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001. fax	Fax cover sheet re: The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (partial) (1 page)	05/01/2000	P6/b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Domestic Policy Council
Andrew Rotherham (Education)
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FOLDER TITLE:

Education Tour

2011-0103-S

rc140

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
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66265

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Joshua S. Gottheimer
05/02/2000 09:58:08 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Andy Rotherham/OPD/EOP@EOP, John B. Buxton/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: revised draft

Final 05/03/00 3:30pm

Josh Gottheimer

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS ON SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION
CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
DAVENPORT, IOWA
May 3, 2000**

Ack: Sen. Harkin [*not present – but has been a major force behind our effort to modernize schools across the nation – and right here in Iowa*]; Ed Sullivan, President of the Building and Construction Trades; Barb Hess [*has been teaching at Davenport for 38 years, and graduated from school in 1956*]

I'm so glad to be back in Davenport. I remember coming here during the final days of my campaign for president back in 1992. And I remember talking with you about health care, the economy, and, of course, the Riverbandits [*local minor league baseball team*]. When I came back here in 1993, in the aftermath of the devastating floods, I recall how inspired I was by the strength of your community, and your eagerness to help one another through a particularly trying time.

Today, I am glad to report that the ground is dry, the sun is out, and the Mallards [*local minor league hockey team*] are on their way to winning another Colonial Cup. And one thing hasn't changed a bit: the strong will and enduring spirit of Davenport is as powerful as it has ever been. The people are still willing to stand by one another ... always ready to face the next challenge.

As part of my school reform tour, I'm here today to speak with you about one of the greatest challenges of the 21st Century: the importance of turning around low performing schools, so that all our children get the education they need and deserve.

This school district has taken up that challenge: you've set standards for what all your students should know. You've put in place assessments to see if they're meeting those

standards. You're giving students help to meet them -- from afterschool to smaller classes. You've set a goal to help all students read at grade level. And to get there, this summer, for the first time, second graders who don't pass reading tests, will go to summer school to help them get back on track.

This strategy of investing more in our schools and demanding more from them works. I saw it this morning in Kentucky, which has turned around many of the worst performing schools through the same strategy of investing more and demanding more. But I've come to this school to make a particular point: We cannot expect our students to achieve high standards in school buildings that are substandard. I have a plan that demands more accountability, but at the same time invests more in the tools of learning. And there is no more important tool than a modern school building.

The time is right to take on this challenge. As President Kennedy once said, the best time to fix the roof, is when the sun is shining. And today the sun is shining on Davenport, and on America. We are at a moment of unparalleled prosperity and national self-confidence, with 21 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, and the lowest African American and Hispanic unemployment rates on record. We have the largest, most diverse group of students in our public schools in history. We have an economy in which education has become the indispensable key to success.

We've worked hard over the last seven years to provide schools with the tools they need. We've nearly doubled investment in education and training, making key investments that help children meet high standards. We're reducing class sizes in the early grades with our program to hire 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers. And I'm delighted that the Davenport school district has received some of these resources to hire nine additional teachers in the first, second and third grades. We've provided an army of volunteer tutors and mentors through our Gear Up and America Reads programs. We've expanded Head Start and improved its quality. We've dramatically increased federal investment in afterschool and summer school, from \$1 million a year in 1997 to nearly half a billion dollars a year today -- and my new budget calls for more than doubling that amount. Finally, with the help of Vice President Gore's E-rate program, nearly three-quarters of all classrooms in America are now connected to the Internet, up from only 3 percent in 1993.

The fundamental lesson of the last seven years is clear: in education, investment without accountability is a waste of money; accountability without investment is a waste of effort. Neither will work without the other. If we want our students to learn more, we need both.

Today, the Department of Education, with the help of Vice President Gore, is releasing a report, *Schools as Centers of Communities*, which suggests ways for educators, parents, and community members to help design and plan better schools. First, it highlights the importance of modernizing classrooms to enhance student-teacher interaction. Second, it stresses the importance of a healthy, safe and secure learning environment, with a focus on lighting and air quality. Lastly, it describes the substantial

benefits that we know come from the use of modern technology in the classroom.

But too many of our nation's schools are not only outdated and overcrowded – they're falling apart. The children of the Baby Boomers are breaking enrollment records for the fourth year in a row. This academic year, 53.2 million students currently fill our elementary and secondary schools. That's nearly half a million more than last year. And fully one-third of our schools – 25,000 of them – need to be rebuilt or extensively repaired. **Four years ago, the GAO estimated that it will cost \$112 billion to repair and modernize America's schools. A new study just released by the NEA today, which includes educational technology improvements, estimates that amount to be \$322 billion – nearly triple what the GAO's earlier figure.**

Central High School is one of those schools. Dating back to 1907, when Theodore Roosevelt was President, Central was called, "a high school for the future." And in 1907 it was. Back then, the population of Davenport was around 39,000 – nearly a third of what it is today. And Central High School had half the number of students that it does now walking these same halls ... filling these same classrooms.

Since then, your school has undergone several renovations. But much of its original infrastructure remains the same. As I saw earlier this afternoon, many of the science labs have the same furniture they did a century ago. Students still use the same wooden lockers that were used when the school was built. And they still have to crack open the windows to ventilate their classrooms. Today, Central's classrooms are cramped and crowded – with an average of 24 students in classrooms that were built for 15. And the electrical system can't handle the demands of the latest technology.

Like most schools, Central High has always wanted to do better by its students. But when it comes to renovating the school, it simply hasn't had the resources to do so. A *Life Magazine* story from 1953, the same time Barb Hess was a student here, described the infrastructure of Central as "badly lighted, poorly ventilated, overcrowded, and always in need of repairs." That was nearly fifty years ago.

But that's all going to change this summer, when Central High gets the repairs that it has long deserved. Your classrooms are being modernized and expanded to handle rising student enrollment, computers and other new equipment. The school's electrical system is being upgraded, so that more students, in more rooms, can have access to the Internet. And a new ventilation system will not only keep the school more comfortable in both the winter and summer months, but fresh air will help keep students in better health.

Despite these improvements, there is still much more to be done. Even after this summer's \$7 million renovation, Central High School will still need an additional \$7 million of work. That's a big bill, and you simply shouldn't be left to handle it all on your own.

I've proposed a major School Construction Initiative to help communities build or modernize 6,000 schools all over America. I've also put forward a plan to give 5,000 schools

the grants and loans for emergency repairs they so desperately need. For three years now, Republicans in Congress have stood in the way of progress, and stood in the way of better schools. It's time they put the education of our children first, and pass this pressing initiative without further delay. Americans should not tolerate outdated schools any longer.

In 1948, Harry Truman came through Davenport on Whistle Stop Tour, and berated Congress for not doing enough to move the country forward. He later said, "The nation cannot afford to waste human potential, as we are now, by failing to provide adequate elementary and secondary education for millions of children." Today, Truman's message still rings loud and clear: Everyone counts. Everyone deserves a chance. Everyone has a role to play. And we all do better when we help each other. That's why we must invest more and demand more in our schools. That's what we owe to our children. That's what we owe to America's future. Thank you.

Joshua S. Gottheimer
05/02/2000 11:30:18 PM

Record Type: Record

To: John B. Buxton/OPD/EOP@EOP, Karin Kullman/OPD/EOP@EOP, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: revised draft

Draft 05/02/00 11:30pm
Josh Gottheimer

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS ON SCHOOL REFORM
EASTGATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COLUMBUS, OHIO
May 4, 2000**

Ack: TK

For the past two days, I have been touring the country, highlighting once failing schools that have begun to turn themselves around. These schools are prime examples of what we can accomplish when we invest more in our schools and demand more from them in return.

Yesterday morning I was in Owensboro, Kentucky, where we visited a public high school that has turned things around in one of our most economically disadvantaged communities. We then flew to Davenport, Iowa where a school building that's nearly a century old is finally getting the repairs it has long needed. This morning, I toured City Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota, the first charter school in America, which opened in 1992. There, I held a "Webisode Chat," and talked live on the Internet with students about the challenges they are facing.

It is fitting that I wrap up my School Reform Tour here at Eastgate Elementary, because not far from here the city of Columbus opened the nation's first junior high school back in 1909. As you know, the journey since then hasn't always been easy. But today you're back on track, returning to that early innovative spirit and a strong sense of community.

You've set tough academic standards for what all your students should know. You've put in place assessments to see if they're meeting those standards. And you've given students help to meet them – from afterschool programs to smaller classes. Your strategy of investing

more and demanding more is working.

In the last three years, your test scores have skyrocketed in subjects across the board. The math, reading and science proficiency scores of fourth graders are all up more than 200%. And this year alone, the reading and math proficiency scores of your kindergartners have more than doubled.

Not only are your students improving, so are your teachers. More than a third of them have their master's degree and over ten years in the classroom. Your Peer Assistance and Review program has both veteran and new teachers becoming better educators by learning from each other's experience. And it's working: Before the program began, Columbus schools lost nearly 25 percent of their first year teachers. Today, you've reduced that number to 15 percent.

You've proven, beyond a doubt, that with the right tools, all our children are capable of learning at high standards in public schools. You are a model for other schools to follow. And your success is an example of what my Administration has been working to foster across this country more than seven years now.

Since 1993, we've nearly doubled investment in education and training. We've required states to set academic standards for what their students should know, and also provided more resources to help states create and implement higher standards. We've reduced class size in the early grades with the help of 100,000 new, highly trained teachers – 55 of whom are in Columbus ... 2 right here at Eastgate.

