EDUCATION ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Minutes

October 16, 2018

Call to Order and Roll Call
The October meeting of the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee was held on Tuesday, October 16, 2018, at 1:05 p.m., in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Max Wise, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Max Wise, Co-Chair; Senator Mike Wilson; Representatives Derrick Graham, Regina Huff, and Steve Riley.

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

Report on Textbooks and Instructional Materials
Bart Liguori, Research Division Manager, Office of Education Accountability (OEA); Allison Stevens, Research Analyst, OEA; and Chris Riley, Research Analyst, OEA; were present to summarize their report on textbooks and educational materials.

Mr. Riley stated that the major themes from the report are: there exists a collaborative process of print material selection and purchasing, and centralized technology planning; there has been a shift in expenditures from print to technology; and while access to technology has increased, some issues remain. Data used for the report included annual district financial reports from 2008 through 2017 as well as an instructional materials survey of superintendents conducted by OEA. Some data was also acquired from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Technology Readiness Survey. Staff noted that the usefulness of the surveys varied based on the questions asked.

The Kentucky Education Technology Systems (KETS) Master Plan, developed and distributed by the Office of Education Technology, guides purchasing, developing and use of technology. It emphasizes instructional devices as central to incorporating technology into the learning environment. The plan encourages a low device to student ratio in districts and was supported by the Kentucky Technology Readiness Survey. The selection of textbooks is governed by KRS 156.405 which establishes the State Textbook Commission which is statutorily required to meet once per quarter and provide a state-sponsored listing of quality vetted instructional materials. The commission has not met since June 2015 and responsibility for selection of materials has fallen to the district and school level. Statute

allows for Site Based Decision Making Councils to select basal textbooks and supplemental materials not on the state-approved list. Superintendents are then required to seek approval from the State Textbook Commission. In the absence of a commission, final approval has been made by KDE through the use of a District Off-List Notification Form. Local boards determine the allocation of instructional resource funding per school and district textbook coordinators and other district staff provide support during selection and vetting. Schools determine which materials will be used, per KRS 160.345(2), and request the quantities needed for their use.

In addition to use of print materials, there has been a significant increase in the use of digital instructional materials. Mr. Riley explained that there are advantages and disadvantages associated with using digital materials for students, teachers, and schools. For students, advantages include increased access, increased engagement, and more personalized learning. Notable disadvantages, though, include student distraction and device breakage. From a teacher's perspective, advantages include ability to easily and frequently update content, data-based decision making, and enhanced professional development and communication options. Teachers are at a disadvantage from outdated hardware and some teachers have yet to fully commit to using digital materials, preferring print materials. Disadvantages for districts and schools include costs for hardware and maintenance of the devices as well as sometimes unreliable networks. However, expenditures for hardware have been declining over time, and one of the advantages of increased digital material usage for districts is the corresponding decrease in printing costs and large-scale print purchases for paper materials. Some districts still experience the need to purchase supplemental materials however, such as workbooks.

Funds from the general fund and special revenue funding have been used for the purchase of digital instructional materials and devices. Peak spending for these materials, after adjusting for inflation, occurred during the 2008 school year. Overall, districts have spent more than $1.5 billion over the ten-year study period. Altogether, spending on technology, including spending that could not specifically be tied to instructional materials, accounted for 64 percent of spending, and hardware purchases alone accounted for approximately 40 percent of total expenditures. Spending on supplies has been on an upward trend, including purchase of supplemental software, but the spending for print materials and textbooks has decreased sharply from 2008 to 2014. Districts have increased spending in this category in recent years, but supplemental materials purchases have been flat since 2010. Instructional materials funding was not provided by the state budget from 2012 through 2014, but was restored in 2015. Mr. Riley stated that during years when funding is not provided, districts must utilize district level general funds or special revenue funds to purchase instructional materials. Spending per student on instructional materials, both print and digital, exhibits a wide range across the state, but the distribution of spending does not show any clustering in specific geographic regions. Average spending during the study period was $242 per student. The technology-to-print expenditure ratio from 2008 to 2017 was also presented graphically and showed that 167 out of 173 total districts spent

more on technology hardware than on print materials over the observation period. The overall statewide ratio of technology-to-print spending was two-to-one.

