

**MEETING MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT
THE NOVEMBER 2026 MEETING**



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

September 15, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carrie Ballinger, Jana Beth Francis, Leslie Jefferies, Nicola Mason, Jennifer Pusateri, Robert Tuck, Sarah Williams, Alan Young, Rosemarie Young

MEMBERS ABSENT: Martha Emmons, Chuck Fletcher, Frank Hall, Brenda McGown, Allison Tamme, Josh Trosper

SUMMARY: The September 15, 2026 virtual School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC) meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. ET by Chairperson Carrie Ballinger. The council charge and member responsibilities were shared.

Roll call was taken, and Jessica Brumley, a 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: Review Agenda and Approve Minutes from July 2026 Meeting

Presenter: Carrie Ballinger, Chair, SCAAC

Summary of Discussion: Rosemarie Young made a motion to approve the July 2026 meeting minutes. Nicola Mason seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Agenda Item: Greetings from the Commissioner

Presenter: Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Commissioner Robbie Fletcher expressed his excitement for the very full agenda and reviewed the agenda items with the council.

Agenda Item: Cognia Improvement Platform

Presenter: Veronica Boller, Program Consultant, Division of School and Program Improvement, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Veronica Boller explained how Kentucky's 2026-2027 comprehensive improvement planning process is moving to the redesigned Cognia Improvement Platform. This new platform is intended to provide a more user-friendly system and connect the four phases of the improvement planning process. Boller did note a small language change: required components of the Comprehensive Improvement Plans are now called elements instead of diagnostics. She continued that districts will designate local platform administrators who will navigate the new technological changes, including the local indicators of quality diagnostic, and provide technical support. The executive summary, needs assessment, assurances, goals, objectives, strategies and professional development plan are intended to function as an aligned sequence; needs-assessment selections populate later selections, priority needs inform professional development, selected priority indicators become optional goal choices, etc. Required goals address achievement gaps and state assessment results, whereas optional goals may address a number of issues, including chronic absenteeism, local accountability, etc. Ultimately, this move is to create a more navigable resource to assist schools, particularly those with federal classifications.

Feedback: Alan Young praised the creation of the new platform but was concerned with the separation of elements and diagnostics. The Local Indicators of Quality diagnostic, for example, can also be evidence, not just a diagnostic. Keeping these categories separate seems to disincentivize districts to join in on the local indicators of quality.

Mason asked if the onboarding process would focus on establishing common vocabulary to previous iterations of this work, and Boller confirmed that the same language was used.

Agenda Item: Local Indicators of Quality Diagnostic

Presenters: Sarah Snipes, Director, Division of Innovation, Office of Continuous Improvement & Support, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Sarah Snipes then outlined the optional Local Indicators of Quality Diagnostic, including the submission requirements for a one-year implementation grant of up to \$15,000 per district. Districts who wish to receive the one-time grant payment must identify a leadership team, submit their locally-developed indicators, provide an implementation timeline and upload local board minutes documenting approval of both the indicators and timeline. House Bill 257 (2026) requires that Indicators must align to the *Kentucky Academic Standards*, reflect local priorities and measure student participation in vibrant learning experiences where students apply learning in authentic contexts. To receive funding, districts must submit the diagnostic and all required documentation by April 1, 2027 in the Cognia Improvement Platform, and KDE will review applications through a monthly reporting process. Snipes also stated that there are Regional Innovation Specialists available to assist districts with planning and networking, and KDE is continuing to develop resources to support districts in this endeavor.

Feedback: Jana Beth Francis suggested that evaluating whether local indicators of quality bolster student achievement by studying these districts would provide valuable information. Snipes agreed and stated that KDE teams are developing possible research proposals for this purpose. Early feedback from about 10 districts has indicated gains among some student subgroups, but formal evaluation remains forthcoming.

Alan Young urged KDE to make clear that local indicators themselves may demonstrate academic learning through real world and vibrant learning experiences, rather than being treated only as a separate diagnostic or optional addition. Fletcher agreed and noted that this platform has been nationally recognized, and it only continues to improve with feedback, like that received from SCAAC.