We've also dramatically increased federal investment in afterschool and summer school programs, from \$1 million a year in 1997 to half a billion dollars a year today. And I'm delighted to hear that 30 fourth graders from Eastgate participate in these programs. We've also expanded Head Start and improved its quality – and we're working to build and modernize 6,000 schools. With the help of Vice President Gore's E-rate program, we now have nearly three-quarters of all classrooms in America connected to the Internet, up from only 3 percent in 1993.

Our strategy of investing more and demanding more is reaping results. Math and reading scores are rising across the country, with some of the greatest gains in some of the most disadvantaged communities. Last year, for the first time in history, the high school graduation rate for African American students was the same as the graduation rate for white students. We have proven that we know how to lift the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged students.

Yet there are still thousands of schools that fail to give children the education they need to graduate ready to succeed in this dynamic new economy. That is why I have sent Congress an Education Accountability Act, to fundamentally change the way the federal government invests in our schools – to support more of what we know works, and to stop what we know does not. Identifying low-performing schools, and investing in turning them around. Ending

social promotion, but investing in afterschool, summer school, and reading tutors for children who need it.

President Kennedy once said, "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education." From Eastgate Elementary ... to Central High School ... to City Academy, we are making the right kind of progress, by investing more and demanding more, so that all our children get the education they need and deserve. And, with strongest economy in history, there's no better time than now.

I'm really here today to learn more about what you're doing here at Eastgate.

[open to questions]

PRESIDENT CLINTON VISITS FIRST PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL IN THE NATION AND ANNOUNCES FURTHER STEPS TO SUPPORT CHARTER SCHOOLS

May 4, 2000

Today President Clinton will visit the City Academy public charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota to highlight the success of the charter school movement and announce further steps to help public charter schools. City Academy is the nation's first charter school and was the only charter school in operation when the President was first elected in 1992. Today the President will meet with students from City Academy, release an Executive Memorandum asking the Secretary of Education to develop guidelines to help faith-based organizations understand how they can play a role in the public charter school movement, announce the release of \$16 million in new grants and \$121 million in continuation grants for charter schools, and will participate in an online chat with students from around the country. This week is National Charter Schools Week and the President will use this opportunity to challenge communities around the country to create more high quality public charter schools to increase choice and competition in public education.

FAITH-BASED GROUPS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS The Executive Memorandum that the President will release today asks the Secretary of Education to develop and release guidelines explaining how faith-based organizations can be involved with charter schools. Public charter schools must be non-sectarian in their admissions and practices; however, there are ways that faith-based groups and individuals associated with faith communities can play a positive role in creating and supporting public charter schools. Schools and faith communities should be reaching out to each other, in constitutional ways, to support their common goals for children and families. There are successful partnerships between public schools and faith communities across the nation in after-school programs, school safety, discipline and student literacy. These range from mentoring programs jointly run by schools and interfaith groups to statewide summits on the role of faith-based groups in college preparation. These guidelines would augment the existing guidelines for public charter schools and the guidelines for religious expression in public schools that the President released in December.

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S LEADERSHIP KEY TO GROWTH OF CHARTER SCHOOLS President Clinton has long been a champion of charter schools since his service as a governor. When the President was first elected, there was only one public charter school open in the United States. This year, there are 1,700 and thirty-six states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia now have laws on the books that enable the creation of charter schools. more than halfway to the President's goal of 3000 charter schools. National leadership and assistance have played a key role in this rapid growth by supporting the development of individual charter schools and helping to disseminate effective practices and strategies among schools. The federal government funds charter schools through the United States Department of Education's Public Charter Schools Program. The President's FY 2001 budget includes a \$30 million increase in funding for the program, bringing total funding to \$175 million annually. Today, the President will announce the release of \$16 million in new grants to charter schools and \$121 million in continuation grants. Local charter schools use federal funding for planning, development, and start-up costs.

CHARTER SCHOOLS: IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EMPOWERING PARENTS

Public charter schools exemplify a standards-based approach to education. Every charter school works with a public authority to establish clear performance standards. A charter school that fails to meet the terms of its charter is closed down. The Public Charter Schools program, which was reauthorized with the President's leadership in 1998, gives priority to states that have strong standards for academic accountability. Charter schools receiving funding from the federal government must also be measured by the same state assessments as any other public school. A recent national survey found that 65 percent of parents rated their child's public charter school as better than their former public school (only 6 percent rated them worse). The U.S. Department of Education reports that seven out of ten charter schools have a waiting list of students who want to enroll. Charter schools are playing a key role in a national strategy that employs public school choice as one component to spurring school improvement.

INSERT WEBCHAT GRAF



Paul D. Glastris
05/02/2000 03:32:52 PM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: draft of Kentucky remarks

Draft 5/2/00 3:30 p.m.
Glastris

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS ON TURNING AROUND FAILING SCHOOLS
AUDUBON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
OWENSBORO, KENTUCKY
May 3, 2000**

Acknowledgments:

Flying in today from Louisville by helicopter, over the farms and wooded hills of this beautiful state, I got a view of Kentucky that few Kentuckians have the privilege of seeing—and if you do get the chance I highly recommend it. On the ground here at Audubon Elementary, I've been given a view of school reform that few Americans have ever seen. And I'm here today because I want the American people to understand that Kentucky has solved a problem that has perplexed our nation for decades: how to bring educational excellence to public schools, even in the most economically disadvantaged communities.

It's a challenge Sec. Riley and I have been wrestling with for 20 years, ever since we were young governors trying to improve the education systems in our states. It's a challenge Gov. Patton has been working on it ever since he was a member of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in the 1980s. I remember talking to him about Kentucky's education reform experiment in 1992 when he was Lt. Governor and I was running for President. So I've been keenly aware of Kentucky's efforts, and for those who are less familiar, let me summarize them.

First, beginning in 1990, you set high standards for what all Kentucky school children should know. Second, you identified the schools where year after year students failed to learn enough to meet those standards. Third, you held these schools accountable for turning themselves around, with real consequences for failure, from dismissing principals and teachers

to allowing parents to transfer their children into higher-performing public schools. And fourth, you provided the investment necessary to help these schools turn around, from more teacher training to high-quality preschool, afterschool and summer school for students.

The results have been nothing short of extraordinary. Take mass number. Audubon Elementary is an amazing example. In 1994, only 12 percent of students at this school met or exceeded the standard on statewide writing tests. Today, 88 percent score at or above the state standard. In 1994, only 5 percent met or exceeded the standard in reading. Today, 64 percent do. In 1994, not a single Audubon student met or exceeded the standard in science. Today, 70 percent do. Audubon is now the 18th best-performing elementary school in the state, despite the fact that two-thirds of your students qualify for free and reduced-price school lunch. In fact, throughout the state, 10 of the top 20 best-performing elementary schools in science are schools where half the students are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch. You've proven, beyond a doubt, that poverty need not be destiny—that all our children are capable of learning at high standards in the public schools.

I have made this the first stop on my education reform tour, because I believe that turning around failing schools should be one of our great national missions of the 21st Century. The moment is right. America is at a point unparalleled prosperity and national self-confidence. We have the largest, most diverse group of students in our public schools in history. We have an economy in which education has become the indispensable key to success in life. And after 20 years of intense experimentation with school reform—on the local, state, and national level—we now have overwhelming evidence about what works to turn around low-performing schools. Setting high standards. Demanding accountability. And providing the extra help for children to meet those high standards. In short, investing more in our schools, and demanding more of our schools.

This is the strategy Vice President Gore and I have followed for seven years.

In 1993, we passed a new economic plan that cut hundreds of programs in order to reduce the deficit and improve the economy, but that also boosted education spending. In fact, over the last seven years, we've nearly doubled investment in education and training, even as we turned record deficits into record surpluses.

In 1994, we overhauled the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, requiring states to set academic standards for what their students should know. And we passed the Goals 2000 legislation, which provided states with more resources to create and implement higher standards. Since then, we've gone from only a handful of states with standards to nearly every state having them, and 48 states now have assessments in place to measure student progress in meeting those standards.

We've made key investments to help children meet high standards. We've reduced class sizes in the early grades with our program to hire 100,000 new, highly-trained teachers. I'm delighted that Audubon has used some of that money to hire a new teacher, Crystal

Davidson, I'm especially delighted that you refer to her as the "Clinton teacher." We've also helped provide an army of volunteer tutors and mentors through our Gear Up and America Reads programs. We've expanded Head Start and improving its quality, so that more children begin school ready to learn. We've dramatically increased investment in afterschool and summer school, from \$1 million a year in 1997 to half a billion dollars a year today--and my new budget calls for doubling that amount.

With the help of Vice President Gore's E-rate program, we now have nearly three-quarters of all classrooms in America connected to the Internet, up from only 3 percent in 1993. We'll probably reach 100 percent by the end of the year, with one major exception: those schools that are literally too old and dilapidated to be wired for the Internet. And later today in Davenport, Iowa I'll be talking about the need to modernize our school building.

This strategy of investing more in our schools, and demanding more accountability from our schools, has also guided our policy on charter schools. When I became President, there was one charter school in the whole nation: City Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota, which I'll be visiting tomorrow. I wanted to see thousands more created, but that wasn't going to happen without substantial investment from the federal government, because charter schools require significant start-up costs. So we have invested nearly half-a-billion dollars in new charter schools since 1994. Today there are over 1700 charter schools, and we are well on our way to meeting our goal of 3000.

