

KENTUCKY SCHOOL UPDATES

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION: LEARNING, REPRESENTATION, AND EMPLOYMENT

THE BASICS OF THE LAW

- Schools are held accountable in Kentucky for educating **all students**. **Data on student performance** must be reported by race, gender, English proficiency, eligibility for the free- and reduced-price lunch program and special needs. School councils and districts must use this data to develop plans to help every child succeed and to address gaps in achievement between different groups of students. Under No Child Left Behind, schools not meeting goals are subject to sanctions. (See chapter on Assessment and Accountability beginning.)
- The Department of Education must report test scores to schools broken out or disaggregated by group and indicate substantial differences or **gaps in achievement**. Schools with gaps must work with their local superintendent to set targets for closing the gaps and they must work with parents and staff to develop plans to close these gaps. If targets are not met within two years, councils must submit improvement plans to the superintendent for review and approval. If they are not met within two two-year cycles, schools are reported to the commissioner of education for review, approval of school improvement plans, and possible assistance. School plans will be presented and school board reviews will be conducted in public meetings. (Enacted in 2002.)
- **Teacher professional development programs** must include effective awareness and sensitivity training to help teachers motivate and nurture students of diverse cultures.
- **School-based decision-making councils** in schools with eight percent or more minority students must have minority representation.
- **Family Resource and Youth Services Center Advisory Councils** must have adequate representation of parents of the different groups of students enrolled in their schools.
- **Superintendent screening committees** in districts with eight percent or more minority students must have minority representation.
- Appointments to **state boards and commissions** must include reasonable minority representation.
- Criteria for **textbook selection** must include the contributions to society of people of all ethnic backgrounds.
- The law requires superintendents to seek **minority applicants** when vacancies exist.

- The Education Professional Standards Board is responsible for **monitoring diversity at teacher preparation programs** and providing assistance to increase the diversity of Kentucky teachers.
- The Office of Education Accountability (OEA) must conduct **periodic reviews of school and district recruitment, selection, evaluation, termination, and promotion policies**. All districts with eight percent or more minority students and less than eight percent minority staff and any district with complaints of unfair hiring practices must be reviewed. Exclusionary practices must be reported to the Kentucky Board of Education for investigation. (Enacted in 2002.)
- The Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission has been created to promote awareness of significant Native American influences. (Enacted in 2004.)

RESULTS

- Statewide assessment scores show gaps in achievement between different groups of students. A smaller percent of African American, Hispanic, and special needs students meet state learning goals than white students, and a smaller percent of students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program meet goals than students not eligible.
- Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIPs) **must address equity issues**.
- The Kentucky Department of Education’s **Division of Leadership and Instructional Support** is responsible for assisting schools in creating and maintaining equitable opportunities for learning and providing multi-cultural education and cultural diversity. **An Equity Analysis Performance Instrument** is available as a resource tool to assist schools with meeting federal and state requirements for meeting the educational needs of all students. It is available by [searching](#) for “equity analysis performance instrument” at www.education.ky.gov.
- The Kentucky Department of Education created a Minority Student Achievement Task Force to determine how to eliminate the gap in student achievement between minority and other students. The **Partnership for Minority Student Achievement (PMSA)** was organized to work intently on closing achievement gaps and has been instrumental in the implementation of new and revised statutes with regard to equitable instruction in the state of Kentucky.

The partnership has been charged with reviewing and analyzing achievement gap data; investigating promising research and practices; and developing a set of actions, with timelines, for improving the performance of minority students in Kentucky. Seven districts have been identified for additional resources and professional development. They encompass almost 75% of the African-American student population in Kentucky. They include Bardstown Independent, Christian County, Fayette County, Hardin County, Jefferson County, Owensboro Independent and Paducah Independent.

Success rates for the PMSA have been associated with Leadership, Culture, and Climate at both the school and district levels. While the focus had initially been on African-American students, success has not only been evident in the minority populations but also on the overall school population. Further information is available from the Division of Federal Programs and Instructional Equity at the Kentucky Department of Education. (See contact information below.)

- The **Commissioner's Educational Equity Council**, created in 2001 by combining members of the Education Equity Task Force and the Minority Student Achievement Task Force, meets quarterly with the Commissioner of Education to monitor progress and offer advice on closing the gaps.
- The **Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention Scholarship** was established to provide educational opportunities for minorities interested in becoming teachers and as a method of recruiting and retaining minority educators for all Kentucky schools. As the population of Kentucky and the nation becomes increasingly more diverse, it is important to have a teacher workforce that mirrors the population.

