



# Commissioner's

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# Comments

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## Doing the Impossible for Kentucky Students

Spring is a time for new beginnings. I hope that everyone has had a chance to get away or at least find a way to reenergize in preparation for the remainder of the school year.

Over Easter weekend, I travelled to watch my son row for his university at a meet in Tennessee. As I sat on the banks of the beautiful lake with incredible weather, my thoughts drifted to Kentucky's next step in improving education for the Commonwealth's students.

Our new vision for Kentucky education is one that puts students at the center of our work, values the profession of education, and values the education of the whole child, not simply test scores. Our vision values innovation, collaboration, and putting traditional academia and career technical education on equal footing as both prepare students for their futures. Our new vision values students' ability to show evidence of proficiency in many ways. It values the growth of each student, the students' readiness to transition from one level to the next, opportunity and access, and closure of the achievement gap.

So by now you may be saying, "Oh here he goes again talking about the new accountability system." Yes, these values are built into the new system, and quite intentionally so. We approached the new system from a vision perspective, not compliance. If we are to move Kentucky education to a next level, we must think more broadly.

As we discuss our new vision for accountability, I have heard several say that people will focus only on what is tested or that accountability will make everything about compliance. I acknowledge that many have grown into a compliance mentality. But, I simply cannot accept that we are doomed to continue in this way.

Over the years, Walt Disney has served as an inspiration to me, and no doubt to many others. One of his sayings is one of my favorite quotes of all time: "I love to do the impossible."

I have to believe that quality educators across the Commonwealth have been waiting for the chance to spread their wings and their minds and nurture their students' futures. I believe that because I have seen Kentucky educators do this very thing for the past 25 years. When presented with a new challenge, they rise to the occasion and so do their students. Kentucky educators love to do the impossible!

The second thing Walt used to say was "Plus it!" Whenever one of his "imagineers" would come to him with an idea that was already innovative, he would tell them to Plus it! This would push them to think even bigger and work even harder. They knew he valued them, they knew he counted on them. I am saying that to all of our educators now. We have a new vision, so Plus it!

It is time for our students to experience innovation beyond what we have done before. It is time for our educators to know that I value them and their work. It is time for our students to get more than they thought they needed. It is time for us to know that if we work smart and not just hard, our students will fly to new heights. It is time for the adults to get out of the way and use all our skill and tools solely for students. It is time to Plus It and do the impossible for Kentucky students.