Rosemarie Young voiced that most schools understand that there are priorities, and those tend to be academic in nature, but a true diagnostic is intended to diagnose the outside areas that require additional focus for students to succeed. To add the Local Indicators of Quality Diagnostic to a Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) plan may overcrowd it, in her view. She additionally recognized that this is a starting point, and modifications can be added as needed.

Agenda Item: Research Blogs

Presenters: Robert Collins, Strategic Data Analyst, Strategic Planning & Research, Office of the Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Robert Collins then introduced the new, biweekly Research Blogs, which launched last month on August 11. These blogs are intended to translate complex, evidence-based research into digestible and actionable insights for educators, leaders and policymakers. Posts will be published on the KDE website and promoted through the *Kentucky Teacher* publication and will include an opportunity for the public to interact with researchers and ask questions. The initial article, “Beyond a Definition: The True Scale of Kentucky’s Attendance Crisis,” examines post-pandemic absenteeism, Kentucky’s attendance patterns and state efforts to address chronic absenteeism.

Feedback: Francis praised this work and implored Collins to present it at the State DAC Conference. She noted that it would be useful to determine how leaders may take these blogs and use them in professional learning development. Chair Ballinger stated that after a district-wide forum on Chronic Absenteeism, she did send the first blog post to her district staff.

In response to Rosemarie Young’s question regarding the sources for this research, Collins assured SCAAC that he and his team conduct a comprehensive literature review, prioritizing evidence-based, peer-reviewed research from reputable journals and institutional partnerships. Alan Young applauded this mixture of theory and practice.

It was then noted that Collins will participate in Harvard University’s Strategic Data Project through the Graduate School of Education’s Center for Education Policy Research. Karen Dodd confirmed that studying the effect of vibrant learning experiences and local indicators of quality on student success is part of their proposal for this research project.

Agenda Item: Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Video Showcase

Presenters: Karen Dodd, Chief Performance Officer, Strategic Planning & Research, Office of the Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Karen Dodd presented the student-developed ILP video showcase, which is intended to help middle school and high school students utilize their ILPs for planning their future career and educational goals. The project originated with KDE's student advisory group, who voiced that students felt underprepared to transition beyond high school. They identified that, if used intentionally, the ILP was an excellent support for career exploration, educational goals, course selection and college and career planning. This resulted in the development of the showcase, where students, teachers, counselors, parents and the public are invited to submit a short video, like the one Dodd played for the council, to explain how the ILP is used within districts or their own experience in using the ILP, in order to promote the tool. Submission instructions and links are available on the KDE website.

Feedback: Commissioner Fletcher believes the ILP is a tool to individualize learning. Given the flexible requirements of upper-level coursework, students can tailor their schedules to fit their career goals. Examples include English coursework centered on biomedical research for students in the medical pathway or case law analysis for students in the legal pathway.

Francis recommended emphasizing ILPs even down to the middle-school level and identified the connection between this video showcase and the STLP digital projects students may already be completing.

Michelle Searcy noted that graduation requirements direct schools to use ILPs when scheduling student to further personalize the graduation experience.

Alan Young commented that this work is even taking shape with student-led conferences all the way down to the kindergarten level and revealed in the pride he feels to work for a state that values the voices of our students and our practitioners.

Agenda Item: Assessment and Accountability Updates

Presenter: Shara Savage, Director, Division of Assessment and Accountability Support, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Shara Savage reported on preparations for the Sept. 23 Quality Control (QC) Day, and the following fall data release, and the many assessment administrations currently underway in the Office of Assessment and Accountability. Approximately 29,000 kindergarten students have also completed the screen, or K Screen, and administration continues throughout their testing window. Savage reviewed that the 2026-2027 accountability model will change our Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) administration, removing the Quality of School Climate and Safety (QSCS) survey, as well as the Editing and Mechanics and On Demand Writing tests. This change will result in the removal of resources and instructions of those tests from OAA webpages. Additionally, teachers across the state are preparing to

administer the Transition Attainment Record (TAR) and Window 1 of the Alternate Kentucky Summative Assessment (AKSA), and the college admissions exam contract and vendor announcement remain on track for October. Lastly, the ordering window for WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS runs from Sept. 28 through Oct. 22.

