



Kentucky Department of  
**EDUCATION**

A Special Report on the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf, and the Department Operated Area Technology Centers

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July 1, 2025

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Dear Commissioner Fletcher,

The Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) has completed its special examination of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE or Department), the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf, and the department-operated Area Technology Centers. This report summarizes the procedures performed and communicates the results of those procedures. The purpose of this special examination was not to provide an opinion on financial statements but to review specific matters and to make recommendations to strengthen and improve internal controls and operations.

Detailed findings and recommendations based on our special examination are presented in this report to assist management in implementing corrective action. A list of all findings is located in the Exam Overview section.

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. All audit reports and agency responses shall be, subject to KRS 61.870 to 61.884, posted online in a publicly searchable format."

We greatly appreciate the cooperation and professionalism of you and your staff throughout the examination. Their timely responses, openness in sharing information, and willingness to engage in constructive discussions significantly contributed to the examination's efficiency and effectiveness. If you have any questions, please contact Alexander Magera, Executive Director of the Office of Special Examinations, at [alexander.magera@ky.gov](mailto:alexander.magera@ky.gov).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Ball".

Allison Ball  
Auditor of Public Accounts

Cc: Stacy Ball, Executive Secretary, [stacy.ball@education.ky.gov](mailto:stacy.ball@education.ky.gov)





# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

### *Acknowledgements*

The Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts (APA), under the leadership of Auditor Allison Ball, and in collaboration with Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG), would like to thank the many individuals who made this report possible. We would like to acknowledge the commitment and support of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) staff who were responsive to our many questions throughout this process. The team would like to thank Associate Commissioner Matthew Ross and Director of the Division of Budget and Financial Management, Karen Wirth, for their invaluable support, collaboration, and provision of necessary data and document requests essential for our analysis. We also thank Stacy Ball and Hillary Bush in the Commissioner's Office for their help coordinating meetings and visits. We extend our sincere appreciation to Commissioner Robbie Fletcher for his commitment and support throughout the entirety of this review. Additionally, we thank the many stakeholders across the Commonwealth with whom we met. Their input and feedback were essential in shaping this report.

### *Auditor of Public Accounts*

The APA ensures that public resources are protected, accurately valued, properly accounted for, and effectively employed to raise the quality of life for all Kentuckians. The APA conducts financial audits, agreed-upon procedures, and special examinations for various state agencies, fiscal courts, sheriffs, county clerks, property valuation administrators, and other agencies that receive public funding. The APA considers requests for examinations from public officials, the general public, the Legislative Research Commission, and the Governor's Office.

The Office of Special Examinations (OSE) within the APA performs special examinations to investigate allegations of suspected fraud, waste, or abuse. These examinations are designed to provide an assessment of the facts gathered during the examination pertinent to the specific scope developed by OSE and APA leadership. Special examinations do not provide an opinion on financial statements; however, they do make recommendations to strengthen and improve internal controls, ensuring that operating activities are consistent, transparent, and statutorily compliant.

The Office of State Government Audits and Technology (OSGAT) assisted OSE with this special examination. OSGAT is responsible for comprehensive audits of state government entities. OSGAT performs the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report Audit and Single Audit for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, as well as other audits, agreed-upon procedures, and special exams related to state government entities.

### *Public Consulting Group LLC*

PCG is a management consulting firm that offers technical assistance, strategic planning, professional development, financial management, systems development, and other management advisory services to public sector clients. Established in 1986, PCG has consistently delivered on its motto of "*Solutions that Matter.*" PCG's education practice is committed to helping schools, school districts, and state education agencies strengthen their performance, streamline their operations, and improve their programs and instruction so that all students have what they need to succeed.

### *Scope & Objectives for Special Examination*

House Bill 825 (HB 825) requires the APA to conduct a full fiscal controls and operational special examination of KDE and to provide the report to the Interim Joint Committee on Education by July 1, 2025.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "House Bill 825." Kentucky General Assembly. April 9, 2024. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/24rs/hb825.html>

On October 10, 2024, the APA initiated a special examination of KDE, the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB), the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD), and the department operated Area Technology Centers (ATCs). The examination scope was based on the guidance within House Bill 825 and was dependent on the data and information gathered during the examination. The purpose of this special examination was not to provide an opinion on financial statements or to duplicate work of routine financial statement audits. Unless otherwise specified, examination procedures focused primarily on activity between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2024.

In November 2024, APA contracted with PCG, a firm with experience reviewing the performance of state education agencies and their facilities and programs, to support the audit. APA and PCG worked closely as a team on the audit and are henceforth referred to as the report authors, including terms such as “the team,” “we,” and “the auditors.”

In accordance with Kentucky HB 825, the scope of the special examination was 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. The examination shall identify any area of operation demonstrating a significant lack of efficiency and effectiveness.

Additionally, in accordance with Kentucky HB 825, this special examination included, but was not limited to the following study areas:

- a) Academic standards;
- b) Statewide accountability and assessments;
- c) Monitoring and consolidated monitoring of districts and programs;
- d) Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives;
- e) Exceptional children;
- f) Preschool;
- g) Model curriculum;
- h) State board oversight of the Commissioner of Education;
- i) Area technology centers;
- j) Interscholastic athletics;
- k) Staffing and support of the Education Professional Standards Board;
- l) Community education programs and services; and
- m) The performance of the commissioner of education as it relates to managing the Kentucky Department of Education.

The result of this special examination culminated in this report, which includes observations, findings, and recommendations to support an efficient and effective KDE in service of students statewide.

Given the breadth of this scope, the team was not able to review all programs with the same level of intensity. As such, observations highlight areas believed to warrant deeper study.

This special examination seeks to document the organization and operation of the KDE at a moment in time. However, data collection and analysis have occurred alongside daily KDE operations and changes in the federal government’s role in public education. Our report endeavors to present the clearest portrait of KDE given this dynamic situation.

### ***Kentucky Department of Education***

KDE is the state agency responsible for the oversight of the K-12 public education system across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It is one of 17 agencies that sit within the Education and Labor Cabinet. KDE operates the ATCs, KSD, KSB, and Future Farmers of America (FFA), as well as provides resources, guidance, and support to the Commonwealth’s 171 school districts as they implement Kentucky’s education

requirements.<sup>2</sup> The Department also serves as the state liaison for federal education requirements and funding opportunities.

The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) is the governing board that directs KDE's work. KBE sets the educational vision, policies, and standards for the Commonwealth. KDE is charged with overseeing the implementation of these policies and standards. As such, the role of KBE is discussed in this report.

In Kentucky, there have been eight commissioners of education, including interim commissioners, in the past decade. On March 21, 2024, KBE named Robbie Fletcher, Ed. D., as commissioner of education. His appointment was confirmed by the Senate, and he began his role on July 1, 2024. HB 825 was introduced and passed into law during the previous commissioner's tenure, before Commissioner Fletcher assumed the role.

The structure of KDE is discussed in greater detail in the Department Overview section.

### *Organization of the Report*

The report is structured under the following chapters, which align with the scope of this audit, as detailed in HB 825:

1. Introduction
2. Audit Overview
3. Department Overview
4. Department Operations
5. Fiscal Overview
6. Department Strategy & Partnerships
7. State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education
8. Academic Standards & Model Curriculum Framework
9. Statewide Accountability & Assessments
10. Monitoring & Consolidated Monitoring
11. Student Supports
12. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
13. Exceptional Children
14. Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf
15. Preschool
16. Career & Technical Education
17. Area Technology Centers
18. Staffing & Support of the Education Professional Standards Board
19. Interscholastic Athletics
20. Community Education Programs & Services
21. Appendices
22. Kentucky Department of Education Response and Auditor Reply

## **Methodology**

### *Our Approach*

The team collected qualitative and quantitative data to inform the analysis. Data collection activities occurred between September 2024 to March 2025.

