



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

**DECEMBER 5, 2024**

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

**Presenter:** Sarah Snipes, Division of Innovation Director, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Kentucky Department of Education; Jodi Doman, Program Consultant, Division of Innovation, Kentucky Department of Education

**ATTENDANCE:**

**PRESENT:** David Webster, Simpson County; Venita Murphy; Webster County; Julia Fischer, Bellevue Independent; Brenda Rose, Whitley County; Brandon Rutherford, Madison County; Larry Dodson, Oldham County; Joanna Freels, Shelby County; Felix Akojie, Paducah Independent; Linda Duncan, Jefferson County; Joanna Hinton; LaRue County

**ABSENT:** Ruschelle Hamilton, Breathitt County; Carl Wicklund, Kenton County; Diane Berry, Nelson County

**Summary of Discussion:**

**II. Agenda Item:** Welcome and Introductions

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

**Summary of Discussion:**

Snipes welcomed members and introduced guests Chief Academic Officer Micki Ray Marinelli, Office of Teaching and Learning, and Associate Commissioner Rhonda Sims, Office of Assessment and Accountability. Snipes introduced Robert Meacham, educational program manager for the Division of Innovation.

Snipes asked each board member to introduce themselves to guests and state their county.

**III. Agenda Item:** Vice Chair Elections

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

Jodi Doman, Program Consultant  
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support  
Kentucky Department of Education

Nominations were received for Brandon Rutherford and Joanna Freels for the election of a vice chair. Snipes explained the process, stating that if no other nominations were in the room, they would proceed with the received nominations. The group then proceeded with the election process. The group conducted the voting process, with Jodi Doman making notes of those in favor of each nominee. Votes were cast for both Rutherford and Freels, with the majority determining the new vice chair. Rutherford was elected as the new vice chair. Snipes thanked both nominees for accepting the nominations and expressed confidence in the new vice chair's ability to contribute to the group's work.

#### **IV. Agenda Item:** Regional Innovate Specialists

**Presenter:** Robert Meacham, Educational Program Manager, Division of Innovation, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Meacham introduced the regional innovation specialists and their role in assessing district readiness to implement the United We Learn initiative, focusing on Portrait of a Learner (PoL), vibrant learning experiences and community engagement. Meacham detailed the responsibilities of the regional innovation specialists, which include contacting districts, assessing their readiness, and providing support for implementing the United We Learn initiative. The specialists work to ensure districts are prepared to adopt the initiative's pillars. Meacham discussed the challenges faced by districts in implementing the United We Learn initiative, including initiative fatigue, staff turnover, and resource limitations. The specialists work to address these challenges and support districts in overcoming them. Meacham shared success stories from districts that have effectively implemented the United We Learn initiative, highlighting the positive impact on student learning and community engagement. These examples serve as models for other districts to follow.

#### **V. Agenda Item:** Science Curriculum and Updates

**Presenters:** Rhonda Sims, KDE Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education

Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Rhonda Sims addressed concerns about science assessment scores and explained the steps being taken to refresh the assessment with new items.

- **Background:** She reminded the group that federal law requires that a science test be administered once at each grade span (i.e., elementary, middle and high) and that state tests measure the state's academic content standards. State law requires that state tests by criterion-referenced involve Kentucky teachers and be included in accountability.

- Concerning Trend: Sims addressed concerns about the decline in high school science assessment scores, noting that the scores have been decreasing since the initial assessment in 2019. This multi-year trend in science at the high school level has raised concerns at the Kentucky Department of Education and among educators and stakeholders.
- Assessment Refresh: The current science assessment has been in place since 2017-2018 school year at elementary and middle schools and the 2018-2019 school year at high school. Sims said the new *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for science* were approved by the Kentucky Board of Education in December 2022 and officially incorporated into law in 2023. Once the new standards were adopted, KDE began facilitating with Kentucky teachers the development of items to refresh the assessment. Sims said students will start seeing the updates in spring 2025, a full year before they originally were scheduled to be used.
- Refresh Goals: Sims highlighted the current science assessment requires students to read and process longer stimuli and associated item sets. The length of these item sets increases the reading and processing load for students and may be contributing to lower student motivation and lower scores. The refreshed assessment will include shorter stimuli and fewer items per set to reduce the reading burden on students. It will maintain the alignment of the KAS for science and assessment blueprint, incorporate new item types (i.e., short answer and standalone items) and provide broader content coverage. Future Steps: Sims mentioned that while the immediate focus is on refreshing the assessment, there are plans to further research and analyze other factors potentially impacting science scores, such as curriculum alignment, student motivation and teacher certification issues. Sims also mentioned multiple efforts KDE is undertaking to address nonacademic factors that could be impacting student performance, including a campaign this year to raise awareness about [chronic absenteeism](#) and a planned public messaging campaign in 2025 to address Kentucky's teacher shortage.