The 1992 Kentucky General Assembly authorized **scholarship funds** for minority students who want to become teachers, especially in the areas of mathematics and science. From 1994-2006, funds totaling \$3.9 million have served approximately 3,425 Kentucky minority students.

By 2004, 120 minority teachers had graduated through the **Alternative Routes to Certification** program and had been certified and hired.

- **Counselors for the New Millennium** is a training and recruitment program designed to provide minority candidates an opportunity to become part of school leadership through counseling. It was created by the Division of Educator Quality and Diversity at the Kentucky Department of Education and the University of Louisville with the goal of providing students from different backgrounds with the care and attention necessary for them to be successful.
- **Summer institutes** in math, science, technology, and communications have been held for middle and high school students in Jefferson and Fayette counties to interest minority students in these subjects and encourage them to consider a career in teaching.
- An **Administrative Leadership Institute** has been established by the Department of Education, the Kentucky Alliance of Black School Educators, and Western Kentucky University. The goal of the institute is to prepare and certify a cadre of highly qualified minority educators who can assume leadership roles as **principals and superintendents in Kentucky**. It provides resources, guidance and support to reduce some of the traditional barriers and challenges encountered during the certification process.
- To address the problem of a lack of **minorities in leadership positions**, the Department

of Education has contacted **local superintendent screening committees**, assisted in identifying minority candidates, created a Web site dedicated to creating a pool of applicants for superintendents, and in 1998 created an ad hoc committee of Kentucky citizens to address the issue of a lack of minority persons in leadership positions. In 2003 the department created a mentoring program, pairing minority candidates with experienced superintendents. As of summer 2006, two African-American women have been hired as superintendents as a result of this program.

- The Prichard Committee conducted a study of **high poverty, high performing schools** to see what was happening in schools that have been successful in educating students at risk. Common characteristics in these schools include:
 - ✓ School-wide ethic of high expectations for everyone in the building;
 - ✓ Caring, respectful relationships among all;
 - ✓ Faculty takes responsibility for student learning, no excuses;
 - ✓ Recruitment strategy for obtaining quality teachers;
 - ✓ Systems for regularly assessing progress of individuals students;
 - ✓ Strong academic, instructional focus;
 - ✓ Team approach to decision-making.

These findings are similar to other studies of high poverty, high performing schools.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- ★ **Review** your school's test scores for different groups of students. If there are achievement gaps, volunteer to participate on setting targets and developing plans for closing those gaps as required by SB 168.
- ★ **Ask** how your school and district address equity and diversity in comprehensive improvement plans. Suggest using the Equity Analysis and Data Gathering Instrument available from the Division of Federal Programs and Instructional Equity to assess what is happening and determine what more can be done to serve all students well.
- ★ **Attend** the annual Gender Education/Title IX Conference, part of the annual spring Teaching and Learning Conference. For registration and more information, visit the Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KTLC/default.htm>.
- ★ **Talk** with and encourage students from all backgrounds. Ask whether they think all students are being well served. Remind them about the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships available for all Kentucky students.
- ★ **Recognize** the diverse academic, social, economic, gender, and cultural learning needs of students.

- ★ **Look for and encourage** the use of instructional materials that are accurate and free of stereotypes.
- ★ **Make a special effort to include** persons from all backgrounds on school or council committees.
- ★ If you observe that your child's school is not sensitive to the needs of diverse students, **suggest** an awareness workshop. Call the Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Federal Programs and Instructional Equity for more information at (502) 564-3791.
- ★ **Sponsor** a school social event that involves families from different cultures to share foods, customs, and so on.
- ★ **Encourage** minority students to consider teaching as a career.
- ★ **Encourage** minority candidates to run for school-based decision making council positions and participate on council committees. Ask the council how it will incorporate minority issues and contributions in its school plan.
- ★ **Encourage** parents of minority students to get involved in the PTA/PTO/PTSA. If your school does not have a PTA, form one. Call the Kentucky PTA office at (502) 226-6607.
- ★ **Ask** your superintendent how your district recruits minority applicants and works to retain minority employees.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

- **Kentucky Commission on Human Rights** at (800) 292-5566.
- **Kentucky Department of Education;** (800) KDE-KERA or visit the Web site at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Default.htm>.
 - **Division of Federal Programs and Instructional Equity,** (502) 564-3791.
 - **Division of Educator Quality and Diversity,** (502) 564-1479.
 - **Division of Leadership and Instructional Support,** (502) 564-4201.
- **Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence,** P.O. Box 1658, Lexington, KY 40588-1658; (859) 233-9849 or (800) 928-2111; e-mail: admin@prichardcommittee.org or visit the Web site at <http://www.prichardcommittee.org/>.

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