



# Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner  
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## Clear direction for improvement

Last Saturday, I gave a short [speech](#) at the Kentucky School Boards Association winter conference. A portion of my speech was to recognize the tremendous work of school boards and educators across Kentucky as evidenced by recent [rankings](#) by *Education Week* that put Kentucky in the top 10 states for education policy and results. It is undeniable that Kentucky has made progress in lowering dropout rates, improving student learning outcomes, improving graduation rates and improving college-and career-readiness rates. The vision for our improvements was provided by the Kentucky Education Reform Act in 1990 and more recently by [Senate Bill 1](#) of 2009.

During my speech I also provided clear direction as to improvements that will be made in school board training and superintendent evaluations. I want to provide readers with some insight into the reasons behind these improvements.

1. While most of our local school boards and superintendents are doing a terrific job, there has been evidence recently of inappropriate behaviors and poor fiscal management among some. Given the challenging times that we are in with state and federal budgets, it is extremely important that local school boards and superintendents exercise excellent management of ethics and fiscal responsibility. That is why we will be addressing specific changes in local board training requirements to emphasize ethical and fiscal management training for all board members.
2. With the No Child Left Behind [waiver](#), Kentucky is required to develop new effectiveness and evaluation tools for teachers and principals. It only makes sense that superintendents also share the responsibility of improved effectiveness and evaluation systems.
3. With the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2009, the subsequent development of the Kentucky Board of Education Unbridled Learning [strategic plan](#) and accountability [model](#), and the implementation of the No Child Left Behind waiver, clear [delivery](#) targets have been established at the school and district levels for graduation rate, college/career ready rate, student proficiency rate, and student gap group proficiency rates. Eventually, we will add teacher/principal effectiveness rates and program review results. It is very appropriate to expect every school board to include as part of the annual superintendent evaluation process a review of the progress toward the delivery targets.

We are expecting districts to submit plans for teacher and principal evaluation systems by December 2013 with full implementation in 2014-15. Most districts will use the [model](#) developed by the state, however, local districts may submit alternative plans. However, the alternative plans must meet the requirements of the NCLB waiver. By adding the requirement that local boards submit the superintendent evaluation process by December 2013, we are ensuring alignment of all evaluation processes in the district to Senate Bill 1 and the NCLB waiver. Local boards may certainly go beyond the minimum expectations of the delivery targets.

In coming weeks, we will provide clarity on the forms that local boards must use in submitting their superintendent evaluation process. Additional requirements in the process will include fiscal management goals and a requirement that the summary statement of the superintendent evaluation be placed in the minutes of the board meeting where the summative evaluation is provided to the superintendent. I would also suggest that any changes in the superintendent contract or salary/benefits be clearly recorded in the board meeting minutes where such action was taken. Several of the recent audits by the state auditor have revealed gaps in the documentation of changes to salary and benefits.

Over the next year, the Kentucky Association of School Administrators will be sharing the excellent work they are doing to develop standards for superintendents. Hopefully, school boards will utilize these standards in the selection, support and evaluation processes for their superintendent.

All of these things working together will ensure Kentucky children are reaching higher levels of achievement. Also, through clear goals and transparency, we will ensure we do not lose the trust of the citizens that we serve.

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