

**Kentucky Board of Education Work Session  
April 11, 2017**

***SUMMARY MINUTES***

The Kentucky Board of Education held a special meeting on April 11, 2017, in the State Board Room on the fifth floor of the 300 Building, 300 Sower Blvd., Frankfort, Kentucky. The board conducted the following business:

**I. Call to Order - Full Board Session**

Chairman Twyman called the special work session to order at 3:00 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Chairman Twyman requested that Leslie Slaughter call the roll. There were eight members present and three members absent. President Bob King was also absent from the work session.

**Attendance Taken at 3:00 PM:**

Present Board Members:

Mr. Grayson Boyd  
Mr. Richard Gimmel  
Mr. Samuel Hinkle  
Mr. Gary Houchens  
Ms. Alesa Johnson  
Mr. Milton Seymore  
Mr. William Twyman  
Ms. Mary Gwen Wheeler

Absent Board Members:

Mr. Ben Cundiff  
Mr. Roger Marcum  
Ms. Nawanna Privett  
President Bob King

**III. Review of Draft Proposal for Kentucky's New Accountability System (Review Item: 2-hour presentation/discussion) - Associate Commissioner, Rhonda Sims and Brian Gong, Center for Assessment**

Commissioner Pruitt opened the discussion with a few remarks. He reminded the board that the information being presented was a reflection of the various work groups and the Accountability Steering Committee recommendations; however, he indicated they were not 100% reflective of his recommendations. He noted that there are still some components that need further attention and discussion. Commissioner Pruitt informed the board that he will publish his final recommendations ahead of the first reading of the proposed regulations in June.

Rhonda Sims, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Associate Commissioner for the Office of Assessment and Accountability, began the discussions by thanking board members for their time and commitment to the conversations for the evening. Sims reminded the group that the presentation would have a deeper focus on the specific indicators of the system and serve as an extension of the information shared at the February work session. Using a PowerPoint presentation that can be found on the board's online materials site, Sims started by sharing the various influences on the proposed new system and also reviewed the timeline of the system development phases.

Sims stated that highlights of the proposed system include the following:

- *personalized options for students to be transition ready with content knowledge and critical essential skills;*
- *a focus on the instructional core with student proficiency and growth;*
- *opportunities and access measures that go beyond tests and tested subjects to allow for a well-rounded education and a broader picture of school performance;*
- *data requirements that shine a light on closing the achievement gap; and*
- *an innovation pilot for a competency-based model.*

It also eliminates percentiles and weights to create a descriptive school profile based on standards and the relationship between indicators.

Sims provided a high-level overview of the system's individual components, then began to provide deeper updates surrounding each component. Those components were proficiency, growth, transition readiness, opportunity/access and achievement gap.

Sims spent time discussing the differences between accountability and assessment. She addressed anticipated changes in relation to both areas, with milestones and timelines being provided.

With changes coming for the state's college admissions assessment due to Senate Bill 1 from this past legislative session, board member Sam Hinkle expressed concern over the lack of continuity that the changes in assessment may create. He indicated that consistency in the trend data is important in order for citizens to understand the progress made within their respective districts over time.

Sims noted that, while the state must submit a request for bids and proposals on the new college admissions assessment, opportunities exist to show the concordance of performance among a variety of tests.

In relation to the bidding process, Grayson Boyd inquired about whether or not the state was required to accept the lowest bid. Sims explained that the bids are evaluated by a committee based upon a formula set forth in state statute, which includes other indicators beyond the assessment cost; therefore, she stated that cost alone does not indicate who is awarded the contract.

Mary Gwen Wheeler inquired about the comparability among states, in terms of assessment performance. Commissioner Pruitt expressed the difficulties in doing this, particularly when each state administers a variety of assessments. Rhonda Sims reminded the group of the ability to

compare states with college admissions assessments and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). Board member Milton Seymore concurred that state-to-state and global comparability are important for the state to ensure these are possible. Alesa Johnson also noted the importance of having nationally-recognized assessments as part of the system, as this is important for the economic development of the state.

