



Commissioner's

Comments

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Kentucky Commissioner of Education

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A new year, a new day

It's a new calendar year, a new day in Frankfort and a new day in Washington D.C., and I couldn't be more excited. When the page on the calendar turns from December to January, I always get a sense of renewal, drive and enthusiasm for the future. The feeling is more acute in 2016 than I remember in a long time.

Part of the reason is that I am here in Kentucky. Nationally, the state has an excellent reputation for improving K-12 education and the prospect to build on that legacy is one of the main things that drew me to my new Kentucky home. I am eternally grateful to the Kentucky Board of Education for trusting me with the opportunity. I pledged to them as I do to you, to listen to all sides and make decisions in the best interest of children. As stated in the Supreme Court opinion in *Rose v. Council for Better Education* more than a quarter century ago, "Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education."

But to me, adequate, doesn't set the bar high enough. My goal is to build on our accomplishments of the past 25 years to provide each child and every child with an equal opportunity to an excellent, world-class education that will lead them to success in their postsecondary endeavors, and in life. I believe, as do many among us, that education is the key to prosperity in Kentucky. It is the one thing with the potential to break the cycle of poverty that has plagued this state for far too many years.

With that said, it is a new day in Frankfort with a new governor, new administration and a new session of the General Assembly that in the next few months – hopefully with the education community's input and expertise – will determine the course toward our goal. Lawmakers will approve a new biennial budget and are poised to consider a slew of education legislation.

It's also a new day in Washington, D.C. with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this time around known as the Every Student Succeeds Act. It provides us a greater opportunity to chart our own course for the future of education than any time in recent history.

In the coming weeks, as always, it is important that policy decisions are based on the facts of today. We must build on our successes with the goal of moving education forward. It is absolutely essential that we are honest with ourselves and with our children and that we continue to have high expectations for all.

We have some great opportunities ahead of us, some would call them challenges, but I see them in a more positive light. These opportunities have reignited a fire within me, and hopefully one within you to work hard, stand up for what is right for Kentucky's kids and not take the easy way out, even if it is the more popular choice. This will take attention, accurate information, hard work, courage, compromise and understanding. I'm up for the task, are you?

Stephen