



The Commissioner's Blog

Thoughts from
Kentucky's Commissioner of Education
Kevin C. Brown, Interim Commissioner



September 18, 2015

It is nearly time for the annual ritual known throughout the Kentucky Department of Education as the "scores release" – the public reporting of K-PREP testing and Unbridled Learning accountability results from the previous year for every school, district and the Commonwealth as a whole. So for my blog this week, I have asked Associate Commissioner Kelly Foster, who heads our Office of Next-Generation Schools and Districts, to share her thoughts about what all these numbers mean and why they are so important to our efforts to serve Kentucky students.

Putting data into action for improvement

As schools across the state anxiously await the release of the online [School Report Card](#), educators must have a plan in place to effectively use the data provided. Data is just a bunch of numbers unless you analyze it and do something with it. Carly Fiorina, the former executive, president, and chair of Hewlett-Packard Co once said, "The goal is to turn data into information, and information into insight."

In order to make informed decisions that are not tied to emotions and remain focused on children and what is best for them and their education, the first step in analyzing the data should be to ask Edie Holcomb's data questions.

- What does the data tell us?
- What does the data not tell us?
- What are the reasons for celebration (analysis of data)?
- What are opportunities for improvement (analysis of data) include contributing factors and root cause?

Superintendents, school boards, principals, school-based decision making councils and teachers must review and analyze the data to determine what instructional changes need to occur and which students need additional interventions in order to be successful. Having a clear understanding of the data is essential to develop a data-driven school or district improvement plan.

School and district improvement plans are developed around goals that focus on proficiency, gap, growth, college and career readiness, graduation rate and novice reduction. Plans should be developed after reviewing the data and receiving information from all stakeholder groups. Each plan should be built around the continuous improvement model and ensure that goals, strategies and activities have been identified based on student data.

School and district plans are required to be submitted into ASSIST within 90 days after the release of the School Report Card. And like data, plans are not of much use unless they are put into practice. After the plan has been submitted, it is essential that plans are monitored at the school and district level to ensure that strategies and activities are being implemented to meet the goals of the plans. An efficient way to ensure that improvement plans are being implemented is to identify 30-60-90 day plans from the overall

plan and appoint people to ensure the work is occurring in order to help meet the goals of the school and district plan.

Using data to ensure quality plans are developed is key to increasing student achievement and overall school improvement. Using the data questions to guide the development of the plan helps keep emotions out of the conversation and stakeholders focused on student achievement. Monitoring and ownership of the school and district plans allows schools and district to take an intentional, laser-like and focused approach to the overall goal of increasing student achievement.