Our strategy of investing more and demanding more is producing real results. Math and reading scores are rising across the country, with some of the greatest gains in some of the most disadvantaged communities. Last year, for the first time in history, the high school graduation rate of African American students was the same as the graduation rate for white students. Today, 67 percent of all high school graduates now go on to college, up 10 percent since 1993. We've made that possible with the largest expansion of college opportunity since the GI bill, including the creation of our HOPE scholarship tax credits, education IRAs, more-affordable student loans, and more Pell Grants. And it's worth noting that scores on college entrance exams are rising even as more students from disadvantaged backgrounds are taking the test.

We have proven that we know how to lift the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged students. Yet there are still thousands of schools that fail to give children the education they need to enter the mainstream of American prosperity. To turn those schools around, we need what the Vice President has called a revolution in education--a revolution governed by the strategy that has brought us to this point--of investing more, and demanding more.

That is why I have sent Congress an Education Accountability Act, to fundamentally change the way the federal government invests in our schools -- to support more of what we know works, and to stop supporting what we know does not work. States and school districts that accept federal money would have to identify and turn around their lowest-performing schools; put quality teachers in all classrooms; have fair and reasonable discipline codes; end

social promotion but also provide children with extra help to meet higher standards; and send every parent a report card on the quality of their children's schools.

I have also asked Congress to double the investment we made last fall in my Education Accountability Fund, to turn around low-performing schools, or shut them down. School districts can use this money to make the kind of sweeping systematic changes that have been proven so effective here in Kentucky.

But if, for whatever reason, a school doesn't turn around, my Education Accountability Fund can be used to allow parents to transfer their students out of these failing schools and into better-performing public schools, including charter schools.

To make this accountability strategy work nationwide, we must have the courage to do what Kentucky has done. We must shine a spotlight on those schools that are failing their students. Only then can we help them turn around. And so today, I am pleased to announce that I am directing Secretary Riley to provide me with an annual failing schools report. This report will tell us, for the first time, how many of our nation's K-through-12 112,000 public schools are failing, in which states they are located, and what each state is doing to turn them around.

I am also directing the Secretary to issue a second annual report on our Accountability Fund, to tell me three main things. First, what are individual states doing with these resources that is working to turn around failing schools? Second, what else can the Department of Education be doing to help the process of turning schools around, from conducting fresh research to publicizing best practices? And third, which federal education programs, such as afterschool grants, should be made available on a priority basis to schools that are in the process of being turned around?

The actions I am taking today will help us to implement nationwide the lesson we have learned during the last seven years: in education, investment without accountability is a waste of money; accountability without investment is a waste of effort. Neither will work without the other. If we want our students to learn more, we need both.

Ten years ago, when things looked pretty grim for our public schools, Al Shanker, the late, great head of the American Federation of Teachers, said something wise to his fellow teachers. He said that we have to be willing to tell the American people the bad news about our public schools, so that when the schools begin to turn around and we have good news to report, they'll believe us. Well, today, here in Kentucky, and across America, there is good news to report about our schools. I think the American people will not only believe us, but they'll want us to keep going forward with what works, until we reach what ought to be our ultimate goal: of a world-class education for every child in America.

Thank You.

 COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

Department of Education

Click here and scroll down to select a subject.

Changes in Report Card Timelines

October 21 Email to the District School Report Card Coordinators

We did predict that some glitches would be inevitable in developing the new school report card, and in streaming information from seven different databases into the templates. As you know, some problems have occurred as expected, and fixing them has resulted in some delays on this end.

We don't want to miss our deadlines, take time away from you, and then insist that you stick to your deadlines. So, we are revising the timelines on the School Report Card project, as follows:

October 29 - new high school templates will be e-mailed to the districts.

November 19 - deadline for districts to request changes in the data supplied by the Department. (Feel free to check and approve data sooner; this is just the new deadline).

January 15, 2000 - Schools will send out printed report cards to their parents.

February 11, 2000 - deadline for publishing district report card in area's largest newspaper.

We urge school and district personnel to study the cards as closely as possible as soon as possible so that any problems can be corrected quickly.

We really must thank you again for your cooperation. Last year, no parent had this amount of information. This year, all parents will have it. This is an important, difficult and massive job. In spite of delays and frustrations your support for the project has been overwhelmingly positive. The staff of KDE in general, and the Help Desk in particular, thank you for your patience and courtesy. You have been terrific.

For additional information, please contact:

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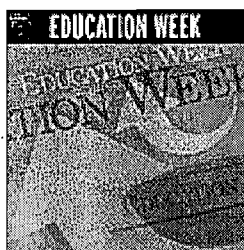
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Back to the [Division of Assessment Implementation](#)

April 21, 1993

EDUCATION WEEK on the WEB



EDUCATION WEEK

IN CONTEXT

THE ARCHIVES

TEACHER MAGAZINE

THE DAILY NEWS

SPECIAL REPORT

From Risk to Reform: Kentucky Moves To Enact Reform Plan

By
Lynn Olson

HENDERSON, KY.--It's 8:30 A.M. and 45 children, ages 5 to 7, gather in a bright open space at South Heights Elementary School to begin their day with calendar exercises.

"Five-year-olds, let's count together," a teacher commands, and the youngest members tally up the days of the month thus far. An older child digs through a packet of cards and selects one with "Wednesday" written on it in large block type.

"Let's spell it together," the teacher says. And the whole class chants in chorus. Over the next hour, the students sing songs about the days of the week, identify colors and patterns tied to the calendar activities, and chat about Dr. Seuss, the "author of the month," with a second teacher also working with the cluster of 45 youngsters.

Down the hall, nine educators--five teachers, two student teachers, and two aides--convene to plan next week's activities for another group of 5- to 9-year-olds. In the school's conference room, three teachers spend a day away from their classes to score the 4th-grade writing portfolios required by the state.

The building also houses a preschool for disadvantaged children; an extended-day program that provides after-school tutoring to students who need extra help; and a family-resource center that provides short-term counseling, parenting workshops, and social-service referrals to more than 400 neighborhood families.

Overseeing the entire program is a school council composed of three teachers, two parents, the principal, and the head custodian (on an ex-officio basis).

Welcome to Kentucky, where schools like South Heights Elementary are struggling to implement what many describe as the most comprehensive and integrated piece of school-reform legislation in the country.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act, or KERA, was signed into law in April 1990, after the state supreme court ruled that the entire system of public education in Kentucky was unconstitutional and ordered lawmakers to start over.

The act weaves together changes in school governance, finance, curriculum, assessment, and teacher licensure to support strong, new learning outcomes for students. It also takes aim at pre-school and out-of-school factors that affect achievement.

Financed with a \$1.4 billion tax increase in its first two years, KERA is the most ambitious effort in the nation to use a comprehensive approach to state policy to bring about radical change in individual schools.

"Whether you agree or disagree with its underlying philosophy, it is a major attempt to change a very big system," observes Jane L. David, one of the dozens of researchers scrutinizing the progress of the Bluegrass State. "And, whatever happens, there's a tremendous amount to be learned from it."

Three Years and Counting

But as the law completes the third year of a six-year phase-in, its policies are colliding with the hard realities of life in school, earning it such unflattering acronyms as the "Kentucky Early Retirement Act" and "Keeping Everyone Running Around."

"Will Rogers summed it up best when he said, 'Liberty doesn't work as well in practice as it does in speeches,'" jokes Marnel Moorman, the president of the powerful Kentucky Education Association. "We're finding that KERA doesn't work as well in our classrooms as it did in the law."

Today, Kentuckians are grappling with problems common to school reform everywhere:

How rapidly and in what order should changes that will take years to complete be phased in? How should the capacity and leadership for reform be built into the system? How should the state education department shift from its traditionally bureaucratic role to one based more on being supportive? And how soon before students, parents, and policymakers can expect that true changes in the classroom will no longer be the exception to the rule?

Since the act was passed, more than 10 court cases have been filed challenging various portions of it. The attorney general has issued nearly 50 opinions directly related to education reform. And the legislature's Office of Education Accountability, created as the watchdog of reform, has logged approximately 3,500 phone calls.

Slumping revenues threaten the law's continued funding. And a growing chorus of teachers and administrators is demanding that the legislation be modified, despite staunch opposition from its creators.

Yet, as Pam Coe, the principal investigator for a study of the reforms by the Appalachia Regional Laboratory, points out, "KERA is having more of an impact than anyone would have anticipated at this stage."

Despite resistance, changes are visible in some districts and schools. The public and educators generally back the direction of the reforms. And a much-feared backlash to the large tax increase that was passed to pay for the reforms has not materialized. Instead, much of the grumbling may indicate that the reforms have struck home.

'Second-Greatest Revolution' In American Education

The Kentucky legislation is based on two simple assumptions: All children can learn at high levels, and schools are the locus for change.

It follows naturally, then, the measure's architects and supporters say, that schools should be given the necessary resources to help students succeed and that they be held accountable for the results.

Thomas C. Boysen, Kentucky's commissioner of education, describes the law as the "second-greatest revolution in American public education."

In the early part of this century, the common-schools movement gave every child the right to attend school. "KERA," Mr. Boysen says, "has the intention of giving every child the right to succeed in school."

The law specifies six learning goals that all Kentucky students must meet. (Since the law's passage, those goals have been elaborated into 75 "valued outcomes.") It then orders the state to develop a new system of portfolios, performance assessments, and paper-and-pencil tests to measure children's progress. Schools are to be held accountable for how students do on such tests, as well as for attendance, retention, and graduation rates; students' health; and their postgraduation success.

