

The Oldham Era

Nine Oldham schools stop short of federal goal

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By Glypie Grider

Report cards are in and Oldham's overall performance has slipped, according to 2010 "No Child Left Behind" results released last week by the Kentucky Dept. of Education.

Only eight of the county's 17 public schools included in test results met all of their reading and math goals under NCLB, compared to 13 last year.

NCLB, a federal act signed into law in January 2002, requires state testing and accountability for public schools. All Kentucky schools are expected to make adequate yearly progress and reach complete academic proficiency by 2014.

Superintendent Paul Upchurch said while the results are disappointing, they're not surprising. Student performance has dropped across the state, he said.

Only 56 percent of the state's 1,158 public schools met all of their goals, down from 60 percent last year and 71 percent in 2008.

Only 21 percent of Jefferson County's 133 schools met all of their goals.

Upchurch blames the "unreasonable measurements and expectations" of NCLB and said he is surprised the system still exists.

"It's too punitive and we aren't able to recognize the students, teachers and schools where performance is improving year after year," Upchurch said.

He added that an entire school — and district — is penalized when one child falls below test expectations.

"It's the most insane measurement I've even seen — when one batter strikes out, the team doesn't lose the game, but that's how it is with No Child Left Behind," he said. "Of course, I want to be held accountable for each and every student's learning and growth, but this isn't the system to measure it."

Upchurch added that it's unrealistic to think every child can perform at a proficient level by the NCLB timeline.

"It's unfair to put that kind of pressure on every student — particularly handicapped children and their families," he said.

As a district, Oldham met 14 of 19 goals, falling short in reading and math for African-American students, reading and math for students with disabilities and reading for low-income students.

Buckner, Camden Station, Goshen at Hillcrest, Harmony, Kenwood Station, La Grange and Liberty elementary schools met 100 percent of their target goals, as did South Oldham Middle School.

The results show improvement for La Grange Elementary and South Oldham Middle – schools that missed goals last year.

Though Centerfield Elementary and East Oldham Middle School did not make adequate yearly progress overall or in reading, they did make progress in mathematics.

North Oldham High School made adequate progress in reading, but not in mathematics or overall.

Crestwood and Locust Grove elementary schools, North Oldham and Oldham County middle schools and Oldham County and South Oldham high schools failed to make adequate progress in any category.

This marks the first time several schools have not made goals under NCLB. If a school fails to make adequate progress in the same category two years in a row, they face increasingly harsh consequences.

Two schools in the district, Oldham County High and South Oldham High, currently face consequences and will receive state assistance.

“We are still reviewing what resources we have and the capabilities of the district to address these situations on their own,” said Lisa Gross, director of the division of communications and community engagement with the Kentucky Dept. of Education.

Gross said it will take two years for the schools to successfully meet targets and get out of the assistance category.

The Oldham district has been charged with “District Improvement: Year 1” status, which means Oldham schools have not met overall progress for two years. The district must notify parents, revise its district improvement plan and may be subject to corrective action from the KDE. If the district does not improve, its status will drop to “District Improvement: Year 2.”

“Next year will be the telling point for Oldham schools,” Gross said.

Kentucky schools completed the 2010 Kentucky Core Content Test in five content areas: reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing on-demand. Reading and math scores from KCCT were used to determine if schools met their goals under NCLB.

While NCLB requires that results be available prior to the start of the next year, Kentucky’s data was delayed due to the impact of multiple natural disasters in 2009 and 2010.

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