Data collection activities included:

1. Stakeholder interviews and focus groups
2. Stakeholder surveys
3. School site visits

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<sup>2</sup> "About Schools and Districts." Kentucky Department of Education. April 3, 2024.  
<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/schdist/Pages/default.aspx>

4. Benchmarking against peer states
5. Laws and regulations review
6. Data and document review

### ***Stakeholder Interviews & Focus Groups***

The team facilitated a series of onsite and virtual focus groups and interviews. Follow-up or clarifying interviews with leadership were conducted as needed. Primary stakeholder groups included:

- KDE leadership and staff, including KSD, KSB, and ATC staff
- KBE leadership and members
- District superintendents

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. Participants were assigned to groups based on role and office. A sample of staff representing a range of roles from each office were identified and invited by the team to participate in the focus groups. Twelve members of the Board participated in individual interviews.

A series of nine virtual focus groups were also held with superintendents from across the state with a total of 32 superintendents participating. A sample of superintendents representing a range of district sizes and geographic regions were identified and invited by the team to participate in the focus groups. Additional superintendent focus groups were added to the original schedule to accommodate demand.

A summary of interview and focus group participation is provided in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY**

Interview and Focus Groups Offered	87
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>289</b>

Question protocols were used to conduct interviews and focus groups and included general questions asked of all participants as well as questions specific to participants' roles. The team took detailed notes during these discussions. With the exception of leaders occupying unique, individual roles (such as the Commissioner), all data in the audit are reported on an aggregate level to show major themes and maintain confidentiality.

### ***Stakeholder Surveys***

The team conducted eight surveys for ATC staff, special education directors, KDE staff, superintendents, KSB staff, KSB teachers, KSD staff, and KSD teachers, respectively.

**FIGURE 2: COMPLETE SURVEY RESPONSE TOTALS**

Survey	Number of Complete Responses	Number Invited to Participate in Survey	Response Rate
ATC Staff	288	400	72%
Special Education Directors	127	172	74%
KDE Staff	415	746	56%
Superintendents	114	177	64%
KSB Staff	31	48	65%
KSB Teachers	20	57	35%
KSD Staff	40	68	59%
KSD Teachers	28	57	49%
<b>Total Across All Surveys</b>	<b>1,063</b>	<b>1,725</b>	<b>62%</b>

The surveys for ATC staff, special education directors, KDE staff, and superintendents—tailored to the specific roles of each group—were conducted using a web-based survey tool called Alchemer. The surveys were distributed by KDE via email. Each survey was open to its respective participants for approximately three weeks during January and February 2025.

These four surveys all contained both Likert Scale questions and open-ended questions. The Likert Scale questions included answer choices of, “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.” For ease of chart visualization and reader comprehension, response data has been clustered into two categories of “Agree” and “Disagree” in figures throughout this report. The “Agree” category contains responses of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree,” and the “Disagree” category contains responses of “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree.”

The four surveys distributed to teachers and staff of KSB and KSD—tailored to each group’s specific roles—were administered through Google Forms and disseminated via a link sent by the respective school’s administration. Each survey was open for approximately five to seven days in November 2024.

These four surveys all contained open-ended questions, rating questions, and Likert Scale questions. The rating questions were on a scale from one to five with one representing least satisfactory and five being most satisfactory. The Likert Scale questions included answer choices of “Yes,” “Somewhat,” “No,” and “Not Sure.” There were variances of this, such as “Significantly Above Expectations,” “Above Expectations,” “Meets Expectations,” “Below Expectations,” “Significantly Below Expectations,” and “I Don’t Know.”

All data in the examination are reported at an aggregate level to show major themes and maintain confidentiality. Findings on any groups smaller than ten were not disaggregated to ensure anonymity.

**ATC Staff Survey**

A total of 288 ATC staff members responded to the survey, yielding a 72% response rate. Teachers represented the majority of the sample with 226 responses. Over half of respondents had been in their current role for more than five years. Additionally, the majority of respondents worked at an ATC that employed between six and ten teachers and that was physically attached to or located on the same campus as a comprehensive high school. Responses were collected from all 50 ATCs.

**FIGURE 3: ATC STAFF SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS**

		<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
<b>Role</b>	Principal	45	16%
	Teacher	226	78%
	Staff Member	17	6%
<b>How long have you worked in your current role?</b>	Less than 1 year	28	10%
	1-3 years	50	17%
	3-5 years	48	17%
	5-10 years	61	21%
	More than 10 years	101	35%
<b>Description that best matches the placement of your ATC?</b>	Physically attached to a comprehensive high school	88	31%
	On the same campus as a comprehensive high school	113	39%
	Standalone	78	27%
	Other	9	3%
<b>How many teachers work at your ATC?</b>	1-3 teachers	4	1%
	4-5 teachers	39	14%
	6-7 teachers	125	43%
	8-10 teachers	102	35%
	11+ teachers	18	6%

Source: Data retrieved from the ATC Staff Survey.

**Special Education Directors Survey**

A total of 128 of the 172 special education directors from school districts across the state responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 74%. The majority of these respondents (87%) were from Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that “Meet Requirements” for their special education monitoring determination. A similar number (88%) have participated in KDE Special Education monitoring in the past three years. Many of these Special Education Director respondents (87%) supervised other programs, as well, with 504-related and preschool-related programs cited most often.

**FIGURE 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS**

		Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
<b>What special education determination was assigned to your LEA in last year?</b>	Meets Requirements	112	87%
	Needs Assistance	16	13%
<b>Which best describes the student enrollment size of your LEA?</b>	Less than 500	18	14%
	501 to 2,100	56	44%
	2,101 to 5,000	34	27%
	More than 5,000	20	16%
<b>How long have you worked in your current role as special education director?</b>	Less than 1 year	9	7%
	1-3 years	26	20%
	3-5 years	26	20%
	5-10 years	26	20%
	More than 10 years	41	32%
<b>My LEA has participated in KDE special education monitoring activities within the past three years.</b>	Yes	113	88%
	No	15	12%
<b>If you supervise other program areas in addition to special education, list them here.</b>	504-related	77	60%
	Preschool-related	73	57%
	Any program listed	111	87%

Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey. Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

26% of special education director respondents opted to identify their district, including six independent and 27 county school districts. While there is only a sampling of respondents, the identified school districts are spread across the state.

**KDE Staff Survey**

A total of 415 KDE staff members responded to the survey, yielding a 56% response rate. The sample represents all KDE staff, including contractors, MOA, ATC, KSB, and KSD staff. It includes individuals with tenure spanning less than a year to more than ten years and both supervisory and non-supervisory staff.

FIGURE 5: KDE STAFF SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

		Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
<b>Office</b>	Office of Assessment and Accountability	24	6%
	Office of Career and Technical Education	44	11%
	Office of Continuous Improvement and Support	63	15%
	Office of Education Technology	57	14%
	Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness	13	3%
	Office of Finance and Operations	95	23%
	Office of Legal Services	11	3%
	Office of Special Education and Early Learning	47	11%
	Office of Teaching and Learning	43	10%
	Office of the Commissioner	12	3%
	N/A	5	1%
<b>Division</b>	Division of Academic Program Standards	22	5%
	Division of Accountability Data and Analysis	9	2%
	Division of Assessment and Accountability Support	13	3%
	Division of Budget and Financial Management	21	5%
	Division of Communications	5	1%
	Division of District Support	31	7%
	Division of Early Literacy	13	3%
	Division of Educator Preparation and Certification	6	1%
	Division of Educator Recruitment and Development	6	1%
	Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool	16	4%
	Division of IDEA Monitoring & Results	8	2%
	Division of Innovation	4	1%
	Division of Resource Management	19	5%
	Division of School and Community Nutrition	26	6%
	Division of School and Program Improvement	36	9%
	Division of School Data Services	16	4%
	Division of School Technology Planning and Project Management	12	3%
	Division of School Technology Services	17	4%
	Division of State Schools	11	3%
Division of Student Success	14	3%	



		Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
	Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness	24	6%
	Division of Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement	20	5%
	N/A	65	16%
<b>Time working at KDE</b>	Less than 1 year	42	10%
	1-3 years	95	23%
	3-5 years	61	15%
	5-10 years	97	23%
	More than 10 years	120	29%
<b>Job Description</b>	Supervisory	97	23%
	Non-supervisory	318	77%

Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey. Please note totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**Superintendents Survey**

A total of 114 superintendents completed the survey, yielding a 67% response rate. Superintendents ranged in their tenures with the largest representation having been in their current role for 5-10 years.