If schools do well, they are rewarded. If they do poorly--and their proportion of successful students decreases by 5 percent or more--they are punished. For example, parents may be given the option of transferring their children to another school, and teachers and other school employees may be placed on probation and possibly dismissed.

In exchange, the law creates an equitable funding formula for schools in the state. It also creates school-based decisionmaking councils to give schools substantial control over how they operate.

In addition, the law mandates some instructional strategies and support services to help educators succeed with students. It requires that nongraded-primary programs be established in every elementary school by next fall; that high-quality preschool programs be provided for all 4-year-olds at risk of educational failure; that a network of family-resource and youth-service centers be created at or near schools in which at least 20 percent of students are eligible for free or subsidized school meals; and that extended-school services, such as before- and after-school tutoring, be provided for youngsters in need of extra help.

The state also anticipates spending \$200 million to bring technology into the schools, and it has substantially increased its commitment to professional development and training.

Students
Accountability
Instant
Reward
Help
Sanctions
Local
control

'Let's Make It Work'

Such changes would be radical anywhere, but no more so than in Kentucky. According to the 1990 Census, only Mississippi had a lower percentage of adults who had finished high school. Nineteen percent of the state's residents lived in poverty in 1989; the poverty rate among children was 25 percent.

That same year, no district in Kentucky—including the wealthiest—spent at least the national per-student average on its schools.

"What Kentucky supplied to the Rust Belt for years was a highly committed, hard-working, uneducated group of laborers," one observer says. "Detroit, Michigan, was designed for dropouts from Kentucky schools."

Henderson, home to South Heights Elementary School, sits in western Kentucky on the south bank of the Ohio River, overlooking the neighboring city of Evansville, Ind.

An old river town surrounded by flat agricultural fields, its Victorian mansions still house tunnels used to help slaves escape to freedom.

The 7,800-student Henderson County district, which serves outlying communities as well as the city, is the 14th-largest district in the state. In 1990-91, the school year after the reform act was passed, Henderson received more than a 13 percent increase in state funding.

Measured by traditional criteria, Henderson County does pretty well. More than 60 percent of its graduates go on to college. Its dropout rate hovers at 2 percent. And the community is generally supportive of its schools.

"We did a good job with the upper half of our kids," Gayle W. Ecton, the superintendent of schools, explains. "And yet, those of us who had looked at it knew there was a whole group of kids with whom we weren't doing very well."

Several years before KERA passed, Henderson began pushing a school-reform agenda of its own: promoting participatory decisionmaking throughout the district, investing in leadership training for its principals, and shifting greater control over resources to the schools.

It has also formed a partnership with the Center for Leadership in School Reform in Louisville to help it navigate the change process.

As a result, school officials here were ready to commit themselves to the law, despite some reservations. "We've never agreed 100 percent with KERA," David McKechnie, the chairman of the Henderson County board of education, says, "but basically our attitude is, 'It's the law. Let's make it work.'"

Glimmers of Change

Today, traces of the reform act's passage are everywhere, both in Henderson and beyond:

From July 1990 to July 1992, state and local funding of precollegiate education in Kentucky each increased by almost 25 percent. The gap between the state's richest and poorest districts was reduced by one-third.

All elementary schools, including those in Henderson, have already or are preparing to make the shift to ungraded-primary classrooms.

More than one-third of Kentucky's schools, and all 16 of those in Henderson County, have school-based decisionmaking teams.

Major progress has been made in developing the first stage of the state's new assessment and accountability system.

This winter, every school received a baseline score indicating how far it must improve to qualify for rewards or avoid penalties.

For the first time, extra educational and social services are available at the school site for large numbers of children and their families.

The Kentucky Department of Education has undergone a wrenching reorganization in which all of its employees were forced to reapply for their jobs.

Law's Comprehensiveness Is Taking Its Toll

To many politicians and educators, KERA's strength lies in its comprehensive and interconnected nature.

"We've learned ... that, if you work on one problem at a time--piecemeal--you never get it done," Superintendent Ecton says.

But the sheer pace and number of reforms have left many schoolpeople overwhelmed and unable to focus on the larger picture.

"Our teachers are exhausted, to be quite frank," says Jim Young, the superintendent of the Russellville Independent School District in southwestern Kentucky. "And I think this is a statewide phenomenon. They are just worn out."

Principals complain that it's impossible to keep up with all of the paperwork and reading materials generated by the law.

Phyllis Becker, an English and Latin teacher at Henderson County High School, says, "I've been taken out of my classroom so much for meetings and committees and workshops that I don't feel I'm doing as good a job as I have done in the past."

And Steve Garner, a 4th-grade teacher at South Heights Elementary, says: "We need the reform. But they want to see a lot of results so fast that it's putting too much pressure on us to get things done."

Aggressive Time Lines

The biggest debate centers on whether the state's time lines are realistic.

Most lawmakers argue that the tight deadlines keep everyone motivated and focused on the task at hand. But schoolpeople complain about doing too much at once--and not always in the right order.

Political wrangling at the state level, for example, has held up money to buy new technology. And educators are scurrying to revamp their instructional content and methods even before the state's new assessment system and draft curriculum frameworks are in place.

"There're a lot of people who argue a lot of our time lines were a little too aggressive," State Sen. David Karem of Louisville says. "I'd argue if you don't make aggressive time lines, it isn't going to happen."

'More Resistance'?

The pressure is greatest in the elementary schools, where teachers charge that it's impractical to demand that ungraded-primary classrooms be fully in place by next fall.

Even in schools that embraced the requirement ahead of schedule, researchers have found that educators vary considerably in both their support for the program and in their ability to teach in the desired ways.

A study released this winter by the National Governors' Association and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a citizens' group that has been a driving force behind the reforms, concludes that the deadline is not realistic for most schools.

"We've got teachers who've been teaching 20 or 25 years," Mr. Ecton, the Henderson superintendent, notes. "And then all of a sudden we say, 'Let's do cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and the whole-language approach and use developmentally appropriate materials.' It's overwhelming, and you get more resistance."

At Longfellow Elementary School in Mayfield, in the far western part of the state, Principal Elsie Jones has told her teachers to take it slowly, regardless of the state mandates. "We're going to do the best we can do for our students," says Ms. Jones, who has strong reservations about mixing kindergarten students in with older youngsters. "And we're not going to lie about it either."

Teachers who question the wisdom of including kindergartners in ungraded programs say they object to the approach on two grounds--both for developmental reasons and because of logistical problems posed by half-day kindergarten classes.

Some of the disgruntlement stems from a feeling among teachers that they were misled. The Kentucky Department of Education originally told schools that they would have until 1995-96 to fully implement the requirement. But lawmakers, who felt that schools were dragging their feet, returned to the issue two years after KERA was passed and clarified their intent to have an earlier deadline.

'Keg of Dynamite'

On the other hand, educators acknowledge that many schoolpeople feel pressured now because they did not begin to make changes soon after the reforms were first passed in 1990. Instead, they wasted two years hoping that the law would be repealed.

Similarly, because schools have until 1996 to form school-based management councils, many have held back.

In the Fayette County school district, which includes the city of Lexington, Superintendent Ronald E. Walton says a number of school faculties have voted several times to reject proposals for school-based management.

"Teachers are saying, 'Look, we've got our plates full, and, if that's not something we have to do right now, we're just not interested in taking on another assignment,'" he explains.

"We all know that there are those people who would never move short of a keg of dynamite," Mr. Ecton says. The time lines "were our keg of dynamite."

Student-Assessment Result Spur Host of New Questions

But if the time lines were the dynamite, the burning fuse that has sent educators scurrying is the state assessment results, released last fall, and the "threshold" scores assigned to schools this winter.

The scores specify how much each school will have to improve over the next two years to avoid state penalties.

Although Kentucky is still in the process of developing a full-blown assessment system, interim measures in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies were given to all students in grades 4, 8, and 12 last year.

For the first time in the state's history, how pupils performed was compared not against each other but against absolute standards for what students should know and be able to do.

The state determined how many students performed at the "novice," "apprentice," "proficient," and "distinguished" levels.

The results were startling. Roughly 90 percent of the state's students scored below the "proficient" level, including many who have traditionally done well on other measures of performance.

But it's not clear whether the gap between where students are and the state's high expectations for them will serve as a rallying point for reform.

Gerald Wischer, the president of the Ohio Valley National Bank in Henderson, says, "Those tests didn't come out nearly as well as the community thought they should."

"Maybe," he speculates, "we're not as good as we thought we were."

Other superintendents and principals say parents are not particularly upset about the results because they're not sure the tests are valid.

"Quite honestly," Mr. Ecton says, "I think that with many of our staff and our community members, too, there's a good bit of denial that our kids aren't that bad."

Nancy Graham, a parent and a member of the school council at Spottsville Elementary School in Henderson County, reflects the view of many parents when she says, "I don't know that I put a lot of value on the tests."

'A Sudden Death'

Far more threatening to educators are the baseline and threshold scores released for each school this winter. The baseline scores reflect a combination of how a school's students performed on the assessments, as well as such data as school-attendance and graduation rates.

The scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100, with most schools scoring around 30. Although schools have 20 years to bring all students up to a "proficient" level, they are expected to improve by a certain percentage every two years, known as the threshold score.

Schools that exceed their threshold goal by 1 percentage point or more are eligible for significant monetary rewards. Those that miss the mark will be required to produce a school-improvement plan and be given state funds and technical assistance to do so.

