



Doc H's Blog

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Thinking Outside the Cage

As superintendents and school boards begin to finalize budgets for the 2013-14 school year, the impact of federal [sequestration](#) and the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust ([KSBIT](#)) assessment on top of the end of stimulus funds and the continued decline of state dollars have made a tough task an almost impossible task. How do you provide teachers the resources and support they need so that more children reach college and career readiness?

I recommend to education leaders a new book, "[Cage-Busting Leadership](#)" by Rick Hess, that I had a chance to read over the weekend. Many readers will recognize the name Rick Hess from his policy work at the [American Enterprise Institute](#). The book will help education leaders think outside the "cage" when developing solutions to difficult problems that we all are facing with regard to budget and reaching higher levels of performance.

Hess believes that two things are true.

"It is true, as would-be reformers often argue, that statutes, policies, rules, regulation, contracts and case law make it tougher than it should be for school and systems leaders to drive improvement, and, well, lead. However, it is also the case that leaders have far more freedom to transform, reimagine, and invigorate teaching, learning, and schooling than widely believed."

As I read the book, I relived many experiences as a teacher, principal, local superintendent and commissioner when I looked at how things could be rather than how they were. We, as education leaders, are in a remarkable time when leadership will truly make a difference for children. Just one example of "cage-busting leadership" helps to make the point.

As we look at our budget challenges in Kentucky, we have the opportunity to create new models of teaching and learning. We are seeing some of these models in our Innovation Lab Network schools and in the proposals being developed for our Districts of Innovation legislation. Rick Hess mentions a few models on page 149.

Rotation – Within a given course or subject, students rotate between learning modalities. [Rocketship Education](#) has created a hybrid model where students rotate out of classrooms to receive extra math and reading instruction via online learning.

Flipped classroom – This model utilizes online instruction for content; students receive more teacher-guided practice in the classroom.

Flex model – Students receive primarily online instruction and have a fluid schedule at school.

Self-blend – Students choose to take one or more courses online and blend between other models for the remainder of their course schedule.

As we all try to solve the challenges of less money and increasing expectations, I hope as leaders we will look to innovative methods and creative problem solving to help more students reach college and career readiness.

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