Seventy-seven of the 114 superintendents (68%) who completed the survey opted to share their district name.

**FIGURE 6: SUPERINTENDENTS SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

<b>Tenure as Superintendent</b>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
Less than 1 year	18	16%
1-3 years	26	23%
3-5 years	17	15%
5-10 years	41	36%
More than 10 years	12	11%
<b>LEA Size</b>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>
Small (Less than 1,000 students)	13	39%
Medium (1,001-10,000 students)	58	44%
Large (More than 10,000 students)	6	55%
<b>Geography</b>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>
Western	17	43%
Central	30	45%
Eastern	30	51%
<b>Total (including districts that did not share their name)</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>67%</b>

Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey. Please note percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### KSB Staff & Teacher Surveys

A total of 31 KSB staff members completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 65%. An additional survey was offered to KSB teachers, 20 of whom completed the survey and yielded a response rate of 35%.

The largest representation of KSB staff respondents worked at KSB for one to five years. The largest representation of KSB teacher respondents worked at KSB for over ten years.

FIGURE 7: KSB STAFF & TEACHER SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

	Tenure	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
KSB Staff	0-1 years	1	3%
	1-5 years	11	36%
	5-10 years	9	29%
	10+ years	10	32%
KSB Teachers	0-1 years	3	15%
	1-5 years	4	20%
	5-10 years	6	30%
	10+ years	7	35%

Source: Data retrieved from KSB Staff Survey.

### KSD Staff & Teacher Survey

A total of 40 KSD staff completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 59%. An additional survey was offered to KSD teachers, 28 of whom completed the survey and yielded a response rate of 49%.

The largest representation of KSD staff respondents worked at KSD for five to ten years. The largest representation of KSD teacher respondents worked at KSD for five to ten years.

FIGURE 8: KSD STAFF & TEACHER SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

	Tenure	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
KSD Staff	0-1 years	7	18%
	1-5 years	10	25%
	5-10 years	14	35%
	10+ years	9	22%
KSD Teachers	0-1 years	2	7%
	1-5 years	7	25%
	5-10 years	10	35%
	10+ years	9	32%

Source: Data retrieved from KSD Staff Survey. Please note totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### School Site Visits

The team conducted site visits to KSB, KSD, and a sample of ATCs. Those visits are discussed in detail below.

### **KSB & KSD Site Visits**

The auditing team visited both KSB and KSD during regular school hours to observe daily operations and to obtain a greater understanding of each school's staff, functions, and obligations. Site visits included:

- Campus tour of facilities
- Classroom and dormitory visits
- Individual meetings with a teacher and staff member
- Individual meetings with the principal and fiscal manager

During the respective onsite visits, team members observed the state of the grounds and exterior, condition of student dormitories and classrooms, accessibility to and functionality of school technology, accessibility to relevant and necessary therapies (e.g., physical therapy), and physical security.

Team members had an in-depth meeting with a teacher and staff member at each school. The former was to gain further understanding of classroom operations and supplies as well as the implementation of students' individualized education programs (IEPs). Staff member meetings provided greater insight into each school's administrative functions and communication strategies.

The team members also had an in-depth meeting with each school's principal and fiscal manager during respective site visits to gather input on each school's challenges, strengths, fiscal condition, and relationship with KDE.

### **ATC Site Visits**

Over the course of three days, the auditing team visited six ATCs. These ATCs were selected based on geographic location throughout the state, county per capita income relative to the statewide average, enrollment, and programs offered such that the auditing team could see a representative sample of centers. Site visits included:

- Campus tour of facilities
- Classroom visits
- Informal conversations with staff
- Individual meetings with the ATC principal

Consideration was given to the first impression of the grounds and exterior, efficiency and staffing of the front office, condition and impression of the interior, physical security, condition and functionality of classroom technology, condition and impression of major equipment, and the learning environment of classrooms.

As the team toured the campus, they prioritized informal conversations with various teachers. Questions centered around the level of support they receive, access to professional learning, and their own ideas around enhancing CTE and the ATC system.

The team members also had an in-depth meeting with each principal during the site visit to gather input on the respective strengths and challenges of the ATC system and particularly KDE's role therein.

### ***Benchmarking Against Peer States***

The team reviewed a variety of publicly available data for Kentucky and selected comparison states: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee. These states were chosen for comparison based on geography, student demographics, and achievement measures. In some cases, additional states are discussed to showcase best practices or models. This state data included, but was not limited to NAEP scores, organizational structures and staffing, teacher indicators, boards of education, and per pupil expenditures. Analysis comparing Kentucky to other states is included in relevant areas throughout the report.

### ***Laws & Regulations Review***

The team reviewed education-related federal and state laws and regulations to better understand its impact on KDE. The team also conducted analysis of the volume of state education-related legislation proposed and passed over the last three years as compared to peer states.

### ***Kentucky Board of Education Meetings Review***

The team viewed all nine Board of Education regular meetings held from December 6-7, 2023, to March 26-27, 2025. The review included analysis of all meeting agendas, materials, minutes and webcasts available on the KDE website. A rubric was used to analyze basic meeting operations and functions. The rubric also included items that supported analysis of topics related to governance, policy oversight, focus on education outcomes, financial management, stakeholder engagement, and innovation.

### ***Documents & Data***

The team reviewed documentation and data provided by KDE to gain a comprehensive understanding of policies, procedures, human capital, student outcomes, academic standards, and other areas. KDE promptly fulfilled requests for data and documents. In total, over 2,050 documents were collected and reviewed. These were maintained in a searchable document inventory. The team also collected and reviewed publicly available documents via the KDE website and internet research.

## EXAM OVERVIEW

The following chapter is a complete summary of the observations, findings, and recommendations made by the audit team throughout the report. It also includes a list of noteworthy accomplishments.

The **observations** identify areas that deserve attention or deeper review. The **findings** specify issues that require action. **Recommendations** for every observation and finding are provided to help guide KDE towards improvements in these areas. By implementing these recommendations, KDE can help propel Kentucky's public education system to the next level of achievement.

The **noteworthy accomplishments** include examples of KDE's positive impact on public education in the Commonwealth, including successes, strategies, stakeholder feedback, and outcomes worthy of commendation.

### Department Operations

The team analyzed how the Department is structured to support internal and external operations. This included a review of operational activities within the Commissioner's office. We also analyzed the processes and procedures the Department uses in its core finance and operations, including (human) resource management and technology systems as well as district support functions.

#### Noteworthy Accomplishments

- 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.
- Kentucky Education Technology Systems (KETS) is highly regarded as a forward-leaning, innovative approach to statewide school technology.
- School district superintendents reported high levels of satisfaction with services and support received from KDE school-facing fiscal staff and leaders.

#### Observations, Findings, & Recommendations

- 1.1 Finding:** KDE's organizational chart at the executive level is not organized for optimal effectiveness.
  - 1.1.a Recommendation:** The Commissioner should have two Deputy Commissioners with clearly defined management roles overseeing major functional areas of the Department, such as academics and operations.
  - 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.
- 1.2 Finding:** KDE has a higher staff count and a more decentralized structure for staff dedicated to policy and legislation when compared with other state education agencies.
  - 1.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should reduce and consolidate all job functions related to interpreting laws that impact the Department to designated policy advisor positions that report to the Director of Government Relations.
- 1.3 Observation:** The Special Assistant to the Commissioner role is a resource that can be strategically leveraged to proactively support two-way communication and to alleviate the volume of direct outreach to the Commissioner from Superintendents.
  - 1.3.a Recommendation:** The Commissioner should continue to engage the Special Assistant role as a communication liaison with Superintendents.
- 1.4 Finding:** Legal Services staff do not have a dedicated private workspace in the office to conduct confidential work.
  - 1.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should put physical office space privacy protections in place for legal services staff.
- 1.5 Finding:** The Division of Communications does not have full ownership of all KDE communications due to some offices managing their own communications staff and related functions.

