



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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March 30, 2012

Education is a National Defense Concern

Last week the Council on International Relations released a report called *U.S. Education Reform and National Security*, which you can view [here](#). The report makes a startling statement – “America’s failure to educate is affecting its national security.”

The findings show that employers are finding it difficult to hire workers with the necessary skills (especially in defense and aerospace industries). Also, almost 75 percent of U.S. citizens between the ages of 17 and 24 are not qualified to join the military because they are physically unfit, have criminal records or have inadequate levels of education. Finally, the U.S. State Department and intelligence agencies are facing critical language shortfalls in areas of strategic interest.

The report made three major recommendations:

- Expand common core to science, technology and foreign language.
- Engage parents and communities in education reform through more choice of education programs.
- Develop a national security audit report for schools and districts that is transparent to parents and communities.

This report is the most recent in a long line of reports documenting the concerns with education in our nation. While no one likes to read reports that document our failure to educate children for their future, it is good news that Kentucky is leading the way in addressing the recommendations from this report and others.

Kentucky is certainly leading the nation in the [deployment](#) of Common Core Standards in English/language arts and math. Also, Kentucky is working closely with 26 other states to develop [science](#) standards. Kentucky is implementing an assessment and accountability system that will meet the requirements of the national security audit recommendation. Kentucky is implementing strategies such as a Program Review to address foreign language (we prefer the term “world language”). The key recommendation we are missing is the choice recommendation.

The foreign language recommendation is one that I hope readers will review. We have struggled with implementing our world language Program Review in Kentucky. We had support

for this Program Review in the House; however, Senate members were very concerned that the Kentucky Board of Education had exceeded its authority with the implementation of that Program Review.

The board approved regulations to implement the world language Program Review starting in 2014. We submitted our No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver with the world language Program Review as a component of our accountability model. We thought we were well on our way with implementation; however, the Senate budget included language that would prohibit the Kentucky Board of Education from implementing the world language Program Review.

Given the recommendations from the report from the Council on International Relations, it would seem that implementing the world language Program Review in Kentucky and similar programs in other states would be in the best interest of our national security. Additionally, failure to implement the world language Program Review in Kentucky means we would have to amend our NCLB waiver, which could cause problems with our timeline of allowing schools and districts to waive NCLB's rigid guidelines.

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