Rhonda Sims then moved into discussions on the new accountability dashboard concept. Preliminary options were presented to the board, as a model of how assessment and accountability data might be reported for parents and the general public. She indicated this would include both rated and reported indicators of data.

Discussion then transitioned to the concept of overall ratings for a school and district. Alesa Johnson asked if the overall rating categories would include numerical value. Rhonda Sims clarified that each category impacting the overall rating will have cut scores established, but that a single summative score for each school or district will not be utilized. Sims said these cut scores are anticipated to be developed in the summer of 2018, after one year of data has been collected on the system. Rich Gimmel suggested that arrows could be used as a way to indicate growth or decline in the performance of each category.

Gary Houchens stated that he was not content with the titles of the classifications or rating labels, as it can be hard to distinguish between the concept of "outstanding" and "excellent". He also expressed concern about the fact that a school classified as "good" could still have an achievement gap issue. Commissioner Pruitt agreed and stated that this was an example of an area that needed further discussion.

Next, Rhonda Sims began discussing the proposals surrounding achievement gap closure and goal-setting for the state. Sims explained that a consolidated student group is still being recommended for use in reporting; however, she shared that a new and different definition of the consolidated group is being proposed. It was reported that the state's free/reduced lunch population is rather large and it often skews the data, so the recommendation is to remove this student population from the consolidated group. Sims commented that it was also recommended that Caucasian students be removed (due to the large population size), as well as Asian students, as they are the highest performing sub-population.

Sims and Gong both described that goals, both short and long-term, are being proposed for the new system in all of the large components of the system. They explained that these goals are recommended for reporting by school and individual sub-groups. They also said these goals are to be ambitious, but provide interim benchmarks and short-term milestones along the way. Sims and Gong indicated that a current proposal for the state includes closing the achievement gap by at least 50% by the year 2030.

Mary Gwen Wheeler then inquired about whether the board would continue to set larger statewide goals, much like the former delivery goals and associated trajectories that had been created by the state board in the past. Brian Gong explained that yes, the state board would provide guidance on what the state-level goals should be for each area. Many board members expressed the need to be bold in the trajectories that were set, while still being realistic about potential outcomes. They also

stressed the importance of ensuring student growth for all students, while moving the students in gap populations at a quicker pace, was also noted.

Brian Gong began explaining the proposal for minimum "n" counts for disaggregated student data. He said that there must be a minimum of 10 individuals for data to be reported, to ensure confidentiality of the data. The proposal is to include a minimum "n" count of 10 students for accountability reporting, while a minimum "n" count of 30 was recommended for rating purposes. Gong explained that a larger "n" count helps to stabilize the data. Commissioner Pruitt expressed a desire for other reporting strategies to be considered, such as confidence intervals. Gong agreed that this approach was better than using a minimum "n" count; however, he explained that confidence intervals were more complicated to understand and to explain to the general public.

#### **IV. Dinner (Provided for KBE members, invited guests and Commissioner's Planning Committee members only)**

The board recessed for dinner at 5:25 p.m.

#### **V. Continued Discussion of ESSA Accountability System Proposals (Review Item: 2.5-hour presentation/discussion) - Associate Commissioner, Rhonda Sims and Brian Gong, Center for Assessment**

The board reconvened at 6:10 p.m.

Discussions after dinner began with the recommendations for the "opportunity and access" indicators of the proposed system. Rhonda Sims reminded board members that this component has been an area of great debate and conversation. She referenced language from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) law related to "school quality" and "student success", which the state is reflecting in the proposed category of "opportunity and access" through whole child supports and equitable access to a well-rounded education.

Sims explained that most of the debate has centered on whether the proposed measures should be a part of a school or district's formal rating, or just publicly reported for transparency purposes. She shared a chart that highlighted the polling of several accountability work groups, which reflected the difference in opinions among the various measures. She explained that the Commissioner's Regulatory Review Committee, which had met earlier that morning, had expressed their belief that ESSA language may actually require that some of the proposed measures be a part of the overall rating.