- 1.5.a **Recommendation:** KDE should create a coherent partnership between all communications-related staff to align the Department's messaging, branding, timing, and material for both internal and external stakeholders.
- 1.6 **Finding:** The KDE website is outdated and difficult to navigate in some areas, which creates challenges for stakeholders to access accurate and current information relevant to their needs.
  - 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.
- 1.7 **Observation:** The administrative requirements of the Personnel Cabinet make the hiring process for 18A employees difficult.
  - 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.
- 1.8 **Finding:** KDE's hiring process does not require reference checks for candidates.
  - 1.8.a **Recommendation:** KDE should ensure reference checks are a requirement in the hiring process for all external and internal candidates.
- 1.9 **Observation:** Staff sentiments regarding hybrid work may impact morale if leadership does not provide clear communication and transparency regarding the Department's policy and practices.
  - 1.9.a **Recommendation:** KDE should clarify and communicate the Department's telecommuting policy.
- 1.10 **Observation:** KDE may be dedicating too much time and effort to asset tagging and related management functions.
  - 1.10.a **Recommendation:** KDE should use technological solutions to perform automated IT equipment inventory functions and disabling of devices that may be lost or stolen.
  - 1.10.b **Recommendation:** KDE should perform a comprehensive review of older items and clean up the inventory files by removing outdated information or data.
- 1.11 **Observation:** KDE's fiscal workflow can improve.
  - 1.11.a **Recommendation:** KDE should conduct a needs analysis and detailed workflow documentation of budgets, expenditure approvals, and disbursements.
  - 1.11.b **Recommendation:** KDE should create a purchase request and payment workflow diagram.
  - 1.11.c **Recommendation:** KDE should compare the Department's needs for budgeting and accounting-system capabilities with the Kentucky Budgeting System (KBUD) and the Management Administrative & Reporting System (eMARS). For unmet KDE needs, the Department should create and execute an implementation plan or explore enhancements to the systems as applicable.
- 1.12 **Observation:** KDE purchasing processes present challenges for KDE internal staff, Area Technology Centers (ATCs), the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD), and the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB), especially those processes related to the Master Agreement and technology approvals.
  - 1.12.a **Recommendation:** KDE should streamline IT procurement approvals.
  - 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.
- 1.13 **Observation:** KDE has several paper-based, email-based, and spreadsheet-based processes, some of which involve the disbursement of billions of dollars in Commonwealth funds.
  - 1.13.a **Recommendation:** KDE should create or purchase IT systems to move away from using spreadsheet software for major processes.
- 1.14 **Observation:** Student data tracking audit information comes in from the 171 districts in various paper and electronic formats and is saved on a shared drive.
  - 1.14.a **Recommendation:** KDE should implement Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) document and/or audit management systems.
  - 1.14.b **Recommendation:** KDE should review the document retention schedule with the Kentucky Department for Library and Archives.
- 1.15 **Observation:** In the district superintendent focus groups and survey, KDE's District Facilities Branch (DFB) was the most frequently cited KDE branch as needing improvement.
  - 1.15.a **Recommendation:** KDE should assess district needs in the DFB's scope of responsibility and create and execute a comprehensive improvement plan for the branch.

- 1.16 Observation:** KDE facilities information resources are geared toward facility design and construction professionals rather than school district leaders.
- 1.16.a Recommendation:** KDE should create and post an accessible guide with funding and construction flow charts for superintendents and school boards to use in local planning.
- 1.16.b Recommendation:** KDE should implement annual training for new district leaders in facilities and finance management and include superintendents and board members.
- 1.17 Finding:** DFB website resources are not user-friendly for school district leadership.
- 1.17.a Recommendation:** KDE should review DFB website navigation and resources for ease of use, accessibility, searchability, and audience.
- 1.18 Observation:** The facility funding formula is 35 years old and may lead to inequitable facilities conditions statewide.
- 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.
- 1.19 Finding:** The facilities approval process is cumbersome and causes the need for waivers and exceptions due to an outdated set of model classroom standards.
- 1.19.a Recommendation:** KDE should accelerate the Commonwealth's work in streamlining and reforming the facilities approval process.
- 1.19.b Recommendation:** KDE should determine which of the 68 recommendations of the Facilities Task Force from 2021 should be implemented and execute those recommendations accordingly.
- 1.20 Finding:** The KDE 18A job classification schedule detracts from finding potential transportation employees with required experience.
- 1.20.a Recommendation:** KDE should recommend appropriate classifications and salaries for Pupil Transportation Branch employees that match industry standards or similar positions in the Transportation Cabinet.

## ***Fiscal Overview***

KDE received approximately \$6.4 billion in FY24. KDE receives funding each year from the General Fund, Restricted Fund, and various federal agencies; the largest allotment comes from the Commonwealth of Kentucky's General Fund.

## ***Observations, Findings, & Recommendations***

- 2.1 Finding:** KDE improperly returned budgeted Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funds.
- 2.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should heed the language of the biennial budget bill and utilize all SEEK funds as legally permitted. Excess funds should not lapse but be utilized to support allowable adjustment factors as needed.

## ***Department Strategy & Partnerships***

The team analyzed KDE's strategic initiatives, including the new 2024-2029 strategic plan and the United We Learn work. This included a review of the relationships between KDE and other government agencies, Educational Cooperatives, advisory councils, and the state legislature. It also included an analysis of laws and regulations in Kentucky and peer states, as well as stakeholder feedback regarding KDE culture and communications.

## ***Noteworthy Accomplishments***

- 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.
- 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.



### *Observations, Findings, & Recommendations*

- 3.1 Observation:** The 2024-2029 strategic plan does not include metrics for its key performance indicators (KPIs).
- 3.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should set KPI metrics early in the strategic plan implementation process to be transparent with stakeholders and to show progress over time.
- 3.2 Observation:** The major focus on the 2024-2026 assessment and accountability work of the United We Learn Council could cause KDE to lose sight of its strategic and operational goals.
- 3.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should create tailored messaging for various stakeholders to support implementation that explains how United We Learn is aligned with the goals in KDE's Strategic Plan, and how stakeholders fit into both the United We Learn assessment and accountability work and KDE's strategic goals.
- 3.3 Observation:** There are redundancies in data exchanged, analyzed, and published across KDE, the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), and the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS).
- 3.3.a Recommendation:** KDE, OEA, and KYSTATS should collaborate and rely on each other for data collection, exchange, and analysis for similar or identical research objectives whenever possible.
- 3.4 Observation:** KDE and the education and labor agencies have gaps in communication, in alignment around strategic resource planning, and in goal-setting for a unified state-level vision for student success in K12, postsecondary, and career.
- 3.4.a Recommendation:** KDE and Kentucky's education and labor agencies should expand their current collaboration to more closely align their efforts, resources, and goals around a state-level vision and strategies for the success of all Kentuckians.
- 3.5 Finding:** Consultation between KDE and educational cooperatives is reactive, informal, and primarily focused on professional learning services for districts.
- 3.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should establish a comprehensive engagement plan with the educational cooperatives to proactively align goals, success metrics, and resource allocation to support districts with the implementation of strategic initiatives.
- 3.6 Finding:** The advisory groups are inconsistent in their function and purpose.
- 3.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should assess the efficacy and impact of each advisory group and revise structures as needed.
- 3.7 Observation:** KDE appears overly focused on compliance with laws and regulations.
- 3.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should strengthen its relationship with the General Assembly through consistent communication and collaboration to prioritize impactful legislation for Kentucky students.

### *State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education*

The team assessed the overall function and effectiveness of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE or the Board), including its oversight of the Commissioner of Education.

### *Noteworthy Accomplishments*

- 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.
- The Board Chair and Vice Chair set an excellent example for expected Board norms and behaviors.

### *Findings, Observations, & Recommendations*

- 4.1 Observation:** The expertise of the State Board of Education members is heavily weighted towards education professionals.
- 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.
- 4.2 Finding:** The Board has not completed a self-assessment since 2022.
- 4.2.a Recommendation:** The Board should set and adhere to a regular schedule for self-assessment.

