

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2022 Interim

October 18, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 5th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on Tuesday, October 18, 2022, at 11:00 a.m., in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Regina Huff, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Max Wise, Co-Chair; Representative Regina Huff, Co-Chair; Senators David P. Givens, Stephen Meredith, Adrienne Southworth, Reginald Thomas, Stephen West, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Shane Baker, Kim Banta, Tina Bojanowski, Jennifer Decker, Jeffery Donohue, Mark Hart, Scott Lewis, Bobby McCool, Chad McCoy, Charles Miller, Melinda Gibbons Prunty, Steve Riley, Killian Timoney, James Tipton, Russell Webber, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Brian Melton, MSgt., USMC (Ret.), NJROTC Naval Science Instructor, Pendleton County High School; Dr. Rhonda Caldwell, Executive Director, Kentucky Association of School Administrators; Larry Holland, Senior Consultant, Office of the Chairman, Scholastic Inc.; Michael Haggen, Senior Vice President, General Manager, Literacy Pro & Collections, Scholastic Education Solutions, Scholastic Inc.; Micki Ray, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Rhonda Sims, Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability, KDE; Chrystal Rowland, Director, Division of Program Standards, KDE; and Dina Lemmer, American Institute of Research.

LRC Staff: Jo Carole Ellis, Joshua Collins, Lauren Busch, and Maurya Allen.

Chair Huff shared some remarks and reflections on her years of service, as this was her final meeting as chair before her retirement from the legislature.

Approval of Minutes – September 20, 2022

Representative Riley made a motion, seconded by Representative Timoney, to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2022, meeting. The motion passed by voice vote.

Anti-Vaping Efforts in Schools

Representative Mark Hart introduced Brian Melton, M.Sgt., USMC (Retired), NJROTC Naval Science Instructure, Pendleton County High School. Popularity of vaping

devices is on the rise, beginning in middle school, and retired M.Sgt. Melton reached out to Representative Hart to discuss ways the legislature can help address this issue in schools.

Use of vaping products leads to addiction and disruptions to attention and learning for young people. The devices have deceptive designs that allow them to hide in plain sight among highlighters, make-up products, flash drives, and hoodie strings. Kentucky's anti-vape law is not strong enough to protect youth and needs to be addressed, specifically the loophole in House Bill 215 of the 2022 Regular Session, which only addressed the use of fentanyl laced vape devices by adults. He said statutory penalties for youth are needed to serve as an adequate deterrent. He also recommended training for school personnel to assist with vape-induced medical emergencies. Examples of legislation enacted by other states, such as Florida, Texas, and Michigan, were presented as model legislation. Several Kentucky school districts were part of the class action lawsuit against vape manufacturer JUUL that resulted in the dissolution of that company. However, there are many more manufacturers, and Kentucky can be a leader in combatting this epidemic.

In response to a question from Representative Tipton, Representative Hart said he is working on legislation to be introduced at the next regular session and he welcomes co-sponsors.

In response to a question from Representative Willner, retired M.Sgt. Melton said he does not currently have data on the impact of increased legislative penalties from other states.

Responding to a question from Representative Gibbons Prunty, retired M.Sgt. Melton said he does not have data on the impact of classifying vaping devices as drug paraphernalia, but he is confident it is serving as a deterrent to adults.

Representative Timoney said there also needs to be increased education for parents and staff on the impact of vaping and the negative impact on students.

Senator Meredith asked for the perspective of young people on how they recommend addressing this issue among their peers.

Improving Literacy Outcomes: The Importance of Home Libraries

Dr. Rhonda Caldwell, Executive Director, Kentucky Association of School Administrators; Larry Holland, Senior Consultant, Office of the Chairman, Scholastic Inc. and Michael Haggen, Senior Vice President, General Manager, Literacy Pro & Collections, Scholastic Education Solutions, Scholastic Inc., were present to discuss the impact an expanded home literacy program could have for school-aged children.

Mr. Holland spoke about his experience with literacy improvement programs in Mississippi, working with Scholastic, and ways to improve literacy in low-performing

states. One of the most important lessons he learned was the necessity of science-based curriculum taught by well-trained educators and supported by engaged parents and families with home libraries. Time spent with families, guided by good advice from educators, even when parents themselves struggle with literacy, improves outcomes. Mr. Haggen presented data to support the impact that home libraries, comprised of high-quality materials, have on creating the environment of literacy that science shows is fundamental. He illustrated how impactful the Read to Succeed Act has been in Kentucky and said having books at home aligned with the instruction they receive in schools could build upon the work already being done. The presenters proposed institutionalizing home libraries for all students in Kentucky, as Scholastic has assisted other states, such as Florida and Louisiana, in doing. The programs in those states include robust family support, as many of the parents also struggle with literacy.

Chair Huff said this was well timed as the test results from the state's assessments were published today and many educators will be looking for strategies to improve literacy and reading scores.

In response to questions from Representative Bojanowski, Mr. Holland said he intended to say students should strive for 20 minutes of independent reading, either at school or at home, and expansion of the home library will assist in attaining that goal, but the books are designed to meet readers where they are. He said Scholastic works with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and expands access beyond the birth to preschool age demographic to the 5th grade.

