



Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday**



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Apology to teachers

This week, we sent out an apology to Kentucky teachers. We apologized for the software glitches that teachers were confronted with when they tried to complete the components of the new evaluation system. What happened that warrants an apology?

Kentucky has worked closely with teacher, principal, superintendent, school board and parent organizations to develop a system called the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). This system is in response to federal and state requirements to develop evaluation systems that use student growth as a significant factor. The work has been ongoing for almost 5 years now. In collaboration with teachers, principals, and superintendents, KDE designed software to support the new PGES.

For teachers, the new software system provides them with access to content standards, standards rewritten into "I can" statements, lesson planning tools, assessment design tools, student performance, professional development, and the components of the new Teacher Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (TPGES). The effectiveness system components in the software are self-reflection, professional growth plan, peer and supervisor observation data, student growth data, and student voice data. The components are grouped together in our state software system within the Educator Development Suite (EDS). By using the software, principals can keep up with the components of the effectiveness system for each teacher they supervise and teachers are able to manage the evidences of the system without having to keep a paper portfolio (paperwork reduction).

The system was designed by teachers for teachers; however, the last few weeks have been very difficult for teachers and principals. The first component of the EDS was the teacher self-reflection. Teachers are asked to utilize the Charlotte Danielson framework for Effective Teaching and identify areas of strength and areas of improvement. This should have been very easy to use and not require too much teacher time. The reality is that the software had a number of problems. Teachers had difficulty logging in. Teachers, who did not save their work often, lost it. The software did not have an auto-save capacity and the time out restrictions were too tight. All in all, many teachers struggled with the software during the early part of the school year when they had little time to spare.

KDE and the software provider have been working overtime to correct the problems. As of this week, we now have more than 32,000 teachers who have successfully started or completed their self-reflection. Many teachers have now moved on to the professional growth plan, observations, and student growth goals. The data are showing that most of the software problems have been addressed and repaired.

As commissioner, I wanted to offer my sincere apology to the many teachers and principals who experienced frustration with the software that was supposed to make their job easier – not more difficult. I

wanted to thank teachers and principals for their patience and persistence in dealing with the software problems.

We have worked almost five years together to develop a system that elevates the teaching profession and focuses on professional growth of teachers and principals. We will continue to monitor the software and the teacher experience with the software very closely. As teachers discover problems or concerns with the software, please let the Help Desk know of the problems so that we can quickly address the issues.

It is my hope that the rest of the year and the required components of the new system go very smoothly and that teachers feel they are supported in their efforts to grow professionally.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Education Commissioner