- 4.3 Observation:** The Board's goals are not measurable or actionable, nor do they appear to inform Board activity.
- 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.
- 4.4 Observation:** The Board does not balance support for the Department with critical oversight of its functions and performance.
- 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 Observation:** Board meetings may not be frequent enough to make a meaningful impact on outcomes.
- 4.5.a Recommendation:** The Board should assess the efficacy of its current meeting frequency.
- 4.6 Observation:** Board members spend more than half of their meetings listening to presentations. The limited discussion rarely includes actionable follow-up steps.
- 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.
- 4.7 Observation:** Notable, recent topics pertaining to Kentucky public education were not discussed by the Board during open meeting.
- 4.7.a Recommendation:** The Board should address any major matter that relates to Kentucky public education during open meeting.
- 4.8 Finding:** Board meetings do not sufficiently focus on student performance outcomes on state or national tests.
- 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.

## **Academic Standards & Model Curriculum Framework**

The team analyzed KDE's responsibilities associated with instructional systems, including the Model Curriculum Framework (MCF), academic standards, Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Reading, Numeracy, and English Learners (ELs). The team reviewed the work of the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL), which is comprised of two Divisions. The Academic Program Standards team is responsible for overseeing the standards review process, supporting the implementation of standards, and providing professional learning and content support to schools and districts. The Early Literacy team is responsible for supporting the implementation of the Read to Succeed Act. There is also a Director of Mathematics Education responsible for supporting the execution of the Numeracy Counts Act.

### **Noteworthy Accomplishments**

- OTL staff reported a strong understanding of and commitment to implementing the state laws and regulations related to teaching and learning.
- The Kentucky Academic Standards are a full set of policy guidance and resources to support districts in developing a local standards-aligned curriculum.
- The Kentucky Reading Academies, also known as LETRS training, has been positively received by the field. It is an example of relevant and timely professional learning provided by KDE to support the implementation of the Read to Succeed Act.
- Superintendents shared positive perceptions of KDE-led training that has improved district staff knowledge and had a lasting impact. Some of the specific training cited included high-quality instructional resources training and new superintendent training.

### **Observations, Findings, & Recommendations**

- 5.1 Finding:** The MCF is comprehensive, but its layout and large volume of content make it difficult to use.
- 5.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should enhance the MCF guidance documents based on educator feedback. Explore other approaches to support districts with the implementation process.

- 5.2 Finding:** Little evidence was found to indicate that KDE is systematically tracking MCF implementation in districts. KDE is unable to determine the impact of the MCF on teaching quality or student outcomes.
- 5.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should create a data system to track districts' use of the MCF.
- 5.3 Finding:** The KYStandards.org website is easy to navigate overall, but the PDF documents that contain the standards are difficult to navigate.
- 5.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should collect feedback from teachers and instructional leaders and produce more usable guidance documents.
- 5.4 Observation:** The next review for Technology and Library/Media standards is not included in KDE's published Standards Review Timeline.
- 5.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should update the published timeline for reviewing Academic Standards to reflect a complete timeline for all reviews.
- 5.5 Finding:** ELA and Mathematics have extensive lists of approved HQIRs, while other content areas only offer process guidance for districts to evaluate quality locally.
- 5.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should identify the quantity and quality of approved instructional materials needed for districts to select HQIRs in all content areas.
- 5.6 Finding:** The voluntary annual HQIR statewide survey limits KDE's ability to assess statewide HQIR usage.
- 5.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should create incentives for all districts to complete the annual HQIR survey to allow KDE to identify gaps among districts and opportunities for statewide collaboration.
- 5.7 Finding:** Districts must budget locally for the adoption of HQIRs because state funds are not provided for implementation.
- 5.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should evaluate its budget and/or work with the General Assembly to ensure funds can be allocated towards the adoption of HQIRs.
- 5.8 Finding:** The required annual MTSS reporting process to KDE for K-12 districts is not standardized or addressed in the Kentucky MTSS (KyMTSS) implementation guidance documents.
- 5.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop evidence submission guidelines for elementary, middle, and high school settings to streamline the annual district reporting requirements.
- 5.9 Finding:** The current number of Early Literacy coaches (23) is not sufficient to meet the stated literacy goals. KDE staff described the goal of having 80 coaches, which is a number more aligned to other successful peer state models.
- 5.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should determine the additional resources and funding needed to increase the number of State Literacy Coaching Specialists (SLCSs) in schools and communicate this need to the General Assembly.
- 5.10 Observation:** Kentucky permits the three-cueing model for reading instruction. There is a national trend for states to ban three-cueing because of the empirical evidence that it hinders reading proficiency.
- 5.10.a Recommendation:** KDE should collaborate with the General Assembly to prioritize any necessary action to mitigate and/or ban the three-cueing model for reading instruction.
- 5.11 Finding:** Mathematics education is not resourced at an adequate level to meet stated numeracy goals.
- 5.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should assess what resources and funding are needed to support the broader implementation of numeracy initiatives across the Commonwealth.
- 5.12 Finding:** Kentucky does not have a comprehensive plan for how to support districts in educating English Learners (EL) despite a growing statewide EL population.
- 5.12.a Recommendation:** KDE should create and execute a strategic plan that defines the Department's vision for supporting districts in serving EL students effectively. The plan should include professional development, resources, and ongoing support tailored to the needs of EL students.
- 5.13 Finding:** KDE has no staff members fully dedicated to supporting districts with the specific learning needs of EL students.
- 5.13.a Recommendation:** KDE should establish at least one full-time position within the Department dedicated to improving instruction and academic outcomes of ELs.

## Statewide Accountability & Assessments

The team analyzed KDE's responsibilities associated with the Kentucky School Testing System (KSTS) and state and federal accountability. The review included the United We Learn Council's advancement of the updated assessment and accountability framework through phases of stakeholder engagement and the work of the Office of Assessment and Accountability (OAA) which is comprised of two Divisions: The Division of Assessment and Accountability (DAA)--responsible for communicating information on regulations, policies, and procedures—and the Division of Data Accountability and Analysis (DDAA), which is responsible for the data components of the system.

### Noteworthy Accomplishments

The Kentucky United We Learn Council created a framework for a new accountability system. The Council sought the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders from across the Commonwealth. The framework is not yet final, but it has the potential to be very innovative.

### Observations, Findings, & Recommendations

- 6.1 Observation:** KDE staff dedicate significant amounts of time to project management and collaboration calls with assessment vendors.
  - 6.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should consider ways to increase the efficiency of project management and collaboration calls with assessment vendors.
- 6.2 Finding:** In 2023-24, the proportion of students scoring proficient or higher on the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) is not aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for fourth-grade Reading, eighth-grade Mathematics, and eighth-grade Reading.
  - 6.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should examine the proficiency standards for fourth grade Reading, eighth grade Mathematics, and eighth grade Reading due to the misalignment with the NAEP proficiency standards.
- 6.3 Finding:** The interface, functionality, and available data on the School Report Card (SRC) requires continued improvement prior to the future release of additional data.
  - 6.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should collaborate with the vendor to enhance the SRC dashboard interface and functionality before releasing 2024-2025 data. Collect and analyze stakeholder perception data to find more opportunities for improvement.
- 6.4 Finding:** KDE lacks a comprehensive strategy that shapes its approach to school improvement.
  - 6.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop a comprehensive strategy to guide school accountability across the Department's offices.
- 6.5 Observation:** KDE does not fully balance its strong customer service priority with its responsibility to hold districts to high expectations.
  - 6.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should consider ways to provide high-quality customer service, while also holding districts to high expectations.
- 6.6 Finding:** In recent years, KDE commissioners have not leveraged their statutorily granted authority to determine a "pattern of significant lack of effectiveness and efficiency" in LEAs struggling with chronic underperformance.
  - 6.6.a Recommendation:** The Commissioner should use KDE's statutory authority to strengthen district improvement when necessary.
- 6.7 Finding:** The United We Learn Framework 3.0 lacks significant implementation considerations. KDE currently does not have a plan for: clear guardrails and quality control measures to hold districts accountable for high-quality accountability indicators; a clear and implementable definition of vibrant learning; a new and overhauled assessment and accountability reporting system; and comprehensive professional development offerings that build educator capacity.
  - 6.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop a multi-year United We Learn implementation plan that includes KDE's strategies for holding districts accountable for rigorous local accountability measures, that overhauls the reporting system, and that provides stakeholders with a clear, implementable definition of vibrant learning. The plan should outline specific quantitative measures to track impact.