Ms. Stevens gave an overview of technology device usage, beginning with the Technology Readiness Survey, which reports the number of instructional devices owned by districts for student and staff use, including computers, tablets, e-readers, and smartphones. Districts have made great strides in providing devices for instructional use and reduction in the number of students per device from 2014 to 2017. Notably, 37 districts have increased devices by more than 100 percent. There have been comparable positive trends in use of more updated technology, both hardware and software. Increased usage of devices does raise questions of data privacy and data collection by outside vendors. The OEA survey found that over 80 percent of districts do not share student data for any reason, and vendors do not have rights to student data in a majority of cases. When data is shared, it is used for progress monitoring, ensuring reliability, or pilot program feedback.

Ms. Stevens said there has been a shift towards newer operating systems across the state. For example there were 173,000 more Chromebooks, and 63,000 more devices using Apple iOS 8. These findings support the OEA survey result that nearly 70 percent of districts desire securing a one-to-one student-to-device ratio. In 2014, only nine districts had achieved the target ratio. By 2017, 60 districts had achieved the target ratio, accounting for nearly 30 percent of districts. At the school level, the KETS Master Plan recommends one device for every three elementary students. In 2017, 167 districts had achieved this goal. For secondary students, the KETS Master Plan recommends a ratio of one device to every student, and in 2017, 63 districts had achieved this goal, an increase of 44 districts from 2014.

In addition to use of technology devices, online courses and digital learning increase access to education regardless of students' physical location. The Technology Readiness Survey found that 157 districts offered online courses in 2017, an increase of nine percent from 2014. However, there remain differing levels of access to online course and wireless network connectivity for students at schools and at home. Ms. Stevens said school connection speeds depend on how many students and devices are in a district, and there is no established ideal connection speed for Kentucky schools. Nearly all schools report connection speeds of 100 megabits per second or greater, a statement corroborated by Education Superhighway, a non-profit research and advocacy group focused on internet usage in education. This finding indicates that 100 percent of Kentucky schools should be able to support one-to-one implementation of student device usage in schools. It is worth noting, however, that one in five students does not have a reliable network connection at home. Students without access will struggle to take advantage of school digital learning options, including the use of technology to meet attendance requirements of the Non-Traditional Instruction or "NTI" program for snow days.

Ms. Stevens summarized the findings, saying that while KRS 156.405 establishes the State Textbook Commission, the commission has not met since June 2015 and has not maintained minutes or a list of members since that time, and has not been involved in the process of selecting instructional materials. This responsibility has fallen to districts and schools as a collaborative effort. Secondly, in reviewing the 2018-2024 KETS Master Plan, there were conflicting measures of student attendance. Third, both the KETS Master Plan and the Kentucky Technology Readiness Survey are available online allowing citizens and policymakers to access information, to understand the technology strategy for Kentucky Education, and to see the progress that has been made. Lastly, from 2014 to 2017, Kentucky school districts have increased technology devices, reduced device-to-student ratios, and updated operating systems. However, the actual effects of increased technology tool acquisition on student learning and outcomes is still unknown.

There is a collaborative process of selection and purchasing of print materials and centralized technology planning for schools. Instructional materials have largely shifted from print to digital which has led to increased access to technology devices and digital education programs both inside and outside of the classroom, but some access issues remain.

In response to questions from Senator Wilson, Mr. Riley reiterated that the State Textbook Commission had not met since June 2015. This is likely due to lack of funding for instructional materials and payment of members. Schools must petition KDE using a process set out online to use materials that are not on the recommended lists already approved by the commission.

Responding to questions from Representative Graham, Mr. Riley said there are some criteria established by adoption groups regarding which materials are recommended. At one time, adoption groups worked on a multi-year cycle, but that has been disrupted by the discontinuation of the commission. Representative Graham stated that re-instatement of the commission would be highly beneficial to the state. Mr. Riley said his research could not find information for the commission since the last meeting in 2015. There were no minutes since that time and no member. It is his understanding that all positions are vacant.

In response to questions from Chairman Wise, Ms. Stevens said the anticipation is that current devices will continue to be updated and there is no current projection of what the replacement for Chromebooks will be in the future. Mr. Riley said the primary support for Chromebooks is price and the ability for schools to pay for them using various grant funds.

Representative Riley made a motion to accept the report as presented. Representative Huff seconded the motion, which passed by voice vote.

Representative Graham made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2018 meeting, seconded by Senator Wilson. The motion passed by voice vote.

Senator Wise reminded members to submit suggestions for topics for the 2019 OEA Research Agenda to staff. He announced that the next meeting will be November 20, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.