

**SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT THE FEBRUARY 2026 MEETING**



**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Local School Board Members Advisory Council  
SUMMARY**

**SUMMARY:**

**I. Agenda Item:** Roll Call and Approval of Minutes

**Presenter:** Jodi Doman, Program Consultant, Division of Innovation  
Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:**

Doman asked for approval of previous minutes and the current agenda. The minutes were approved by David Webster and seconded by Venita Murphy.

**ATTENDANCE:**

**PRESENT:** Felix Akojie; Paducah Independent/McCracken County, Joanna Freels, Shelby County, Carl Kiser, Clark County, Venita Murphy; Webster County, Brenda Rose, Whitley County, Jennifer Thomas, Graves County, David Turner, Walton-Verona Independent/Boone County, David Webster, Simpson County

**ABSENT:**

**II. Agenda Item:** Welcome and Opening Remarks

**Presenters:** Sarah Snipes, Director of Innovation  
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support  
Kentucky Department of Education

Dr. Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner of Education  
Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Snipes stated that it is really good to see everyone—both new faces and familiar ones noting that several new members were either present tonight or will be joining in the near future. The group expressed excitement about this transition and welcomed everyone in attendance. Snipes reiterated the desire to ensure that the Advisory Council feels truly owned by its members. Rather than simply collecting agenda topics month-to-month, the

intention is to work collaboratively to establish priorities that reflect the needs and perspectives of the council.

It was noted that Dr. Fletcher, who was present this evening and consistently makes an effort to attend, may not always be able to join future meetings. Setting strategic priorities as a group will help ensure the council can continue to offer meaningful guidance to the Commissioner throughout the year.

These priorities will help focus the council's advisory efforts on issues that are important to board members as they represent districts, students, and communities across the state.

Additionally, Dr. Collins was welcomed and will provide a deeper exploration of previous discussions related to local accountability. In the past, this topic has been described somewhat abstractly, but tonight's presentation will clarify how local accountability fits into a broader framework. Dr. Collins will share an overview of sessions recently held across the state with local co-ops, with the goal of helping members leave with a stronger understanding of local accountability and its potential impact on their counties.

Members were invited to introduce themselves using three prompts: their name, their district, and a celebration from their community. The group was asked to share something that has recently brought joy within their school district.

Commissioner Fletcher began by congratulating districts across the state on the most recent assessment results. He reported that Kentucky achieved its highest percentages of students scoring Proficient and Distinguished since COVID. While there was a slight plateau in some areas during the 2022–23 year, all content areas—except writing, which remained steady—showed increases in proficiency statewide.

He further noted strong improvement in school performance classifications. The number of “blue” high schools more than doubled, and the overall number of top-tier “green” and “blue” schools increased. Except for science, which required level-setting due to a new test, all assessment standards and performance bars remained unchanged. Despite this, more students met or exceeded proficiency benchmarks, which the Commissioner described as encouraging progress.

Looking ahead to the legislative session, Commissioner Fletcher shared that **local accountability** will be a top priority. Recent statewide town halls included significant input from educators, parents, students, and legislators. Their feedback shaped the department's proposal for a revised accountability model. Dr. Collins will provide additional detail on the local accountability component.

Commissioner Fletcher then outlined key elements of the broader accountability proposal:

- 1. Adaptive Reading and Math State Assessments**

The department is proposing that state reading and math assessments become adaptive—similar to tools many districts already use (e.g., STAR). Adaptive testing

would:

- Determine whether students are performing on grade-level standards.
- Provide grade-level equivalency information, which may be more meaningful to families.
- Allow categories such as very low proficiency to be identified more accurately.

## 2. **Shifting Away from the Current Change Metric**

The Commissioner shared concerns about the complexity of the existing change calculation within the CSI identification formula. He described the current system as difficult to interpret, even for experienced educators. As an example, he noted that if a school's reading index drops from 90 to 85, the change formula doubles the decrease and applies multiple deductions, resulting in a much larger penalty than many consider reasonable. The department is asking legislators to remove the current change metric and replace it with a more transparent approach.

