



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE BOARD LAUDS GOVERNOR'S SPENDING PLAN

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Members of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) commend Governor Steve Beshear for his courage and wisdom in making education the top priority in his 2014-16 proposed budget.

“The Governor had to make some really hard choices, many at the expense of other state agencies,” said KBE Chairman Roger Marcum. “The state board and I are extremely appreciative that the Governor saw the need to fund education at a higher level than in the previous few years.”

Marcum said the state board is thankful for both the Governor's and Education Commissioner Terry Holliday's leadership on behalf of Kentucky's school children.

The Kentucky Board of Education had made the restoration of P-12 funding to pre-recession levels, or greater, its primary goal for this legislative session.

In its 2014-16 biennial budget request, the board asked for the:

- restoration of Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding to 2009 levels
- restoration of Flexible Focus Funds for professional development, safe schools, extended school services, textbooks and preschool to 2008 levels
- technology funding to increase bandwidth and pay back a bond that would support district replacement of computers and/or mobile devices with up-to-date instructional devices

“The Governor heard our plea, and the plea of teachers, administrators and school boards across the Commonwealth,” Marcum said.

The Kentucky Board of Education plans to formally thank the Governor for his support in a letter signed by each member when the board meets in regular session on Feb. 5.

“In recent years, much more of the burden of funding schools has fallen on local taxpayers, which has created an inequity among our schools,” Marcum said. “That's the very thing that the Kentucky Education Reform Act addressed nearly a quarter century ago. And we do not want history to repeat itself.”

(more)

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In addition to KBE's request for SEEK, flex focus and technology funding, the Governor's budget request also included a total 3 percent pay hike for certified and classified personnel over the next two years – a raise Marcum and KBE said is well deserved.

"Increasingly, teachers have been reaching into their own pockets to pay for materials they need in the classroom. Combined with inflation, higher health care costs, and no pay raises in recent years -- they have been losing ground financially at a time we've asked them to do more to raise achievement and meet the directives of Senate Bill 1," Marcum said. "The issue should never be what we are going to cut to fund education. If that's the case, lawmakers need to take a hard look at increasing revenues, either through expanded gaming, tax reform or both. Unfortunately, our young people can't wait until the state coffers are full."

"Education is the key to our children's and Kentucky's future," Marcum said. "By reinvesting in education now, we will see dividends for years to come. We've come too far and made too much progress to turn back now."

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