Concerns about CPE's Co-Requisite Model Initiative

A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand

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I. Overview. The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is finalizing a plan to solve the college remediation problem by eliminating remedial courses and imposing a one-size-fits-all model based on the assumption that all high school graduates are prepared for college level work. This assumption is clearly false, and will result in lower academic standards and expectations for incoming college students. Indeed, it is difficult to see how these standards and expectations could be set any lower.

The plan is being advocated by the national educational organization *Complete College America* http://completecollege.org/ and is based on what is called a co-requisite model. The guiding principles for implementing the co-requisite model in Kentucky can be found on the CPE website.

http://cpe.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B8CA09C0-6AE7-41F4-B6C5-EC5F6A315B3B/0/DevelopmentalEducationandInterventionProgrammingGuidingPrinciplesFinal.pdf

Students whose test scores indicate that they are not prepared for college level work, and who are usually placed into remedial courses, are instead placed into credit-bearing courses, but given supplemented instruction of generally one, but possibly as many as two, additional credit hour(s) for a three hour course in order to help them pass the course.

This seemingly elegant, global solution to the college remediation problem has some decidedly detrimental consequences, especially in Kentucky. These consequences are discussed in this paper.

The overarching goal of Kentucky's K-12 education system since Senate Bill 1 was unanimously passed by the 2009 General Assembly has been to ensure that more high school students graduate college or career ready. Kentucky's nationally acclaimed college and career readiness program is designed to reach this goal and has been amazingly successful.

Imposing the co-requisite model as a statewide standard will negatively impact the college readiness program and will reverse the progress made in getting more high school graduates college ready. The impact of the co-requisite model as a statewide standard will be particularly destructive in mathematics because students will no longer be held accountable by the postsecondary system for learning any algebra, not even the most basic algebra universally regarded as essential for college readiness in mathematics.

This de-emphasis of high school mathematics will have a devastating effect on the number of students pursuing careers in vitally important Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines as well as many other disciplines. The economy of the state will be adversely affected.

No one is saying that colleges and universities should not have the freedom to experiment with the co-requisite model in some courses and measure its short-term and long-term impact. The ***principal concern*** is imposing the model as a statewide standard without considering its impact on both the K-12 and postsecondary systems and its impact on the educational and economic future of the Commonwealth.

This concern deserves more inclusive and extensive discussion. Kentucky's new Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt has pledged to support the KDE's overarching goal of college and career readiness for all students and to work enthusiastically towards getting even more high school graduates college and career ready. At the very least, Dr. Pruitt and the KDE should be extended the courtesy to study and evaluate the co-requisite model in collaboration with the CPE and other shareholders before the CPE approves it in November as is currently planned.

II. Success of Kentucky's College Readiness Program. Perhaps the most challenging and specific requirement of Senate Bill 1 was to reduce college remediation rates by 50 percent in five years. To meet this goal, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), the CPE, and Kentucky's public colleges and universities worked together to choose standards and assessments to measure college readiness.

The assessments chosen were the ACT, ACT Compass, and Kentucky Online Testing (KYOTE). High school seniors who fail to meet an ACT benchmark score in English, mathematics or reading in grade 11 can take a transitional course in one or more of these areas followed by either a Compass or KYOTE placement exam. High school graduates who pass any one of these assessments in each of the three academic areas are considered college ready by the KDE and can take credit bearing courses without the need for remediation at any public college or university in the state.

The percentage of Kentucky high school graduates who are college or career ready has risen dramatically as a result, from 34 percent in 2010 to 66.8 percent in 2015 as shown in Table 1. The primary component in this growth is college readiness as shown in Table 2. While the percentage of students who attained college readiness with their ACT scores alone has risen gradually, the principal growth of college readiness has been the percentage of students who achieve college readiness by passing at least one Compass or KYOTE exam in English, mathematics or reading during their senior year.