Schools that decline by less than 5 percent will also be assigned a "distinguished Kentucky educator"--one of a number of experienced teachers and administrators on leave to the state education department--to help them shape up. And educators in schools whose scores decline by more than 5 percent will be put on probation, with the possibility of dismissal. Parents can also choose to bail out of such schools.

This strict accountability lies at the heart of Kentucky school reform, which relies on local educators and parents to restructure their schools so that all students can succeed.

Ed Reidy, the associate commissioner for curriculum, assessment, and accountability, says that release of the baseline scores and of the thresholds that schools must meet in 1994 have made school reform "real" to people.

The data reveal, for instance, that many schools in wealthier districts have as far to go in boosting their performance as their poorer neighbors.

"We called in all the school principals the day that we gave the results," recalls Ruie Murphy, Henderson's assistant superintendent for instruction and student performance. "It was like attending the funeral home when you walk in and there's been a sudden death. For the first time, I think, the real sobering effect of all this hit the administrators."

'Haven't a Clue'

But others question whether most schools will be able to reach their thresholds in 1994 and particularly in subsequent years, as the gains rely more and more on pulling all youngsters up to a high standard.

And they note that most teachers, rather than being motivated by the possibility of a reward, are now motivated by fear.

The state has set aside \$34 million in a trust fund to pay for the rewards in the years to come. But teachers still remember a pledge by former Gov. Martha Layne Collins to pay them a \$300 bonus that never materialized.

"I've heard more people worry about being sanctioned than I've heard talk about being rewarded," says Mike Haile, the president of the Henderson County Education Association.

Whether such fear will prove to be a potent motivator in a system where successes are rarely recognized and failures are often overlooked is hard to forecast.

"You don't assume that when people resist, it's because they're unwilling to change," argues Phillip C. Schlechty, the president of the Center for Leadership in School Reform in Louisville. "I think there's been too much made of [rewards and sanctions] and not enough made of the support."

"People in the schools that we've been observing know what skills kids are going to be required to have," Ms. Coe of the Appalachia Regional Laboratory says, "but they haven't a clue as to how to impart those skills."

"The people who are running scaredest," she adds, "are the people who have the least idea about how to achieve the changes."

Educators also complain that the law includes no consequences for individual students based on how well they perform on the assessments and that youngsters, therefore, have no incentive to achieve. "Students feel no responsibility," Michael Bussiere, the coordinator of health and physical education at Henderson County High School, asserts. "We're expecting students to go in and perform to the best of their ability on these tests, and I think that's unrealistic."

Trading Old Regulations For Even More New Ones?

Theoretically, the tradeoff for such strict accountability was a substantial amount of freedom for schools.

Indeed, since 1990, some of the state's most onerous requirements for schools have been dropped. For example, the state no longer tells teachers how many minutes to spend on reading or math each day. And it has thrown out an accreditation process that once held schools accountable for the number of books in their libraries and the number of guidance counselors on their payrolls.

The department of education has also tried to couch much of its advice to schools in the form of advisories and suggestions, not mandates.

But many charge that the system is still too bureaucratically driven.

"Very frankly, we are finding even more regulations and more restrictive regulations than we were before KERA," charges David Keller, the executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association.

"Local educators are so used to being told exactly what to do, and state officials are so used to telling them," observes Robert F. Sexton, the executive director of the Prichard Committee, the citizens' advocacy group, "that changing those cultures is very slow and difficult."

"Every time the state department says anything," he argues, "it's taken by many school districts as a regulation--which to me demonstrates that they want those regulations."

'Planned Decentralization'

But KERA has also generated a lot of paperwork. Under the law, school boards are required to direct every school to develop a school-improvement plan. In order to receive new computers and technology from the state, schools must submit a technology plan.

Each school must have a professional-development plan. And every elementary school must have an ungraded-primary plan as well as a plan for purchasing textbooks and manipulative materials.

Lawmakers have also asked the state department of education to monitor how schools spend their funds for extended-school services.

"I think that accounts for the feeling that this is a lot of monitoring for a deregulated situation," Commissioner Boysen says.

"We are thinking as hard as we can about how to simplify the planning and process requirements," he adds. "I don't think we've got the right mix now."

But, he cautions: "This is a planned decentralization. It's not a planned loss of control."

Department Communications

Educators, blaming Mr. Boysen's reported tendency to micromanage in part, also fault the department for distributing inconsistent information and disseminating it in an untimely fashion.

At South Heights Elementary, for instance, teachers who needed to score portfolio assessments on a Wednesday complained that they first received the forms that Monday.

And at the high school, Ms. Becker says: "We don't feel that the instructions we get from the state are adequate. It's almost like, 'Do it, and then we'll tell you what we wanted you to do.'"

Since December, at least six top officials at the department have moved on--some voluntarily, some not, and several to higher-paying jobs outside the state. Mr. Boysen describes it as "trying to manage the fit in jobs that themselves are evolving," and claims, "Morale is good."

"The number of people who have left or indicated that they're leaving is not unexpected," agrees Joseph W. Kelly, the chairman of the state board of education. "This is an extremely high-visibility, high-pressure, stressful environment that the department operates in."

Many maintain that, under the circumstances, Mr. Boysen has performed admirably.

But communications with the field is clearly a problem. "My personal feeling," Ms. Coe says, "is that it may have been a mistake to reorganize the state department so thoroughly at the same time the districts were being required to restructure."

Built-In Conflicts

The law also contains some built-in tensions between top-down and bottom-up reform. For instance, it requires schools to create decisionmaking councils that are designed to give local educators greater control over the reforms. But then it specifies who can sit on such councils: one principal, two teachers, and two parents.

Although schools can appeal to the state board of education to create councils with a different composition, some educators complain that their proposals have been rejected.

In the Jefferson County school district in Louisville, nearly 130 of the district's 150 schools engage in some form of shared decisionmaking, most pre-dating KERA. But only three schools have voted to adopt school-based decisionmaking councils, as defined by the law. And two of those use alternative models that were approved by the state board.

In Henderson, many school councils include teachers' aides and other noncertified employees--who make up more than 40 percent of the district's workers--on an ex-officio basis. "But it's still not the same," says Superintendent Ecton, who worries that such employees have been sent a message that they're not important.

'It Can Be Different, And It Can Be Right'

Despite such strains, KERA has begun to spark flickers of change in the classroom--though they have yet to ignite into a full-scale explosion.

The most visible glimmers are in the elementary schools. At Spottsville Elementary School in Henderson County, a teacher leads a mixed-age group of 7- and 8-year-olds through an integrated unit of social-studies and math activities.

The lesson begins with a game: Thirty-four children sit in a circle on the floor and pass a red balloon to the beat of music. When the record stops, the child holding the balloon must describe a time when there was "scarcity" in his life--only one bicycle and two children, three ice-cream cones and four friends.

The teacher, Janey Couch, then groups the students in teams of four, each of which is given a paper with some drawings on it. Working cooperatively, the children are to look at the pictures and place an "X" next to those that depict a shortage. "You've got to work together," she warns them. "Everybody in the group has got to decide and agree."

After 15 minutes or so, the class reconvenes, and the teams defend their findings. One picture shows three people and four cookies. Some students identify a shortage, since there are not enough cookies for each child to receive two. Others, noting that each youngster could eat a cookie with one left over, disagree. The teacher accepts both arguments, as long as they are reasoned clearly.

Then she asks the teams to get back together and create math problems that depict each drawing. When the whole class gathers again, students have come up with an impressive array of mathematical equations that encompass addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Although Ms. Couch forces each group to think through its response, her basic message is this: "It can be different, and it can be right, because we asked you to make mathematical problems with these pictures. I didn't tell you what type."

Throughout the exercises, a second teacher acts as coach and guide to individual teams struggling to reach a solution.

This is precisely the kind of problem-solving, hands-on activity that KERA is meant to generate.

'Barely Discernible'

But from school to school and even from classroom to classroom in Henderson and throughout the state, such breakthroughs are fitful and uneven.

"Some schools have made significant and dramatic progress," one interim research report observes, "and for others the progress was barely discernible."

Moreover, as a visitor works his way up through the education system--from elementary school to middle school to high school--the changes become more sporadic and less pronounced.

In the earliest grades, fewer desks have been aligned in rows. Room arrangements are more flexible, and hands-on activities and scads of laminated books, written by students, are evident everywhere. More and more activities also span the disciplines, such as when children at South Heights construct a time line of Dr. Seuss' life after reading his books.

In the 4th grade, where the state has required students to keep writing portfolios of their work--and now math portfolios as well--teachers report more writing going on. And there is a greater emphasis on cooperative learning and teamwork. Particularly in schools where their colleagues have embraced ungraded-primary classrooms, teachers in grades 4, 5, and 6 are beginning to look over their shoulders at what's coming.

At the junior high level, at least in Henderson, teachers are also beginning to explore cooperative learning and mixed-ability grouping.

But most acknowledge that the tough nut to crack is the high schools. With the exception of being asked to do more writing projects, because of the portfolio requirements, Henderson students report little or no difference in their classrooms. The final recommendations of a statewide task force on high school restructuring are expected next fall.

A casual walk through Henderson County High School--a large comprehensive school in a sprawling building--reveals both rays of hope and signs of ennui.

In one English class, special-education and regular students work side by side with a team of two teachers, who enthusiastically describe their use of investigative projects and cooperative learning.

