

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Kentucky Board of Education
FROM: Stephen L. Pruitt
RE: Self-Evaluation on Goals for 2016-17
DATE: September 13, 2017

Being named Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of Kentucky was one of my proudest professional moments. The two years since have been a whirlwind for sure, but the opportunity has been everything I had hoped for and more. It continues to be my honor to provide this service to our students, schools, districts, and the Kentucky Board of Education. I am thankful each day to the board for this opportunity.

Below is my self-evaluation in response to the goals that were set for 2016-17. I have responded to each goal in italics and any new text appears in purple font. In responding to the goals from last year, I want to acknowledge that my goals were in large part process goals as there were many process and initiatives that needed to be in place prior to some of our larger vision. As I consider my goals for the coming year, they will represent more specific outcomes alongside of processes and initiatives within the KDE. With the new strategic plan and accountability system in place, metrics for my performance for the coming year will be more seamless and clear with regard to statewide outcomes.

Again, I am very appreciative for this opportunity and look forward to a great future for Kentucky's students.

Relationships

General Comment:

Relationships are paramount to the success of anyone in my position. They are difficult and time consuming, but well worth it. I try to approach each issue/initiative with the perspective of building new or building upon existing relationships. My use of the term "shareholder" is intentional in that I want to build relationships that will ultimately lead people to "invest" in our vision. However, relationships take constant work and there continues to be work to do on all fronts.

2016-17 Goal: Strengthen the connection with higher education as well as with early childhood/pre-K to enhance the alignment of the P-20 education system. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Ensure every committee/task force includes members from higher education and early childhood (where appropriate)

Response -

During the 2016-17 fiscal year, our main focus has been on accountability. This aspect of my goals was met through that and in several other areas. We have made it internal KDE policy that representatives from across P-20 are to be involved in each appropriate committee. This is evident in several committees such as each of the accountability work groups and Accountability Steering Committee, Educator Diversity Workforce Committee, standards development committees, additions to each of my personal advisory committees (where appropriate), and Dyslexia Task Force. In the coming year,

we will continue that policy as we review the graduation requirements, early reading initiative, gifted and talented program, and as we expand pathway and industry certification options for students.

- Add alternate monthly meetings with the president of KCTCS to ensure alignment of our CTE programming

Response -

I have added monthly calls/meetings with Dr. Jay Box, KCTCS President, to exchange information and discuss joint initiatives.

- Continue monthly meetings with the president of CPE, Secretary of the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, and Executive Director of EPSB

Response -

These meeting have continued. Additionally, I have added bi-monthly meetings with the Secretary of Education. I also have started quarterly meetings with the Secretary of Labor as we work to enhance apprenticeship options for students.

- Initiate standing meetings with representatives from Governor's Office of Early Childhood

Response -

These meetings have not yet taken place. Members of KDE staff meet regularly with the Office of Early Childhood staff. This is a meeting I will need to initiate going forward.

2016-17 Goal: Increase the visits to schools and districts. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Visit 33 districts and at least 66 schools for a total of at least 33% of districts to be visited in 2 years

Response -

Since my last evaluation, I was able to visit 28 districts, but was able to visit 84 schools. These are among the most satisfying parts of my job. The visits are exhausting as I am usually taken to several schools in one day, but they have been a boost when I needed one and a way to keep my focus on our students and schools. I will continue to work on my district and school visits as my intention is to visit all 173 districts within the next two years. Part of what I must reconcile is that I chose to be engaged with the General Assembly during legislative session; this limits my visits. I also had to balance the need to be present at KDE to manage the work of the strategic plan and the new accountability system. In the coming two years, I will better utilize days when the legislature is not in session. Also, with accountability development complete, I hope to have more time to devote to this.

- Focus for the visits this year to be on science instruction at all levels and in off-tested years

Response -

This year's tour of science classrooms came with moments of satisfaction and disappointment. The utilization of the new Through Course Tasks (TCTs) as part of our new science assessment system was well received and seemed to provide some much needed focus for our elementary and middle schools. In fact, several local superintendents scheduled time in schools just to observe the TCTs and the students' reactions and achievement. I witnessed some quality science instruction at both

elementary and middle schools. I also witnessed some schools who are not engaging in quality science instruction. Most disappointing, but understandable, was what I observed this at the high school level. I still saw very traditional instruction (lecture with an occasional lab), and for the most part instruction not focused on Kentucky's standards. I say this is understandable due to the burden we placed on teachers regarding End-of-Course Exams that were "off the shelf" products that in no way aligned to our standards. We are correcting this, but it will take some time and convincing to properly implement the standards and best practice science instruction into our high schools.

- Visit at least three schools to discuss disproportionate rates of violations, suspensions, and expulsions to understand contributing factors.

