



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday



April 19, 2013

Superintendent Challenges

This week I met with the executive board of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents ([KASS](#)) and Executive Director Wilson Sears. The purpose of the meeting was to hear about the frustration that superintendents are feeling about recent actions and the negative impact this has had on the morale of superintendents across Kentucky.

I can hardly criticize our superintendents for their concerns. Over the last few years, we have seen significant reductions in funding for schools. As a superintendent, it is extremely difficult to propose a budget to a school board that reduces staff and services to students.

The continued decline of state funds for education and the impending impact of federal sequestration are very real issues. Coupled with declining resources and increased demands from Senate Bill 1 (2009) and the No Child Left Behind waiver, you have conditions that most certainly will impact morale.

Another issue that has certainly impacted superintendents has been the actions of a few bad actors. Most of our Kentucky superintendents are doing a terrific job for the students in their communities, in spite of budget reductions and many challenges of declining enrollments and increasing numbers of children in poverty. However, recent audits in districts like Mason, Breathitt and Dayton Independent have cast a cloud over superintendents and school boards in Kentucky.

These issues are not isolated to superintendents. All of our educators are beginning to feel very frustrated with the increasing gap between expectations and resources. This week in The New York Times, I read an interesting editorial, [The Kids Are \(Not\) All Right](#), by Charles Blow that further describes the challenges our educators are facing.

As commissioner, I made a commitment to our superintendents to provide many more opportunities for them to speak to me directly about their concerns and challenges. Also, I made a commitment to find ways to highlight the many positive things that are happening in our schools under the leadership of many dedicated leaders.

I have to applaud our educators in Kentucky. Even with all of the challenges they are facing and the frequent criticism they receive from many sources, I always find they are dedicated to children and helping all children achieve college- and career-readiness.

Certainly, times are tough but I know we have many leaders at all levels that will rise to the challenge. My job as commissioner is to be a constant advocate for what they need to do their job and to also be a constant advocate for the improvements that need to be made to help more children be successful. Balancing these two sometimes competing interests is a challenge. Some days I get it right and many days I fail but my resolve is to work for more balance.

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