



PRICHARD COMMITTEE

FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Stu Silberman, Executive Director

859-233-9849 x224

859-229-8040 (cell)

stu.silberman@prichardcommittee.org

Reaching the Nation's Top 20 in Key Education Indicators Will Require Hard Push for Improvement

LEXINGTON, Ky. – Moving Kentucky into the top tier of states in key areas of education by 2020 will require a hard push for improvement in the next six years, according to a new report from the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

The 2014 update of the Committee's "Top 20 by 2020" found Kentucky's performance in six categories to be on track to reach the goal. These include reading scores, Advanced Placement credits and teacher salaries.

But other indicators show reason for concern. The report noted that Kentucky lost ground in the math achievement of eighth-grade students and the share of higher education costs that families must pay. The state's performance also showed no net improvement in total higher education funding or bachelor's degrees earned in science, technology, engineering and math.

The state's ranking in other areas showed some improvement, but not at a rate sufficient to reach the Top 20 by 2020. These include the number of adults with a high school diploma, preschool enrollment, per-pupil funding and adults with a bachelor's degree.

The Prichard Committee began its Top 20 measurements in 2008, when it issued a challenge to the state to accelerate the improvement of its education system. The latest report is the third update of the initial measurement. The [update is available here](#).

Education Commissioner Terry Holliday applauded the report for highlighting Kentucky's progress in areas like reading, Advanced Placement and teacher salaries, and for also providing a clear roadmap of the areas that need further attention going forward.

“We are proud of the progress Kentucky students and educators have made the past several years as they have embraced more rigorous standards and become more focused on college- and career-readiness,” Holliday said. “At the same time, the report confirms what we already know: there is still much work to be done. We need to be making faster gains in key content areas like mathematics and science while also continuing to close achievement gaps so that all students have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life. We are committed to making continuous progress, and are grateful for partners like the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence for joining us in this critical work.”

Bob King, president of the Council on Postsecondary Education, noted the state’s increase in bachelor’s degrees, from 44th to 39th in the last six years, and expressed the importance of partnerships to work toward the Prichard Committee’s 2020 goal.

“The steady improvement in bachelor degrees or higher and adults with a high school diploma is welcome news to Kentucky’s economic future. We look forward to working alongside Prichard and our other partners to make even greater gains in the future.”

The update also noted the Committee’s three overarching priorities for Kentucky education:

- A strong accountability system that measures the performance of students, teachers, principals and postsecondary graduates;
- Adequate funding;
- Sustained and expanded engagement of parents, community members and businesses in support of schools.

“It is great to see the areas where we are making good progress but we still have a lot of work to do. We will continue to monitor these areas and look forward to evidence of more forward progress in the 2016 report,” said Stu Silberman, executive director of the Prichard Committee.

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