



Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday**



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Make It Real

While most of the country seems embroiled in a political fight around Common Core State Standards and their implementation, too many of our students are graduating from high school unprepared for the current workforce. An upcoming special report, *No College = Low Wages*, from the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS) brings this issue to the forefront. The report is due out on July 25, so be sure to check the [KCEWS website](#) for the full report once it is released.

The following highlights are based on the third of the total high school graduates from 2009-10 and 2011-12 who did not enroll in postsecondary programs. Of the third, 60 percent went directly into the workforce

- On average, Kentucky's public high school graduates from 2011-12 earned \$7,567 the year following graduation. After three years the 2009-10 graduates' wages rose to \$11,511.
- Three years after high school, more than three out of four graduates from 2009-10 who did not attend postsecondary were earning less than full-time minimum wage.
- Female graduates who did not attend postsecondary are earning 30 percent less than male graduates.
- African American high school graduates who did not attend postsecondary were earning 30 percent less than their white counterparts
- Graduates with 20 or more unexcused absences in their senior year earned up to 55 percent less than those with five or fewer absences.
- About 60 percent of the high school graduates, who did not attend postsecondary, work in three industry groups that have three of the four lowest average wages.

These facts should be a wakeup call to high school students and their parents. This is clear evidence that high schools must do a better job in preparing all graduates to enter postsecondary programs (one year, two year, or four year diploma or certification) prepared for credit bearing work and with the skills necessary to succeed in careers that pay a living wage.

We certainly can continue to discuss the right wording for standards and the right assessments to measure the standards, however, we need to make the discussion REAL! Too many of our high school students are leaving high school unprepared for postsecondary and unprepared for careers. We have made excellent progress in the last four years in addressing this situation; however, we have much more work to do. Let's not get sidetracked with the political debates around standards and assessments, let's stay focused on the getting ALL students prepared for THEIR FUTURE and not our past.

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Education Commissioner