But in another room down the hall, the teacher marches sophomores through workbook exercises on normative-case pronouns, and several students slump at their desks. One student mutters that timeless complaint: "This class is sooo boring."

Asked about the changes under KERA, Ms. Becker, an English teacher at the school, says: "I don't know if you could tell just by looking. I don't think it would be that obvious."

Building a Culture To Sustain Reform

The uneven nature of the changes in schools and classrooms underscores the biggest hurdle that KERA faces--how to build the capacity and leadership for reform.

"If we don't build a culture that's going to sustain and support and nurture the changes that we've put in place," Mr. Ecton warns, "they're not going to live. I think there's maybe a lack of appreciation for that at the state level."

Under KERA, the state allocates funds to districts for ongoing training based on their student enrollment. The money amounted to \$17 per student this year. In addition,

lawmakers have permitted local boards to use up to five instructional days for staff development.

Across the state, teachers say they are getting more and better training than ever before. And in districts that have made the investment, educators report feeling more confident about their ability to implement the law. Henderson, for example, has more than tripled the amount of professional development offered to its employees in the past two years.

"We put more training money into this than we've ever had before," Mr. Sexton of the Prichard Committee says. "Over all, a remarkable amount. But it's still not enough. The scale and scope of this thing is so huge that there's almost a bottomless pit of need."

Although the law created eight regional training centers to assist teachers and administrators, they are staffed at a ratio of one employee for every 1,000 teachers. Many districts have not used the available instructional days for training. And researchers question whether educators are getting the right kind of support and guidance.

Compared with the amount of professional development offered to teachers, there is even less training available to superintendents, board members, principals, and union leaders on how to manage reform.

"The legislature is at fault," Senator Karem concedes. "We did not provide enough assistance for training and for professional development at all in this situation."

But, he adds, "They're hard dollars to provide."

Moreover, many teachers feel they are already getting more training than they can absorb. The real problem, they say, is not information but time.

Sharon Stalls, a teacher at South Heights Elementary, says some of her colleagues "have reached their saturation point. We really need to go back to the classroom and implement what we've seen."

'Find Their Niche'

Henderson County's experience also highlights how much district leaders can promote reform. But while KERA is clear about what school boards and superintendents should not do, it is less clear about what they should.

In response to charges of cronyism, nepotism, and abuse throughout the state, lawmakers in 1990 banned school-boards from hiring anyone below the level of superintendent, required that they institute competitive-bidding and other commonly accepted business practices, and made it easier for the state to remove administrators for malfeasance or failure to comply with the law.

The act simultaneously strengthened the hand of individual schools:

As a result, many board members and their chief executive officers perceive KERA as a distinct loss in power. Forty-three of the state's 176 superintendents left their jobs last year; and another 35 to 40 are expected to do so this year. About one-third of school board members in the state have been elected since 1990.

"School boards have yet to find their niche," Mr. Sexton notes. "They have a lot to do, but many of them are still saying they don't have anything to do. What that really means is that they don't hire."

'Pervasiveness of the Problem'

The biggest battles have come in poverty-stricken eastern Kentucky, where state officials are engaged in a showdown with local residents over their right to intervene in districts where corruption has very nearly been accepted as a fact of life.

While reform activists want stronger state action, opponents complain that the state has muscled its way into local affairs without understanding how things work.

In Floyd County, in one of the state's coal-mining regions, an investigation by the Office of Education Accountability led to the ouster of the local superintendent. The removal of a school board member is still pending. But local residents and school administrators have fought back. An anonymous letter mailed from district headquarters and tracked back to

administrators there urges an all-out fight against the law's changes.

Mr. Boysen exacerbated the situation when he personally intervened in the search for a new superintendent and reduced the available candidates to one administrator from central Kentucky, who had served on an advisory panel with him. Since then, observers have questioned whether the new superintendent is executing the improvement plan developed by the state.

Tom Gish, the publisher of The Mountain Eagle newspaper in neighboring Letcher County for 35 years and a first-term member of the state board of education, says Mr. Boysen "was slow to grasp the depth and the pervasiveness of the problems in eastern Kentucky, where it's been a matter of using the school system primarily ... as a vehicle for hiring one's friends and relatives--and if a kid got an education out of it, it was more or less accidental."

In nearby Harlan County, the state has ousted three of five board members and forced the superintendent's resignation on charges of corruption. And it has issued a lengthy improvement plan calling for a host of changes in the district, whose policies it labeled "outdated, incomplete, and inadequate." In November, about 100 people gathered at a local high school to applaud speakers demanding that the state "get out."

Roger Noe, a Harlan County resident and the former chairman of the House education committee, lost his bid for re-election in part because of the board upheaval. Nonetheless, he argues that, as districts like Harlan County are brought to task, other school systems "will take a good hard look at themselves ... and move in a more positive direction."

'More Than a Law'

But such changes will not come overnight. And it remains to be seen whether state-level intervention can inspire and help those who aren't committed to reform in the first place.

After three years of battling the system, Regina Sizemore, a parent in Letcher County who served on a school council and ran unsuccessfully for the local school board, finally withdrew her children from the public schools and began educating them at home.

"I'm not sure that people want things to change," she says. "KERA is good as far as it's written down, but it's going to take more than just a law. The reason that most people in this community are reacting toward KERA is because it's a law--not because fundamentally they think our education system is bad."

The Need To Create A 'Commitment to Change'

Yet, most agree that if the reform law is to work, it must ultimately win the hearts and minds of not only the state's educators, but of parents and citizens who don't have children in the schools.

"We're still concentrating on overcoming resistance to change," Mr. Schlechty of the Center for Leadership in School Reform in Louisville argues. "Creating commitment to change is what it's about."

Until now, the reform act has had some powerful friends, including two successive governors. The Prichard Committee, a nonpartisan group with an 11-year track record of promoting educational improvement, has organized some 60 community committees in local districts to support the reforms. And it has served as a tireless watchdog and critic, hiring out-of-state consultants to monitor the implementation process.

Business support has also "packed a major wallop," in the words of one observer. The Kentucky Business Roundtable--led by Ashland Oil, Humana, and United Parcel Service--has made a 10-year commitment to help implement the reforms.

Its support led to the formation of the Partnership for Kentucky School Reform, a nonpartisan coalition of more than 60 public and private leaders from the state's business, civic, government, and education communities. The partnership has sponsored a \$1.5 million public-relations campaign to sustain support for KERA. And it has encouraged companies to set up their own programs to involve their employees in the schools.

"We've been doing all we can on trying to educate Kentuckians on the importance of seeing this through," says Kent C. (Oz) Nelson, the chairman of the board of U.P.S. and a founder of the partnership. "We can't go tell the teachers how to teach, and we can't go

tell the kids how to study. But one thing we can do is generate support for the right kinds of improvements in education."

In contrast, many observers fault the higher-education community for failing to rally behind the reforms, change their admissions or teacher-education requirements to reflect the new standards, or provide sufficient technical assistance.

'Image Is Missing'

And despite such efforts, public understanding of the reform act and why it is needed remains disappointing. A recent Bluegrass State Poll shows that 55 percent of Kentuckians have not heard or read anything about the changes brought by KERA since its passage in 1990.

Moreover, few people--including educators--see the law as an interconnected whole. Those familiar with the act tend to know only one piece, such as the ungraded-primary program or the family-resource centers.

"I'm not sure how important it is that the person on the street understand how all the pieces fit together," says Ms. David, the author of the N.G.A. report. "It's much more important that educators and the public have a clearer image of what challenging curriculum and instruction look like."

But that image, she maintains, "is missing for a lot of educators, as well as for students, the parents, and the public."

The state education department has taken steps to alleviate the problem. It published 55,000 "truth in testing" sheets that provide citizens with examples of open-ended assessment questions, a scoring guide, and samples of student work at different levels of proficiency.

It has also involved some 300 teachers from across the state on "content committees" that are developing the assessments in particular subject areas. Another 250 teachers have volunteered to become "KERA performance-assessment fellows," who have given 20 days of their time to learn about the assessments and their implications for instruction.

But many of these efforts have yet to reach local communities. In Henderson, George Warren, the executive director of the Henderson Area Chamber of Commerce, admits that businesspeople have been minimally involved in implementing KERA "because they really haven't been asked."

And while parents are more aware of the individual pieces of KERA, they are by no means comfortable with it. Many parents, for example, would prefer letter grades to the more descriptive transcripts of student performance that are now required for primary school students. Some miss the worksheets that their children brought home every night. And others worry that students are being tested too much.

Turnout to elect the parent members of school-based decisionmaking councils in Henderson and throughout the state has been low. And at one school, Jefferson Elementary in the city of Henderson, a small contingent of parents formed a protest group after their children were placed in an ungraded classroom of 6- to 8-year-olds.

Mr. Bussiere of Henderson County High School says: "We have to change student attitudes. Probably more than that, we have to change parent attitudes. If it's a community where parents don't value education, no legislation is going to change that."

'Right for Kids'

For KERA, the bumpiest roads lie ahead.

Most of the reform act's funding has materialized until now, despite cutbacks in other state services. But times are tough. For this year and next, state funding for education is virtually flat.

Mr. Boysen estimates that to keep the reforms on track would cost about \$225 million in new monies in 1994-95, or a 10 percent increase. At the same time, Gov. Brereton C. Jones is pushing a health-care-reform package that would require \$50 million in new revenues.

Meanwhile, there still isn't a district in Kentucky that spends at least as much as the national per-pupil average on its schools. But as the huge influxes in funding that accompanied KERA's early years begin to fade, all districts will have to learn how to meet higher expectations with existing resources.

