subgroup. The responsibility of the schools and districts is to create goals. So if you have a subgroup that needs improvement, a specific goal will be there for you. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model, <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)

**Will percentiles be generated for the individual components?**

On the overall score there is a percentile, but when we get to the components, you will just have a score from 0 - 100. There will not be percentiles. Schools and districts will have access to spreadsheets of scores from which they can calculate percentiles if they choose. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model, <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)

**For the overall score, will there be goals set for schools/districts to achieve?**

The quick answer is yes. NCLB had unachievable goals. In this model we are creating goals that are achievable. You will have an overall goal for the overall score. As an example in the component of Proficiency, we expect that proficiency rates will drop 10-40 points in the short term. So this year, your school may achieve 50. Take 100 (goal) and subtract your score of 50 to get a difference of 50. The federal government wants us to improve ½ of that difference within 5 years. So half of 50 is 25. Take 25 and divide it over 5 years to get 5 points. So each year your school would need to improve 5 points each year to meet its goal. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model, <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)

**What drives schools/districts to pay attention to those goals?**

We are still working on that training. For the first year, we will provide the software to monitor goals. Test scores will be shared publicly. Parents will have access to plans for improvement. We will ask districts to share what they are doing to help schools improve. In the second year, for schools who are not meeting goals, we will have a closer look at improvement plans. Third year, we could deal with Title I, Title II, IDEA in a more prescriptive manner on the state level. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model,

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)

**Do we have the same labels as we have had in the past such as Persistently Low Achieving Schools?**

The labels have changed and we have some new labels. We used to use the label "Persistently Low Achieving" for the bottom 5% of schools. Now we will refer to them as **Priority Schools/Districts**. Right now there are 41 total schools. We will not identify any new schools until some move out of this category. Using at the gap component, schools needing focus in this area will be referred to as **Focus Schools/Districts**. **Reward schools/districts** will not be rewarded financially but will receive plaques and banners to build a sense of pride. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model,

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)

**What is included in the parent reports for K-PREP testing?**

We are still finalizing those. Parents will want to know how their student performed. They will also want to know their student's percentile so that they can compare their child's performance with the rest of nation. And they will want to see how their child is performing compared to other students in Kentucky. This is the student growth component of our accountability system. In grade 3-8 there will be a score in proficiency to see whether they are on track toward college/career readiness. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model,

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)

**Can the score of the new system be compared to previous years? What is the difference between overall score and the percentile?**

You cannot compare the new score to the old scores. Under the old system the scale was 0 – 140 and the new system's scale is 0 – 100. The Commissioner's caution for parents and educators is that proficiency was defined as basic proficiency in the old system but with the new system it is defined as college/career readiness. There is one way you can compare scores and that is with percentiles. Look at where we rank in KY with percentiles under both systems. Schools and districts will want to pay most attention to percentiles.

**Is it possible to say that when a school has reached a particular score, all students are proficient?**

The only way is to look at the proficiency subscore. That's only one part or one-fifth of the overall score. If you want to know about proficiency, look at proficiency score. (from Commissioner Terry Holliday's videotaped presentation on Unbridled Learning accountability model,

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>)