The Commissioner also acknowledged challenges districts face with funding and sustainability, particularly regarding one-to-one device initiatives as federal COVID-era dollars expire. He recognized the financial pressure this places on districts and noted that legislative conversations will likely continue around these concerns.

### **III. Agenda Item:** Introductions and Member Expectations LSBMAC Overview

**Presenter:** Sarah Snipes, Director of Innovation  
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support  
Kentucky Department of Education

#### **Summary of Discussion:**

The purpose of this Advisory Council is to serve as a two-way communication channel between board members and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). Members are expected both to be informed by the department and to provide feedback and insight that reflects trends, needs, and unique perspectives from their communities.

Since there are several new members, the council reviewed its composition and charge:

- The council will ultimately consist of 13 local school board members from across the state.
- KSBA and regional cooperatives assisted with nominations and selections.
- Sessions are facilitated by Doman and Snipes representing the Division of Innovation within the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support.

- The primary role of the council is to advise KDE on how state-level initiatives impact local boards, students, and communities. This includes providing perspectives on initiatives such as local accountability.

Meeting structure and expectations were reviewed:

- The council meets three times per year.
- Members serve staggered one-year terms, with half initially serving two-year terms.
- Representatives must currently serve as local school board members, advocate for all students, and not serve on any other KDE Advisory Council.

Member responsibilities include:

- Attending all scheduled meetings, with virtual participation available if in-person attendance is not possible.
- Arriving on time and fulfilling obligations for any assigned projects.
- Serving as fair representatives for their communities and for Kentucky students.
- Treating peers and themselves with respect and honoring the contributions of each council member.

The group acknowledged the value of the council's work and expressed appreciation for the members' commitment and participation.

## **VI. Agenda Item: Annual Priorities and Learning Agenda**

**Presenter:** Sarah Snipes, Director of Innovation  
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support  
Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Snipes introduced a focused discussion on developing the council's learning agenda for the year. The goal was to identify the topics that members want to prioritize for learning, exploration, and advising the department. Moving forward, members were encouraged to guide conversations more intentionally and create a common thread throughout the year. To achieve this, members were asked to identify their top five priority areas. These priorities will:

- Inform council discussions, presentations, and topics.
- Shape the Commissioner's consultation throughout the year.

- Provide a shared sense of direction and focus for the council's work.

Members were provided sticky notes (or online chat options for virtual participants) to capture their ideas. Facilitators encouraged reflection on:

- Individual priorities and collective priorities across districts.
- Topics where members have expertise or connections to relevant speakers.
- Local initiatives or programs that could be scaled to benefit other districts.
- Areas related to local accountability or other issues of significance.

Members were encouraged to complete their lists and prepare to discuss them in pairs.

The next phase focused on clustering ideas:

- Members paired up to share their individual topics with one another.
- Pairs were asked to identify themes, similarities, or recurring ideas across their notes.
- The goal was to determine the top two or three priorities that were most significant and broadly relevant across districts.

Guiding questions included:

- Which themes appear repeatedly across members' notes?
- Which issues feel particularly urgent beyond an individual member's community?
- Which topics would benefit most from the Commissioner's attention and feedback from the council?

Pairs were assigned as follows:

- In-person members formed natural pairs based on seating.
- Online members were paired to discuss and cluster their ideas virtually.

This exercise was designed to help council members reflect on both their own districts and broader statewide trends, ensuring that the final priorities represented collective insights and actionable recommendations for KDE.

Following the paired discussions, council members moved into a whole-group synthesis of their clustered ideas.

- Facilitators explained that the focus was to capture guiding priority-level themes rather than solutions to specific problems.
- Examples of acceptable themes included:
  - Supporting teacher workforce and well-being
  - Strengthening local governance and community voice
- Members were encouraged to consider what topics they would prioritize if they had the Commissioner or the department's full attention for one hour. The aim was to filter for high-value statewide priorities.
- Priorities were recorded as they were shared with the full group.
- Members were given a brief period to make any final adjustments to their themes before reporting them to the larger council.

