



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday



August 23, 2013

Listening to Teacher Voices

This week, The New Teacher Project (TNTP) published a follow-up report to its October 2012 study, [“The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America’s Urban Schools.”](#) This year’s report, [“Perspectives from Irreplaceable Teachers,”](#) was compiled from a survey of celebrated teachers across the nation.

The survey was completed by 117 of America’s best teachers, representing 36 states and all 10 of the nation’s largest school districts. The survey respondents were state and national award winners, National Board Certified Teachers, Milken Educator Award winners, Teach for America teachers, National Education Association (NES) members, and KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) charter school teachers. The summary findings were interesting.

1. When it comes to measuring success in the classroom, they want a wide array of factors. This is good news for Kentucky and other states that are developing teacher effectiveness systems that include multiple measures.
2. They attribute little of their success to formal preparation or professional development programs. This finding highlights the need for teacher preparation reform and shift from professional development to differentiated professional learning. Both of these issues are being addressed in Kentucky. Recent reports from the Council of Chief State School Officers and the new Commission on Accreditation of Educator Preparation standards will guide our work in Kentucky.
3. These teachers have a love/hate relationship with their profession. “Respondents cherish the opportunity to make a difference in their students’ lives, but they feel beaten down by many other aspects of the profession – low pay, excessive bureaucracy, poor working conditions and ineffective leaders, and colleagues.”

Policy makers and legislators would be wise to listen to the voice of teachers. In Kentucky we have numerous processes in place to listen to our teachers. More than 42,000 teachers respond Our TELL Kentucky biennial working conditions survey in the spring of 2013. Our partners at the Prichard Committee, Kentucky Education Association and the Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky have launched several programs to provide a stronger voice to teachers in Kentucky.

Our success in helping more children reach college/career-ready status depends heavily on teachers. We should listen to teachers and then act on their recommendations. Hopefully, this report from TNTP will serve as a conversation starter in schools, districts, and state agencies across the nation and encourage more decision makers to listen to teachers!

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Education Commissioner