

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Action/Discussion Item:

Request from the Carter County Board of Education for a waiver of specific requirements relative to the district leadership assessment outlined in 703 KAR 5:180

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.160, KRS 160.346, 703 KAR 5:180.

Action Question:

Should the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) approve Carter County's request for waiver of specific requirements relative to the district leadership assessment outlined in 703 KAR 5:180?

History/Background:

Existing Policy. KRS 156.160 (2) allows a local board of education to request in writing that the KBE waive any administrative regulation promulgated by the board provided certain criteria are met. KRS 160.346 authorizes the KBE to promulgate regulations to establish processes and procedures for implementing interventions required of persistently low-achieving schools and districts. 703 KAR 5:180 establishes those processes. One of the requirements is the conducting of a district leadership audit to determine the functioning of school and district governance structures and the capacity of leadership to lead the required interventions. While the KBE may waive the specific type of audit process required in 703 KAR 5:180, it cannot waive the establishment and make-up of the audit team that is required by statute (KRS 158.6455(4)).

Because it has schools that have been identified as persistently low-achieving, Carter County Public Schools (CCPS) is required to undergo a district leadership assessment. Unrelated to this process, CCPS recently contracted with AdvancED to conduct an accreditation external review.

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of student performance or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. Institutions participate in an external review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The external review is a rigorous process that includes examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations. The AdvancED external review team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

CCPS' external review report has been completed very recently. The site visit required extensive preparation, staff time and disruption to students, but resulted in an exhaustive evaluation of instructional policy and practice. State leadership assessment requirements mirror those of the external review, so if the district is required to complete a second full-blown assessment process, there is the potential to negatively impact student learning.

To that end, Carter County is requesting to be allowed to substitute a crosswalk of the AdvancED accreditation external review, the AdvancED Diagnostic Review Standards and the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement for the traditional leadership assessment process required by 703 KAR 5:180. An audit team would still be selected to perform a crosswalk of these systems to generate the findings and conclusions for the leadership assessment report, with additional data being collected by the team as necessary to fill any gaps not covered in the curriculum audit. Allowing this substitution would accomplish the same objectives as the full-blown leadership assessment, but with far less disruption to classroom instruction.

Staff Recommendation and Rationale:

Based on the issues addressed above, staff recommends KBE approval of the requested waiver. Since the recent accreditation audit requirements align with those of the state leadership assessment, that audit can serve as the basis to generate the findings and conclusions for the leadership assessment report and prevent further disruption to student learning.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Allowing Carter County to substitute a crosswalk of the AdvancED external review, the AdvancED Diagnostic Review Standards and the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement for the traditional district leadership assessment process will allow more staff time and energy to be addressed to student learning needs and will mean less interruption of the instructional process.

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Commissioner of Education

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