**6.8 Finding:** Although the Division of Innovation is effectively partnering with schools and districts to implement vibrant learning, it is not clear how the Division will scale these practices to support the UWL implementation statewide.

**6.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should identify additional resources needed to scale the Division of Innovation's work. The Division of Innovation and OTL should coordinate to ensure professional development offerings are not duplicative, maximizing KDE's reach to districts.

### **Monitoring & Consolidated Monitoring of Districts & Programs**

The team analyzed KDE's responsibilities associated with the monitoring of school districts and programs for required areas outside of Special Education, gifted and talented, and publicly funded preschool. The Office of Continuous Improvement and Support (OCIS) and the Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) are responsible for leading these monitoring activities.

#### **Noteworthy Accomplishments**

- OCIS has numerous communications and guidance documents to build districts' capacity to implement federal programs with fidelity.

#### **Observations, Findings, and Recommendations**

**7.1 Finding:** Approximately 43% of districts have not participated in Statewide Consolidated Monitoring (SCM) in the last decade. As a result, KDE has only completed comprehensive, onsite assessments of about half of all districts in the last ten years.

**7.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should evaluate the feasibility of more frequent district monitoring, potentially increasing the number of districts monitored annually, depending on staff capacity.

**7.2 Finding:** The risk assessment and district selection process for SCM is not transparent to districts and other stakeholders.

**7.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should clearly explain to district leadership the reasons for selecting a district for monitoring.

**7.3 Finding:** The names of districts selected for SCM are not publicly available until the end of the monitoring process.

**7.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should publish the list of districts selected for monitoring in the fall once district leadership has received official notice.

**7.4 Finding:** Risk assessment results are not used to strategically inform the technical assistance process.

**7.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should use risk assessment results to tailor technical assistance for each district.

**7.5 Finding:** The team did not observe evidence of a unified approach to tracking or monitoring outcomes of districts who have participated in SCM.

**7.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should establish a data repository to centrally track monitoring outcomes and guide future technical assistance and monitoring efforts.

**7.6 Finding:** The consolidated monitoring reports highlight significantly more Effective Practices than Opportunities for Improvement.

**7.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should offer tailored, constructive feedback to districts to promote continuous improvement in consolidated monitoring reports.

**7.7 Finding:** The SCM team produces a consolidated report for each district it monitors. However, the recommendations use stock language and are not tailored to districts.

**7.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should ensure all recommendations are tailored to the local context of each district.

**7.8 Observation:** Twelve percent of all districts participated in two or more monitoring processes led by OCIS in the 2023-2024 school year.

**7.8.a Recommendation:** OCIS should strategically coordinate district selections to minimize capacity strain. Evaluating the timing and calendar of monitoring activities will ensure site visits are appropriately spaced.

**7.9 Finding:** KDE manages a Best Practices Database for schools and districts to use as a resource to improve student performance; it is neither actively maintained nor systematically used.

**7.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should create a process to collect and share best practices with districts, using them to offer tailored technical assistance.

- 7.10 Observation:** KDE is underutilizing its statutory authority to conduct management reviews and audits to enhance district effectiveness.
- 7.10.a Recommendation:** KDE should, when appropriate, utilize its authority to conduct management reviews and audits to improve efficiency and effectiveness in district governance or administration.
- 7.11 Observation:** KDE Transportation provides public access to limited data via the KDE website.
- 7.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should publish an annual one-page "fast facts" document with expanded summary data and multi-year trend information including financial metrics such as total cost (state and local), cost per rider, riders versus walkers, special transportation modes (such as specially equipped buses or vans), and driver information (such as average age and hourly wage).
- 7.12 Observation:** Nutrition monitoring results are not easily accessible to the public.
- 7.12.a Recommendation:** KDE should add links to the nutrition monitoring manual, online training, technical assistance materials, and results search to the KDE school meal programs webpage to enhance accessibility by organizations and the public.
- 7.13 Finding:** Attendance monitoring processes are not efficient.
- 7.13.a Recommendation:** KDE should update attendance monitoring protocols to use electronic/remote monitoring and electronic document receipt/storage, reserving onsite visits for random selections and follow-ups on suspected major errors or fraud.
- 7.14 Finding:** The team did not observe consistent coordination of monitoring functions between OFO, Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL), and OCIS.
- 7.14.a Recommendation:** KDE should create a system to track district engagements and prevent overlapping audit or monitoring activities.

## **Student Supports**

The team analyzed KDE's responsibilities in ensuring all Kentucky students have the supports they need to succeed through comprehensive school counseling, academic programs, and targeted interventions. The team examined laws and regulations, safe and supportive schools initiatives, Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS), student access to advanced coursework, and school discipline. This work is managed across the OTL and OCIS.

## **Noteworthy Accomplishments**

- Kentucky was one of the first states nationally to require a career plan for students. KDE has resources for Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), such as the ILP Playbooks for different grade bands, to help districts develop and implement the ILP.
- Although they currently do not meet the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommended school counselor-to-student ratio, Kentucky prioritizes trying to meet the recommended ratio for school counselors through statute.

## **Findings, Observations, & Recommendations**

- 8.1 Finding:** The essential functions related to Student Support and School Safety overlap between OTL and OCIS.
- 8.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should create a Student Support and School Safety strategic plan to guide cross-office collaboration on critical interdisciplinary work and establish structures to sustain these efforts.
- 8.2 Finding:** The OTL is not structured or staffed to maximize impact in school counseling. School counseling does not have a long-term vision that can be achieved with the current staffing structure.
- 8.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should update the organizational reporting structure of OTL so the Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling directly reports to the Chief Academic Officer.
- 8.2.b Recommendation:** KDE should further develop a detailed, long-term vision for Comprehensive School Counseling.



- 8.3 Observation:** The School Counselor Advisory Council (SCAC) meeting time is spent primarily on KDE dispersing information to school counselors rather than intentional time for the Council to advise the Commissioner.
- 8.3.a Recommendation:** SCAC should define the educational priorities that meet the needs of the whole child to help drive the Council’s agenda and to more strategically advise KDE.
- 8.4 Finding:** Kentucky does not meet the student-to-counselor ratio recommended in KRS 158.4416.
- 8.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should conduct a statewide landscape analysis of school counseling and school-based mental health to determine where mental health and counseling needs are underserved.
- 8.5 Observation:** ILPs are not connected to a larger strategy that ensures all students graduate with skills and experiences that will help them be prepared for college and career.
- 8.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should better promote current ILP tools, such as the ILP Playbooks and Futuriti, to encourage LEAs to more effectively implement the ILP with fidelity.
- 8.6 Finding:** There are demographic disparities in high-school-student participation in advanced coursework.
- 8.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should identify the root cause of enrollment discrepancies and implement strategies to promote student access to advanced coursework statewide.
- 8.7 Observation:** The Safe Schools Branch provides many resources, but individuals within the branch are unsure of stakeholder awareness or use of these resources.
- 8.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop a standardized process for tracking usage of training, presentations, or other information sharing events from the Safe Schools Branch.
- 8.8 Observation:** KDE does not appear to have resources related to sexual assault prevention and raising awareness in schools.
- 8.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should provide resources on how best to prevent, respond to, and support victims of sexual violence for relevant stakeholders including students, school personnel, and families in the Commonwealth.
- 8.9 Observation:** Several recommendations in the 2023 report from the Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council have not been addressed or discussed since.
- 8.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should encourage the Student Advisory Council to evaluate progress on recommendations in the [A Focus on School Safety](#) report and, if necessary, make additional recommendations for KDE to consider in School Safety.
- 8.10 Observation:** Fewer than 15% of all schools have been recognized for implementing PBIS with fidelity.
- 8.10.a Recommendation:** KDE should make efforts to support and help increase the number of schools and districts implementing a PBIS framework with fidelity across the state.
- 8.11 Finding:** Black or African American students and males are more likely to receive at least one disciplinary referral compared to their peers.
- 8.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should monitor, share, and discuss disaggregated disciplinary data with school leadership and staff, highlighting disparities. KDE should also facilitate professional development for LEAs to understand the root cause of these disparities.

