



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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College/career-readiness for ALL – Part I

As I reflect on the last six years of working with educators in Kentucky, one of the most successful strategies has been the focus on college- and career-readiness.

Recently, the Education Commission of the States recognized the Kentucky Board of Education for the innovation of the Unbridled Learning accountability model, which has college and career readiness as a primary focus. The board's recognition highlights the terrific job that our educators in Kentucky have done over the last six years helping more students reach college readiness.

The focus on college readiness was a result of Senate Bill 1 in 2009. At that time, only 30 percent of our high school graduates were able to enter credit bearing courses at the postsecondary level without the need for remediation. That number came from ACT results, the only measure we had at the time.

Thanks to a strong collaboration with our postsecondary partners under the leadership of Bob King at the Council of Postsecondary Education, Kentucky colleges developed several other measures of college readiness. Kentucky colleges expanded the use of the ACT Compass and the Kentucky-developed placement tests for math and language arts – KYOTE.

Many of our Kentucky colleges offered college remedial courses at high schools so that seniors who had not met the ACT benchmarks for college readiness were able to successfully complete the remediation during their senior year at no cost to parents. By utilizing multiple measures of college readiness, high schools and colleges were able to help more students reach the postsecondary-defined college-readiness levels for language arts and math.

Kentucky has been recognized nationally for this work in many publications due to the strong collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary. It is critical to note that the measures for college readiness were not defined by K-12. ALL measures for college readiness were defined and agreed upon by Kentucky colleges. What this means is that any student who reaches college readiness as defined by Kentucky colleges on the ACT, Compass, and/or KYOTE can be placed in a credit-bearing college course upon being enrolled in the college. Since Kentucky began this work, the college readiness rates have moved from 30 percent to more than 60 percent.

It is estimated that students and parents have been able to save more than \$1,000 per student by avoiding non-credit bearing remedial course tuition at the college level. With almost 15,000 more students reaching college readiness for the class of 2015 compared to the class of 2009, Kentucky families have realized an estimated savings of almost \$15 million. On top of that, high school graduates who reach college readiness levels are more likely to return to college for a second year, take more credit-bearing courses, and have a higher GPA.

I am extremely honored to have worked in a state with such a focus on student success. The partnership between K-12 and postsecondary is a model for all states. Kentucky teachers are the envy of the nation. Kentucky students and families have benefitted. Thanks for letting me be a part of such important work.

Next week, I will focus on the tremendous work done in career readiness.

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Commissioner of Education