And, because of the equalization formula, the state's property-rich districts are likely to feel the pinch first.

"We're just going to do the best we can," Mr. Karem, the majority leader in the Senate, says. "We're going to try to be as aggressive as we know how. ... But God knows if we'll ever make it where it needs to be."

Against this backdrop, pressure to open KERA up for debate and mid-course corrections is mounting. But legislators remain tremendously reluctant to tinker with the law--based on a fear that picking away at individual threads will eventually unravel the whole cloth.

"I doubt if I would be in favor of changing anything," Sen. John (Eck) Rose, one of its architects, says.

Certainly, for many teachers, KERA is not perfect. But as Carolin Abbott, a teacher at South Heights Elementary School notes, "I really think it is the best thing they've done in Kentucky."

"Finally," she says, "Kentucky is really beginning to do some things that are right for kids."

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About This Report

"Results Matter" is the Kentucky Department of Education's report to the people upon the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990.

Its purpose is limited to documenting how the key reform programs have been implemented during the past decade, and what impact they are having on improving the education of Kentucky's children.

The report is divided into four sections.

A narrative section provides profiles, in words and pictures, of a dozen Kentucky schools and how the new reform initiatives have changed what takes place inside them. These schools vary greatly in geography and demographics. They have approached reform in some different ways. But they are all scoring well on Kentucky's Core Content Tests and, as you will soon see, they have some important characteristics in common. It must be pointed out that there are many more diverse schools that share these characteristics, and there are still some schools that don't.

Two data sections document implementation and results. They show how each key element of reform has been implemented during the past 10 years — in effect, how a new educational infrastructure was built. They also document the impact this new system has had on school improvement and student achievement to date.

A timeline highlights major milestones in the implementation of our new system of education.

The data in the report show progress worth celebrating, and also cause a sense of urgency to keep improving:

- School funding is far more equitable now. SEEK has narrowed the per-pupil spending gap between the wealthiest and poorest districts. The gap was \$1,199 in 1989-90, and \$757 in 1998-99.
- All demographic groups of Kentucky children are achieving at higher levels now than when we began, according to state test results.
- Kentucky children are performing better — in comparison to their peers nationally — than they ever have before, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly known as "the nation's report card."
- According to the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, some of Kentucky's highest-achieving schools are also among its highest-poverty schools.
- Scores on the national ACT have remained basically flat — but many more Kentucky students are taking the test and aspiring to higher education. And the core courses that are known to result in higher ACT scores are now high school graduation requirements in Kentucky.
- Kentucky is a national leader in education technology.
- The state dropout rate, which is about in the middle nationally according to the National Council for Education Statistics, has not improved significantly since 1990.
- Race and gender achievement gaps have not been eliminated.
- Public opinion surveys show broad and growing support for our system of education and for our local public schools.

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The data were provided by: Carole Kruse, branch manager for extended school services; Jeff Drake, program consultant, extended school services; Tom Willis, associate commissioner of district support services; Kyna Koch, director of school finance; Linda Robinson, program consultant, division of student/family/community support services; Tonya Cookendorfer, technical support coordinator, Office of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, Cabinet for Families and Children; Debbie Schumacher, director of extended learning; Michael Miller, branch manager for early childhood; Tom Peterson, associate commissioner of leadership and school improvement; Judy Tabor, coordinator of regional service center activities, Office of Academic and Professional Development; Charles Edwards, director of instructional leadership development; Linda Pittenger, director of planning services, Office of Education Technology; Jim Wyrick, systems consultant, division of planning services, Office of Education Technology; Angela Wilkins, director of student/family/community support services; and Scott Trimble, associate commissioner of assessment and accountability.

Other contributors are: Barbara Burch, Dana Biscontin, JoCarol Carter, Pam Clemons, JoAnna Crim, Bill Davis, Sharon Crouch Farmer, Faun S. Fishback, Lisa Gross, Donna Melton, Susie Morrow, Windy Newton, Fran Salyers, Tim Smith, Melissa Terrell and Kay Anne Wilborn.

Introduction

From the 1950s through the 1980s, Kentucky made several significant attempts to improve the quality of public schools. In 1953, Kentucky's Constitution was amended to allow state aid to be based on actual attendance rather than total school-age population and to be spent for more than just teacher salaries. In the 1960s, the sales tax was adopted and then increased from 3 percent to 5 percent. Education spending was increased, and standards for teachers and schools were raised periodically.

Despite those efforts, Kentucky in the mid-1980s still ranked at or near the bottom of the nation in most measures of educational quality.

In 1984, the legislature passed the School Improvement Act, a measure widely known as the "academic bankruptcy law."

It was cutting-edge legislation at the time — only New Jersey and South Carolina had passed similar legislation, and only in the previous year.

The academic bankruptcy law gave the Kentucky Department of Education the authority to "take over" any school district that failed to meet certain performance standards. The performance standards were attendance rates, dropout rates and test scores.

The idea was that good districts have good attendance, low dropout rates and good test scores. Good districts get students to come to school regularly, keep them there until they graduate from high school and teach them enough to advance successfully into college, military service or a full-time job.

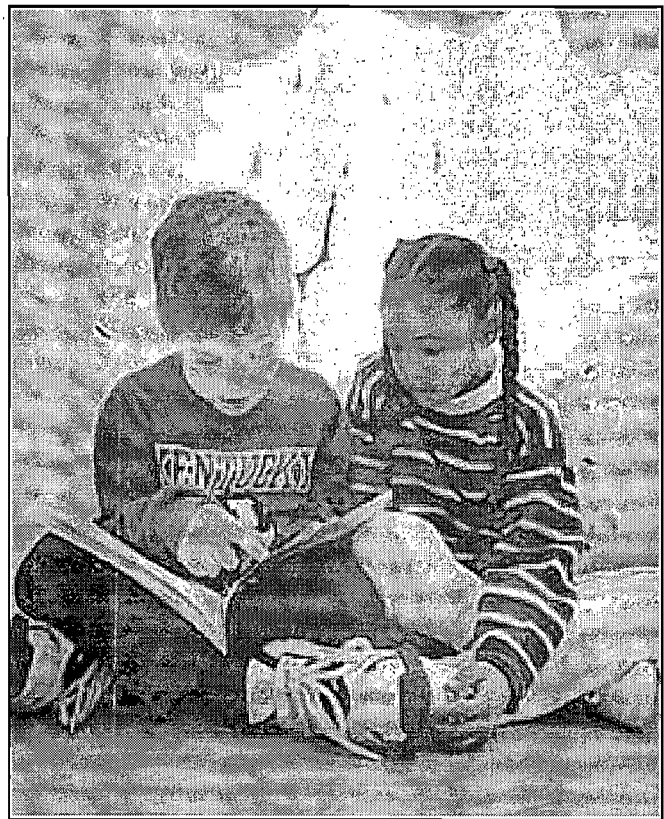
Districts that failed to achieve these results could be declared "bankrupt" and put into state receivership under that 1984 law.

Six years before the reforms of 1990, Kentucky had decided that all districts should meet the same performance standards and that the state should hold its schools accountable for results.

But, in those days, Kentucky's wealthiest districts had on average about twice as much money as its poorest districts to spend on each child. And the districts with the fewest resources generally had the most students with serious educational obstacles to overcome.

In 1985, 66 of the poorer school districts formed an organization, the Council for Better Education. It hired Bert Combs, the former governor and former federal judge, as its lawyer. The council's basic position was that every child deserves an opportunity to learn; that an expectation of equal results should entail equal resources.

Four years later, the 66 districts prevailed. Their quest for fundamental fairness led to an historic decision by Kentucky's Supreme Court in 1989.



Jacob Henry, Vanessa Walton, Longest Elementary, Muhlenburg County Schools

Introduction

Kentucky's Constitution says, "The General Assembly shall, by appropriate legislation, provide for an efficient system of common schools throughout the State." In its 1989 decision, the Kentucky Supreme Court defined "efficient system" in terms of "equity, adequacy and uniformity." And it concluded that Kentucky's education system failed the test on every count. Thus the whole system was unconstitutional.

"Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education," the court declared.

The 1990 General Assembly responded aggressively to this challenge, and so did Gov. Wallace Wilkinson.

After 10 months of public hearings and meetings with national experts, the General Assembly enacted the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990.

Kentucky's reform initiative was quickly recognized nationwide as the most comprehensive education package ever conceived by a state and indeed, the act made major changes in every part of Kentucky's educational system: how schools were financed; how decisions were made, and who made them; what kind of learning was expected from students; what kind of performance was expected from teachers, administrators and school boards.

The overriding principle of the reform was that all children can learn at high levels, given time, effort and opportunity. To get this job done, Kentucky's new system of public education would:

- provide equitable resources for all districts and schools;
- provide extra resources to those districts and schools with a lot of children who come to school with disadvantages;
- eliminate political barriers to good schools — such as nepotism, cronyism and patronage;
- set high standards for the performance of all children, all teachers, all schools and all districts;
- provide a statewide network of technology and communication tools to support teachers and students;
- empower local schools to make the decisions that would affect their own learning environments;
- hold schools accountable for reaching the new standards;
- reward successful schools; and
- help unsuccessful schools.

So how did the 1990 Reform Act put these principles into operation? The reform made school funding more equitable. Kentucky no longer has "rich" and "poor" districts. Every child in the commonwealth, rich or poor, urban, suburban or rural, is supported by about the same number of dollars.

