



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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Metlife Survey Provides Reinforcement for Teacher Support

This past week, Metlife released the latest report for the *Metlife Survey of The American Teacher*. Readers can find the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/7tlj6q6>. This survey has been conducted since 1984 to give a voice to students, teachers and parents. The survey looks at views concerning the teaching profession, parent and community engagement and effects of the current economy on families and schools. There were some very interesting findings in this year's survey.

According to the survey, there was a dramatic drop in teacher satisfaction this year. Those indicating they were "very satisfied" fell from 59 percent in 2009 to 44 percent in 2011. This is the lowest satisfaction rating in the history of the survey. The percentage of teachers who say they are fairly likely to leave the profession has increased by 12 points since 2009, from 17 percent to 29 percent.

To understand the drop in satisfaction and increase in likelihood of leaving the teaching profession, we can look at the impact of the economic downturn. Three-quarters (76 percent) of teachers reported declines in school budgets. Two-thirds (66 percent) of teachers reported layoffs in their schools. A majority (70 percent) of teachers reported increases in class sizes. Teachers also reported increases in poverty among students and families they serve, which has led to increased demands for health and social support services.

On a positive note, parents and teachers report an increase in parent and community engagement with schools. However, parent engagement is not universal among all schools. Parent and community engagement also have an impact on teacher satisfaction. In schools with high parent engagement, teachers are twice as likely to be very satisfied as compared to schools with low parent engagement (57 percent vs. 25 percent). Critical parent-school involvement activities include communication, volunteer opportunities, involving families in curriculum activities and decisions, involving parents in school decisions, coordinating school and community resources, and assisting families with parenting skills.

As I travel Kentucky, I see wonderful teachers and administrators who are excited about our focus on college and career readiness. However, I also see teachers who are frustrated with the continued decline of education dollars. The decline in education funding has led to increased class size, reduction of arts and practical living programs, reductions in planning time,

reductions in materials and textbooks, and reductions in professional development. Additionally, teachers across the nation feel under attack due to the focus on using standardized test data as the most important component of evaluation.

First and foremost, I am a teacher, and I identify with the struggles and concerns of teachers. It is my hope that the key decision makers for the state budget are listening to the concerns of teachers. While we all know that we are in a difficult spot at the present time, I do hope that the positive signals from the economy will translate into support for our teachers.

Support for teachers leads to satisfied teachers, which leads to low turnover, which leads to positive impacts on the future of Kentucky – our children!

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