



Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday**



May 16, 2014

The angst and anticipation of PGES

In order for more students to achieve success by reaching college- and career-readiness standards, we must have a highly effective teacher in every classroom, a highly effective leader in every school, a highly effective leader in every school district, and strong support and guidance from the state through the General Assembly, Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Board of Education.

The theory of action is strong and clear but the resulting plan is a daunting challenge to implement.

The teacher, leader and superintendent growth and effectiveness blueprint has taken Kentucky educators more than four years of careful planning, negotiation, testing and tweaking. Full implementation of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System without personnel consequences will roll out for teachers, leaders and superintendents during the 2014-15 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the effectiveness system will be used for personnel decisions at all levels. The work to date has been very difficult; however, we are only half way to our goal.

Full implementation of our educator effectiveness system will require significant changes and intensive training, but the benefits are many. Superintendents will be much more engaged in instructional and planning processes with their principals and school councils. Principals will be more involved in monitoring instruction and providing feedback to teachers to help them improve. Teachers will be looking for models and exemplars of powerful instruction that help more students succeed. That's what should happen.

I do, however, have some trepidation as we move toward full implementation of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System in 2014-15. I am concerned that teachers and principals may not have received adequate training to implement the system. I am concerned that teachers and principals may not fully understand the multiple measures in the effectiveness system. I am concerned that principals may not implement the system with fidelity and rather than focus on feedback to teachers so they may improve teaching and learning, the principals will use the system as just another checklist to get the work done. I am concerned that at the end of the school year we may have more than 90 percent of our teachers rated effective and yet student achievement will not have improved.

A couple of recent national issues also cause me some anxiety. In recent weeks, we have seen a number of education research reports question the use of student value-added growth measures. These reports show the wide variability of value-added measures and the inconsistency between value-added measures and other measures of teacher effectiveness.

In Kentucky, we made very early decisions on using a student growth percentile that made more sense to teachers than a value-added measure used in surrounding states. Also, we were very intentional in not using student growth as a weighted component in our effectiveness system. In Kentucky, we will certainly use student growth as a significant component in teacher, principal and superintendent effectiveness

systems; however, our focus is more on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning rather than dismissal of educators.

My uneasiness has been eased in the last few weeks with some encouraging news from the U.S. Department of Education (USED). When considering No Child Left Behind waivers, USED indicated for a large number of states, it would focus on standards and assessments and work with states on teacher and leader effectiveness. This is a good sign. Many states will not have student growth measures until 2016-17 since they are implementing new assessments in 2014-15 and at least two years of assessment data is needed to generate student growth data at the state level. In Kentucky, we first implemented our new college/career-readiness assessments in the spring of 2012, so we will have three years of data at the end of the 2014 assessment cycle but still may benefit from USED's approach.

No doubt, the national debate around teacher and leader effectiveness will continue and our roll out of the Kentucky Professional Growth and Effectiveness System will move forward. A key for Kentucky will be that we continue to listen to our educators to improve the system and weigh the results of the effectiveness system against the student and school measures of college- and career-readiness. We must see improvements in both these areas. If we do not, our effectiveness system will lack credibility.

The theory of action is clear. Our planning has been collaborative and intentional. Now, we face the really tough work of implementing, monitoring and improving an effectiveness system that has the potential to not only elevate the education profession, but also to significantly improve student outcomes.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Education Commissioner