



# KENTUCKY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Terry Holliday  
Commissioner of Education

October 5, 2011

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Dr. Terry Holliday, Commissioner  
Kentucky Department of Education  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero Street  
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Terry:

Pursuant to the statutory mandate, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has completed your annual evaluation. This evaluation was verbally shared with you on August 4, 2011, at the regular KBE meeting in Frankfort. This letter will serve as the written record of our discussion.

The membership of the board unanimously agrees that your performance during 2010-11 has been outstanding. As expressed by Chair David Karem to open your evaluation discussion, "You are the right person at the right time to move Kentucky's education system forward."

Many positive accomplishments and attributes were shared with you during the August 4 session including the following:

- As commissioner you have put Kentucky's education system on the course requested by the board. You have been efficient, effective and innovative while maintaining focus on the success of all of Kentucky's students. The board is very pleased with your leadership.
- Through your actions and words you have honored Kentucky's history of education reform and sought to build on our past accomplishments.
- Regarding the previous year's employee survey, you are to be commended for showing good progress in improving the weaker areas as well as maintaining areas of strength.
- Through the long application processes for Race to the Top, you kept everyone focused and upbeat while producing a strategic road map to guide our work in the years to come. Although the state was not selected to receive the funding the application proved highly competitive against many other states. In addition, as testament to your effectiveness and efficiency, the crafted strategic plan is now being implemented even in the face of limited resources.
- The board commends you for exceptional outreach efforts; in fact we've noted that you have provided more outreach than any previous commissioner. You go above and beyond to get the message out.

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- The business community is very supportive of your work and you are to be commended for delivering a consistent message at every event where you appear.
- Your work with major stakeholder groups has been outstanding resulting in strong relationships across the state, and most notably, with the Governor and his administration. Tremendous collaboration has been established with the Education Professional Standards Board and the Council on Postsecondary Education. Dr. Robert King, Dr. Phillip Rogers and you have become a powerful force to coordinate work across all three agencies and to ensure a continuous and comprehensive system of education marked by exceptional quality.
- You have distinguished yourself on a national level through your work with the Council of Chief State School Officers, engaging federal legislators in discussion about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and pursuing a waiver of No Child Left Behind requirements on a fast-track time schedule. In so doing, you have put Kentucky on the national radar and in the spotlight.
- Your effective and transparent use of performance metrics and deliverology provide a framework through which the department and the board can stay focused on very clear goals and objectives. Your efforts in this area not only provide direction internally but also serve as an example to school districts and local boards across the state so they might implement strategic and measurable goals.

In addition to the many positives that you have accomplished, the board shared the following areas of growth upon which we ask you to focus for the coming year:

- In the current economic climate, we will need to maintain a focus on efficient use of limited resources while also striving to be effective and innovative for Kentucky's students. We look forward to your continued leadership in this regard.
- We recognize that strengthening and maintaining relationships with stakeholders is an ongoing process. We also believe it is essential to the success of our shared goals in education. We ask that you keep the following in mind as you work with stakeholders:
  - ❖ The 174 superintendents and their leadership teams need to be on board as we progress through implementation of our Unbridled Learning goals. Continued cultivation of these relationships, characterized by mutual respect, is imperative if we are to achieve our mission of success for all Kentucky students.

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- ❖ As implementation of Unbridled Learning is on an exceptionally fast timeline, we must be assured that no constituencies are left behind. Where miscommunication, lack of understanding or disagreement exists, we must redouble our efforts to build broad and far-reaching support.
- ❖ As the General Assembly is integral to our ultimate success, strong and effective relationships must be a priority.
- ❖ Similarly, an increased effort must be made in the communications area to ensure exceptional media relations. We encourage you to routinize meetings with editorial boards and media leaders across the state.
- ❖ Finally, as this state and this board have placed a strong priority on the success of all of Kentucky's students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, we encourage you to provide continued focus on the empowerment and training of minority superintendent candidates and in mentoring new minority superintendents once they are hired.

As to your performance on the goals set for 2010-11 in both relationship building and process changes, the board applauds your progress and notes that all goals were either met or exceeded. Congratulations on a job well done!

In looking at next year, we asked you to come back to us at the October 5 board meeting with well-defined performance goals and measures for 2011-12.

