

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

## **Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the 2024 Interim**

**October 21, 2024**

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

The eighth meeting of the Efficient and Effective School District Governance Task Force was held on October 21, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in Capitol Annex Room 154. Representative Kim Banta, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

### **Present were:**

Members: Senator Michael J. Nemes, Co-Chair; Representative Kim Banta, Co-Chair; Senator Gerald A. Neal; Representatives Tina Bojanowski, Ken Fleming, James Tipton; Britany Abdelahad, Phillip Baker, George Nichols, Rebecca Nicholas, Jody Wurtenberger, and Allison Ball (by proxy, Savannah Baker).

Guests: Dr. Stephen Pruitt, President, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB); Dr. Tatia Prieto, President, Prismatic Services Inc.; Dr. Kelly Foster, Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Gretta Hylton, Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, KDE; and Melody Cooper, Policy Advisor, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, KDE.

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

### **Southern Regional Education Board - Large US Districts, A Landscape of Governance and Achievement**

Dr. Stephen Pruitt, President, SREB, presented information about governance models and achievement level metrics for large US school districts. The data shared by Dr. Pruitt was collected via the National Assessment of Educational Progress - Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). The study gathered measurements of academic achievement in reading, math, and science for students in urban districts. Dr. Pruitt testified that from 2019 to 2022, almost all states saw a significant decline in eighth grade reading proficiency. He outlined the structures by which school districts are governed: an operational model, a managerial model, a traditional model, and a policy model. Dr. Pruitt offered that TUDA research appears to find no correlation between academic achievement and school governance model.

In response to Representative Tipton, Dr. Pruitt testified that according to recent Programme for International Student Assessment comparative research, the United States tested multiple grade level proficiencies below Singapore in math and science.

Responding to Representative Bojanowski, Dr. Pruitt said for a policy model governance structure to be successful, information flow must be continuous between school districts and policymakers. He further added that urban districts in Mississippi and Maryland have benefited from implementing governance in which a board determines goals and sets boundaries, while district staff runs the system.

In response to Mr. Nichols, Dr. Pruitt stated SREB would investigate a potential correlation between partisan elections and academic achievement.

### **Prismatic Services, Inc. - Overview of the 2023 Transportation Audit Reports**

Dr. Tatia Prieto, President, Prismatic Services Inc., summarized a comprehensive investigative analysis, beginning in November 2023 and concluding in June 2024, of the Jefferson County Public Schools' (JCPS') transportation department. Dr. Prieto identified multiple factors which led to transportation issues, including: little evidence of active project management, a lack of planning inclusion for affected departments, a lack of frank discussion about potential obstacles, historical failure to implement routing software, poor implementation timeline, no schedule adjustments for testing or incorporation of feedback, communication with contractor management excluded important considerations, a reliance on sole sourcing with little embedded oversight, and transportation department staffing shortages with a lack of an operations manual, new leader training, or departmental exposure to other operations.

Responding to a question from Representative Bojanowski, Dr. Prieto stated the final investigative report was provided to JCPS in July 2024, predating the start of the following school year. She further testified that JCPS substantially reduced the school bus transportation services provided to students following the report.

In response to a question from Mr. Wurtenberger, Dr. Prieto said a national shortage of school bus drivers is a major concern for many school districts.

Responding to a question from Mr. Baker, Dr. Prieto testified an openness of communication with leadership, implementation of project management principles, and interdepartmental coordination has improved similar urban districts faced with transportation challenges.

In response to a question from Mr. Nichols, Dr. Prieto said the analysis conducted provided no evidence that JCPS transportation was more complicated or overly-accommodating when compared to similar districts.

Responding to a question from Ms. Abdelahad, Dr. Prieto testified that since the completion of Prismatic Services Inc. investigation of JCPS transportation in July 2024, they have not been asked to consult or study proposed changes to school start times for various age-groups.

In response to Mr. Baker, Dr. Prieto stated successful bus discipline is grounded in the same principles as good classroom management. She further spoke to the importance of providing bus drivers with proper training, as well as clear, consistent guidelines for disciplinary issues.

Responding to a question from Senator Nemes, Dr. Prieto testified that increasing the number of school start times should reduce the need for additional bus drivers. She stated the root of the issues felt by JCPS' transportation department were effects of the districts' attempt to implement a new routing optimization solution.

**Kentucky Department of Education - Review of Management Audits and Previous Academic Performance and Review of Special Education Monitoring and Findings**

KDE Staff, Dr. Kelly Foster, Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support; Gretta Hylton, Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning; and Melody Cooper, Policy Advisor, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, presented a review of previous management audits of JCPS. Dr. Foster outlined the process for the school district management improvement program. Steps include: data and artifact review, management review, a comprehensive management audit, determination of efficiency by the commissioner, and a review of findings by the Kentucky Board of Education, which, upon completion of the investigation, may designate a district as state-assisted or state-managed.

In response to a question from Mr. Wurtenberger, Dr. Foster testified state management audits of JCPS ended in November 2020 and KDE has not worked directly with JCPS since they were released from their corrective action plan that year. Responding to a follow up question from Mr. Wurtenberger, Dr. Foster said some districts have policies which prevent expulsion of students, opting instead to provide alternative behavioral services.

In response to Representative Tipton, Dr. Foster stated that since 2013, two school districts in Kentucky have had state management takeovers by KDE, both of which have since exited state management intervention.

Responding to a question from Representative Bojanowski, Ms. Hylton testified that KDE would provide the committee with two years of previously conducted reports of annual determinations, indicator monitoring, annual performance, alternate assessment participation, and risk focused monitoring for JCPS.

In response to a question from Representative Tipton, Ms. Hylton detailed the process by which a student referral to participate in special education is made, followed by an evaluation of the student. She further added Kentucky has 14 disability categories that could apply to a student determined eligible for special education.

Responding to a question from Representative Tipton, Ms. Hylton testified there has been an increase across the Commonwealth in the past few years for individualized education programs for students determined disabled. She continued by saying there is no evidence which would suggest a cause for this increase.

### **Announcements**

Chair Banta announced the next meeting of the committee will be in the Annex on Thursday, November 14, 2024.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:46 PM.