Response -

In meeting this goal, I learned we have much to overcome. While no one would come out and address any disproportionate issues as racial or any other bias, there is clearly work to be done on how to best support our schools as they grapple with these issues. We will not overcome the achievement gap as long as the assumption for poor behavior, absenteeism, and other such violations are inherent among those who come from bad home situations or "rough neighborhoods." Rather, we will need to work harder to demonstrate more effective means of discipline. That is not to say that school level individuals are the sole issue. There needs to be more partnerships such as Black Males Working (BMW) in Lexington that bring communities together to address social and academic issues affecting all of our students regardless of race or zip code.

2016-17 Goal: Continue to build and strengthen relationships with all partners. Relationship building has definitely been strengthened and improved. The board recognizes that relationship building is a two-way process, but it needs continuous attention. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Continue to focus on strengthening relationships with superintendents, administrators, teachers, non-certified personnel, General Assembly members, and the Governor's Office

Response -

As I mentioned before, each interaction I have is intended to build trust and a shareholder's support for our work. I believe I met this goal as evidenced by strong support for the new accountability system from the field including superintendents, educators, General Assembly members and the Governor's Office. In particular, we have developed regulations for our two biggest initiatives this year, accountability and charter schools, in concert with members from each of these shareholders. Certainly, we have not agreed on everything, but people have felt heard and they have felt that substantive changes were made as these initiatives progressed.

- Build new relationships needed to move the state forward, such as meeting with presidents for all content professional groups (e.g., Kentucky Science Teachers Association, Kentucky Reading Association)

Response -

I met this goal by meeting each of the sitting or past presidents for the organizations. I plan to cultivate these relationships more over the next few years.

- Conduct annual town hall meetings

Response -

I conducted 11 more town halls this year after the completion of the legislative session. The theme again for this year was accountability, but this time we shared with folks the proposed design of the new system in follow-up to what they told us during the initial town halls as to what they wanted to see in the system. These meetings also gave me a chance to hear from many shareholders on various topics. It also is where I am able to get more district and school visits in during the day before the meeting as it is difficult to visit schools during the legislative session.

- Continue meetings with key legislative leaders

Response -

This goal was met and I continue to work on it. In addition to regular meetings and interactions with the education chairs, I met with the chairs for the Appropriations and Revenue committees. This year, we did extra meetings with all of these as well as leadership in both houses to ensure they were aware of the financial plight of many of the school districts, especially after the change to revenue caused by the reduction of the unmined coal tax.

Communication

General Comment:

Communication is and always will be a priority for me. We have tried to consider new and often unique types of communications beyond the “Monday Message” and webinars. As with most things, communication is difficult on many levels. First, one must make the time during very stressful events. Second, to select the correct message for the correct audience is always a challenge. We will continue to work on this as it will be critical during the budget crisis and accountability implementation.

2016-17 Goal: Increase the use of social media as a communication mechanism. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Increase usage of social media by 25% to advertise school visits, town halls, important announcements, and to educate social media followers on KDE initiatives

Response -

I met this goal by increasing my social media presence by roughly 30%. It is still a work in progress, but I hope to do more in the coming year and host my first “Twitter Chat.”

- Increase all categories of communication support to shareholders by 5% as reflected on the customer service survey

Response –

The following results came from the annual Kentucky Department of Education customer service satisfaction survey (323 respondents) that was available for three weeks (September 11-26, 2017) and was promoted through direct emails, Monday Messages and staff email signatures. The questions on the survey dealt with the responsiveness of KDE staff to inquiries from customers. The results for this year’s survey and last year’s survey are provided for each item.

- 84% indicated a response was received within 24 hours (2016 rate: 77%)

- 76% indicated the response addressed their need (2016 rate: 70%); 17% indicated the response somewhat addressed their need (2016 rate: 14%)
- 85% had no concerns about the accuracy of the response (2016 rate: 75%)
- 94% indicated their interaction was handled in a professional manner (2016 rate: 88%)

2016-17 Goal: Bring clarity and explanation to e-mail communication perhaps either dealing with less content or better targeting the audience for certain content. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Reorganize email communications to be clearer to the various audiences

Response -

I feel I met this goal in large part, but I still need to work on individual messaging. I did clarify for the board when I forwarded the Monday Message and Commissioner's Weekly Update to whom these publications were intended and used highlighting to draw board members' attention to items of interest. Additionally, superintendents continue to tell me that they only want one communication per week with pertinent information in it, hence the Monday Message's weekly distribution.

We did try a new targeted communication with superintendents recently where all 173 superintendents could hook into a conference call about the budget shortfall. A meeting request was sent out to all superintendents with the information on how to access the call. We had 140-plus superintendents that participated and we accomplished this within about an hour's timeframe.