Agenda Item: Accountability Regulation: Proposed Amendments to 703 KAR 5:270

Presenter: Jennifer Stafford, Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education; Jenni Larkins, Policy Advisor, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Jennifer Stafford reviewed the proposed amendments to the state accountability regulation, including the revisions to the Individual Student Growth table and the accountability weights. Stafford noted that several advisory groups and councils, like SCAAC, provided feedback that ultimately led to this version of these tables, which will be presented to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) in October for the second read. For the Individual Student Growth Table, KBE accepted the recommendation to include a 110 diagonal value, as well as changing the Distinguished High to Distinguished Low value from 50 to 100, the Apprentice Low to Novice High value from 0 to 50 and the Novice High to Novice High value from 0 to 100.

Feedback: Robert Tuck voiced concern for the Proficient High to Distinguished Low value. Francis cautioned that the intention is not to duplicate points in a growth table when students are already receiving credit for being Proficient or Distinguished in the Reading and Math indicator score. She suggested providing an example that shows how the achievement and growth scores combine.

Stafford then outlined the proposed accountability weight structure that was updated after the KBE meeting in August. The Chronic Absenteeism indicator was lowered to 4%, which allowed for a shift to increase the high school indicators, Postsecondary Readiness to 25% and Graduation Rate to 6%. Stafford noted that the regulation does not specify the grade levels assessed for Chronic Absenteeism, but researching other state plans has yielded the common directive of measuring Chronic Absenteeism from kindergarten through grade 12.

Commissioner Fletcher noted that this seemed to be the intent of our legislators, and SCAAC members supported this measure.

Stafford clarified that the proposed accountability calculation uses the federal days-based approach for Chronic Absenteeism, rather than the minutes-based approach, to account for partial-day absences for necessary appointments that students may have.

Chair Ballinger inquired about a different iteration of this table that lowered the high school Reading and Math indicator weight from 40% to 36% and raised the Graduation Rate indicator to 10%. The Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC) had discussed this, according to Commissioner Fletcher. Tuck voiced his support.

Francis noted her desire for a growth rate for high school, but she opposed the change to Graduation Rate at the expense of Reading and Mathematics. These assessments are the final broad measures of academic skills, in her view, and the Postsecondary Readiness and Graduation Rate indicators have such little variance between districts.

Alan Young noted his support for the 10% Graduation Rate indicator weight, stating that assessments are only a snapshot of one-time testing performance, whereas graduation rate emphasizes the importance of completion and application of skills.

A motion was then made by Tuck to recommend changing the high school Reading and Mathematics indicator weight from 40% to 36% and the Graduation Rate indicator from 6% to 10%. Alan Young seconded the motion. Motion to vote on the recommendation carries.

Roll Call Vote for the Recommendation:

Carrie Ballinger: Yes

Jana Beth Francis: No

Leslie Jefferies: Abstain

Nicola Mason: Yes

Jennifer Pusateri: Yes

Robert Tuck: Yes

Sarah Williams: Yes

Alan Young: Yes

Rosemarie Young: No

Motion to make a recommendation to KBE carries.

Agenda Item: Expiring SCAAC Member Terms and Continued Interest

Presenter: Carrie Ballinger, Chair, SCAAC

Summary of Discussion: Chair Ballinger reminded SCAAC that the next meeting, on Nov. 17, will include the elections for chair and vice-chair. Members with expired terms who remain eligible for reappointment may be elected, but at least one leadership position should be held by a member whose term continues through 2027 or later. Jessica Brumley will email members to request nominations for both positions. Current chair and vice-chair may be renominated, and nominees may choose to accept or decline nomination before the November meeting.

Agenda Item: Proposed 2027 SCAAC Meeting Dates

Presenter: Carrie Ballinger, Chair, SCAAC

Summary of Discussion: Chair Ballinger asked members to review the proposed 2027 meeting dates before voting to approve them during the November meeting.

Francis motioned to adjourn. Jennifer Pusateri seconded the motion. Motion carried. The next SCAAC meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2026.

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