

Dear Parents and Community Members:

There are six state rankings of schools derived from the Ohio State Report Card:

- Excellent with Distinction
- Excellent
- Effective
- Continuous Improvement
- Academic Watch
- Academic Emergency

The Kettering City School District was rated "EFFECTIVE" on the State Report Card for the 2007-2008 school year. On the recently released State Report Card for 2008-2009, six of the district's schools are rated "EXCELLENT" and six of the district's schools are rated "EFFECTIVE." Yet, the district is rated "CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT" for 2008-2009.

There is a lot of good news and one piece of bad news with our State Report Card. Unfortunately, the one piece of bad news trumps all the good news.

State Report Card Performance Indicators, or "markers," are mostly standardized test scores. Kettering City Schools made 29 of 30 state markers to ***qualify us for the EXCELLENT state rating.*** Performance Index is an average of all students tested as opposed to a simple count of who passed and who failed. We achieved a 100.2 on Performance Index, ***which also qualifies us for the EXCELLENT state rating.*** A district can be rated EXCELLENT with either of these accomplishments; we achieved both last year. This is the first time in the history of state testing that Kettering City Schools accomplished either of these feats.

Value Added is a gauge of student progress with respect to expected growth over a school year. Kettering City Schools received a "plus" Value Added rating, meaning KCS students gained more than a year's growth in learning last year. A "plus" Value Added rating two years in a row qualifies a district to move up one level of state ranking. KCS qualified for this bump up in the state rankings.

The 29 of 30 state markers or a 100+ Performance Index score, coupled with a "plus" Value Added rating, ***qualified Kettering City Schools for an EXCELLENT WITH DISTINCTION state ranking, the highest possible state ranking.***

However, KCS did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) last year. Unfortunately, despite how well students do on every other aspect of the State Report Card, if a district does not make AYP, nothing else matters much.

AYP is a requirement that all students in a district, as a whole and within all subgroups, achieve federally mandated targets. We did not make AYP in the subgroups of Limited English Proficient students (LEP) and Special Education students (IEP) on the Reading test. According to the State Accountability System, "A district that misses AYP for three consecutive years, and misses AYP in more than one subgroup in the current year, can be rated no higher than Continuous Improvement." AYP takes precedence over all other factors.

Consequently, the Kettering City School District ranked CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT for the 2008-2009 school year.

I am very proud of our teachers and students. Our students did better than they have ever done. Our students, as a whole, did well enough to achieve the highest state ranking. We couldn't have asked more of them.

The issue is not the concept of AYP; we believe that all students should learn at a high level. Our complaint is with a faulty State Accountability System that fails to recognize the good work teachers and students do and disproportionately penalizes all students for the performance of a few. While our district has more than 7,000 students, one of our subgroups that missed AYP last year had only 51 test takers. The fate of an entire district on the State Report Card was determined by a handful of tests.

AYP is a provision of the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act. Only a few states tie AYP to their school ranking systems as Ohio does. Ohio realizes that there is a growing problem with AYP. Each year, more and more highly respected districts, like Kettering, miss AYP. If it is any consolation, we are certainly not alone in the AYP conundrum.

The Kettering School System is a great place to go to school. The vast majority of our graduates move on successfully to higher education. Our ACT scores are well above the national average. We are one of a very select group of schools in Ohio to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate program. We have fabulous facilities, tremendous Career Education and Special Education departments, a full range of Advanced Placement offerings and extracurricular programs that are second-to-none. Our teachers are friendly, knowledgeable, skilled and helpful. One would be hard-pressed to find a student who does not love attending school in Kettering.

As your superintendent, I assure you that this situation will be addressed. I hope that your faith and confidence in Kettering City Schools will not be affected by this temporary setback. If you have questions, or issues, or just want to chat, please call my office at 499-1430.

Sincerely,

Dr. James J. Schoenlein, Superintendent
Kettering City Schools