

# MYTH BUSTERS

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**Kansas  
PTA**

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**Advocacy**

## Kansas School Performance

**FACTS:** Kansas public school performance is consistently in the top 10 to 15 nationally, with at least 4 out of every 5 students scoring at or above basic performance levels. Every state in the top 10 except South Dakota spends more per pupil than Kansas.<sup>1,2,3</sup> While rank and per pupil expenditures are indicators of Kansas public schools' efficiency<sup>3</sup>, the percentage of youth scoring at or above basic performance levels is a reflection of effectiveness.

**MYTH:** Kansas public schools are "failing" because NAEP scores are "low" and have remained relatively stable.

... Some public school opponents are arguing that "proficiency matters, not rank." Kansas PTA finds value in both types of indicators, as well as, a common understanding of the term *proficient*.

**FACT 1. Kansas public schools' performance consistently ranks high.** Kansas public schools rank 9<sup>th</sup> nationally and 3<sup>rd</sup> regionally on the combined 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) score – where 80% of all students' combined scores were at basic or higher performance levels.<sup>1</sup>

**FACT 2. Kansas schools continue making significant progress.** About 85% (B+) of Kansas students performed at or above state standards in reading and math in 2010, up from less than 60% in 2001.<sup>1,4</sup>

**FACT 3. The performance bar is rising, from basic to proficient.** Proficiency refers here to student achievement levels in relation to education standards. NAEP uses 4 levels of student achievement at each grade level in relation to national standards: *below basic, basic, proficient, advanced*. The Kansas Assessments use 5 levels: *academic warning, approaches, meets, exceeds, exemplary*. In keeping with federal law enacted in 2001, states across the country adopted standards and set the starting performance point, as mandated by law, at the lowest-achievement demographic group or school in the state.<sup>5</sup> On average state standards align with NAEP's current *basic* performance level.<sup>6</sup>

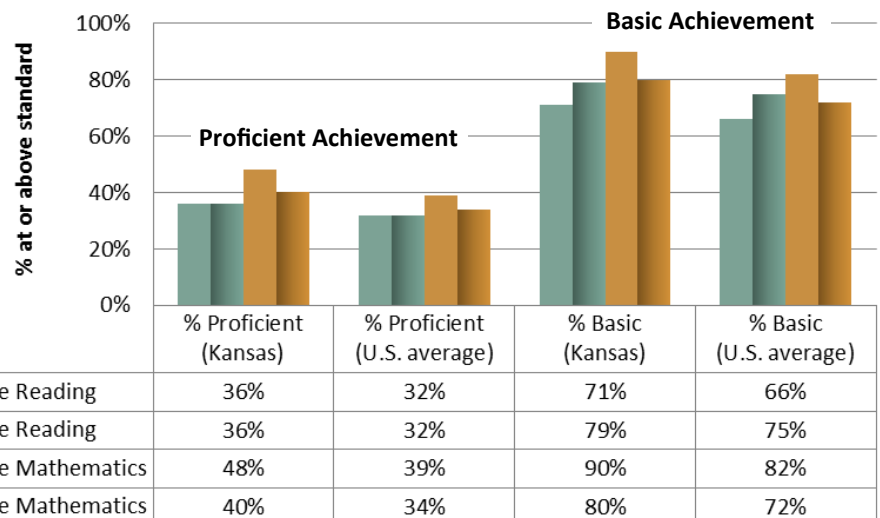
Today, 48 states and territories including Kansas are raising the bar beyond *basic* in alignment with recent changes to federal law and shifting standards to what NAEP now defines as *proficient*, where every single student is expected to be college and career ready.<sup>7</sup>

### More Indicators of Success . . .

Multiple indicators of school performance produce a more valid measure than any one single reliable outcome indicator can provide. Indicators of Kansas performance are excerpted here from KASB (2012):<sup>1</sup>

- Student proficiencies in reading and math have increased 40% over the past decade on the Kansas State Assessments.
- Over the past 10 years, Kansas improved high school completion rates across three different measures and all exceed the national average.
- Kansas students have an overall ranking of 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation in college readiness.
- College completion rates exceed the national average.
- Kansas public school achievement exceeds that of private school systems with similar students as measured by the state assessments.
- Kansas ranks 7<sup>th</sup> nationwide among low income students on NAEP tests and exceeds the national average for the same population in private schools.

### Proficiency Matters, AND Rank



Notes. Based on 2011 NAEP scores. Discrepancies in the original table are assumed to be due to rounding error. Kansas NAEP national rankings: 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading—14<sup>th</sup> ■ 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading—20<sup>th</sup> ■ 4<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics—7<sup>th</sup> ■ 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics—10<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas Association of School Boards (January, 2012). *Focus on ... what we know about student achievement and school improvement in Kansas*. Prepared by Mark Tallman.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2011). *NAEP State Profiles*.

<sup>3</sup> Education Law Center. (2010). *Is school funding fair?* See also Standard & Poor's Efficiency Study (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Kansas Department of Education (KSDE). (2010). *Report Card 2009-2010. State of Kansas*.

<sup>5</sup> No Child Left Behind (2001). *Action Briefs. What is the process for establishing AYP?*

<sup>6</sup> National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2009). *Mapping state proficiency standards*.

<sup>7</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). (2011). *About the Standards*. See also Kansas Common Core Standards Fact Sheet (2011-2012).