Table 1
College or Career Readiness Rates in Kentucky

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
34%	38%	47.2%	54.1%	62.5%	66.8%

Table 2
2014 Distribution of College or Career Ready Students

College Ready Only	Career Ready Only	College & Career Ready
44%	7%	11%

The percentage of Kentucky high school graduates who are college ready when they enter college has risen accordingly, from 52 percent college ready in 2010-2011 to 70 percent college ready in 2013-2014 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Kentucky High School Graduates College Ready when Entering College

2010-2011	2013-2014
52%	70%

Former Commissioner Terry Holliday reflected on the extraordinary success of Kentucky's college and career readiness program in several of his final blogs that are most interesting and insightful. Four of these blogs are reproduced in appendices C through F. In two of them, he makes clear that Kentucky's college readiness program and college readiness assessments are strongly validated by the data shown in Table 4. In short, graduates in the class of 2013 who were college ready vastly outperformed those who were not college ready in their first year of college.

Table 4
Kentucky Public High School Class of 2013
Performance in First Year of College

	College Ready	Not College Ready
GPA	2.6	1.7
Credit Hours Earned	22	11
Retention	85%	65%

III. Impact of the Co-Requisite Model on the College Readiness Program. The key to the success of Kentucky's college readiness program is the powerful ***motivation*** students have to ***earn***, while still in high school, guaranteed placement into credit-bearing college courses by passing a college readiness assessment in English, mathematics and reading.

Imposing the co-requisite model as a statewide standard would seriously diminish this motivation. High school students, especially those who are struggling academically, will quickly realize that they can take credit-bearing college courses ***without*** all the hard work required to become college ready in high school. They

will also assume that college readiness is an artificial barrier constructed by the K-12 system to get them to work hard while the postsecondary system, with a wink and a nod, is telling them that all the hard work is not really necessary.

The only difference for struggling students is whether they take a four-hour credit-bearing course with underprepared students or a three-hour credit-bearing course with prepared students. Some will choose the four-hour course because it will be easier and their chances of passing it greater. Unfortunately, that's just what happens when a college instructor teaches a class consisting entirely of poorly prepared students!

Imposing the co-requisite model as a statewide standard will be even more devastating in mathematics. Students who are not college ready in mathematics can take a credit-bearing, supplemented mathematics course that involves little or no algebra. The message being sent to high school students is loud and clear: The postsecondary system will not hold you accountable for failure to learn algebra; you do not need any algebra unless your intended college major requires algebra-based mathematics courses such as college algebra or calculus.

High school students often do not know whether they will attend college, let alone what their college major will be, and do not understand how many college and career doors will close for them without a solid background in mathematics. These students will seize upon the message from the postsecondary system as justification for lackluster performance in their required algebra courses.

The message will be most harmful for struggling students taking transitional mathematics courses as seniors where the goal is to become college ready in mathematics by passing the algebra-based assessments KYOTE or Compass. Struggling students who do not make benchmark on the ACT math exam as juniors are unlikely to take these transitional courses seriously when they can take algebra-free credit-bearing mathematics courses when they get to college. It is difficult to see the college readiness rates in mathematics going anywhere but down.

Imposing the co-requisite model as a statewide standard will be disheartening and depressing for high school English and mathematics teachers, especially those teaching senior-year transitional courses. It is difficult enough getting these struggling students college ready even with the motivation of guaranteed placement into credit-bearing college courses, but it will be far more difficult without this motivation.

IV. Letter of Concern from Mathematics Department Chairs. It is not surprising that Kentucky's college mathematics community is alarmed by the CPE plan to implement the co-requisite model as a statewide standard. A letter of concern about the plan was sent by a group of mathematics department chairs to the CPE on May 28. The letter and its signatories are in Appendix A. The letter expressed the concerns discussed in this paper and several others.

CPE President Robert King responded to the letter on September 30 (Appendix B). He apologized for the delay in his response, stated that "we greatly value your views" and urged the chairs to "re-start this process" by contacting their campus provosts to discuss their concerns.

He discussed the co-requisite model at the October 6 Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) meeting and noted the resistance CPE was getting from math faculty. But he indicated that statewide implementation of the model would likely begin in January of 2016 and in the fall of 2016 at the latest. This will no doubt leave the chairs wondering just how much the CPE values their views.

