

# **EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE**

## **Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the 2024 Interim**

**August 19, 2024**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The third meeting of the Efficient and Effective School District Governance Task Force was held on August 19, 2024, at 1:00 PM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Michael J. Nemes, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

### **Present were:**

Members: Representative Kim Banta Co-Chair; Senator Michael J. Nemes Co-Chair; Senator Lindsey Tichenor; Representatives James Tipton, Tina Bojanowski, and Ken Fleming; Allison Ball, Brittany Abdelahad, Phillip Baker, Angela Masden, George Nichols, Rebecca Nicolas, Jody Wurtenberger.

Guests: Dr. Matthew H. Ruther, Director, Kentucky State Data Center; Ben Zumbahlen, State Relations Associate, Education Commission of the States (ECS); Zeke Perez, Assistant Policy Director, ECS; Lauren Peisach, Policy Analyst, ECS

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

### **Approval of Minutes - July 29, 2024**

Mr. Baker made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Representative Banta. The motion passed by voice vote

### **Presentations**

Dr. Matthew H. Ruther, Director, Kentucky State Data Center, shared information regarding demographic changes in Kentucky and Jefferson County. The child population growth rate is slower than the overall rate due to slowing birth rates, which is consistent with the state and nation. He illustrated the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on enrollment in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), and how the numbers have rebounded since 2021. Dr. Ruther gave an overview of the population change by race in Jefferson County and discussed the impact of this population change on school enrollment rates by race. He illustrated projections of demographic changes for the county and how that is estimated to impact school enrollment.

In response to a question from Representative Bojanowski, Dr. Ruther said there is not data going back to the 1960s and 1970s to illustrate the impact on population and enrollment due to desegregation. There is another source of data that may address that cultural shift and he will get that information for the committee. Additionally, the population trend chart for children ages 5-17 would need modification to show actual enrollment and it would implicitly include multilingual students.

Responding to a question from Mr. Nichols, Dr. Ruther said suburbanization does have an impact on schools in that it increases the number of lower socioeconomic students in urban schools. Those that move to the suburbs are those with the most resources. Dr. Ruther said his department does not do tracking of individuals and cannot address how many individuals are moving to Oldham County but continue to work in Jefferson County. Chair Nemes said that may be a question better answered by the Kentucky Center for Statistics in a future meeting.

In response to a question from Representative Fleming, Dr. Ruther said he did not look directly at attendance, but it would not be difficult to take these projections and combine them with attendance data from JCPS on to make an attendance projection. Dr. Ruther pointed out that a smaller child population with a larger adult population can be a positive outcome, as it may mean there are more adults to provide for children.

In response to a question from Auditor Ball, Dr. Ruther said there is some speculation in the number of students homeschooling rather than enrolling in JCPS. He does not get data on the number of students homeschooling from JCPS, but he inferred that the disparity of the number of students enrolled compared to the overall population must include homeschool students as well as drop outs.

Responding to a question from Representative Tipton, Dr. Ruther said his data source is the Kentucky Department of Education, so it is likely only reflecting certified private schools. Additionally, the data center does not have a report of the number of refugees from the US Census Bureau. Regarding the impact of COVID-19, Dr. Ruther said the impact on middle schools was more a decline in the number of middle schoolers who were born, and the numbers are expected to rebound as elementary students advance.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Dr. Ruther said the data clearly indicates non-Hispanic white flight to Oldham and surrounding counties, which is expected to continue. He does not know how other cities are responding to this kind of population shift.

Responding to a question from Chair Nemes, Dr. Ruther said there is a slide showing the actual enrollments in JCPS, which has remained relatively stable. There is nothing in the projections regarding socioeconomic status. He cannot make a prediction on which portion of the population is multilingual or are immigrants. Data does seem to indicate that the largest birth rates are among families which are already established in the city, and a majority of immigrants are young, single individuals.

In response to a question from Dr. Nicholas, Dr. Ruther said it is not possible to parse out the number of multilingual students from existing data, but it is clear there is a growing number of languages being spoken in the district as well as a growing number of multilingual students.

Ben Zumbahlen, State Relations Associate, Education Commission of the States; Zeke Perez, Assistant Policy Director, Education Commission of the States; and Lauren Peisach, Policy Analyst, Education Commission of the States, were present to give an overview of education governance across the nation. They focused on giving a broad understanding of how other states structure state-level education governance and how Kentucky was situated in comparison to other states. Ms. Peisach said they were able to categorize most state governance models into one of four broad categories, with a fifth set of 14 states which do not fit into any of the other models.

Mr. Perez gave an overview of types of school district reorganization which are most often used by states, including consolidation, district subdivision, property transfer, and annexation. He presented what efficient and effective school governance at the state level looks like, highlighting the use of collaboration, measurables, and state task forces on governance. Locally effective and efficient school governance benefits most from a consistent mission or vision; remaining accountability-driven; and having collaboration among all stakeholders.

Ms. Piesach closed the presentation with three key takeaways: nationally, a wide-range of governance approaches exist; collaboration between roles is key; and there needs to remain a focus on student achievement in all governance models for effectiveness.

In response to a question from Representative Bojanowski, Ms. Piesach and Mr. Zumbahlen said they had looked at the impact of dividing large school districts on segregation and were striving to get additional data on the use of racial and socioeconomic composition in dividing large districts. Mr. Perez said they would have to also gather additional information regarding how many of the decisions to divide districts were made by voters versus decisions made at the state level by legislators or executive bodies.

Responding to a question from Chair Nemes, Mr. Zumbahlen agreed they most frequently see consolidation rather than division.

Representative Tipton shared data from the Kentucky District Data Profiles School Year 2023 publication, recently published by the Legislative Research Commission and available online. Mr. Perez said he would be able to get additional state data, specifically data on finances and per-pupil expenditures, to provide to the members.

Responding to a question from Mr. Nichols, Mr. Perez said he would like to see more data on states who consolidated and the impact on lowering costs. It would need much more research to determine if dividing a district would result in raising costs. Property transfer is a significant concern among districts when making reorganization decisions. Mr. Perez said that any given model for reorganization will include a geographic element. Ms. Peisach said most of the examples they found were of a wealthier area splitting from the larger district and creating inequity among socioeconomic and racial demographics.

In response to a question from Representative Fleming, Mr. Perez said they excluded the Nevada district study and the Arkansas case for brevity, as the Arkansas case was more concise. The conversation is still ongoing in Nevada and is worth monitoring. Mr. Zumbahlen said he would gladly connect Representative Fleming with individuals in Nevada for further conversations.

Responding to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. Perez said they do not have data on student outcomes in order to make any assessment of the impact of reorganization on student outcomes.

In response to a question from Mr. Wurtenberger, Mr. Zumbahlen said JCPS is such a large district in comparison to the neighboring districts in Kentucky, it presents a unique situation. It will be easier to compare Kentucky and JCPS to similar states, such as Arkansas, with similar composition. Mr. Perez said all the states tend to argue positively for their models and it was hard to determine if any particular model is more effective.

In response to a question from Representative Fleming, Mr. Perez said they have a 50-state comparison to illustrate all the data points regarding state level education governance.

## **Announcements**

Representative Bojanowski said she wanted to recognize JCPS for an excellent start to the school year, especially in how the district improved student transportation.

Chair Nemes announced upcoming meeting dates, including the next meeting, August 27, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in Central High School Auditorium. The purpose of the meeting will be for public comment to allow individuals to share how families would like to see the district's academic offerings, educational capabilities, and operations improved. Additionally, the task force would like to hear how these factors have affected enrollment decisions for families.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the task force, the meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.