



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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April 24, 2015

How Kentucky is creating responsive 21st-century schools

Over the past few weeks, I have been writing about the International Summit on the Teaching Profession that I attended recently. In last week's [blog](#), I highlighted the key ingredients for a responsive 21st-century school. I want to revisit those this week and briefly mention what is happening in Kentucky to address some of them.

Promoting effective school leadership

- Empower teachers to play a role in decision making at the school level – Kentucky has long been a leader in this regard. Kentucky teachers are heavily involved in what happens in a school through the school-based decision making councils and through professional learning communities. In addition, every two years, we ask teachers to let us know how they are involved in decision making at the school. The teacher survey results can be found at www.tellkentucky.org. 2015 results will be public in June.
- Provide opportunities for, and remove barriers to, continuing professional development for principals – Kentucky has strong principal development programs in our universities. Also, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce has worked with communities across Kentucky to provide innovative and creative leadership training to more than 100 principals the last few years. Kentucky is also providing training to principals who are looking for ways to improve student achievement in their schools. Through a partnership with the National Institute for School Leadership, we are training more than 100 principals a year.

Strengthening teachers' confidence in their own abilities

- Build teachers' capacity to provide instruction to all types of learners – the Kentucky Department of Education has offered an online resource for a number of years where teachers can access differentiated professional development aligned with the special needs of students in their classrooms.
- Support the development of interpersonal relationships/collaboration within the school – Many schools are providing common planning time for teams of teachers to collaborate and review student learning expectations, current student performance and identify instructional techniques that help improve student performance.

Innovating to create 21st-century learning environments

- Create conditions conducive to innovation – Legislation has enabled the state to create districts of innovation and for the Kentucky Board of Education to grant exemptions from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions in an effort to improve student learning. As a result, Kentucky's districts of innovation are spawning new approaches to teaching and learning.

While there is much work to do in Kentucky, there is much we have accomplished. It is extremely important that we continue to look for ways to improve public perception of the value of the teaching profession. Our very future depends on our ability to recruit, support, and retain great teachers.

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Education Commissioner