

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Leadership for Instructional Transformation: Changes in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158.6453

History/Background:

Existing Policy. Kentucky has long been a leader in K-12 education reform in the United States beginning with the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 to the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2009 leading the nation in the adoption of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. Most recently the adoption of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System has occurred. The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has long taken the lead in policy decisions around these reform efforts.

Today, the national conversation and much of the research in education goes beyond simply changing instruction in the classroom to better meet the needs of all children. The concept of “deeper learning” is at the center of the conversation and research.

The Hewlett Foundation, which facilitates a consortium of schools called the Deeper Learning Network, defines deeper learning as:

The transfer of knowledge in one subject area to newly encountered situations in another. Deeper Learning allows students to see how their classwork relates to real life. They are gaining an indispensable set of knowledge, skills, and beliefs, including:

Mastery of Core Academic Content: Students build their academic foundation in subjects like reading, writing, math, and science. They understand key principles and procedures, recall facts, use the correct language, and draw on their knowledge to complete new tasks.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Students think critically, analytically, and creatively. They know how to find, evaluate, and synthesize information to construct arguments. They can design their own solutions to complex problems.

Collaboration: Collaborative students work well in teams. They communicate and understand multiple points of view and they know how to cooperate to achieve a shared goal.

Effective Communication: Students communicate effectively in writing and in oral presentations. They structure information in meaningful ways, listen to and give feedback, and construct messages for particular audiences.

Self-directed Learning: Students develop an ability to direct their own learning. They set goals, monitor their own progress, and reflect on their own strengths and areas for improvement. They learn to see setbacks as opportunities for feedback and growth. Students who learn through self-direction are more adaptive than their peers.

An “Academic Mindset”: Students with an academic mindset have a strong belief in themselves. They trust their own abilities and believe their hard work will pay off, so they persist to overcome obstacles. They also learn from and support each other. They see the relevance of their schoolwork to the real world and their own future success.

The KBE must now build on its past leadership history and consider what policy decisions are next and how it will communicate the importance of ensuring “deeper learning” and an even more college- and career-ready cadre of graduates.

A series of questions should assist the KBE over the next year in considering what policy changes need to be made and subsequently, how the KBE will provide leadership in communicating and advocating for those policy changes as follows:

- If Kentucky wants to be leader in the national movement to create a system of deeper learning, what changes need to be made?
- Are there different outcomes from our current model (proficiency on Kentucky’s Core Academic Standards) that should be considered to declare a student college-ready?
- Should a new system be developed to measure “deeper learning”? Should this system include more novel ways to measure student mastery?
- If changes are made to move toward deeper learning, what changes need to be made in our accountability model to reflect the previous questions?

As part of the August 6 retreat session, Gene Wilhoit, Executive Director, National Center for Innovation in Education, will facilitate a session to provoke thought and discussion on how the KBE will lead changes in instruction, learning and assessment. A prepublication draft of an article titled “Accountability for College- and Career-Readiness: Developing a New Paradigm” is included as an attachment to this staff note for reading prior to the retreat.

Joining Wilhoit as part of this retreat session will be Associate Commissioner Ken Draut of the Office of Assessment and Accountability and David Cook, Director of the Division of Partner Engagement. They will present work that is already underway designed to lead change. Attachments also are included as visuals for this portion of the session.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Transforming our assessment and accountability structures to keep up with ongoing changes to instructional practices will require the strong leadership of the Kentucky Board of Education. Board members must embrace and communicate a vision for transforming our system so that assessment ceases to be what drives instruction but instead becomes a tool to improve instruction.

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Date:

August 2014