V. The Co-Requisite Model in Other States. The co-requisite model is being implemented in several states. The PBS News Hour had an interesting article about the implementation of the model taking full effect this fall in Tennessee.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/tennessee-scraps-course-standing-less-prepared-students-college-credits/

Data show that even students with very low ACT scores pass the supplemented credit bearing courses at remarkably high rates. But there are many questions about the co-requisite model based on this data:

- Is the academic integrity of these courses credible given the high pass rates of underprepared students?
- Do students who pass these courses succeed in later courses when the academic supports are removed and they are forced to compete with college ready students?
- Do these students graduate at higher rates than other underprepared students have in the past?
- Will students who want to remediate their academic deficiencies be able to find courses that will help them, given that remedial courses will essentially be eliminated?
- Are colleges using this model to attract students who are not college ready, taking their money and loading them up with debt with little or no concern with what they learn or whether the degrees they may earn lead to jobs that pay a living wage?
- What effect does the co-requisite model have on high school students when they discover that they do not need to learn any high school algebra in order to take credit bearing mathematics courses in college?

The most striking feature of these discussions about the co-requisite model is that postsecondary systems are attempting to solve the college remediation problem without ***any*** collaboration with their K-12 systems. The assumption seems to be that it is hopeless to work with K-12 systems to produce more college ready graduates.

That assumption is patently false in Kentucky where we have the finest college readiness program in the nation!

Dr. Holliday discusses in his blog (Appendix D) the predicament in which other states find themselves and the advantages Kentucky has because the extraordinary collaboration among the postsecondary and K-12 systems brought about by the outstanding work of the General Assembly in writing, passing and overseeing the implementation of Senate Bill 1.

The co-requisite model is more attractive in a state where only 1/3 of the high school graduates are college ready as opposed to Kentucky where 2/3 are college ready and a program is in place to grow this percentage!

VI. Conclusion. Kentucky should reject the CPE plan to impose the co-requisite model as a statewide standard. Instead, the CPE and the postsecondary system should continue to work collaboratively with the K-12 system to improve the percentage of high school graduates who are college or career ready. Kentucky has moved the needle from 34 percent of high school graduates college-or-career ready in 2010 to 66.8 percent in 2015. But continued progress depends upon both systems working together toward common goals and common expectations for students as envisioned in Senate Bill 1. That will not happen if the co-requisite model is imposed as a statewide standard. *A house divided against itself cannot stand*. Kentucky should stay the course and continue to improve its existing and nationally acclaimed college readiness program. Our future depends upon it.

Appendix A

Letter to CPE from Mathematics Department Chairs

May 28, 2015

Robert L. King, President
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
1024 Capital Center Drive, Suite 320
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear President King:

As mathematicians and mathematics educators we are concerned about the initiative put forth by the CPE in the document *Kentucky's Guiding Principles for Developmental Education and Postsecondary Intervention Programming.* That document calls for modifying postsecondary mathematics curricula by embedding developmental content into college-level courses, with a corresponding reduction in developmental instructional hours. While this approach may be worth exploring in

some settings, we believe it should not be promoted as a default statewide standard. Some of our concerns are as follows:

1. There has been no general invitation by the CPE for input on the *Guiding Principles* from Kentucky communities of mathematicians and mathematics educators. While there have been some meetings and conferences, those have been largely promotional events intended for advocacy of the *Guiding Principles* reforms; there has been very little opportunity for consideration of opposing views. The proposed reforms could profoundly impact mathematics education in Kentucky. They therefore warrant input from the mathematics community.

2. The *Guiding Principles* call for default placement of all students into college-level mathematics courses in the first semester and for remediation to be accomplished concurrently with one or two additional credit hours. Students who have not met college readiness standards in mathematics already face significant challenges in overcoming their deficiencies. Many of these students lack the skills desired even of high school freshmen, skills that need to be mastered before becoming immersed in college-level courses. Placing these students into courses for which they have not met prerequisites can only lead to either lower educational standards or increased failure rates. The *Guiding Principles* also fail to take into account many factors other than content that must be addressed in developmental courses, such as poor reading comprehension, study habits, and time-management skills. If we are to maintain standards, then accelerated or reduced remediation will only exacerbate the problems caused by these deficiencies.

3. The *Guiding Principles* specify that the credit-bearing course for a developmental student should be linked to the student's career pathway. Many mathematics departments already have courses designed for students who have met college readiness standards but who are not intending to major in a STEM field. Such courses were historically developed to provide students with alternative pathways after having achieved minimal mathematical competence. The current initiative effectively encourages the use of those courses, instead, as a means to circumvent basic skills. This will result in lower standards for college students than currently exist for high school students.