The new system set the same achievement goals for every Kentucky child and for every Kentucky school. The reform act says: "Schools shall expect a high level of achievement of all students."



Steven Hoagland, Southern Elementary, Fayette County Schools

Introduction

It defines achievement not merely as the ability to memorize stand-alone facts, but to use knowledge to solve problems and to communicate solutions in writing. It replaced short multiple-choice tests with comprehensive performance tests that require students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

The new law recognized that schools with high proportions of economically disadvantaged students need extra help. So it provided a preschool program for at-risk children; an Extended School Services Program for students falling behind in one or more subjects; Family Resource and Youth Services Centers to help students and families overcome health and economic barriers to learning.

The reform instigated a process that resulted in detailed definitions of what students at various grade levels should know and be able to do in each major subject area.

It set goals for schools, and tested students to measure how well schools were meeting those goals.

It created school-based decision making councils — typically three teachers, two parents and the principal. It gave these local councils the authority to make decisions concerning curriculum, staffing and other matters affecting learning in their building.

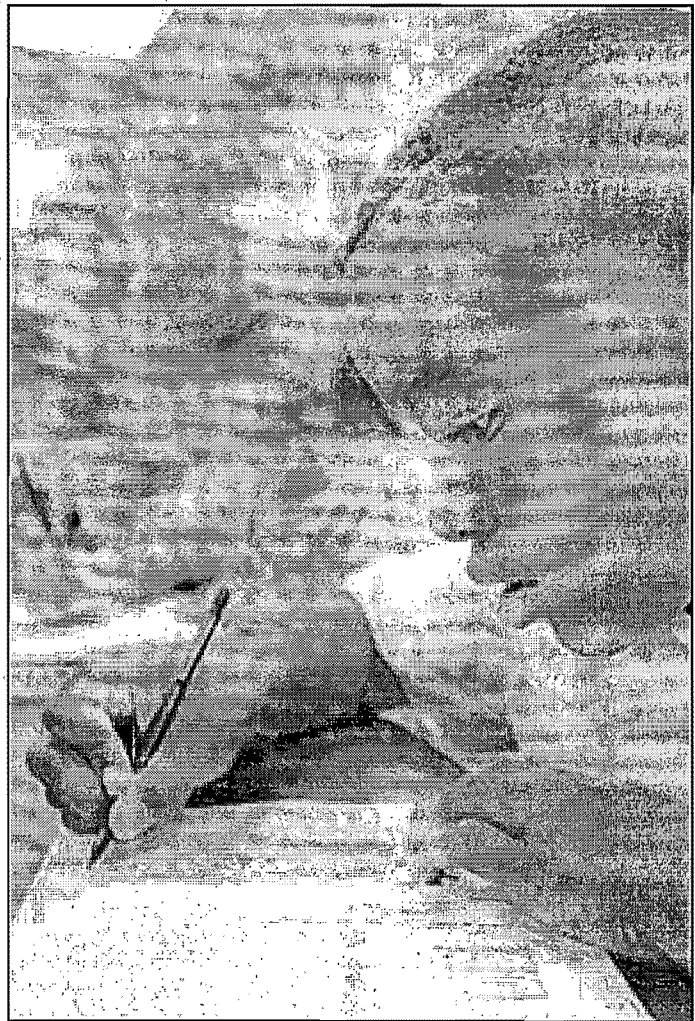
The Reform Act also created a network of eight regional service centers to provide more opportunities for intervention and collaboration among the Department of Education, schools and districts.

And so — for the first time in history — Kentucky schools had equitable funding, extra help with at-risk children, clear goals for learning and high standards for performance.

And Kentucky's new system of public education recognized that results matter — that the single most important measure of a school's quality is how much its students know and are able to do.

As important as the Supreme Court ruling was, as powerful as the Reform Act was, real change takes place — or doesn't — in each individual school building.

What follows are profiles of a few of the many schools that accepted the KERA challenge and are making it work for their students a decade later.



Jesse Haskins, Belmont Elementary, Christian County Schools

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High-Poverty Schools Score Big on Ky. Assessment

By Kerry A. White

In a country where one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement is socioeconomic status, it's no surprise that Anchorage Elementary School in suburban Louisville was a top performer in reading on Kentucky's assessment.

Most students in the small, affluent community of comfortable homes and wide lawns are, like their parents before them, college bound. In Anchorage, home computers, private lessons, and summer camp are the norm.

So what of another top scorer, Wrigley Elementary School--worlds away from Anchorage in Appalachia? Poverty hits home for most children at the eastern Kentucky school, where more than 80 percent of the pupils qualify for subsidized lunches. Many parents in the mountain community of Wrigley never finished high school and work long hours for low pay in nearby timber factories and on tobacco farms.

Still, Wrigley managed to perform just behind Anchorage on the reading portion of the state test, the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System, or KIRIS, scoring third among the state's 800 elementary schools. And the school ranked fourth overall on the writing portion of the test.

An education-group official who recently compiled those and similar results from the Kentucky tests says they offer important lessons for state policymakers and educators.

'It Can Be Done'

Susan Perkins Weston, the executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils, said Wrigley Elementary's performance challenges conventional thinking on student achievement and leaves fewer excuses for administrators and teachers at low-achieving schools who view poverty as a virtually insurmountable barrier.

"These schools show us it's not impossible for high-poverty schools to meet tough standards," said Ms. Weston, who compiled the KIRIS data this spring. "It can be done."

Using the 1997-98 KIRIS scores the state released in December, her group found that Wrigley Elementary was not the only high-poverty school to perform as well as or better than its more affluent counterparts on the test.

At eight of the elementary schools scoring in the top 20 in reading, more

Read an accompanying chart, "Reading Champs," showing the elementary schools with the highest scores in Kentucky's state assessment, and the percentage of students in those schools who are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches.

Our Kentucky Page includes articles and statistics on education issues from the past year.

than half of each school's students qualified for free or reduced-priced lunches, a yardstick for poverty. At 13 of the 20 top-scoring elementary schools in writing, more than half the students qualified for subsidized lunches. The same was true for 13 of the top 20 in science.

Top-scoring middle and high schools had some of the same socioeconomic mix, especially in reading and writing. Eight of the best performers on the middle school writing portion, for example, were schools where more than 50 percent of students qualified for subsidized lunches.

KIRIS tested students in grades 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, and 12. Kentucky switched to a new test, the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, this school year. CATS, which tests students in grades 4-12, is being administered for the first time this month.

High Expectations

While state officials were somewhat surprised by the school council's findings, they said the data affirmed the fundamental philosophy behind Kentucky's wide-ranging 1990 school reform law: All students can learn at high levels.

"It ties in to the philosophy of the [Kentucky] Education Reform Act and validates the premise that high expectations produce high results," said Sen. David K. Karem, a Democrat and one of the chief architects of the law. "We tried to be sure insofar as possible to level the playing field financially and give schools the resources they need."

"This [achievement data] is people saying, 'We heard you, we believe you, and we're going to take the tools you've given us and make it happen,' " he added.

That can-do attitude is just what Sandy Pelfrey, the principal of the 170-student Wrigley Elementary School, says is the key to her school's success.

"We have an energetic staff that has high expectations of every child ... [and is] willing to work, willing to change, and open to new ideas," she said. "Sure, poverty is a barrier, but you compensate."

"You have to provide for the things the child may not be getting at home," she said, by distributing books, reading to children as much as possible, and providing learning opportunities after school.

Spreading the Word

What's crucial now, Kentucky reformers say, is figuring out a way to replicate such outcomes.

"If some schools with the highest poverty rates in the country can, the next question is, why can't all the rest?" said Robert F. Sexton, the executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a Kentucky citizens' group. "At the other side, high-poverty schools dominate the bottom of the list."

Mr. Sexton has spent the past several weeks interviewing principals like

Ms. Pelfrey and found that their formula for success, similar to her school's, is no secret.

Principals say, "We're paying attention. We're focusing on reading. We look at test scores. We respond. We adjust. We talk to parents about reading to children," Mr. Sexton said. "It's things we know--nothing earth-shattering."

Through networking and assistance from state-sponsored educators--who help train teachers at low-performing schools--the Kentucky education department is intent on spreading those strategies to all high-poverty schools.

"Our emphasis in the past has been getting the strengths of the reform program in place: assessment and accountability, technology, school-based decisionmaking," said Scott Trimble, the director of accountability for the education department.

The push now, he said, is for the department to offer intensive staff development and help schools implement proven strategies that aid achievement in reading, math, science, and other disciplines.

Still, national experts, while praising Kentucky for instituting reforms that have raised student achievement across the board, say more hard work lies ahead.

"Kentucky is closing the gap between low-income kids and wealthy kids, and I laud them for it," said Amy Wilkins, a senior associate at the Education Trust, a research and advocacy group in Washington. "But they're not closing the gap between black and white kids."

While scores from the past six years of KIRIS show improvements by both races, black students have scored significantly lower than white students.

Mr. Trimble said state education officials acknowledge the race gap but have decided to stay focused on raising the achievement of all low-achieving students.

"The job ain't done yet," he said. "We don't want any group left behind."

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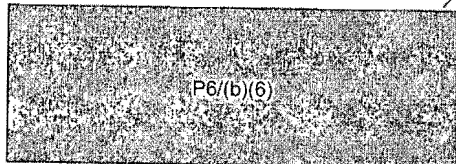
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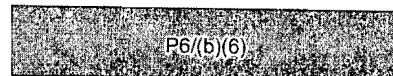
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