



# Commissioner's

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## Comments

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### Off to a good start on a new accountability system

Last week, we had our first meeting of the Accountability Steering Committee. It is composed of 37 individuals representing teachers, principals, superintendents, community members, higher education, education advocates – including the business community, legislators and parents. It is a huge group, but I felt it was important to ensure we had the perspective of all shareholders. In the coming weeks, you will learn more about the overall process. The steering committee is just one facet. There are nine other committees that have similar makeups.

At the meeting, the steering committee reviewed the main themes we learned from the Town Hall meetings held across the state this spring. We reviewed all the comments that were made at the meetings along with submitted emails and categorized them into central themes. The themes we most often heard were:

- Our children must be at the heart of the system.
- A well-rounded education is important and necessary.
- All subjects, both tested and non-tested, need to be valued.
- Access and opportunity for students are critical.
- An emphasis on teaching is needed.
- Collaboration instead of competition among schools and districts needs to be the focus.

We are continuing to take feedback through a special [email box](#), so keep your thoughts coming. You may join a virtual Town Hall Meeting on Tuesday, June 7 at 6:30 p.m. ET or on demand anytime thereafter by clicking [here](#). I am so glad we decided to do the Town Halls. I learned a lot from them and plan on making them an annual event (although not so many in such a short time).

The Steering Committee agreed on a few principles to guide the work – based on the feedback from the Town Halls and discussions in the committee. The Steering Committee agreed that:

- The system should be focused on the welfare of all students and promote good decision making for their benefit.
- The system should promote a holistic and quality education for all students.
- The system should reflect the Kentucky Department of Education's guiding principles of equity, achievement and integrity.
- The system should be simple and easy to understand.
- Data should be reported in a dashboard that better illustrates school/district progress or deficits than a single number.

So, we are off to a good start. Shortly we will be communicating about the rest of the process. There is much work to do, but I believe that we have an incredible amount of brainpower in our state to make what we are doing a model for the rest of the country. We will need to work together and hold each other accountable. We will need to develop our common vision and stick to it. Most of all, we will need to remember who this is for, our students.

On a related topic, last week, the United State Department of Education (USED) released the draft regulations for the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Some of you may have heard that I am not thrilled with a couple of issues in

the proposed guidance including the timing of some issues and the use of a summative number rather than a dashboard for reporting. I want to encourage all of you to be engaged in the public input process by going to the [Federal Register website](#), reading the draft regulations and making your voice heard.

We cannot move ahead as long as we keep a foot in the past. I have already made my thoughts known loud and clear, I need the Commonwealth to do the same. We need to do this to ensure the full impact of ESSA is realized here. If it is, I firmly believe we will continue to build a world class education system for Our Children and Our Commonwealth.