Micki Ray Marinelli discussed the implications of high-quality teaching and learning for science specifically. The KDE is investing in Kentucky teachers and administrators to increase student access to standards-aligned, grade-level learning in science. The Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) has created a consumer guide to assist districts in the evaluation and selection of highquality instructional resources (HQIR) for science. She shared the OTL science consultants are further providing asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities, including curriculum based professional learning for selected HQIR and those supporting deeper learning evidencebased instructional practices. The goal is to improve communication regarding the availability of resources and professional learning opportunities across the commonwealth.

Ray Marinelli shared information on the availability of the below statewide supports for highquality standards-aligned instruction:

- Professional Learning: Three new modules are available on [kystandards.org](https://kystandards.org) (Driving Question Board, Academic Discourse and Anchoring Phenomenon), which have new design features including:
  - A curriculum-based professional learning experience symmetrical to the student experience using an Open Educational HQIR;
  - Considerations for classroom implementation; and
  - Highly effective instructional strategies anchored back to the three dimensionality called for in the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Science*.
  - The OTL science consultants provide a variety of free professional learning opportunities to Kentucky educators, such as virtual workshop series, in-person workshops held at regional education cooperatives and other public spaces across the state, and published recordings of webinars.
- Resources/Guidance: The OTL provides three-dimensional assessment modification
- Key Partnerships: PIMSER is working across the state to implement Science Learning samples as well as the Kentucky Atlas, which provides web-based instructional tasks for Kentucky-based scientific phenomena. Support Networks and a Science Leadership Network to equip and empower educators for the benefit of a vibrant student experience aligned to the *KAS for Science*.

**VI. Agenda Item:** Kentucky United We Learn Updates

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

**Summary of Discussion:** Snipes briefly introduced the reimagined accountability system and directed participants to a detailed presentation by Jennifer Stafford, Director, Division of Assessment and Accountability Support on the framework 1.0 of the reimagined accountability system. This is available to view on the KDE Media portal. A link to this meeting will be sent out by liaison with the post-meeting email. Snipes explained that framework 2.0 is already in the works. Snipes encouraged members to listen to the entire conversation. Snipes highlighted the core values of the accountability system that includes:

- Flexibility, Comparability and Confidence; thinking about the local systems and how we enable districts to take on that work that is so meaningful and lift that up in a space that is recognized in accountability.
- Trust and Empower; balancing local autonomy with necessary statewide data and maintaining those federal requirements in streamlined ways by focusing on an inclusive process.
- Connect to Grow; focusing on an inclusive process. Want to see that a district is deeply engaged and committed.

Snipes promoted and encouraged members to promote the town hall meetings led by

Commissioner of Education Robbie Fletcher and Stafford. The town hall meetings will be held at each co-op in January to discuss the reimagined accountability system and to gather feedback. Snipes stated the goal is to reach educators as well as communities.

**VII. Agenda Item:** Facilitated Open Discussion and Feedback **Presenter:**  
David Webster, Local School Board Advisory Council Chair **Summary of Discussion:**

Members discussed the agenda for the February meeting, emphasizing the importance of legislative updates and considering extending the regular meeting time from 6-8 p.m. Members discussed moving February's meeting to 5p.m. ET. The chair and vice chair will discuss with the liaison and send out a notice. One member proposed a mandate to KDE that any new board member should receive 80% of their training from in-person conferences during their first four years and 50% in the next four years. Snipes will follow up and report to members at the February meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m. ET

Next Meeting: Kentucky School Board Association Annual Conference

Location: Galt House, Louisville

Date: Feb. 20, 2025

Time: 5-7 p.m. ET