This process was intended to establish a shared understanding of the council's top priorities for the year, ensuring alignment with both local concerns and statewide relevance. The Commissioner emphasized the importance of stakeholder input and how seriously it is taken in informing priorities. As an example, the Department developed 27 additional budget requests for the governor, which were also shared with district finance officers at CASBO. Finance officers were asked to rank the top four priorities, and their rankings exactly matched those of the State Board of Education, demonstrating strong alignment between the Board and school districts.

This aligned information is then used in conversations with legislators to show that identified priorities reflect not only the Board's views but also those of schools and districts. The speaker noted the value of advisory council activities in surfacing research, identifying potential blind spots, and confirming shared priorities. While there may be areas of disagreement, presenting aligned priorities to legislators strengthens advocacy efforts. He concluded by thanking participants for their work and contributions.

Participants were instructed to share their group themes aloud for whole-group synthesis. Doman was asked to record the themes as they were reported. Groups were given time to review and refine their ideas, with guidance to keep them at a guiding priority level rather than proposing specific solutions.

The following topics were highlighted:

- Communication between schools and the community.
- Legislative updates and detailed information regarding bills that have passed.
- Special education focuses on guidelines, definitions, and supports.

- Site based versus school board obligations.
- Inequality gaps.
- Numeracy
- Local Accountability
- Pre-K logistics
- Career education and opportunities
- Teacher recruitment and retention

The council voted on their top 5 priorities for upcoming meetings:

- Teacher Recruitment
- Inequality gaps
- Numeracy
- Communication
- Site Based vs. School Board

The focus was then shifted to local accountability.

## **V. Local Accountability**

**Presenter:** Rob Collins, Program Consultant  
Kentucky Department of Education

### **Summary of Discussion:**

Collins introduced himself to the members and explained that the group would explore local accountability, including its purpose, impact, and relevance to district contexts. This work builds on the Local Accountability Design Guide and Toolkit developed collaboratively by the team, the University of Kentucky, and the OVEC Educational Cooperative. The guide outlines six critical actions needed to implement high-quality local accountability at the district level and is now completed and available for use.

Collins reviewed the Local Accountability Design Guide & Toolkit and asked members to consider how success and quality are defined outside of education.

He defined local accountability as:

- An expansion of who determines what is measured.
- An expansion of what is measured.
- An expansion of how it is measured
- A shift in how results are shared and acted upon.

Collins clarified what local accountability is not, noting that it is not:

- A compliance checklist
- A dashboard without dialogue
- A rebranded report card
- Not something intended only for innovative districts

Collins discussed why local accountability matters highlighting:

- Traditional systems have failed to earn trust
- It lifts up strengths, not just deficits
- It fuels continuous improvement

Collins identified what we are learning from local accountability:

- Define success for students
- Design vibrant learning experiences
- Demonstrate student success
- Define local school district success
- Design an interactive accountability system
- Demonstrate local school district success

Kentucky's Portrait of a Learner was presented and discussed. Collins invited members to attend his session tomorrow, where he will present this information over an extended period of time. Snipes shared a strong idea emphasizing the importance of equitable access to this information, mentioning that as of December 1st, the team concluded sessions at Central Kentucky Education Cooperative (CKEC) in Lexington after visiting all eight co-ops. Attendance was extremely high across all locations. Due to this strong demand, capacity limits resulted in some individuals being turned away. In response, a virtual session will be offered to ensure broader access. This session will be open to anyone, including teachers, community members, and any other interested participants. Attendees will receive a more detailed and expanded version of the information presented.

## **VI. Agenda Item: Facilitated Open Discussion and Feedback**

**Presenter:** Sarah Snipes, Director of Innovation  
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support

### **Summary of Discussion:**

Snipes thanked members and reminded them to place their sticky notes on the top 3 priority agenda items and that the final information would be emailed along with the slides from the presentation. Snipes reminded attendees of the next meeting at the Galt House Hotel in February.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m. ET

Next Meeting: Kentucky School Board Association Annual Conference

Location: Galt House Hotel, Louisville

Date: February 19th

Time: 5:00-7:00 p.m. ET