Gary Houchens inquired about the justification for having this category in the system in the first place. He expressed the sentiment that if schools are providing the right support systems and learning environments for students, then the result of those opportunities and such access will show up in the results of increased proficiency and achievement gap reduction. Commissioner Pruitt expressed his belief that achievement gaps exist partly because of the opportunity and access gaps that students experience. Pruitt stressed the importance on placing emphasis on areas and subjects other than simply mathematics and reading.

Gary Houchens went on to ask about how the state would define the term "access". Rhonda Sims indicated that a variety of the work groups had given that question consideration and that one current recommendation is to quantify the student exposure to these various measures. She shared that this could be done through a minimum number of hours of exposure per week, etc. Brian Gong stated that "equitable access" could also be calculated by student enrollment in various programs versus the proportional distribution across the school. After much discussion, Gary Houchens expressed his support for the notion of measuring opportunity and access within the system; however, he indicated the need for data validity and reliability through the inclusion of objective measures. There was consensus among the group that data validity was critically important moving forward.

Alesa Johnson then reiterated that, if the belief was that opportunity and access in many ways contributes to reducing the achievement gap, then these measures (some, if not all) should be formally rated. Rhonda Sims indicated that KDE leadership would move forward with the "opportunity and access" category by prioritizing the indicators based on their ability to produce reliable data and how they may impact the closing or narrowing of achievement gaps in the state.

Next, Sims transitioned the conversation to the proposals related to the category of "transition readiness". She referenced a graphic that depicts the current recommendation for high school transition readiness. All students would be required to complete the state's minimum high school graduation requirements, as well as the demonstration of foundational "essential skills". She clarified that those essential skills would be based on high attendance rates, work-based learning opportunities, service learning and community service, expanded components of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and possibly the incorporation of a standardized workplace skills assessment.

Associate Commissioner Sims pointed out that additionally, students would demonstrate their readiness for post-high school transition through three personalized paths (academic readiness, technical readiness or military readiness), with a variety of indicators proposed for each. She said the student could also pursue a designation known as the "Kentucky PLUS" option, which highlights students who have successfully demonstrated readiness in more than one area or who have completed more in-depth learning experiences and demonstrated more sophisticated essential skills. It was explained that the "Kentucky PLUS" designation would be student-driven and reported at the school and district level, but not included in the overall rating.

The conversation continued where it was noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the alignment of academic benchmarks with college entrance requirements established by the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE). Sims stated that conversations related to other college admissions exams and the ASVAB assessment for military readiness were also underway, in terms of the setting of appropriate benchmarks.

Alesa Johnson referenced the college and career readiness (CCR) bonus point concept that exists in the current accountability structure and inquired about how the new model would continue to incentivize the inclusion of career and technical education (CTE) and career pathways as a viable option for all students. Commissioner Pruitt expressed the need to continue with the development of a system that celebrates CTE and provides multiple paths for students. He stated that the dual and articulated credit options, as well as the inclusion of the work-based learning opportunities,

would hopefully accomplish this. It was also noted that resource allocation for college and career advising systems was critical to the future success of this work.

Mary Gwen Wheeler noted concern that the technical readiness measures could potentially be perceived as an "easier" path for students, due to the removal of the academic measures in the new proposal. While this could encourage more students to be counseled towards career pathway opportunities, Wheeler expressed worry that this practice may work against the efforts to remove the stigma of CTE only being for non-college bound students.

Next, Rich Gimmel discussed the continued need for a paradigm shift related to CTE. He noted that being an academic achiever does not exclude a student from also being technically prepared for a career. Gimmel also expressed his desire to see the state and country adopt the philosophies of many other foreign countries, such as Germany, where machining and other skilled trades are highly-respected professions. He acknowledged that there is much work to be done in this regard.

Alesa Johnson agreed with Gimmel and noted that the current proposals surrounding transition readiness did not appear to reflect the blending of both academic and technical readiness measures. Commissioner Pruitt asked the group to think about how an accountability system could address this. He noted that, while the bonus concept in the current model stimulated growth for CTE, the structure also led to some risk and unintended consequences. He posed the question of whether or not amendments to the minimum high school graduation requirements would be a more appropriate way to address this concern. Mary Gwen Wheeler shared that the city of Chicago does require a post-high school transition plan prior to graduation, with evidence of acceptance into college, the military, apprenticeship, or offer of employment opportunities. Milton Seymore expressed the need for the state to start discussing careers with students much earlier in their educational career. Gary Houchens stated that the good intention of exposing all students to CTE has, at times, caused some students to be "squeezed out" of other opportunities, such as music and the arts. He acknowledged that the new proposals may continue the silos that exist between academic and technical readiness; however, Houchens said the unintended consequences that could occur from requiring both are also concerning.