### ***Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion***

The team reviewed the practices, programs, and initiatives related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion administered by KDE. The team did not observe any program or activity at KDE that indicated non-compliance with current federal or state guidance. Specific findings and recommendations related to student subgroup disparities are included in other sections of this report.

- 9.1 Finding:** Kentucky still has significant work to do related to closing achievement gaps and ensuring all students are prepared for future success.
- 9.1.a Recommendation:** The Commonwealth should increase its focus on closing achievement gaps.

### ***Exceptional Children***

The team analyzed KDE’s efforts to monitor and support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with programming for exceptional children, including federally required general supervision responsibilities and

state support for gifted and talented students. The team reviewed this work within OSEEL, which is comprised of three divisions: The Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results (DIMR), the Division of State Schools (DSS), and the Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool.

### *Noteworthy Accomplishments*

- Kentucky achieved and sustained a “Meets Requirements” determination within the U.S. Department of Education’s Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) system between 2017 and 2024. This designation shows the state’s commitment to the federal implementation and general supervision systems that support students with disabilities.
- The U.S. Department of Education’s 2024 special education monitoring report for Kentucky required no corrective actions. To date, Kentucky is the only state monitored with no corrective actions required under this monitoring program.
- KDE has developed a robust and intentional system for ensuring LEA compliance with federal and state special education regulations.
- Over 90% of LEA special education directors surveyed agreed that KDE takes reasonable action to ensure noncompliance with special education requirements at the LEA level is corrected within one year.
- KDE has increased Corrective Action Plan (CAP) closure rates for LEAs cited for noncompliance with special education regulations from 87% in the 2017-2018 school year to 99% in the 2023-2024 school year.

### *Observations, Findings, and Recommendations*

- 10.1 Finding:** Special education data systems and monitoring activities are ineffective to support LEAs in closing performance gaps for students with IEPs.
- 10.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should utilize all aspects of State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators 1 through 14, including the results-oriented aspects of those indicators, when establishing annual LEA determination levels.
- 10.1.b Recommendation:** KDE should refine special education monitoring and support processes to ensure the system is focused on improving educational and functional outcomes for students with disabilities.
- 10.2 Observation:** The KDE special education dispute resolution webpage provides linked documents and materials only in English or Spanish, limiting the accessibility of families without English or Spanish proficiency.
- 10.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should provide dispute resolution resource documents and their respective hyperlinks in both English and a variety of languages on the KDE website to provide access for stakeholders whose primary language is not English.
- 10.3 Finding:** KDE lacks procedures for managing funds withheld from noncompliant LEAs in the special education trust fund as required by KRS 157.224(5).
- 10.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop implementation processes and procedures aligned to KRS 157.224(5) for the withholding of LEA funds due through a special education trust fund. After processes and procedures are developed, OSEEL should implement such processes and procedures for any circumstance in which LEA funds are withheld due to the LEA’s failure to meet the required special education program standards.
- 10.4 Observation:** Large LEAs with more than 5,000 students enrolled may require differentiated support from the Department related to disproportionality in special education.
- 10.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should conduct targeted engagement efforts with stakeholders from LEAs with more than 5,000 enrolled students to understand the distinct needs of the district related to significant disproportionality in special education.
- 10.4.b Recommendation:** KDE should use data from targeted engagements to identify and improve state support systems for LEAs addressing significant disproportionality in special education and implement necessary changes.
- 10.5 Finding:** OSEEL’s state policy and guidance documentation on the KDE website is only provided in English and is not organized to optimize user experience or accessibility.



- 10.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should review, update, organize, and condense website materials related to special education for all appropriate audiences, including resources in multiple languages, and ensure all policy guidance and resources are accessible and align with regulatory requirements, research, and best practices.
- 10.6 Finding:** The processes for providing special education technical assistance to LEAs and other stakeholders, including parents of students with disabilities, are inefficient and require oversight that slow down KDE’s stakeholder response time.
- 10.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop an improved system for tracking special education related communications and storing vetted or cataloged responses.
- 10.6.b Recommendation:** KDE should revise the internal requirement for KDE to peer review special education guidance by multiple staff members by reducing the number of reviews needed before issuing stakeholder guidance when requested.
- 10.6.c Recommendation:** KDE should conduct targeted engagement efforts, such as focus groups or listening sessions with special education stakeholders in LEAs with student enrollment populations larger than 5,000 to gather more information about large district support needs. Use data gathered through targeted engagements to identify continuous improvement areas related to state support systems for LEAs and implement any changes needed to provide such support.
- 10.7 Finding:** KDE technical assistance and professional development on special education topics do not adequately meet the needs of state stakeholders.
- 10.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should analyze trends and themes related to special education topics from the Department’s customer service communications to identify areas that are not clear in the available resource documents and training materials.
- 10.7.b Recommendation:** KDE should streamline OSEEL’s internal process for developing special education related public-facing resources to deliver more timely guidance materials to stakeholders.
- 10.7.c Recommendation:** KDE should identify LEA training needs to improve educational outcomes for special education students and provide professional learning opportunities to enhance LEAs’ capacity to meet these students’ academic needs.
- 10.8 Finding:** The State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC) does not fulfill its required obligations under the IDEA to advise KDE about the unmet needs of children with disabilities in Kentucky and in the development of statewide policies related to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.
- 10.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should revise the purpose, structures, and coordination of SAPEC to align with the advisory’s regulatory requirements according to 34 C.F.R. § 300.169. SAPEC should advise KDE on the impact of state policies and areas where the needs of students with disabilities are unmet.
- 10.8.b Recommendation:** KDE should implement a transparent tracking mechanism that demonstrates when SAPEC makes policy recommendations to the Department, how such recommendations were reviewed by the Department and by whom, decisions regarding the implementation of such recommendations, and the Department’s progress in moving forward SAPEC’s recommendations.
- 10.8.c Recommendation:** KDE should develop an outreach, recruitment, and training plan to ensure SAPEC vacancies are filled, members are trained to understand roles and responsibilities, and active membership is posted on the Department’s website for the public to access.
- 10.9 Finding:** The processes for LEA submission and KDE verification of gifted and talented summative evaluation data are insufficient to assess the quality of LEA programming or the effective implementation of program requirements.
- 10.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should ensure gifted and talented monitoring includes disproportionate representation.
- 10.9.b Recommendation:** KDE should limit the number of items in an LEA’s gifted and talented self-assessment to only those elements that are not already available to KDE staff through existing data systems including School Accountability, Infinite Campus, and the Student Information System.

- 10.9.c Recommendation:** KDE should establish an integrated gifted and talented summative assessment method through the statewide Student Information System or other online data management platform that allow for pre-filled data fields, extended response mechanisms such as dropdowns, rubrics, or rating scales, and upload capabilities for documentation.
- 10.9.d Recommendation:** KDE should implement a data validation procedure to verify LEA gifted and talented self-reported data, including randomized sampling of assessment items and review of supporting artifacts, or sampling of LEAs reporting full compliance for follow-up verification.
- 10.10 Finding:** There is no public mechanism to track the outcomes of recommendations from the State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education (SACGTE).
- 10.10.a Recommendation:** KDE should implement a transparent tracking mechanism that demonstrates when SACGTE makes policy recommendations to the Department, how such recommendations were reviewed by the Department and by whom, decisions regarding the implementation of such recommendations, and the Department's progress in moving forward the SACGTE's policy recommendations.
- 10.11 Finding:** The current use of gifted and talented staffing at 1.5 FTEs is insufficient to serve the identified gifted and talented student population in Kentucky and inadequate for fulfilling the required responsibilities with high quality.
- 10.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should cross-train the Department's staff that guide and train LEAs, such as OTL, on effective instruction principles for gifted and talented learners to support educator training needs.
- 10.11.b Recommendation:** KDE should reassign the responsibilities of managing the SACGTE from the Gifted and Talented Coordinator to the Guidance and Support Branch Manager.