4. Where similar initiatives have been implemented, it is clear that success has typically been attained simply by redefining what it means to be successful. For example, at the CPE's Kentucky Developmental Education Institute held in Frankfort last October, Complete College America (CCA) Vice President Bruce Vandal referred to success primarily in terms of numbers of students completing courses or receiving degrees, not in terms of mastery of learning outcomes. At the same conference, panelists from institutions that have adopted approaches advocated by CCA and similar to that of the *Guiding Principles* described how standard mathematics learning outcomes have been replaced by less rigorous objectives tailored to students' career choices. In particular, basic skills in

elementary algebra have effectively been discarded. (http://cpe.ky.gov/policies/academicinit/deved/kydevedinstitute/).

5. An effort to increase course completion rates by eliminating traditional college readiness content would be especially troubling in Kentucky. Following the mandate provided in Senate Bill 1, Kentucky has developed a collaborative, nationally acclaimed program designed to ensure that high school graduates have mastered traditional college readiness content. The postsecondary and K-12 systems have worked together to develop clear standards and assessments that both systems have agreed constitute college readiness. The result of this collaborative effort has been a dramatic increase in the readiness rate of high school graduates from 34% in 2010 to 62% in 2014. The approach described in the *Guiding Principles* places the continued success of this program at risk and is likely to reverse the progress already made, for the following reasons:

    a. It would dismantle the demonstrably beneficial statewide agreement on what it means to be college ready. In particular, the mathematics learning outcomes now incorporated by reference in state law (13 KAR 2:020) would need to be changed. These learning outcomes for all transitional, developmental and supplemented courses include the basic algebra that would no longer be included in supplemented courses. Such a change would diminish both secondary and post-secondary educational standards.

    b. It would send the message to the K-12 system that students no longer need to become college ready in high school by successfully completing high-quality transitional math courses because, in fact, they would not be held to those same standards in college.

    c. It would undermine implementation of the K-12 Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS), which are more rigorous than the minimal standards now required for college readiness in the Kentucky system. Adoption of the default placement model described in the *Guiding Principles* would indicate to the K-12 community that the postsecondary system no longer adheres to even these minimal standards for college readiness, let alone the more rigorous standards of the KCAS.

    While we support the goals of increasing course completion rates and decreasing time to degree, those goals should not be pursued at the expense of academic standards.

For these reasons, we call upon the CPE to refrain from imposing the *Guiding Principles* as a statewide standard. We urge the CPE instead to continue to support the collaborative efforts among K-12 and postsecondary educators that have already proven to be successful in improving college readiness and in reducing the need for developmental education.

Sincerely,

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Appendix B

Response to Letter from Mathematics Department Chairs

September 30, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

First, let me apologize for taking as long as this to respond to your letter or May 28. While the work here at CPE and travel commitments over the summer have been extensive, you deserved a response long ago.

Second, as you can imagine, the concerns you have raised have generated a great deal of discussion here among our staff, and among campus leaders. We value greatly your views, and regret that some of you were not able to provide input into the decision making that led to the creation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental and Postsecondary Intervention Programming.

Third, I recommend that each of you who have signed the May 28 letter re-start this process by contacting your campus provost or vice president for academic affairs to discuss your concerns, and the various approaches that can effectively be utilized on your campuses or elsewhere to address the needs of students who are particularly challenged by mathematics.

Respectfully,

Robert L. King
President

Appendix C

Dr. Holliday's Blog: August 7, 2015

Work yet to do

Kentucky has made remarkable progress in high school graduation rates and in the percentage of high school graduates who are college ready. High school graduation rates are among the best in the nation at 87.5 percent and our college/career-readiness rates have soared from 30 percent of graduates in 2009 to more than 62 percent in 2014.

While this is good news, there is much work yet to do.

Despite the improvement in college/career readiness, currently only 60 percent of high school graduates enroll in postsecondary programs. In some of our high schools that number is as high as 90 percent while in others it is less than 40 percent. However, back in 2012-13, more than 80 percent of students said they had plans to enroll in postsecondary when they graduated from high school.

