



Commissioner's

by Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.
Kentucky Commissioner of Education

Comments

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Courage in the Face of Change

Courage, a simple word. Nearly everyone knows how to define it. Many statements exemplify it. It takes courage to rush into battle, to stand before a crowd of peers, to even take a stand for what is right. It takes just as much courage to be patient (especially in a highly charged environment that screams rush), to listen to others, to admit when you do not have all of the answer, and to admit when you are wrong.

In this blog, I'd like to address another type of courage, courage in the face of change. This is a special type of courage. It is about putting another's need in front of your personal needs. It is about trying to consider the uncomfortable truth, that only through change can we make the lives of our students better.

Change is uncomfortable, it is at times unwieldy. I know that Kentucky educators have seen great change over the past few years, but it has made us stronger and it has made a better life for our students.

Andre Gide said, "Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore."

We are at an important and, I believe, historic moment in Kentucky and across the nation with the passage and implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Courage will be required if we are to move forward in educating our students. If we are going to actually make change, we are going to have to be ready to lose sight of the shore. In other words, those things that have been the basis of where we are today of which some have proven successful on and some have not. Oddly enough, even when we aren't successful, we often will still choose comfort over the possibility of change.

I have named more than 160 individuals to come together and develop our new accountability system. This is going to be hard and intense work, but work that is needed in Kentucky. But they cannot be the only people involved. We need all of our educators and shareholders to be engaged and willing to inform the process.

I have been clear that I am open to a brand new system. There is no agenda here on my part except to develop a system that will drive adults to make good decisions for our students. To do that, it will take courage, but given Kentucky's history I know our people are up to the task.

All of that sounds good, sounds great actually. However, if we do not first stand up for ourselves as the guidance for ESSA is being developed, we may never get there. We have until August 1 to submit feedback on the United States Education Department (USED) proposed regulations on accountability, state plans, and data reporting. The link to submit comments can be found [here](#). I am not going to tell anyone what to say, but I want to push all to have the courage to send feedback.

Robert F. Kennedy said, "Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, these ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

It is time consuming and tough to stand for what is right. I encourage all of you to send feedback to the USED so that Kentucky's voice will be heard loud and clear. I would appreciate it if you would support the issues the Kentucky Department of Education has identified as reflected in my congressional testimony, but if you see different issues that is

fine too. You can link to my House Committee on Education and the Workforce [oral](#) and [written](#) testimony from last month as well to the [oral](#) and [written](#) testimony presented to the Senate Committee on Health Education, Labor and Pensions last week. While they are very similar, there are a few differences. I just want the Commonwealth of Kentucky to lead the way in providing direction to USED. It is our right to do this, but it is also what is right.

While courage manifests itself in many ways and has many forms, in my opinion, there is no area that requires more courage than education. Everyone thinks they know about it and everyone has a better way to do it. It often feels like everyone is on the attack. However, only through courage in the face of change in education can we make a real difference for students. We must push to “search for a new ocean” and have the courage to “lose sight of the shore.” If we do, our children will be prepared to be a fulfilled and contributing member of our Commonwealth and beyond.