Rhonda Sims went on to share the survey data on areas of shareholder agreement and disagreement, in relation to the transition readiness proposals. The two areas of greatest disagreement she pointed out included: 1) the requirement of 97% attendance for "essential skills" demonstration and 2) the benchmark identified for the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), which is recommended at a score of 50.

Discussions then shifted to the topic of student growth. Rhonda Sims spent time explaining the recommendations related to this portion of the system, which involves the recognition of a school's ability to "catch up" lower-performing students, "keep up" the progress made for students who are meeting benchmarks, and accelerated growth for higher-performing students by "moving up" their performance levels. Individual growth targets would be set for each individual student, with the intent of ensuring that each student reaches proficiency within "x" number of years. Sims shared a sample growth matrix that demonstrated how schools might receive credit for the growth of their students, with weight being distributed by the amount of growth achieved.

Gary Houchens inquired about the reasoning for the recommendation to award credit for moving a student from one performance category to the next, rather than simply focusing on the individual student's growth trajectory and whether or not the annual goal was met or exceeded. Brian Gong explained that states have approached this in different ways and that one alternative could be to consider using scale scores, rather than achievement levels. Gong stated that one positive attribute of the current proposal is that the inclusion of performance levels keeps the conversations centered on the student reaching proficiency. Houchens expressed his desire to see the inclusion of a "low" and "high" level of the proficient category (and possibly the distinguished category also), if those are statistically possible.

Milton Seymore asked the question of whether the attention to the "moving up" category would unintentionally make the achievement gap widen. Commissioner Pruitt explained that "all boats must rise, but some need to rise faster". Pruitt stated that it was equally as important to increase the performance of novice students, while also ensuring that higher-performing students do not fall behind. Rich Gimmel reminded the group that the proposal was focused on providing a greater incentive and reward for novice reduction and moving students into the proficiency performance category. Pruitt acknowledged that, at its core, the system is completely focused on addressing the achievement gap and that the discussions throughout the night had been evidence of that.

Sims moved the focus to the performance of English Language (EL) students, which is related to growth. She said the goal is now focused on progress (growth) toward fluency in English, rather than simply being proficient or not. Sims clarified that this progress could be measured by using a student's WIDA ACCESS performance as a measure, which is an English Language Proficiency exam. This could be factored into the growth category at elementary and middle school and included in transition readiness at the high school level. With five (5) Kentucky school districts accounting for approximately 64% of the EL student population, she commented that it is important for the system to fairly measure this indicator, given the unequal distribution of these students across the state. Board Chair Bill Twyman asked if the Accountability Steering Committee supported these recommendations related to EL growth. Sims indicated that the majority of that committee was in favor of the current proposal.

With the scheduled ending time of 8:00 p.m. having already passed, Sims indicated that the items left to discuss further included recommendations on student proficiency, school improvement, and the competency-based education and assessment pilot. Chair Twyman asked if the department had received adequate feedback from board members during the work session in order to proceed with the next steps. Sims confirmed that yes, the feedback had been noted and was helpful.

Mary Gwen Wheeler then asked about the board's next steps related to goal-setting for the new system. Commissioner Pruitt clarified that, once the system was finalized, department staff would bring forward multiple options for the board to consider and vote upon. Gary Houchens expressed the importance of ensuring that, once goals were identified, there were also strategies in place to address instances where there may be lack of progress toward those identified goals.

## **VI. Next Steps**

KDE staff will continue meeting with various shareholders to finalize the proposals. A first reading of the drafted accountability regulations is to be scheduled for the June board meeting.

## **VII. Recess**

The board recessed until 9:00 a.m. the following morning for its regular meeting.