I am finding that videos geared to specific audiences are particularly effective; however I also recognize that too many videos can yield a diminishing return. For particularly big issues, we will work on designing special communications meant to be focused on particular audiences. I am considering moving to a video message for superintendents and perhaps teachers as well. The feedback we have gotten on key messages this year indicated people would rather watch or listen than read.

Leadership

General Comment:

By definition, my job is leadership. It is one area where I take both honor and responsibility. I feel I have conducted my position from a position of leadership. My philosophy of servant leadership has stayed intact and I have worked to better myself in all areas. I still have work to do in this area in combination with communications. In the past year, I have driven our state accountability process by focusing on giving everyone "seats at the table", have worked to reestablish lines of communications with other organizations, worked to make KDE a service agency, and taken on national leadership roles such as becoming a board member for the Council of Chief State School Officers, bringing other chiefs to the table about the importance of quality science assessment, being recently named as a board member of the National Association for Gifted and Talented, and securing the support of superintendents, districts, and teachers in the new accountability system (perhaps the one of which I am most proud).

2016-17 Goal: Leadership of the Kentucky Department of Education. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Increase clarity among KDE staff of direction and goals based on the new strategic plan by 5% on my survey of staff

Response -

We have worked hard to provide more clarity this year with regard to direction. All staff have been engaged in the development of a new strategic plan. The plan has intentionally followed the timeline of the accountability system to ensure coherence. Staff are working now on their “fit” and understanding of how all our work will be focused on our common vision.

The internal staff survey on the commissioner’s performance was made available online to all KDE staff via email for three weeks (September 11-26). 194 respondents participated in the survey. On the item related to clarity on direction and goals, the results for both this year and last were as follows:

- *The commissioner provides clear direction and measurable goals. (78% agreed; 14% undecided) (2016 rate: 77% agreed; 19% undecided)*

A related item on the internal staff survey dealt with exhibiting visionary leadership. The results for both this year and last were as follows:

- *The commissioner exhibits visionary leadership. (78% agreed; 13% undecided) (2016 rate: 78% agreed; 19% undecided)*

Another related item on the internal staff survey dealt with making decisions in the best interest of students. The results for both this year and last were as follows:

- *The commissioner makes decisions in the best interest of Kentucky children. (88% agreed; 10% undecided) (2016 rate: 86% agreed; 12% undecided)*

- Improve internal communication to ensure integrated and cross-functional understanding of KDE’s work by 10% on my survey of staff

Response –

The internal staff survey on the commissioner’s performance was made available online to all KDE staff via email for three weeks (September 11-26). 194 respondents participated in the survey. On the item related to internal communication to ensure integrated and cross-functional understanding of KDE’s work, the results for both this year and last were as follows:

- *The commissioner improves internal communication to ensure integrated and cross-functional understanding of KDE’s work. (73% agreed; 16% undecided) (2016 rate: 70% agreed; 23% undecided)*

- Make deliberate attempts to meet with all levels of employees to listen and show I value them and their work. I will increase the survey numbers by 5%.

Response -

In addition to my morning “walk arounds” throughout the KDE office areas, I have tried to be deliberate about bringing staff from all levels to strategy and working meetings. I feel I met this goal, but barely. This is an area that needs continuous work.

I have scheduled all-KDE meetings for each quarter and for the first time all employees are able to be in the same room at our new office space to hear the same message from me instead of having to hold multiple sessions. The first one where we were all together occurred on July 13 and the next one is scheduled for October 10. The dates are published in advance for KDE employees and we have them scheduled through January 2019.

Also, I pull staff together sometimes for a quick informal gathering in the collaboration areas on the 5th floor when the need arises. The most recent one of these related to the budget shortfall where I tried to give employees the information I knew and assure them that I would let them know more information as it becomes available.

The internal staff survey on the commissioner's performance was made available online to all KDE staff via email for three weeks (September 11-26). 194 respondents participated in the survey. On the item related to meet with all levels of employees to listen and show I value them and their work, the results for both this year and last were as follows:

- The commissioner respects and listens to all levels of employees. (72% agreed; 19% undecided) (2016 rate: 68% agreed; 23% undecided)*

2016-17 Goal: Develop and implement a new accountability system and any other plans required to meet the elements of ESSA. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Complete development of Kentucky's new accountability system

Response -

This goal was successfully completed with the approval of the administrative regulation at the August 23rd KBE meeting. I am very proud of where this ended up and for all the input into and support of the system.

- Oversee modeling of the system to ensure the metrics measure what is valued by the accountability system

Response -

Given the time it took to complete the system and the fact that some of the indicators have never been measured before, this goal will be ongoing into next year. For what we have developed so far and what we are able to measure, I feel confident that I met this goal for the year. I am very involved with this work and intend on continuing that close involvement.

