

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2024 Interim

September 16, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Efficient and Effective School District Governance Task Force was held on September 16, 2024, at 1:00 PM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Kim Banta, 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; Senators Gerald A. Neal and Lindsey Tichenor; Representatives Tina Bojanowski, Ken Fleming, and James Tipton; Brittany Abdelahad, Phillip Baker, Angela Masden, George Nichols, Rebecca Nicolas, Jody Wurtenberger, and Allison Ball (by proxy, Savannah Baker).

Guests: Matt Ross, Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Chay Ritter, Division Director, KDE; Jessica Carlton, Assistant Director, KDE; Dr. Kim Chevalier, Chief of Exceptional Child Education, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS); Carlisa Gibson, Executive Director, Early Childhood, JCPS; Anne Staley, Director, Early Childhood, JCPS; Nicole Robison, Specialist, Child Development and Education, JCPS; Dr. Matt Anderson, Assistant Superintendent, JCPS; Dr. Alicia Averette, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, JCPS; Dr. Joe Ellison, Assistant Superintendent for High Schools, JCPS; Chief Todd Kessinger, JCPS Police Department; and Maddie Shepherd, President, Jefferson County Teachers' Association.

LRC Staff: Joshua Collins, Emily Wiley, and Landen Holder.

Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2024

Senator Tichenor made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Senator Nemes. The motion passed by voice vote.

Presentations

Matt Ross, Associate Commissioner, KDE; Chay Ritter, Division Director, KDE; and Jessica Carlton, Assistant Director, KDE, shared information regarding the enrollment,

attendance, and truancy trends of Kentucky students. Mr. Ross explained the enrollment, attendance, and membership data collection and validation processes. The statistics and trends provided by KDE are created using membership data, a once yearly count of students which prevents duplicate entries of the same student. Ms. Carlton said truancy charges are only filed at the district level, and these filings are not reported to KDE. Mr. Ritter noted a statewide decline in student enrollment and a significant decrease in daily attendance post Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to a question from Representative Bojanowski, Mr. Ritter stated the department does not have data dating back to the mandatory desegregation of schools in the 1970s. The department uses the previous 20 years of data for budgeting purposes, which is based on average daily attendance, and he plans to retrieve those figures and provide them to the committee.

Responding to a question from Senator Neal, Mr. Ritter said the department has not collected data which would illustrate a correlation between poverty and attendance rates. Other sources of data could be provided such as county specific chronic absenteeism and poverty levels which could be used for analysis. At the request of Chair Banta, this data compilation shall be shared with the entire committee.

In response to a question from Senator Nemes, Ms. Carlton said the department could recalculate chronic absenteeism data for the Commonwealth, excluding Jefferson County's population of students.

Responding to a question from Representative Tipton, Ms. Carlton stated the department's procedure for data collection would require significant changes in order to retrieve specific district provided information including: truancy events, non-public school students, and homeschooled students.

In response to a follow-up question from Representative Tipton, Mr. Ritter said KDE does not specifically track birth rate data, however, some similar information is provided by the Office of State Budget Director for the purpose of building trend models. He added these studies may help illustrate potential future enrollment dips.

Responding to Representative Tipton, Mr. Ritter explained the role property assessments have in district funding evaluations. This information is reevaluated every four years and heavily impacts the money which reaches each student in each district.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. Ritter said he is unsure of any data which would compare JCPS to peer cities or similar districts outside of the Commonwealth. Ms.

Carlton added that potential data may be misleading, given the definition for chronic absenteeism will change as defined in other states, and as outlined federally.

Responding to a question from Mr. Nichols, Ms. Carlton explained attendance is calculated using a half day - whole day scale, while chronic absenteeism is a separate calculation which considers every minute in each school day. She added that attendance rates are used for funding purposes while chronic absenteeism values portray the actual loss of instruction. Furthermore, state law requires districts to accurately reflect student disenrollment with an allowance of a one-day overlap if a transfer is made to another district.