Job number one is to find out why students who indicate an intent do not follow through and enroll in postsecondary. Is it the tuition rates? Is it a lack of support from families? Is it a lack of skills to complete the enrollment process or complete financial aid forms? Is it a lack of college scholarship funding from the Kentucky lottery?

Job number two is to make certain students who move on to postsecondary work are successful. We know that students who graduate from high school having reached the Kentucky college/career-readiness benchmarks realize more success their first year in college than those who are not college ready.

- They have a higher GPA –2.6 versus 1.7 for those who are not college ready.
- They complete more college hours–22 versus 11 for those who are not college ready.
- They will return for a second year of postsecondary at higher rates–85 percent versus 65 percent for those who are not college ready.

It is clear that Kentucky's college/career-ready benchmarks are excellent indicators of success in postsecondary. I know our postsecondary institutions are working hard to build support systems for students who need additional support to reach success in their freshman year.

Job number three is to make certain students who move on to postsecondary are enrolled in career pathways that lead to jobs paying a living wage. Too many of our students who are graduating from postsecondary programs are finding that they have large student debt and very few job prospects in their chosen field of study. In some areas, unemployment of college graduates exceeds 20 percent and underemployment is higher than 40 percent.

Preparing students to make wise career choices begins in elementary school and continues through postsecondary. We should NEVER put students into programs that lead to a dead end. Our career pathways programs should always provide students with plenty of on ramps and off ramps as they move through the education system.

Job number four is for Kentucky to decide what type of economy we are willing to support. Recently, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce released an analysis of the workforce pipeline in the Commonwealth. Less than 10 per cent of employers think the workforce is prepared with the skills needed for the 21st century economy.

Similar reports from the Southern Region Educational Board, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governor's Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have pointed to similar concerns about the workforce pipeline. While there are plenty of job openings, employers say it difficult to find employees with the skills needed for those openings. We have a huge skills gap in Kentucky and across this nation.

Kentucky must decide if we are going to invest in an education and workforce system that will prepare our citizens for the 21st century economy. The states that invest in K-12, career pathways, the workforce pipeline and postsecondary today will outcompete other states for jobs in the future. As Kentucky prepares to elect the next governor, these are critical questions to be asking.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Education Commissioner

Appendix D

Dr. Holliday's Blog: July 31, 2015

What state testing tells us

There has been a lot of controversy over state testing in the last year.

Fortunately, Kentucky has not seen much of this controversy thanks to the leadership of our General Assembly. In 2009, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1 which required Kentucky to develop college-and career-ready standards, assessments based on these more rigorous standards and an accountability system aligned to both the standards and assessments.

What has happened in other states?

While most other states adopted college-and career-ready standards in 2010-11 time frame, the adoption of the standards was voluntary. Major pushback on college-and career ready standards occurred after President Obama and Education Secretary Duncan supported adoption and implementation of the standards through the Race to the Top grants and No Child Left Behind Waivers.

Most states moved slowly to implement the standards and relied on the Race to the Top (RTTT) assessment consortia-the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) or Smarter Balanced-to develop new assessments. The first administration of these consortia-developed state assessments took place in the 2014-15 school year, and only now are states beginning to report the results.

Major push back on the state assessments happened within the last 12 months primarily due to opposition to the college-and career ready standards; opposition

from teachers who were concerned about being evaluated based on student test scores (a Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind waiver requirement); and opposition from parent organizations who were concerned about over testing of students and narrowing of curriculum due to an emphasis on tested subjects.

At one time, almost 40 states belonged to one or more of the assessment consortia. Very early in 2010, Kentucky belonged to both. However, it became apparent to us that the consortia would not be able to provide an assessment that met our budget or timeline.

Kentucky worked with classroom teachers and assessment experts to develop a Kentucky-specific assessment that was aligned from 3-8 through high school with the college-readiness expectations based on the ACT. Kentucky parents and teachers are able to determine as early as 3rd grade if a student is on track to reach the ACT college-readiness benchmark in the 11th grade. Since the ACT is a state-required assessment and is widely recognized by parents and colleges, this alignment seems to have given Kentucky an advantage with helping parents understand the importance of annual testing.

