



# Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner  
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## Highlights of 2011: From Development to Implementation

I've had a few weeks to reflect on the work accomplished during 2011, and I wanted to share some highlights with readers. The list below is by no means all-inclusive, but I hope you'll agree that there was much accomplished in 2011.

There is a common thread running through the items on this list, and it's that none of this could have been accomplished without the support and work of our superintendents, principals, teachers, school and district staff, education partners, parents, elected officials, state agency employees and citizens.

My thanks and praise to all of you who helped make Kentucky's educational system better in 2011.

### Student Learning and Achievement

January -- Kentucky's 4th and 8th graders outscored the nation on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) [science](#) tests. In fact, Kentucky's scale scores were significantly above the national average.

February -- Kentucky's overall [scores](#) moved up slightly in nearly all subject areas covered by the EXPLORE (8th grade) and PLAN (10th grade) assessments taken in the fall of 2010.

June -- data from the 2009-10 school year showed fairly stable [nonacademic indicators](#) for Kentucky's public school students.

August -- Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate ([AFGR](#)) data were reported for the first time, and for the 2009-10 school year, the statewide AFGR was 76.68 percent.

August -- overall results from the 2011 administration of the [ACT](#) to Kentucky's public school juniors and public school graduates showed improvements in all subject areas and higher percentages of students ready for college-level coursework.

August -- at a special [ceremony](#) on the campus of the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD), the Kentucky Board of Education awarded diplomas to African Americans who were enrolled at KSD in the mid-20th century, but did not receive recognition for graduation.

September -- the number of Kentucky public high school students taking [Advanced Placement](#) (AP) examinations and scoring at high levels continued to rise.

November -- the [results](#) of NAEP's 2011 assessments in mathematics and reading showed that Kentucky's 4th graders and 8th graders made gains and outperformed the nation in some areas.

November -- the Commissioner's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council (CRACGC) released *Guidelines for Closing the Gaps for All Students*, a new [document](#) that is designed to help parents and community members become engaged in their schools and districts and to focus on statutory and regulatory expectations related to achievement gaps.

### **Teachers and Leaders**

February -- the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) received a two-year, \$1 million [grant](#) from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) to support implementation of the new Common Core Standards (CCS) by developing instructional strategies and tools in mathematics and literacy.

March -- the [TELL](#) (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) Kentucky Survey provided a unique, anonymous opportunity to gather information about school working conditions from Kentucky's certified educators. Participation rates in Kentucky set a record for first-time response rates on similar surveys.

August -- a new 21st-century instructional tool called the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System ([CIITS](#)) was launched. CIITS is a searchable online database of Kentucky academic standards and student learning targets aligned and linked to high-quality instructional resources to help teachers as they implement the new Kentucky Core Academic Standards in mathematics and English/language arts.

September -- 54 Kentucky school districts are participating in a field test of the proposed [Teacher and Principal Professional Growth and Effectiveness System](#). The proposed system will help define expectations of what it means to be an effective teacher and leader as well as providing support, assistance and resources to help all educators reach that goal.

### **College/Career Readiness**

February -- I called on public school district superintendents and local board of education chairs to sign a [pledge](#) to improve college and career readiness in their high schools. All of Kentucky's school districts signed on to the "Commonwealth Commitment to College and Career Readiness" pledge, reinforcing their commitment to the mandates of 2009's Senate Bill 1.

June -- a new, free advising toolkit, [Your Future Ahead](#), will help districts keep students in school, better prepare them for postsecondary options and increase the number of students that are college/career ready.

June – the Kentucky Board of Education [agreed](#) to include an additional half-point of credit to schools and districts for each student who is deemed both college- and career-ready. This half-point would apply toward a school's or district's overall college/career readiness percentage.

August -- the Kentucky Board of Education [agreed](#) on a definition of career readiness, for which students are considered career-ready if they meet benchmarks for one requirement in the Career-Ready Academic area and meet one requirement in the Career-Ready Technical area.

### **Work Around 2009's Senate Bill 1 (SB 1)**

August -- Kentucky, along with other states, called for greater flexibility in implementing the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and the U.S. Department of Education (USED) [responded](#). USED announced that President Barack Obama approved the development of a waiver request process to enable states to ask for flexibility in implementing the requirements of NCLB during the 2011-12 school year.

August -- the Kentucky Board of Education took final [action](#) on 703 KAR 5:220, the state regulation related to school and district accountability recognition and support, and 703 KAR 5:230, the state regulation related to next-generation instructional programs and support.

September -- an \$8.8 million, three-year [grant](#) from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) will support teachers and students in 12 school districts. This "Integration Grant" supports the integration of several critical streams of work – measures of effective teaching, implementation of the [Common Core State Standards](#) and the development of innovative tools and resources to help teachers deliver instruction.

September -- I shared the stage with President Barack Obama and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan as they [announced](#) how states could get relief from provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA/NCLB) in exchange for serious state-led efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability and ensure that all students are on track to graduate college-and career-ready.

November -- KDE submitted the state's [application](#) for flexibility under ESEA/NCLB. The application proposed using Kentucky's new accountability model in place of the NCLB model for schools and districts.

December -- Kentucky was [awarded](#) a federal [Race to the Top](#) grant of \$17 million to advance targeted K-12 reforms aimed at improving student achievement. The funding will be used to implement professional development and resources and expand Advanced Placement offerings.

December – the Kentucky Board of Education gave final [approval](#) to state regulation 703 KAR 5:070, which is related to the inclusion of special populations in the state-required assessment and accountability programs. The board also approved state regulation 703 KAR 5:240, which administrative guidance and reporting processes for the state’s new accountability system.

### **School Improvement**

February – the Governor’s Transforming Education in Kentucky Task Force presented its final [report](#), which included recommendations to strengthen all areas of public education.

April – the Kentucky Board of Education [approved](#) the selection of external management organizations, as enabled by KRS 160.346 for assistance to low-performing schools

May -- the Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools, or [ASSIST™](#), can be used for the required Comprehensive School and District Improvement Planning (CSIP/CDIP) process that has been mandated for nearly 20 years.

October -- an additional 19 schools were [identified](#) as “persistently low-achieving” and began receiving support from KDE to help improve student achievement. Data show that 90 percent of the schools identified as “Persistently Low-Achieving Schools — Cohort One” demonstrated statistically significant increases in the percentage of students scoring proficient or distinguished in math and reading.

### **Communications and Outreach**

May -- KDE formally entered the realm of [social media](#) with the launch of the agency’s Facebook page and Twitter feed.

August -- [Kentucky on iTunes U](#) provides the state’s teachers, students, parents and communities with free, state-specific curriculum and instruction resources for users, including school districts and other Kentucky providers.

October -- I hosted KDE’s first-ever [Twitter Town Hall](#), which was designed to capture questions from Twitter users and provide real-time responses.

October -- KDE released the Campus Mobile Portal [app](#), which allows parents, guardians and public school students access to grades, attendance information and more.

December -- [Kentucky Chamber of Commerce](#) President Dave Adkisson and I started a 10-city tour to promote education improvement in Kentucky. The theme of our tour was that education drives employment, and employment drives the economy.