



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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School Board Role Key for College/Career Readiness

Recently, I've worked with the Kentucky School Boards Association ([KSBA](#)) as the organization prepares for its annual regional [meetings](#) for school board members.

KSBA continues to be a strong partner in our work to implement [Unbridled Learning](#). Over the past few years, KSBA has provided training and support for school board members focused on implementation of Common Core Standards, career and technical programs, improving the graduation rate and understanding the new assessment and accountability system.

Bill Scott, executive director for KSBA, offers the key roles for school boards:

- Set clear and high expectations.
- Create the conditions for success.
- Hold the system accountable.
- Create the public will to succeed.
- Learn as a board team.

In setting clear and high expectations, we were very excited that every school board chair and superintendent signed the Commonwealth Commitment to College and Career Readiness a few years ago. From research, we know that the first step in improving classroom-, school-, district- and state-level student performance is to establish high expectations. The Kentucky Board of Education has set a goal of increasing the percentage of students that graduate college/career-ready from 34 percent to 67 percent by 2015. It is my hope that as school boards set goals for superintendent evaluations, the college/career-ready goal will be part of the annual evaluation of the superintendent. This is a clear signal in setting high expectations for the school system.

In creating conditions for success, the key role of the school board during this time of dwindling resources is to focus on those strategies and activities that are aligned with the goals of the school system. We have reached a point in our local and state budgets that we are unable to do everything for every constituent group. By focusing on a few strategic priorities and providing support for these priorities, school boards can stretch existing dollars.

One of the key ways to create conditions for success is to focus on working conditions. KSBA has provided excellent training on how school boards can utilize the [TELL Kentucky](#) working conditions survey to provide support for educators.

Hold the system accountable. With the advent of the new School Report Card, school board members will have easy access to data about their schools and districts. The new School Report Card also will allow the school board to provide transparency of data to the local community. Also, board members will have access to school and district improvement plans that are aligned to goals of college/career readiness, student achievement, graduation rate and closing achievement gaps. Close monitoring of the district plan at regularly scheduled intervals will certainly signal to the public that boards are committed to accountability.

School board members have to advocate for improving student outcomes. I believe that through setting high expectations, creating conditions for success, holding the system accountable and being transparent about progress, school boards will build public will to support schools.

Finally, it is important that the board work as a team and learn as a team. KSBA offers many excellent training modules that are closely aligned to Unbridled Learning. Also, by scheduling regular reviews of progress toward district goals that will be documented in the district and school improvement plans, the board will soon learn what is working and what is not working. This information provides the board with the ability to target resources to improve the effectiveness and productivity of the school system.

I tip my hat to school board members across Kentucky. They work for little or no pay. They receive lots of criticism (especially around budget time). However, they are dedicated individuals who are committed to improving the future for the children of Kentucky.

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