

# Union denies teachers dragging feet



Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday has criticized some teachers. DAVID R. LUTMAN/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER-JOURNAL

## Association president challenges Holliday to provide specific examples

By Antoinette Konz

akonz@courier-journal.com

The Courier-Journal

The Jefferson County Teachers Association is denying claims by Kentucky Department of Education officials that its teachers are resisting changes at some of the district's persistently low-achieving schools.

In a email sent Tuesday to Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday, JCTA President Brent McKim said his organization has reviewed a six-page

letter Holliday gave to Jefferson County Schools Superintendent Donna Hargens on March 26, outlining concerns about union interference, as well as several other documents, and cannot find examples where teachers are interfering with overhaul efforts.

"Could you provide us with a brief summary of the 'significant resistance' KDE has been encountering in our JCPS schools?" McKim asks in the email. "We are particularly interested in

See JCTA, Page B3

## JCTA: Union denies teachers dragging feet

Continued from Page B1

which specific schools have been demonstrating 'significant resistance' with some detail, so we can plan school visits to these sites to try to understand what has been occurring."

McKim is referring to comments Holliday and other state education officials made in a Feb. 10 article in The Courier-Journal that said the state has met "significant resistance" when working with some of Jefferson County's priority schools.

"Dr. Holliday, if you are going to criticize teachers and the Association publicly, we believe you should at least provide us some detail regarding

what we are being accused of and where you believe it is occurring," McKim's email said.

Nancy Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for the Kentucky Department of Education, confirmed that Holliday received the letter and said that he plans on responding but is out of the office until later in the week.

McKim said Wednesday his organization looks forward to hearing from Holliday.

"We have been asking him for examples of the interference since Feb. 11, and we've heard nothing from him," McKim said. "We are trying to understand the issues and be supportive, but that requires some communication from the commissioner."

Based on Holliday's recom-

mendation following the March 26 letter, McKim said, JCTA spoke with Hargens and two other top district officials and none was aware of "any specific complaints regarding teachers not cooperating with state staff."

Hargens confirmed Thursday that she has not received complaints regarding specific teachers at specific schools, a JCPS spokesman said.

The March 26 letter detailed ongoing problems that frustrated state education officials say have undermined turnaround efforts at 16 of the 18 JCPS schools that have had to undergo overhauls for chronically low student achievement.

Some of the ongoing problems include union obstruc-

tions at the lowest performing schools, Holliday said. He indicated that "perception issues" with JCTA illustrate that some teachers are slowing reforms by arguing that their contracts don't require them to participate in collaborative meetings or in-class coaching.

According to state law, a collective-bargaining agreement between a union and district cannot pre-empt the interventions a school or district has chosen to implement as part of its turnaround effort.

But Holliday said that is exactly what is happening inside some of the district's schools.

McKim has maintained that Holliday's contention that teachers are getting in the way of turnaround efforts isn't true.

Reporter Antoinette Konz can be reached at (502) 582-4232.