In response to Representative Fleming, Mr. Ross testified that KDE maintains a calendar which contains superintendent report due dates as required, which can be provided to the committee. Mr. Ritter stated these data compilations impact funding, therefore independent auditors visit districts to verify the accurate coding of students, as well as a yearly visit from KDE field auditors for authentication and verification.

Responding to Dr. Nicholas, Ms. Carlton informed the task force of KDE's plans to further break-down chronic absenteeism data by demographic student groups.

Dr. Kim Chevalier, Chief of Exceptional Child Education, JCPS; Carlissa Gibson, Executive Director, Early Childhood, JCPS; Anne Staley, Director, Early Childhood, JCPS; and Nicole Robison, Specialist, Child Development and Education, JCPS, were present to give an overview of the impact of their early childhood education program and some challenges it faces. They testified on the increased kindergarten readiness scores achieved by young students who participated in the early childhood program.

In response to a question from Ms. Abdelahad, Ms. Gibson said the early childhood program has a contract with university instructors, which currently provides 100 instructional assistants to help curb their staffing shortage. This contract is not sustainable and full-time staff will be required.

Responding to a question from Chair Banta, Ms. Gibson stated much of their staff shortage results from the requirement of potential early childhood educators to pass mandated assessments for certification. The district has staff members who have been grandfathered in before the exam mandate and substitute teachers that are exempt from this assessment, yet these individuals are still great educators, despite not completing the exam requirement.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Ms. Robison spoke to the additional assistant instructor positions that have been added to support multi-lingual students. The department has emphasized the need for educators to pursue professional development courses such as language learning.

Responding to a question from Representative Tipton, Ms. Gibson testified that new changes to curriculum are expected to increase the kindergarten readiness scores of children participating in the early childhood education program.

In response to a question from Ms. Baker, Ms. Staley said many assistant instructors interviewed were turned away due to failing the advanced mathematical portion of the assessment. These complex math questions are a staffing hinderance, as they do not accurately reflect the curriculum being taught to the program's learners.

Dr. Matt Anderson, Assistant Superintendent for Climate and Culture, JCPS and Dr. Joe Ellison, Assistant Superintendent for High Schools, JCPS, gave a presentation about student discipline from the district's administration and staff perspective. They shared information about the process of stakeholder input, as well as administrative changes which have been implemented to further support student needs.

Maddie Shepherd, President, Jefferson County Teachers' Association also gave a presentation about student discipline, as perceived from the district's teacher's perspective. She testified to the need for mental health providers to spend more time providing for the students needs and the positive trends in student behavior associated with an increase in adult presence throughout school buildings.

In response to Senator Tichenor, Dr. Anderson said they will submit data which represents the incidents recorded the previous year regarding: guns brought into school buildings by students, disciplinary issues on busses, the number of bus drivers that have quit or been fired due to violence, amount of teacher resignations due to violent incidents, counts of student-on-student assaults and student-on-staff assaults, number of sexual assault and rapes, expulsions and punishments related to each of these incidents, and any trends of higher occurrences at particular schools.

Responding to Mr. Wurtenberger, Dr. Anderson testified that cell phone usage is a school-based decision within the district. Dr. Ellison added that some teachers may utilize cell phones as an instructional tool in the classroom.

In response to Mr. Baker, Ms. Shepherd said more suspensions do not always equal improved behavior, however, the removal of a disruptive student can improve the academic integrity and performance of a class.

Responding to a question from Ms. Abdelahad, Dr. Ellison outlined the goal of the progressive discipline process. He explained some teachers may lack understanding of the approach, but encouraged them to continue writing referrals and following the process administration has designed.

In response to Dr. Nicholas, Dr. Anderson and Dr. Ellis testified they have never denied a principal from suspending a student when warranted.

Responding to a question from Ms. Masden, Dr. Anderson indicated there are transition services to help students return to the general education classroom from alternative placements.

In response to a question from Senator Nemes, Dr. Anderson said district administration is very limited in their ability to disclose details about how specific events are handled, but assures that appropriate, consistent consequences are pursued for all known safety violations.

Announcements

Chair Banta announced the next meeting date, October 7, 2024, in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the task force, the meeting adjourned at 3:33 PM.