

**MEETING MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT
JULY 2026 MEETING**



**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (KDE) SCHOOL CURRICULUM,
ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL (SCAAC) MEETING SUMMARY**

May 21, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Deborah Atherton, Carrie Ballinger, Chuck Fletcher, Jana Beth Francis, Frank Hall, Nicola Mason, Josh Trosper, Robert Tuck, Sarah Williams, Alan Young, Rosemarie Young

MEMBERS ABSENT: Martha Emmons, Leslie Jeffries, Brenda McGown, Allison Tamme

SUMMARY: The May 21, 2026 Specially Called virtual School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC) meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. ET by Chairperson Carrie Ballinger.

Roll call was taken, and Jessica Brumley, program consultant in KDE's Office of Assessment and Accountability (OAA), informed the council of the public meeting protocol. A quorum of members was present. The open meeting was recorded and made available for viewing on the [KDE Media Portal](#). All materials were made available in the SCAAC Members Google Folder.

Agenda Item: Legislative Updates: SB 197, HB 257 and HB 10

Presenters: Jennifer Stafford, Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education; Shara Savage, Director, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education; Melissa Chandler, Program Manager, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion and Feedback: Dr. Jennifer Stafford began the discussion by introducing a new section added to Senate Bill 197, mandating a new competitive bid for the state's college admissions exam despite an existing contract with the College Board for the SAT. The bill also initially included limitations on the use of general funds for exams not aligned with Kentucky Academic Standards, but this was vetoed by the governor.

The earliest possible date for naming a new vendor is October, but the procurement process

typically takes 18 months, creating uncertainty for the 2026-27 school year. This uncertainty affects students, educators and families, as they will not know which exam will be administered in Spring 2027 at the beginning of the school year. Commissioner Fletcher echoed his sympathy for districts as they deal with these unforeseen circumstances.

Josh Trosper commented that the feedback he had received from test administrators regarding the SAT administration was overwhelmingly positive. Jana Beth Francis also stated that the SAT administration was smooth and that this legislative decision lacked practicality, which will ultimately result in professional learning placed on hold until the procurement process is complete.

Rosemarie Young asked about costs resulting from this legislation. Stafford clarified that the current SAT contract was awarded through a legitimate procurement process and saves the state several hundred-thousands of dollars annually compared to the ACT contract, with increasing savings over time. The SAT contract does include a clause allowing termination with 30 days' notice, as required by all state procurement contracts, which will allow KDE to terminate the contract and begin the new, legally required bidding process without financial penalty.

Shara Savage then reviewed the changes that will come to Kentucky's accountability model as a result of the passage of House Bill 257. Districts may now adopt locally developed indicators of quality aligned to Kentucky Academic Standards, allowing for more authentic demonstrations of student learning, such as projects and partnerships with community members. KDE will support districts with technical assistance and a one-time payment of up to \$15,000 to help initiate these systems for participating districts.

For the 2025-26 school year, no changes were made to content areas assessed. Starting in the 2026-27 school year, Editing and Mechanics, On-Demand Writing, and the Quality of School Climate and Safety (QSCS) Survey will be removed from state testing, with writing to be addressed through district-adopted programs. Chronic absenteeism and individual student growth will become new accountability indicators. Additionally, Targeted Quality Measures, including FASFA completion, teacher National Board certification percentages and high school credits in grade 8, will be reported on the Kentucky School Report Card until June 2030, when they will become part of the accountability model.

Sarah Williams stated she had heard that grade bands for testing would change, but Commissioner Fletcher responded that this would not be the case, and continued testing areas would remain in their original grade levels within the new accountability model.

Alan Young inquired about the need to purchase a writing program. Commissioner Fletcher noted that each superintendent must adopt and publish a district-wide writing program policy, including writing across the curriculum, but districts are not required to purchase a specific program; they simply must have a policy in place as dictated by their SBDM. There was some discussion on how that may look in larger counties like Fayette and Jefferson, which ultimately

settled on the idea of unity but not necessarily uniformity between the schools of a district.

Shara Savage then continued to explain that the accountability system must meet both state and federal requirements, including academic achievement in Reading and Math, Growth, English Language (EL) proficiency, Graduation rate, and at least one School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) indicator. The council discussed how Science and Social Studies fit into these requirements depending on the inclusion of Growth at the high school level.

Members, including Jana Beth Francis, Alan Young and Robert Tuck, provided feedback on the proposed weight of these indicators, emphasizing the need to balance Reading/Math with Science/Social Studies and Postsecondary Readiness and to keep the weight of Chronic Absenteeism low due to limited school control of student attendance.

