



Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday**



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United We Stand, Divided We Fail

The words United We Stand, Divided We Fail are emblazoned on the Kentucky state seal, displayed on the state flag and, in 1942, were adopted by the General Assembly as the Commonwealth's motto. While biblical in origin, this simple, yet inspiring phrase first appeared in modern times in the revolutionary war ballad *The Liberty Song*. Nearly 250 years later, with respect to John Dickinson, I'd like to adapt his lyric for our use – United We Stand for Education, Divided We Fail Our Children. This axiom sums up the coalescence we have realized in P-12 education in the Commonwealth in recent months.

In September 2013, the Kentucky Department of Education convened all state superintendents in Frankfort to discuss key education issues. At the top of the agenda was the development of key priorities for the FY15-16 state budget. Superintendents supported restoration of SEEK funds, Flex Focus funds, and funds for increased bandwidth and technology devices. The "top three" priorities were endorsed by the Kentucky Board of Education. Meanwhile, numerous education groups came together as the Kentucky Education Action Team.

Today, we see the fruition of those efforts in the state budget adopted by the General Assembly earlier this week. A few of the highlights reflect what can happen when educators stand together. Never before have we seen the level of cohesive commitment from all education, business, parent groups and even students for restoring funding to SEEK, Flex Focus and technology.

As a result of our united voice:

- Educators will see a pay raise of 1 percent in 2015 and 2 percent in 2016 (the first pay raise in six years).
- Educators will see an increase in extended school services to help provide additional time and support for children who are not achieving at the expected levels.
- Educators will see restoration of professional dollars to help implement more rigorous standards and teacher/principal effectiveness systems.
- Educators will see increases in funds to ensure our schools are safe for teachers and children.
- For the first time in the last six years, educators will have funding to purchase textbooks and instructional resources.

In our biennial TELL Kentucky Working Conditions Survey, teachers told us there was a critical need for more bandwidth and additional technology devices. This budget will provide additional resources to support those needs.

In total, K-12 education received a \$141 million increase in FY2015 and a \$228 million increase in FY2016 over FY2014 funding levels. With our unified voice, we were able to gain additional funds for education during a time that the state was not gaining any significant revenue enhancements. This is strong evidence

that when our adapted motto – United We Stand for Education -- actually happens, great things can happen.

Educators should take time to thank members of the General Assembly for their efforts in making K-12 education a top priority in the state budget. Additionally, educators should thank Governor Beshear and his staff for their tireless efforts in promoting restoration of funds for education.

As we move forward in the 2014-15 school year, I strongly encourage educators to remain united.

There will be efforts to divide us based on the anti-Kentucky Core Academic Standards group. There will be push back on the implementation of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System. There will be debate as the Kentucky Board of Education begins to review and modify the Unbridled Learning Accountability System.

It is critical that we continue to work together and united to help more students reach college and career readiness. We may not agree on every detail, however, we know that a united front is much more successful than one that is divided.

United We Stand for Education, Divided We Fail Our Children.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Education Commissioner