- Develop and implement a strategic plan

Response -

As stated earlier, the strategic plan was put on a timeline that matched the accountability system. As such, the system was just completed and the strategic plan is still under development. The plan will be presented at the October state board meeting and KDE is developing its work plans that are necessary to implement the new plan. However, that is not to say we have gone a year without strategy. In the past year, we have had a focus on the science assessment system, accountability, and career and technical education. In addition, we also have worked to set up the discussions around graduation requirements

and implemented our three pillars (equity, achievement, integrity) with fidelity. We will work over the next year on enhancing equity and closing achievement gaps through novice reduction strategies, new course codes, standards, new and better assessments, career and technical education, an overall literacy plan that will focus on early reading initiatives, charter school implementation and the computer science initiative.

2016-17 Goal: Continue to make improvements at KSB and KSD and define how we should measure success. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Marshall resources of KDE to support ongoing and continuous improvement of both KSB and KSD

Response -

I believe this goal was met in a quality fashion. Our staff at KDE has really stepped up to the plate to provide support for both schools. In the past year, we have named new principals at both schools, expanded academic and CTE coursework for all students, worked to build better relationships with the respective communities, successfully procured funding for major upgrades at both schools from the General Assembly for the first time in 20 years, provided on-the-ground support through power outages and human resource issues, and established quarterly meetings with principals and KDE leadership to hear concerns, needs and problem-solve.

- Develop new strategic plans for both KSB and KSD

Response -

Both of these are completed and being implemented. Both plans focus on increasing achievement and providing more opportunities regarding career and technical education.

- Place both KSB and KSD on the new accountability system

Response –

The schools have been notified they will be on the new system upon implementation in 2018-2019.

2016-17 Goal: Complete the design of the new science assessment and implement it. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Perform successful full-scale field test of the science assessment in the spring of 2017

Response -

This goal has been successfully completed. Feedback from the field was that the test was more rigorous, yet more engaging for students than previous assessments. We are on track for the full operational assessment to occur in spring of 2018.

- Convene state level committees to review student work submitted by schools for Through Course Tasks (TCTs)

Response -

This goal also has been successfully completed. A large team of teachers came together to review the work submitted by districts and reported it was some of the best professional development they had received. One teacher wrote about the process in her blog stating, “Focusing on probing student sense-making rather than their ability to find a ‘right’

answer helps us to think about whether we are truly equipping our students with important 21st century skills.” She went on to say, “The best part about the TCT process is that it is designed to help you do the work of assessment by collaborating with your peers.” Her thoughts were pretty emblematic of the feeling of others.

- Continue development of Through Course Tasks

Response -

This goal also was also and the development process continues. Other states have approached Kentucky as this tool is proving to be one that is changing practice for the better. I was told by multiple superintendents that they were scheduling their time such that they could spend time with students while they engaged in the tasks. The success of these tasks have been such that we will begin development on them for all subjects upon adoption of new standards.

2016-17 Goal: Design and implement how the department can be more involved in the modeling of/guidance for curriculum/best practices that will lead to deeper learning. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Develop and implement a process in partnership with co-ops and other partners to provide exemplar instructional materials and a process that local schools can use to evaluate the materials

Response -

The process to review instructional materials is up and running. Every co-op chose to join us in the endeavor and they are providing quality teachers to implement the process. The first review teacher-developed materials will be available in science by the end of this year.

2016-17 Goal: Design and deliver the professional learning that teachers and leaders need to improve student learning. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Conduct a needs assessment for the purposes of providing professional learning to teachers and leaders

Response -

This goal was met in the form of the TELL survey showing there was greater focus on professional learning than in past years. As usual, a remarkably high participation rate gives us confidence that professional development is moving in the right direction. However, it is incumbent on us to continue to provide quality models and guidance.

- Develop guidance for districts as to the most needed professional learning based on KDE’s strategic plan and needs assessment

Response –

Professional learning will be critical as we move our state toward cutting our achievement gap in half. At KDE, we utilize the Kentucky Professional Learning Standards throughout all of our networks and our own professional learning experiences. In our work, we work with all districts to ensure that districts are not only learning from us, but also are thoughtful about how to develop and implement their own plans back in their schools and districts.

2016-17 Goal: Embrace innovation as a key strategy to accomplish the items listed above. In 2016-2017, I will:

- Continue our review of regulations for the purpose of removing barriers to innovation

Response -

This goal was successfully implemented. In the past year, we repealed six regulations and provided districts with guidance on innovation. We are working with a small group of districts interested in pursuing a competency-based pilot.

- Ensure quality implementation of any innovative initiatives originated by KDE or the General Assembly

Response -

This goal was successfully implemented. For KDE, a large part of this will be our implementation of charter schools, dual credit, advanced coursework, CTE pathways focused on local needs, and opportunity for districts to participate in a competency-based pilot.