Responding to questions from Senator West, Mr. Haggen said a science-based curriculum would start with the LETRS program offered by Scholastic. The program helps teachers learn how to teach sounds that are foundational for learning literacy and teaching comprehension. Mr. Holland said that Florida, Louisiana, and Tennessee all use a program with physical books mailed directly to the child. However, in Mississippi they are developing a model that delivers physical books, e-books, and magazines so children have a wider variety of material.

Representative Donohue spoke in favor of having physical books because while technology can be a positive, it also contains a lot of negatives due to the distractions posed by the internet. Mr. Holland agreed, as he is an advocate for rural schools and those communities may not have adequate internet access. Physical books help address that gap.

In response to questions from Representative Tipton, Mr. Holland said the Mississippi legislation to address literacy was passed in 2013 and teacher training was the first element. After two years, the program was fully implemented and results began to show a positive shift at that time. Funding was also a critical element. Representative Tipton shared some of the test score data that was recently published and his concerns about math and literacy declines, and he asked what was recommended to help rebound

from the pandemic. Mr. Haggen said it would be critical to help support teachers and give them the appropriate training in their postsecondary education tracts so they have the skills necessary to teach literacy effectively in the classroom. Mr. Holland said the funding necessary to create a Scholastic program in Kentucky, like Florida's, depends on how many students would be served and how frequently the books would be shipped.

Responding to a question from Representative Decker, Mr. Holland said he would be happy to share data from other states to illustrate the impact of the program. He would like to see this program expand to all households throughout the nation, regardless of which company states partner with. However, Scholastic is the largest publisher and distributor of books for children and has the knowledge and resources to know how best to reach students.

In response to questions from Senator Wilson, Mr. Holland said the books are curated by Scholastic and selected because they meet state standards. In the Florida example, educational professionals have the final approval, and rarely ask for modifications to the proposed list. Mr. Haggen said his group reads the books and provides written recommendations and summaries of the books to the state officials, as well as following up with families to see what children and families enjoy and want from the books. This creates a feedback system to encourage engagement from families.

In response to questions from Senator Thomas, Mr. Haggen said he did not mean to give the impression that families should not be engaged. Independent reading begins with whole class instruction, followed by small group instruction from the teacher. Those skills are then taken home, where students read with their families and are still supported as they strive toward independent reading. Universal preschool was valuable for Mississippi because it eased the transition for students from pre-literacy to early literacy in kindergarten, and the state addressed training for teachers accordingly. Mr. Holland said there was no one program that was the single solution for Mississippi, but a collection of programs addressing family engagement, teacher training, home libraries, and creating a science-based literacy curriculum in schools.

Responding to a question from Senator Southworth, Mr. Holland said the ideal situation would give students choice among a curated list of age- and reading-level appropriate books. However, there is not time and resources to give the maximum amount of choice. Instead, parents identify which themes would be most appreciated by their students, and then one of nine books from that theme is sent to the student. Mr. Holland said that digital book options improve choice but can be a problem for students who do not have access to technology.

Revised Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Science

Micki Ray, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Rhonda Sims, Associate Commissioner, Office of

Assessment and Accountability, KDE; Chrystal Rowland, Director, Division of Program Standards; and Dina Lemmer, American Institute for Research, were present to give the committee an overview of the process of development of the new Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for science.

Ms. Ray spoke briefly to the statutory requirement for the department to review standards, respond to the public, and create a draft document. The process took longer for the science standards than is typical, due to the pandemic as well as the impact of the West Kentucky tornado and Eastern Kentucky flooding natural disasters. There will be a final public comment period in the next month before new standards are finalized and distributed to schools. Ms. Lemmer gave an overview of the data acquired during the public comment periods and the work of the review committees. Eighty-seven percent of respondents agreed with the recommendations from the committee, and 83 percent found the new layout clarified standards and made them easier to understand and implement. The layout was a highlight of the new standards and is organized into four sub-categories. She gave an example of the layout to illustrate how they will be used by educators. The assessment alignment process utilized the same review committees to ensure alignment and the assessment blueprint was also submitted for public comment. Review committee members made some recommendations based on comments and included hyperlinks to the assessment blueprint for increased understanding.

Responding to a question from Representative Gibbons Prunty, Ms. Ray said the department used multiple channels to communicate about opportunities for public comment, but other forms of feedback were used to account for low engagement during the public comment period. Ms. Rowland said further information about the membership of the focus groups was in the electronic binder shared with members.

In response to a question from Representative McCool, Ms. Ray said the electronic binder includes all the feedback received during the public comment period.

Responding to questions from Senator Southworth, Ms. Ray said the committees were composed according to statutory requirements, and KDE attempted to include parties from all demographic areas including rural, suburban, and urban regions. Ms. Sims said the performance on assessments has declined for all subjects, including science, largely because of the break in testing due to the pandemic. The summative assessment this year will also be different and will make it difficult to create any kind of direct link between the change in the standards and impact on test scores. Ms. Sims said she would try to get some data together to illustrate the impact of the standards change but cautioned to remember the impact of the pandemic on the data.

Adjournment

Chair Huff announced the next meeting of the committee would be on November 1, 2022. With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.