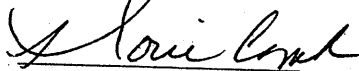
Again, we are extremely pleased with your leadership at the department, state and national levels. The board looks forward to another successful year and to your steady hand helping to guide the state's education system through the tremendous change that is underway.


Sincerely,

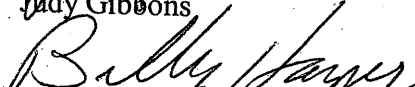
Kentucky Board of Education members

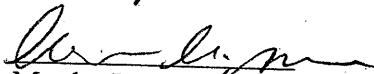
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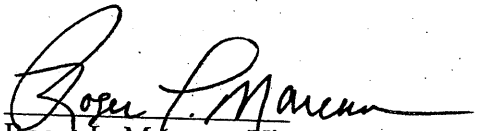
  
David Karen, Chair

  
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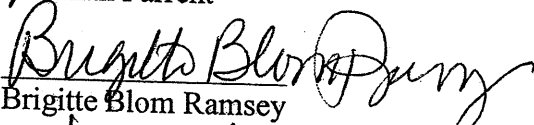
  
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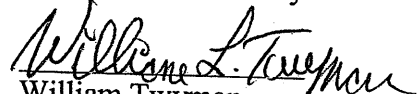
  
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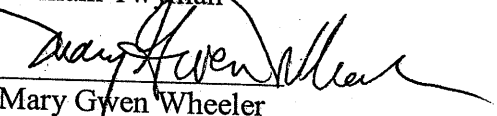
  
Martha Jones

  
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## **GATES FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT KEY FINDINGS**

In late 2011, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation offered to implement a communications assessment for the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to identify how the department communicates with the districts it serves and how districts respond to the communication it provides. The intent of this assessment was to maximize communication efforts and ensure a collaborative, productive working relationship between school districts and the department.

Soholt Strategic Communications led the assessment and prepared a report with findings and recommendations to be used for discussion. The Gates Foundation also implemented similar assessments in five other states, with the goal of eventually compiling comparative data.

The initial work of the assessment began in January 2012. Components of the assessment included:

- conversation with KDE's communication director and commissioner to discuss the objectives of the project
- on-site interviews with state department leadership team
- interviews with school district leaders
- electronic survey of school district administrators
- convening with department leadership team to discuss findings and recommendations

### **Internal Findings**

The primary concerns voiced by staff include:

- speed of implementation
- consistent messaging
- lack of "Big Picture" thinking
- limited direct support
- e-mail overkill
- internal silos

### **Recommendations**

- Identify how communication flows (or doesn't) in the districts and use different models of delivery: from superintendent to principals to teachers for some, direct communication to everyone for others
- Be more intentional about the reasons behind the use of technology.
- Develop structures to get as well as give information.
- Reframe cross-functional teams to provide greater value.
- Help everyone understand what's urgent and what's not.
- Use more meetings, less e-mail, with more open dialogue.
- Use strategic planning as intended — to tear down silos.
- Make the website more accessible and useful.
- Move from reactive to proactive communication.

## **External Findings**

From the in-person interviews with school district leaders, specific items were highlighted:

- District leaders understand and support the rationale for reforms.
- Kentucky gets a good grade for effort, with KDE making a concerted effort to use every technological tool at its disposal to communicate to districts, including e-mail, electronic newsletters twice a week to superintendents, webinars, blogs and tweets.
- Some divisions excel at communication; specifically, the Office of Assessment and Accountability.
- Barriers to communication include scope of the reforms; speed; and KDE silos.

## **Recommendations**

- Take a step back to get the big picture right.
- Use language and visuals to frame priority communications: the Commissioner's e-mails, webinars, print materials, the homepage of the website.
- Spend more time in districts.
- Recognize success in schools and districts.
- Identify preferences for dissemination of information.
- Utilize the expertise of professional development staff to design webinars that are more interactive and engaging.

In early June 2012, a survey was opened to school district superintendents to help assess the current state of communication efforts and develop recommendations for improvements as needed. Data from that survey will be shared with KDE leadership staff

## **Work to Date**

KDE leadership staff has analyzed the top-line findings of the assessment and addressed several issues.

- A project is underway to revamp the agency's website, with an unveiling date of September 1.
- The commissioner's advisory groups are being realigned, and more consistency is apparent in their agendas and meeting results.
- College and career readiness is becoming the agency's "brand" through constant reinforcement internally and externally.
- Cross-functional work is becoming the standard.