



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday



May 4, 2012

Set Aside May 8 to Thank a Teacher

Kentucky Derby Weekend is here, and I am sure a lot of you are planning to enjoy the fastest two minutes in sport, whether it be in person at Churchill Downs or more remotely at home or at a Derby party. It's a wonderful event for Kentucky and spotlights many of this state's strong traditions.

Another great tradition in Kentucky's recent history is its efforts to improve learning for all students. It is an ongoing process and one that has involved incredible work this year, particularly by Kentucky teachers.

It is often said that teachers do not receive the recognition for the work they do. That is why I encourage everybody to take a few minutes on May 8, [National Teacher Appreciation Day](#), to thank teachers for the wonderful work they do every day to ensure our children are successful.

Tremendous change has occurred in Kentucky public education system this year with the implementation of new standards and state tests, the creation of the [Unbridled Learning](#) accountability system and the development of the new teacher and principal Professional Growth and Effectiveness System ([PGES](#)).

Kentucky is a national leader in the effort to increase student achievement and prepare kids for life after high school. That excites us and brings us great pride. But I realize it also brings its share of stress and uncertainty, especially for teachers and others who feel pressure to learn and master the changes so they can raise achievement for all students and accomplish the goals we have set.

Yet, despite the additional work and the continued budget cuts, lack of textbook money and limited resources for professional development, I have been continually impressed with what I have seen as I visit classrooms throughout Kentucky. As I visit schools across the state and talk to educators, I am impressed by the high expectations Kentucky teachers are setting for their students and themselves and the innovation they are undertaking in their classrooms. Teachers have risen to the occasion as they have worked to implement new Common Core [Standards](#), prepared for the new [K-PREP](#) assessments and [Program Reviews](#), and developed innovative ways to ensure Kentucky students are engaged in meaningful learning that will ensure they are college- and career-ready.

A lot of states have been undertaking similar work in their schools. Not all those efforts have been productive or collegial. Some have resulted in legal wrangling.

In Kentucky, however, teachers are partners in our efforts to create new curriculum, instruction, assessment and evaluation systems that will help us ensure all children have the skills they need to succeed after graduation. At every stage, teachers have been at the table, working in networks to implement new standards, piloting new practices and systems and alerting us to implementation issues and problems that we may not have foreseen. This is exemplified by our ongoing, strong collaboration with the development of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System.

In turn, I and the Kentucky Board of Education have continued to seek out teacher input and insights through the [TELL](#) Kentucky survey — a tool that offers us valuable information as we focus on doing a better job of preparing teachers for the classroom and supporting those that are already there with effective professional development.

Kentucky is blessed to have such hard-working professionals in our schools. Showing our appreciation to them on May 8 is a small act. But it is one that I know would be much appreciated and is very much deserved.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.