

**March 15, 2013**

### **A Productive Legislative Session**

All in all, the 2013 session of the General Assembly was a very productive session for education. The major initiative of the Governor, First Lady and the Kentucky Board of Education was the passage of the [graduation bill](#). This bill allows local school systems to raise the dropout age from 16 to 18. The bill includes a state trigger – once 55 percent of school districts adopt the change in policy, it would become a requirement in all districts within four years. It is my goal to have 55 percent of the school districts adopt a local policy raising the dropout age from 16 to 18 by the end of the 2013-14 school year. If we are successful in reaching our goal, then starting in the 2017-18 school year students across Kentucky would be required to attend school until they are 18.

Another major piece of legislation that was passed during this session was [HB 180](#). This bill requires the KBE/KDE to work with stakeholders to develop a statewide system of teacher/principal effectiveness and support. This bill was in response to federal requirements for the No Child Left Behind waiver.

Additionally, legislation was passed to complete the [reorganization](#) of the career and technical education programs in Kentucky. All CTE programs in K-12 were merged and placed under the Kentucky Department of Education. A statewide advisory panel will assist in developing the details of the merger and the vision for career and technical education in Kentucky.

Also, the General Assembly passed two identical preschool funding bills, [one in the House and one in the Senate](#), that will be much fairer to districts and much easier to understand. The funding bill will help districts plan budgets when they have a loss in preschool enrollment.

Finally, I wanted to highlight the [early graduation bill](#). This bill allows students to graduate from high school and move on to postsecondary options at the end of the junior year; it protects school district funding and provides scholarship funds to students. Also, the bill allows the typical KEES scholarship money to be calculated as if the student had completed 4 years of high school. This bill will help districts utilize funds gained from the early graduation option to improve the services for alternative and career technical education which could lower the dropout rate. If districts lower their dropout rates, then they receive more SEEK funding since they have more students in attendance.

Why was this session so successful for education? The education chair of the House, Carl Rollins, and the education chair of the Senate, Mike Wilson, established an excellent working relationship. While, they did not agree on everything, there was a sense of trust and a focus on improving education in Kentucky for all children. These legislators exhibited the type of collaboration that I wish we could see more of in Congress! Also, I want to thank the Governor and First Lady who were champions for education. Finally, I want to thank the excellent team at KBE/KDE who worked many long hours in behind the scenes meetings with legislators and the terrific “K” groups who came together on key legislative issues.

Now for the fun part – developing regulations and implementing the legislation during a time of dwindling resources. Tough work, but, the right work!

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