The background of the slide is a composite image. The top-left portion shows two yellow school buses, with the one in front having the number '32' on its side. The bottom-left portion shows a classroom with blue walls, decorated with colorful balloons and framed pictures. Several small white tables and chairs are arranged in the room.

House Bill 825 (2024) Special Examination



Kentucky Department of
E D U C A T I O N

House Bill 825

- “Office of the Auditor of Public Accounts shall conduct a special examination of the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf, and the department operated area technology centers and shall assess the extent to which the department complies with statutory mandates and requirements.”
- “Shall conduct a special examination to assess the Kentucky Department of Education's operational effectiveness relating to the efficient management, control, and operation of the schools, departments, projects, and initiatives under its jurisdiction, including identification of those departments, projects, and initiatives that do not serve to improve the educational outcomes of the Commonwealth's students.”
 - “State board oversight of the commissioner of education.”

- Aug. 5, 2024: First meeting between the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA)
- “The Office of the Auditor of Public Accounts may contract with an entity that has experience in reviewing the performance of state education agencies and their facilities and programs.”
 - “[...] shall procure professional services by a personal service contract through noncompetitive negotiation with an entity that has experience in reviewing the performance of state education agencies and their facilities and programs.”
 - “The cost of the special examination shall be borne by the Kentucky Department of Education through the department's general operating fund.”
- APA Press Release on Oct. 15, 2024, announced Public Consulting Group, LLC (PCG) selected to conduct the exam with the APA.

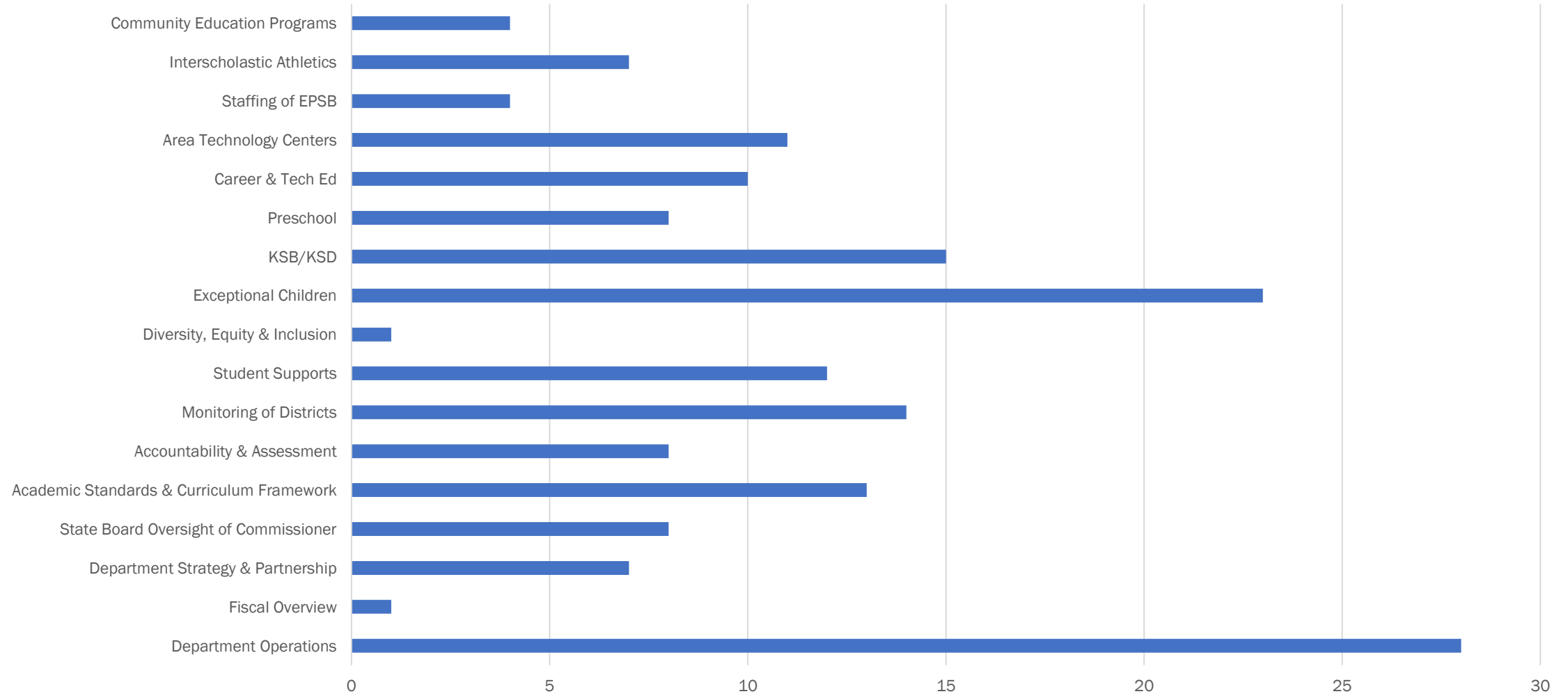
Interviews, Surveys and Document Review

- Conducted Interviews and Focus Groups:
 - Interviews were held with all KDE executive leadership, as well as office and division-level leaders.
 - Focus groups were held with KDE staff from every branch.
 - Interviews were held with 12 members of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE).
 - Nine virtual focus groups were also held with superintendents from across the state.
 - 87 interviews/focus groups were held with 289 total participants.
- Surveys:
 - ATC staff, special education directors, KDE staff, superintendents, Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) staff, KSB teachers, Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) staff and KSD teachers.
 - 1,063 responses – 62% overall response rate.
- Documents and Data:
 - APA requested and was provided over 2,050 documents.

