



Commissioner's

Comments

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Board of education members critical to future of public education

The boards of education in our state and country share a tremendous responsibility. They are critical to improving the lives of students, and in turn our state and nation. Although we officially celebrate their contributions next month in Kentucky, in advance of that, I think it is important to highlight the significance of their work as we prepare for a new legislative session and to take on increased state and local control of public education should the federal Every Student Succeeds Act become law, which it likely will be by the end of the year.

I want to start with my thoughts on my own state board. I believe that some of the most important work I do is with the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE). Our work together forms the basis of the vision we have for education in Kentucky. Our relationship is critical to progress and our working together helps us come to the best answer. That does not mean they always agree with each other, or with me. What it does mean is we that work hard – together – to consider every possibility and develop policy that will result in a better educational experience for our students. In my opinion, I have the opportunity to work with the best board in the country. The members understand the need for their leadership, commitment, focus on policy and taking action based on what will provide the greatest benefit for our children. They are a great model for the Commonwealth and the nation.

This is an interesting time in Kentucky and if there has ever been a need for the leadership of our local boards, it is now. We know from research across the country that the best boards work well together, with their district offices, and focus on policy. I know this can be tough given all the demands and information board members receive on a daily basis, but it is critical that we all focus on children and make it a priority to act in their best interest.

In the face of new accountability, lower budgets and shifting priorities, our local board members stand between the policies at the state level and implementation at the school level. Local board members play a special role in our communities. Unless they have served on a local board, I do not think people realize that being a board member is a full time job – with little or no pay. They do not get to turn off being a board member at the grocery store, the mall, or even church. They listen to the concerns of the community, their superintendents, their parents and their community at large. They then have to take those concerns and determine the best course of action for students given the resources at their disposal. I applaud their work and their dedication.

As we move into our legislative and budget session, it will be critical that our local board members provide leadership on policy work at the local and state level. Their constituency does not only elect them to

manage the school system, but also local board members are entrusted with providing the conditions by which our students can achieve the American Dream.

I am excited about our work ahead. With the expected approval of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, we are about to embark on the huge task of developing a new accountability system for the Commonwealth. I am honored to do that work for our students with our local board members and our other education shareholders.