As I reflect on events since Senate Bill 1 in 2009, the key reasons that Kentucky has successfully navigated the rough political waters that have sunk other states are:

1) General Assembly support and action on a comprehensive college-and career-ready agenda
2) Overwhelming support and buy in from educators and parents for the college-and career-ready agenda.

Moving forward, I believe we will continue to see other states struggle with state assessments.

I predict the RTTT assessment consortia will have difficulty providing an assessment of college-and career-readiness that is comparable to accepted measures such as ACT. The consortia will also struggle to provide an assessment that is cost effective for states. Due to the political environment, we will continue to see more states drop out of the assessment consortia (currently the majority of states do not belong to an assessment consortium).

I am very proud of the leadership of the General Assembly and the work of Kentucky educators to make a smooth transition to a college-and career-ready agenda. I predict that the Kentucky economy will continue to improve due to the education focus on college-and career-readiness.

Just this week, I reviewed data for the Class of 2013 that revealed students who graduated from high school, met the Kentucky college-readiness benchmarks and attended postsecondary out performed students who were not college ready. According to the data, in their first year of postsecondary, college-ready students

- Have a much higher GPA (2.6 vs. 1.7)
- Complete nearly double the number of college credit hours (21.9 vs. 11.1) and
- Return for a second year of postsecondary at a higher rate (85 percent versus 65 percent)

This is a great validation that our assessments and college-readiness benchmarks are strong predictors of postsecondary success.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

Appendix E

Dr. Holliday's Blog: July 10, 2015

College/career for ALL-Part I

As I reflect on the last six years of working with educators in Kentucky, one of the most successful strategies has been the focus on college– and career-readiness.

Recently, the Education Commission of the States recognized the Kentucky Board of Education for the innovation of the Unbridled Learning accountability model, which has college and career readiness as a primary focus. The board's recognition highlights the terrific job that our educators in Kentucky have done over the last six years helping more students reach college readiness.

The focus on college readiness was a result of Senate Bill 1 in 2009. At that time, only 30 percent of our high school graduates were able to enter credit bearing courses at the postsecondary level without the need for remediation. That number came from ACT results, the only measure we had at the time.

Thanks to a strong collaboration with our postsecondary partners under the leadership of Bob King at the Council on Postsecondary Education, Kentucky colleges developed several other measures of college readiness. Kentucky colleges expanded the use of ACT Compass and the Kentucky-developed placement tests for math and language arts--KYOTE.

Many of our Kentucky colleges offered college remedial courses at the high schools so that seniors who had not met the ACT benchmarks in for college readiness were able to successfully complete the remediation their senior year at no cost to parents. By using multiple measures of college readiness, high schools and colleges were able to help more students reach the postsecondary-defined college-readiness levels for language arts and math.

Kentucky has been recognized nationally for this work in many publications due to the strong collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary. It is critical to note that the measures of college readiness were not defined by K-12. ALL measures for college readiness were defined and agreed upon by Kentucky colleges. What this means is that any student who reaches college readiness as defined by Kentucky colleges on the ACT, Compass, and/or KYOTE can be placed in a credit bearing course upon being enrolled in college. Since Kentucky began this work, the college readiness rates have moved from 30 percent to more than 60 percent.

It is estimated that students and parents have been able to save more than $1,000 per student by avoiding non-credit bearing remedial course tuition at the college level. With almost 15,000 more students reaching college readiness for the class of 2015 compared to the class of 2009, Kentucky families have realized an estimated savings of almost $15 million. On top of that, high school graduates who reach college readiness levels are more likely to return to college for a second year, take more credit-bearing courses, and have a higher GPA.

I am extremely honored to have worked in a state with such a focus on student success. The partnership between K-12 and postsecondary is a model for all states. Kentucky teachers are the envy of the nation. Kentucky students and families have benefitted. Thanks for letting me be a part of such important work.

Next week, I will focus on the tremendous work done in career readiness.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

Appendix F

Dr. Holliday's Blog: May 29, 2015

A history lesson to remember

As we wrap up the 2014-15 school year, I have high hopes for the future of our high school graduates in Kentucky. We will have a higher percentage of students successfully complete high school in four years than at any point in the history of the Commonwealth. Of those who graduate from high school, we will have the highest percentage of students reaching college-and career-readiness in the history of the Commonwealth. This is an amazing testament to the hard work and dedication of educators, parents and students in Kentucky.

