



Commissioner's

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Comments

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Expanding Our World

I know many of you are on a well-deserved vacation this week. I hope those of you who had spring break last week had a great week. I got the chance to take a week off and spend it at the National Science Teachers Association meeting. I know, that may not sound like much of a vacation, but it was. My wife went with me and while I got to enjoy some time with science teachers, I also got some down time to spend with her.

While I was there, I tried to see every Kentucky science teacher I could who was presenting. Unfortunately, there were not a lot. The ones I saw did a great job. It was nice to see the examples of good science instruction that we have here in Kentucky showcased.

As I went through the program to find our Kentucky teachers, it dawned on me that we need to have more of our great teachers presenting and learning from other great teachers. I then realized that this is most likely the same in most of our national organizations. I know, as well as anyone, how tight funds are for professional development and certainly I know that attending a conference is never high on anyone's list.

I also know that there is some well-deserved skepticism regarding teachers attending and fully maximizing the opportunity due to the poor choices of a few. However, I would like to encourage all of us to find a way to present the work we do whether at the state or national level. We can only improve if we are willing to make our world big enough to let others in. Besides being an opportunity to connect to other professionals, conferences allow us to see ourselves as others do.

Kentucky has a lot of work to do in education. There is no denying that. However, we are still viewed as a leader in education in the country. The only way to experience that is to get outside of the state. I hope we will consider sharing our expertise.

On another topic, Sunday was Autism Awareness Day. These children experience a disability that is not well understood by the general populace. It is unfortunate we need a day to stop, recognize and raise awareness of this disease. I say unfortunate because we should not need to raise awareness at this point in history. These children are a special treasure in my opinion. While they certainly have their challenges, they also tend to have hearts of gold and special talents as well.

I have recently had the opportunity to meet a twice-exceptional young man named Jack. He is brilliant and probably has a better grasp on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) than many adults. I would like all of us to pause a few minutes today and celebrate students like Jack and do all we can to ensure EACH child gets the education he/she deserves.