



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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Kentucky Teachers Speak, Others Listen

The nation is listening to Kentucky teachers.

It was my honor to attend an event in Washington, D.C. this week that highlighted the great work of our teachers. The event was sponsored by [Learning Forward](#), formerly the National Staff Development Council, and was titled "Advancing the Common Core: State Strategies for Transforming Professional Learning."

At the event, Kentucky was highlighted for the extensive work that our teachers have done since the inception of the [Common Core State Standards](#). Kentucky teachers and professors were heavily involved in reviewing the standards and providing feedback to the committees that developed the common core.

Kentucky teachers worked on a monthly basis, in regional networks, to translate the common core standards into language that teachers, students and parents could understand. Kentucky teachers became leaders, in every district in the state, to prepare every teacher in Kentucky for implementation of the common core standards that we now call the [Kentucky Core Academic Standards](#).

Kentucky teachers were the center of attention at the event this week. Numerous groups asked our teachers specific questions about the professional learning needs of teachers required to implement the common core in their own states. Most of the work highlighting Kentucky's focus on redesigning professional learning can be found in the Learning Forward [report](#), "Seizing the Moment: State Lessons for Transforming Professional Learning." Our work with Learning Forward will continue this year through funding from the [Sandler Foundation](#).

The goal of professional learning is to provide teachers with just-in-time learning opportunities that are differentiated based on what each teacher needs to meet the learning needs of his or her students. A key tool in meeting this goal is the use of CIITS, the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System. It provides differentiated learning through a technology-based model.

Kentucky teachers have worked very hard over the last four years. They share the vision of helping every child reach college/career-readiness. Kentucky teachers have led the nation in the implementation of common core standards that provide the base for college- and career-ready expectations. They have done this in spite of no textbook funding for five years, no pay raise in five years, a 75 percent reduction in professional development funds and many other budget cuts that hamper services for children.

When I ask teachers why they continue to move forward in spite of all these budget and resource problems, I get the same answer: we do it for our children; we do it to ensure our children have hope; we do it for the same reason a teacher in Oklahoma covers her students with her own body as a tornado bears down on their school.

Some in Kentucky, for political purposes only, want to undermine the work of teachers. Some want to abandon the last four years of work on implementing common core standards because they believe there is a conspiracy to control the minds of our children. I will not honor that premise with a rebuttal. I only encourage those people to talk with Kentucky teachers and to look at their work. Also, I ask that they look closely at the results of implementing the Kentucky Core Academic Standards and the improvement in college/career-readiness rates.

I will admit that, as Commissioner, I am part of a conspiracy. The conspiracy involves working with partners across the state and nation to help ALL students reach college- and career-readiness so that the futures of our children, state and nation are bright.

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Kentucky Education Commissioner