



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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INTERIM COMMISSIONER LAYS OUT HIS PRIORITIES TO KENTUCKY BOARD OF EDUCATION

(Frankfort, KY) – Interim Commissioner of Education Wayne Lewis today laid out his priorities to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), telling board members that “everything that we do ought to be aligned to improving student outcomes.”

“First and foremost is the achievement gap,” Lewis said. “We’ve made very little progress in our state with closing the achievement gap. In fact, in some respects and in some districts, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic achievement gaps have widened. One of the top priorities I will have in this position will be working to significantly reduce the achievement gap.”

Part of reducing that achievement gap – the difference between how white and higher-income students perform academically compared to other groups – is by focusing on teaching children to read and learn the basics of mathematics at an early age, Lewis said. If the Commonwealth is trying to build science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors, many of those careers will be blocked for students if they don’t have a strong background in mathematics.

“You’ve heard us talk a lot about early reading over the years. I think we have to talk just as much about early numeracy,” Lewis said. “Our mathematics achievement scores are abysmal. We do better benchmarking our scores across the country in reading than we do in mathematics.”

Lewis also said the work KBE has begun by looking at minimum graduation requirements is key to moving Kentucky forward. Students must be able to demonstrate the ability to meet the minimum academic standards in reading and mathematics before they receive a high school diploma, he said.

Lewis’ priorities also include:

- Increasing the number and percentage of high school students completing career and technical education pathways and earning industry-recognized credentials in high-demand sectors;
- Increasing the number and percentage of high school students successfully completing early postsecondary opportunities, such as dual credit and Advanced Placement;
- Increasing flexibility and autonomy for public schools and school districts in exchange for performance accountability; and
- Expanding the number and type of high-quality public school options available to Kentucky’s students.

(more)

During the meeting, the board also approved:

- The appointment of Dodie Karr and Bridgette Mann to the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Advisory Board.
- New district facility plans for Fulton, Mercer and Metcalfe counties.
- 2019 Kentucky Minimum Specifications for School Buses.
- School district indirect cost rates for the 2018-19 fiscal year.
- KBE Curriculum and Management Committee members.
- Voluntary certification of nonpublic schools.
- 2018-19 Preschool Grant Allotment System and funding rates.
- 704 KAR 3:015, Kentucky All STARS for preschool programs.
- Kentucky Department of Education Capital Funds Request Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2018-19, as required by HB 200.
- 2017 Report, 2017 Exceptions and 2019 Plan as required by 702 KAR 1:115, Annual In-Service Training of District Board Members.
- An update on the deadline for opportunity and access measures in the new accountability system. The board voted to delay approval of opportunity and access measures until early 2019 to give more time for establishing the measures.
- Modification of the test window to support online testing.
- Elimination of the nominating committee for board chairman and vice chairman and removal of the requirement that board members must have served for one year to be eligible for those offices.

The board also approved the Kentucky Academic Standards for Historical and Cultural Influences of the Bible Elective Social Studies Course, an elective course for grades 9 and up that was created with the passage of HB 128 (2017). Similar electives have been taught in several schools previously, but this is the first time standards have been created for the course. Courses must follow applicable laws and federal and state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality, and cannot endorse, favor or promote any particular religion or faith.

Additionally, the board voted to allow the Kentucky Department of Education to contract with another state agency for a hearing officer to oversee the hearing requested by Jefferson County Public Schools in its appeal of the Interim Commissioner's recommendation to place the district under state management. The board also approved the firm of Embry Merritt Shaffar Womack, PLLC to serve as special board counsel for matters related to the Jefferson County recommendation and hearing.

The board also had first readings on several proposed regulation changes, including:

- 702 KAR 7:065, Designation of Agent to Manage Middle and High School Athletics and Revision to Bylaws
- 701 KAR 5:140, Districts of Innovation, which streamlines the application process for districts and gives them more flexibility.

During the meeting, the board also received updates or presentations on:

- The process of revising Kentucky's minimum high school graduation requirements. Lewis said KDE is considering requiring students who are freshmen during the fall of 2019 to be able to read proficiently at the 8th-grade level and meet a minimum score on the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Mathematics* up through Algebra I before they graduate high school. The first reading of a regulation regarding minimum graduation requirements is anticipated to take place in August, with a second reading in October.

(more)

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- Standard setting for the accountability system. For 2018, KDE will identify schools that fall into the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) categories. Any school can be identified as a CSI school if student performance is as low as the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools at the same grade level (elementary, middle or high school). Additionally, any high school with a graduation rate below 80 percent will be identified as CSI. Any school can be labeled as a TSI school if it has one or more student group performing as poorly as the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools at the same grade level (elementary, middle or high school). The accountability standards setting committee will convene Aug. 22 to select cutoff points, and a special called meeting of the KBE is expected in September to approve the standards in time for schools to be identified as TSI or CSI this fall.
- A review of all Kentucky Board of Education regulations per HB 50 (2017).
- Spotlight on Innovation – Real Employment and Dedicated Youth (READY) internship program in Pulaski County.
- The Kentucky Department of Education strategic plan.
- The 2018-20 biennial budget, which resulted in a \$54 million overall budget reduction in P-12 education.
- The 2018 Alternative Programs of Distinction. Adair Youth Development Center (Adair County), Calloway County Day Treatment Center (Calloway County), Covington Alternative Programs (Covington Independent), Cumberland Hall School (Christian County), Jackson Academy (Warren County), McCracken Regional School (McCracken County), McDaniel Learning Center (Laurel County), Perry County Alternative School (Perry County), Ramey-Estep High School (Boyd County) and Western Day Treatment (Jefferson County) were recognized.
- 703 KAR 5:280, School Improvement Procedures (Second Reading, new regulation). The changes to the regulation concern school audits.
- Recognition of past Kentucky Board of Education members.
- State management in the Breathitt County and Menifee County school districts.
- The Kentucky High School Athletic Association's annual summary report.

Visit the board portal at <http://portal.ksba.org/public/Agency.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4388&AgencyTypeID=1> to access the agenda and supporting materials online. The next regular meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education is scheduled for Aug. 2 in Frankfort.

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