



# Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner  
Terry Holliday**



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## **Closing Achievement Gaps and NCLB Waiver**

During 2011, I was working with a committee of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to develop guidelines for next generation accountability models. The timing was good for Kentucky since Senate Bill 1 (2009) required new standards, assessments, and accountability model.

My hope in working at the state and national level was reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with a focus on college and career readiness similar to Senate Bill 1. As it played out, reauthorization was stalled. However, President Obama and Secretary Duncan moved forward with a waiver process for states that included many of the recommendations from the CCSSO accountability committee. To date, 34 states have been approved for a waiver and several other states are asking for specific waivers.

While we appreciate the waiver process, state chiefs agree that the most stable solution is reauthorization of NCLB by Congress. Early in February, I hope to testify before a Senate committee holding hearings on the waiver process and NCLB reauthorization. I know that one of the key concerns for Congress and for advocacy groups across the nation is closing achievement gaps. I wanted to connect a few points through this blog.

This week, we have sent out [maps](#) to all school districts and major stakeholders showing the proficiency rates of key groups of students. Our expectation in Kentucky is that school districts and schools will have annual goals to raise proficiency rates and that over a five year period, we will cut in half the gap between current performance and the aspirational goal of 100 percent proficient. As with NCLB, we continue to have the aspirational goal of 100 percent proficient, however, we are being much more focused on how to make steady progress and we have created rigorous but achievable annual targets for improvement. Interested readers can find these annual targets for every district and school by going to the new [school report card](#), choosing a school or district and then clicking on the "delivery" tab on the profile page.

The most critical element of closing achievement gaps are the strategies used by schools and districts. The Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps has provided a comprehensive [report and recommendations](#). The Kentucky Department of Education is providing strong support for schools and districts that have significant achievement gaps through our focus and priority schools implementation. Also, we are tracking the progress of each school and district and their plans for closing gaps through a comprehensive planning software program called ASSIST.

As I prepare for my testimony to the Congressional committee, I will emphasize that in Kentucky we have not backed up on our push to close achievement gaps. Closing achievement gaps remains the moral, economic and civil rights issue of our times and every educator in Kentucky is committed to helping all children reach college and career readiness.

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