

KDE Commissioner Stephen Pruitt's Report
Kentucky Board of Education
February 3, 2016

❖ ***State of K-12 Education in the Commonwealth Address, Related Report and Press Release***

On January 21st, I gave my first State of K-12 Education in the Commonwealth address focusing on both the progress Kentucky has made and the challenges we face. I plan for this to be an annual event.

If you would like to access a recording of the address, go to the following link:

<http://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/leadership/commissioner/2016/01/state-of-k-12-education-in-the-commonwealth/>. Additionally, a related written report can be found at this link: <http://education.ky.gov/comm/news/Documents/SoE%20Web.pdf>. The press release about the address can be found at this link: <http://education.ky.gov/comm/news/Documents/R%2016-003%20SoE%20release.pdf>.

As I stated in the address, I am proud to be a Kentuckian and of the outstanding work that educators in this state have done to improve the education of our students. In the future, I will be asking for input from everyone in order to begin addressing some of the challenges we face in areas that require more work.

❖ ***KSB/KSD Update***

Since the last Kentucky Board of Education meeting, KDE staff and I have had ongoing interactions with the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD). A KDE team has visited both schools and is following up on areas that need immediate attention.

Additionally, invitations to meet with me individually were sent to the parents who spoke at your board meetings in order for me to better understand their concerns. I have met with those who responded to the invitation. Since those conversations pertained to their children, I cannot share the details, but I wanted to ensure their voices were fully heard.

One activity that KDE has moved forward since the last board meeting is the ability of outside providers affiliated with the University of Louisville to be on campus at KSB for those students who can benefit from their services. It is essential to collaborate with those who have expertise to assist with students' education and welfare and I have made it clear that the appropriate services are to be provided.

Another positive item to report is that the principals of both KSB and KSD will be traveling to the Georgia School for the Blind and Georgia School for the Deaf to collaborate with their staff and learn best practices that can be applied here in our state. They will be accompanied by KDE staff on the visit. Additionally, the Director of State Schools in Georgia will be visiting Kentucky to aid in our review of practice.

Specific to KSD, I am pleased to report that the KSD is very excited to be hosting an academic bowl on February 26-27. The event is sponsored by Gallaudet University and is open to teams of high school students currently enrolled in recognized schools or programs for deaf and hard of hearing students in the Southeast region of the United States. KSD will be host to 18 teams (72 students) from Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Washington, DC, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Throughout the fall and winter, four other regional competitions have been held. The top ranking teams from each region will compete in the national competition held at Gallaudet University in the spring. The goals of the Academic Bowl are to: 1) Foster the pursuit of academic excellence, 2) Promote a spirit of academic competition and sportsmanship, and 3) Encourage social opportunities for collegiality among students. The Gallaudet University Academic Bowl has been an annual event since 1997, but this will be the first time KSD has hosted a regional competition. The school is very excited to have the opportunity give deaf and hard of hearing students the opportunity to show off their academic excellence.

One more item of good news from KSD is that the KSD Signing Choir performed at an event on January 27th recognizing the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Kentucky Civil Rights Act of 1966. John Johnson, Executive Director of the Commissioner on Human Rights, said in a note of appreciation that the choir is a credit to the state and set the tone for the day and rest of the proceedings. Join me in congratulating this group of young people for an outstanding performance and representing the school in a distinguished manner!

I will continue to make the education of the students at KSB and KSD a priority and provide you an update on the schools at each board meeting.

❖ ***Proposed 2017-2018 Governor's Budget***

As I shared with you previously, department staff are working to determine what the proposed budget means now and for the upcoming biennium if approved by the General Assembly. Again, it is a proposed budget. Nothing is final. This is just the first step in the legislative process.

In last week's superintendents' webcast, we briefly addressed some of the elements of the proposal and noted the following:

- The Governor's proposed budget recommends KDE make reductions in the current fiscal year of 4.5% as well as 9.0% in both FY17 and FY18.
 - FY16 - Current year reduction of \$17.9m (4.5%)
 - FY17 – Reduction of \$35.8m (9.0%)
 - FY18 – Reduction of \$35.8m (9.0%)
- Since we are more than halfway through the fiscal year, this is going to be difficult at best.
- KDE Frankfort-based personnel and operating is less than 1% of the KDE budget (approximately \$25 million). Clearly, the department will not be able to absorb the entire \$17.9 million reduction for the current fiscal year.
- The majority of the KDE budget is funding that flows through directly to districts.

- In the Governor's proposed budget, most KDE programs were proportionately reduced by 4.5% in FY16.
- Relative to SEEK:
 - The proposed SEEK budget was created by using consensus estimates reached between KDE and the Governor's Office of the State Budget Director.
 - The per pupil guarantee amount is maintained for FY 17 and FY 18 at \$3,981.
 - Transportation also is maintained at \$214 million for both FY 17 and FY 18.
 - An additional \$25 million (FY 17) and \$14 million (FY 18) is included for Facilities Equalization, Tier I, and Local District Teachers' Retirement Match.

We will continue to work with legislators to make sure they understand the impact of this proposal on K-12 education. We remain positive that lawmakers will do the right thing to balance replenishing our underfunded pension systems with providing a system of common schools that is adequately funded to achieve its goals, so that each child, every child in this Commonwealth is provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education.