APA Report

- Preliminary draft provided to KDE on June 6, 2025.
 - KDE responded on June 23, 2025, noting errors, omissions and recommended edits.
- Final Report issued by APA on July 1, 2025.
 - 174 Total Recommendations:
 - 8 recommendations in the area State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education
 - 15 recommendations in the area of Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf
 - 7 recommendations in the area of Interscholastic Athletics
- Pursuant to KRS 43.090(1), “[w]ithin sixty (60) days of the completion of the final audit or examination report, the agency to which an Auditor’s report pertains shall notify the Legislative Research Commission and the Auditor of the audit recommendations it has implemented and of the audit recommendations it has not implemented. The agency shall state the reasons for its failure to implement any recommendations made in the final audit or examination report.”
- \$1.2 million total invoiced to KDE for the special exam.

Recommendations by Area



Many recommendations require substantial funding to implement...

- For example:
 - 1.6.a Recommendation: KDE should update and reorganize the Department's website for a consistent look and feel, coherent and intuitive navigation, accessibility compliance, and responsiveness to the needs of various stakeholder audiences.
 - 1.4.a Recommendation: KDE should put physical office space privacy protections in place for legal services staff.
 - 1.1.b Recommendation: The Commissioner should establish a new Chief of Staff position who will provide decision-making support to the Commissioner, including overseeing the prioritization of communications between the Commissioner, executive staff, and stakeholders.

Other recommendations require action, collaboration or support of the General Assembly or other agencies...

- For example:
 - 1.12.b Recommendation: KDE should explore ways to allow ATCs, KSD, and KSB to procure goods and services similar to how school districts do instead of how KDE does.
 - 1.7.a Recommendation: KDE should work with the Personnel Cabinet to determine how the hiring process for 18A employees can be improved and made more efficient.
 - 1.18.a Recommendation: KDE should explore options to improve the facilities funding system by enhancing the nickel tax system or moving to a new funding model that enables less wealthy districts to build or modernize their facilities.

Noteworthy Accomplishments

- 26 Noteworthy Accomplishments contained throughout the report.
- “According to senior KDE leaders and Board members, the Commissioner has worked quickly in his first year to build relationships with the state legislature.”
- “KDE staff survey respondents had overall positive perceptions related to workload, staff levels, role clarity, resources, and support.”
- “The overall culture at KDE is positive and morale is high. Staff take pride in their work, care about student success, believe in the mission of the agency, and overall work well together and with districts.”

Noteworthy Accomplishments, continued

- “Most superintendent survey respondents agreed that KDE produces high-quality resources, considers the diverse needs of families and community stakeholders when making decisions, takes action to improve student success, and positively contributes to student success in Kentucky.”
- “The Kentucky Board of Education conducts business and interacts with each other in a commendable manner. Board members are respectful to each other, to KDE staff, and in their interactions with the general public during Board meetings. Board members demonstrated a high level of professionalism and commitment to their role.”

State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education

- 4.1.a Recommendation: As positions become vacant, the Commonwealth should consider adding at least one business community member to the Board to represent industry interests.
 - Response to APA noted business/industry experience of existing KBE members.
 - Will forward the recommendation to Governor's Office – Boards & Commissions.
- 4.2.a Recommendation: The Board should set and adhere to a regular schedule for self assessment.
- 4.3.a Recommendation: The Board should create measurable and actionable goals that can be achieved within a designated timeframe and should use these goals to strategically guide their actions.

State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education, continued 2

- 4.4.a Recommendation: The Board should execute its oversight role by engaging in meaningful discussions and providing critical feedback during Board meetings.
- 4.5.a Recommendation: The Board should assess the efficacy of its current meeting frequency.
 - Board meeting calendar on agenda for consideration.
- 4.6.a Recommendation: KDE should ensure all meeting presentations, and other relevant documents and data, are shared ahead of time to allow for robust, action-oriented discussions during Board meetings.
 - KBE Policy manual states materials shall be provided seven days in advance.

State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education, continued 3

- 4.7.a Recommendation: The Board should address any major matter that relates to Kentucky public education during open meeting.
 - Two examples provided: NAEP Results and Kentucky Student Voice Team litigation (discussed in closed session).
- 4.8.a Recommendation: KDE should provide the Board with a summary of results by grade and subject, and disaggregated by student subgroup, to get a clear picture of student achievement across the state.
 - KDE presented accountability results annually. See meetings 12/5/24, 12/7/23, 12/7/22, 10/5/21.

Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf

- 11.1.e Recommendation: KDE should strive to include a substantive overview of both KSB and KSD in KBE board meetings on an as needed or more frequent basis. KBE must be consistently informed of the state schools' conditions (fiscal and otherwise) and take timely action on items that need to be addressed and/or require attention.
 - KBE State Schools Committee

Interscholastic Athletics

- Seven recommendations:
 - Title IX complaints, tracking and reporting to KBE.
 - Annual comprehensive reporting to KBE.
 - Actions to prevent/mitigate abuse by coaches, including centrally tracking investigations regarding abuse.
- The Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) will provide its response to KDE for each recommendation.

Questions and Additional Discussion