Dr. Stafford then led a discussion on incorporating individual student growth into the accountability system, explaining the difference between Growth and Change metrics, the rationale for including high school growth using skip-year measures from grade 8 to grade 10 and soliciting feedback on growth models and their impact. Incorporating Growth as a metric was the direct result of the Kentucky United We Learn (KUWL) council's work to acknowledge student progress and meaningful gains in learning, and now there was a need for SCAAC input on implementation.

Rosemarie Young asked about the lack of high school growth measures before this point. Jana Beth Francis described the historical lack of high school growth measures due to limited testing points, but with technical advances, skip-year growth (8th to 10th grade) is now feasible and recommended by the Accountability Thought Partner group to better capture student progress and support continuous improvement within high school years.

Dr. Stafford then outlined the two models that were proposed by the Center for Assessment and discussed by the Accountability Thought Partner group. The first is a student growth percentile, which is norm-referenced and allows student percentiles to be measured against their peers. The second model is a value table, which is criterion-referenced to show progression within NAPD performance-level indicators based on standards.

Council members debated the merits of each, with feedback favoring criterion-referenced models for clarity and fairness. Alan Young preferred a measure of students against standards instead of peers, for fear that comparison would create a narrowing of the educational experience. Josh Trospen mentioned his appreciation for incorporating growth, especially as its own silo indicator, which would allow for clearer communication on scores to families and community members. Sarah Williams suggested subdividing performance categories (e.g., novice high/low) to better capture incremental gains, especially for multilingual learners. Dr. Stafford thanked the council for their feedback.

Shara Savage proceeded to detail Chronic Absenteeism as a new indicator in accountability.

Chronic Absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school time for any reason, with the federal definition based on days missed and the state currently using minutes. Various group discussions lead to the decision to align with the federal definition for simplicity and consistency.

SCAAC considered using a 50-day enrollment period (half the school year) for accountability, as opposed to the traditional 100-day period, to avoid 'track back' issues where schools are held accountable for students no longer enrolled. This approach would better reflect the school's actual influence on student attendance. Members, including Rosemarie Young and Sarah Williams, also advocated for a low weight for Chronic Absenteeism due to limited school control, especially at the elementary level where absences are often determined by parents.

Following this, Dr. Stafford led a discussion on the weight of each of these indicators. Jana Beth Francis suggested maintaining current weights for English Learner Progress and Postsecondary Readiness, assigning a low weight (4%) to Chronic Absenteeism (the original weight for the QSCS survey) and ensuring that the combined weight of Reading/Math and Growth does not exceed current levels to avoid overemphasizing those areas at the expense of Science and Social Studies.

Dr. Nicola Mason suggested that, given her knowledge of Chronic Absenteeism measures in other states, more weight may be placed on Chronic Absenteeism at the elementary level. Jana Beth Francis contended that this may be overly punitive at the elementary level when these students are not in charge of their own transportation.

Alan Young pushed for Success indicators to have a larger weight within the accountability model, because he feels the over-reliance on multiple-choice tests as an indicator of knowledge is antiquated. Robert Tucker seconded this but also advocated for increasing the weight of Postsecondary Readiness and Graduation Rate at the high school level, which are larger indicators of educational success for a student entering the real world. Alan Young suggested a 60-40 split between academic and SQSS indicators to better reflect readiness for life and community needs and cautioned against overweighting Reading and Math (including Growth) to prevent narrowing the curriculum and to ensure that authentic demonstrations of learning remain valued in the accountability system.

Shara Savage then explained the flexibility under ESSA for English Learners newly enrolled in U.S. schools, outlining two options for EL assessment participation and accountability. Option one allows exemption from assessments in the first year, beyond what is required for federal participation. Option two allows participation with results reported but not used in accountability until the second year. Kentucky has historically used option one but may now consider option two due to the inclusion of growth in accountability.

Finally, Melissa Chandler informed the council that House Bill 10 now requires Senate confirmation for all future SCAAC member appointments and chair elections, with the process applying only to new appointments and not retroactively. SCAAC members will still be

appointed by the governor, with appointees serving until confirmed during the legislative session. If the Senate does not confirm, the individual cannot continue in the role. This change also applies to other education advisory groups.

Jana Beth Francis made a motion to adjourn. Alan Young seconded the motion. Motion carried. The next SCAAC meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2026.

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