



# Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner  
Terry Holliday**



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## **The nature of education**

Kentucky has been featured in numerous state and national media sources recently for the improved performance in college- and career-readiness rates and graduation rates. As commissioner, I have been very proud of the efforts of teachers, administrators, students, and education partners in implementing Senate Bill 1 (2009) which required more rigorous standards, assessments, accountability model and professional development for teachers.

While there has been a lot of good news recently, as I look closely at the performance of our students and schools, there are areas that should be addressed. One of the major areas is the continued achievement gap between student groups.

I have been very encouraged by recent developments in Fayette County. The local equity council has worked with the school administration and the school board to adopt and implement 10 major recommendations for closing achievement gaps.

I have also been encouraged by the commitment in Jefferson County schools to address the hiring of minority teachers. I have made a commitment to the Kentucky Board of Education to redouble our state efforts on closing achievement gaps.

At the December meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education, we have invited a national group, Education Trust, to present findings from their recent report that questions the ability of current state accountability models to address the achievement gap. Over the coming months, the state board will look at ways to improve the accountability model to address concerns about the achievement gap. Also, the department will be working closely with advisory groups to develop specific state strategies that could help schools and districts develop local plans to address achievement gaps.

The other concern I have is mathematics performance. Kentucky students are above national averages in reading and science as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress; however, our mathematics performance is lagging the nation. In a recent report from the National Governor's Association titled [Unlocking Young Children's Potential: Governors' Role in Strengthening Early Mathematics Learning](#), I noted three recommendations that could address our mathematics performance.

- 1) There is a need for states to build support for early mathematics education within pre-kindergarten expansion, early literacy, STEM education and future workforce preparation.
- 2) States should align high-quality standards throughout the education pipeline and mathematics instruction should reflect current research. The report was clear that too often our early mathematics education provides less time and less rigor than needed to help build a mathematics literacy in children.

3) States need to look at changes to improve educator preparation and ways to support building early childhood and elementary teachers' capacity in mathematics instruction.

Lots of great accomplishments and lots of work left to do. That is the nature of education!

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Education Commissioner