Given these amazing results, I feel it is important to remind readers of the recent important events in education history that have helped Kentucky reach these significant milestones.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 was and remains the foundation of our work. KERA became reality based on significant business support and support from the Pritchard Committee to reform education in Kentucky. By any measure of student success, KERA has been the basis for improvement.

While KERA moved Kentucky from the cellar of state rankings to about the midway point, there was continued concern voiced through the late 1990s and 2000s about how prepared high school graduates were for college and career. Too many high school graduates were taking college placement tests and finding out they needed to take remedial courses prior to taking credit-bearing college courses. The college remediation rates were as high as 80 percent in a number of our technical colleges. Remediation is a significant cost for students and colleges, and students who need remediation are much less likely to return to college after their first year than students who are ready for college when they enroll.

In 2009, the Kentucky General Assembly came together again, as they did in 1990, and passed significant reform legislation-Senate Bill 1. This legislation required the Kentucky Board of Education to set a goal to reduce by 50 percent by 2015 the percentage of high school graduates who were not ready for college-level work or prepared with the skills necessary to enter a career that would lead to a job that pays a living wage. In 2010, the percentage of students ready for college level work was 34 percent. A goal was set for at least 67 percent of high school graduates to be ready for college and career by 2015. From all indications, Kentucky will reach this goal with the Class of 2015.

In order to reach our goal, Senate Bill 1 required new standards, assessments, and accountability systems.

Throughout the 2009 session of the General Assembly and during the interim session of 2009, all of the stakeholders in Kentucky were aware and supportive of Kentucky adopting and implementing the Common Core standards for English/language arts and mathematics. It was very clear that a student could master these basic standards in order to achieve college- and career readiness. Certainly, local districts could exceed the standards, however, not every student in Kentucky needs to take AP Chemistry, AP Calculus or other high level coursework in order to reach the college- and career-ready level. Acceptance into a top tier university requires students to take more rigorous courses, however taking these courses is a decision students and their parents make depending on college- or career-plans.

Senate Bill 1 asked Kentucky educators to implement standards, assessments and a new accountability system so more students would reach college readiness. The universally accepted definition of college readiness is that a student would reach the level of performance that would enable the students to enter credit-bearing course work at a two-year or a four-year university. The measures include the ACT, Compass, and the state placement exams used by all public higher education

programs-KYOTE. All Kentucky higher education institutions agreed on these measures and the scores needed for high school graduates to reach college readiness.

As parents talk to their students in grades 3-8 about the end of year K-PREP assessments and high school end-of-course assessments, it is important to note that each parent and student will receive an assessment report in the fall. This assessment report will enable parents to know if their student is on track to reach the college- and career-readiness level upon graduation. It is very important for students that parents have a discussion with their child's teacher and school officials concerning student performance and how to support students in reaching college – and career-readiness by high school graduation.

Over the next few months, there will be a lot of political discussion and debate about Kentucky's academic standards, assessments and accountability systems. While we can certainly revise the systems and make them stronger, it is important for parents to recognize that the systems are working. More students are graduating for high school with the skills needed for college and career success.

Lots of politicians will tell you what they are against, however, it is difficult to find out what they really support, and if what they support has a track record of success. Hopefully, this brief history lesson will help filter the political rhetoric from the reality of proven systems that are successful in helping more children reach college- and career-readiness and emerge from high school ready to take the next step in life.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

About the Author

Steve Newman is a mathematics professor at Northern Kentucky University who has focused on college readiness issues for over 18 years. He has written numerous white papers on these issues and served on many statewide college readiness committees. He was a member of the national Content Expert/Employer Panel that developed the American Diploma Project benchmarks in mathematics in 2003. He is the director of the Kentucky Early Mathematics Testing Program (KEMTP) begun in 2000. He is a founder and a leader of the Kentucky Online Testing (KYOTE) college placement testing and college readiness program that grew out of the KEMTP beginning in 2006. He currently serves as KYOTE contact person for the Kentucky Department of Education along with his long-time colleague Professor Paul Eakin at the University of Kentucky.

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