### ***Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf***

The team analyzed KDE's oversight of two state schools: the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD). OSEEL's Division of State Schools specifically oversees these two schools. The primary directive of the Division of State Schools is to provide informational, technical, and regulatory support to both KSB and KSD.

#### ***Observations, Findings, and Recommendations***

- 11.1 Finding:** KBE and KDE lack involvement with KSB and KSD.
- 11.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should collect survey data (anonymously, if necessary, to encourage better quantitative and qualitative responses) regarding detailed concerns, thoughts, and proposed solutions for identified problems on a regular basis from KSB and KSD administrators, personnel, parents, and students.
- 11.1.b Recommendation:** KDE should establish more consistent interaction with KSB and KSD to better understand the needs of the state schools and the communities they serve. This additional interaction should involve not only the administration of KSB and KSD but also include teachers, staff, and students, as well as a greater presence on each campus.
- 11.1.c Recommendation:** KDE should establish more consistent interaction with the KSB and KSD advisory boards to assist them in meeting the needs of KSB and KSD, as well as the communities they serve. This should include attending KSB and KSD advisory board meetings and ensuring each advisory board has the required number of members to have a quorum for meetings.
- 11.1.d Recommendation:** KDE should ensure the KSB Advisory Board is comprised of at least some individuals who are blind or visually impaired, reflecting the community the board serves, and seek a statutory change that provides for such representation.
- 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.
- 11.1.f Recommendation:** KDE should consider the following options related to administrative oversight and operations:

- Formally appoint a KSD superintendent pursuant to KRS 167.017.
  - Administratively appoint a KSB superintendent while seeking a statutory addition to provide for a formal appointment process for a KSB superintendent.
  - Administratively appoint one superintendent to oversee both KSB and KSD while seeking a statutory change to KRS 167.017 to provide for a formal appointment process for a KSB superintendent.
  - Analyze whether KSB and KSD should be established as independent school districts and turn their advisory boards into decision-making school boards.
- 11.1.g Recommendation:** KDE should work with the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet to review the job specifications and pay scales for 18A classified employee positions.
- 11.2 Finding:** Improvements can be made to the procurement process for state schools.
- 11.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should foster greater communication related to procurement with KSB and KSD, ensuring that any necessary immediacy for approval is clearly communicated to the appropriate personnel at KDE.
- 11.2.b Recommendation:** KDE should conduct an internal analysis of its approval process to identify any factors that may negatively impact procurement timing. Any unnecessary obstacles should be removed.
- 11.2.c Recommendation:** The schools' fiscal managers should hold an annual information session at the beginning of each academic year to ensure a clear understanding of the procurement process among staff. A KDE representative should attend these sessions to speak to KDE's role in the process. Clarity and transparency during this session is key to fostering trust and communication regarding any future issues.
- 11.3 Finding:** Teachers utilize personal funds to purchase essential classroom items.
- 11.3.a Recommendation:** With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should review their respective process for budgeting to determine whether additional funding is available to assist teachers and staff with the purchase of essential items. Methods of assistance could include designated classroom stipends and/or a reimbursement process (separate from the processes associated with the schools' charitable foundations).
- 11.3.b Recommendation:** With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should make efforts to inform their employees of their respective schools' budgets on an annual basis via informational sessions, regardless of whether either of the above suggestions is possible. Employee awareness of the fiscal budget (and its constraints) should promote transparency and informed purchasing, as well as help alleviate any misconception that money is being withheld for arbitrary or unexplained reasons
- 11.4 Finding:** KSB and KSD have an informal complaint process.
- 11.4.a Recommendation:** With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should formulate and formalize a written complaint process. The process should provide detailed information and guidance on the types of complaints that can be handled by the respective schools and specify which types of complaints should be submitted to KDE.
- 11.4.b Recommendation:** Take steps to ensure all staff, teachers, students, and guardians are aware of the applicable complaint process. Awareness can be raised by holding informational sessions, email blasts, or announcements in newsletters.
- 11.4.c Recommendation:** Maintain and update the complaint process as necessary.

## Preschool

The team analyzed Kentucky's publicly funded preschool education programs which are available for all four-year-old children considered at-risk. These programs are designed to be developmentally appropriate within the framework of early childhood learning, which is defined as educational programming serving students ages three through five, including five-year-old children attending kindergarten. This work is managed by the School Readiness Branch (SRB) within OSEEL's Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool.

The team did not review other types of early childhood programs available to children in Kentucky, which include federally funded Head Start programs, licensed child-care centers, private preschool programs, and

certified family childcare providers, because KDE is not the designed state regulatory agency overseeing the implementation of these early learning programs.

### *Noteworthy Accomplishments*

- Kentucky preschool students with disabilities are served in regular early education environments at higher rates than preschool students with disabilities in comparison states (Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Ohio).
- Over 70% of Kentucky preschool children demonstrate kindergarten readiness in social/emotional domains between 2020 and 2023.

### *Observations, Findings, and Recommendations*

- 12.1 Finding:** Subpart 4 of § 4 of 704 KAR 3:410 allows secular, but not religious, private programs to receive state funding, which violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.
- 12.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should strike and/or amend Subpart 4 of § 4 of 704 KAR 3:410 in accordance with controlling Supreme Court precedent.
- 12.2 Finding:** Monitoring procedures for the identification and citation of noncompliance in preschool programs are inconsistently applied and lack needed specificity in alignment to statutory and regulatory requirements.
- 12.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should provide ongoing training to agency staff responsible for implementing and interpreting regulatory requirements for preschool programs. Training should be provided at least annually.
- 12.2.b Recommendation:** KDE should develop and implement a process for inter-rater reliability within the preschool monitoring process. Staff should be equipped to evaluate and identify compliant and noncompliant practices with accuracy and consistency across staff utilizing KDE monitoring protocols.
- 12.2.c Recommendation:** KDE should assign a minimum of two staff to conduct site visits for the purpose of evaluating regulatory compliance to conduct validation and verification of noncompliant preschool program practices.
- 12.3 Observation:** While Kentucky preschool students outperform the established state outcomes targets in State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator 7, the state targets are set lower than all comparison states across areas of SPP Indicator 7.
- 12.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should review the history of student performance against state targets in each SPP Indicator 7 reported area as well as available kindergarten readiness data to evaluate the degree to which future state targets in this area meet criteria for being both rigorous and attainable.
- 12.4 Finding:** KDE preschool monitoring and data systems in their current state are not optimized to promote strong preschool outcomes and kindergarten readiness.
- 12.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should incorporate metrics associated with preschool outcomes and kindergarten readiness within the annual preschool determinations process to emphasize the need for programs to not only meet compliance standards but also implement high-quality programs and practices that promote student outcomes in all domain areas.
- 12.4.b Recommendation:** KDE should refine preschool monitoring processes to verify LEAs with high rates of inclusionary practices for preschool students with disabilities are implementing strong practices aligned to student outcomes.
- 12.4.c Recommendation:** KDE should enhance support efforts to emphasize student growth in pre-academic skills. It is commendable that KDE has emphasized social emotional readiness as evidenced by kindergarten readiness data. Similar efforts should be implemented to ensure students have solid foundations for academic success.

## Career & Technical Education

This team reviewed the work of KDE's Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) and aspects of Kentucky's secondary school career and technical education (CTE) programs. CTE is part of Kentucky's multi-agency approach to workforce development and attracting businesses to the Commonwealth. The team analyzed KDE's supports for districts and ATCs which interfaces with employers, workforce development agencies, and postsecondary education providers on behalf of Kentucky students.

### Noteworthy Accomplishments

- OCTE partners with schools, employers, and state agencies to offer a strong portfolio of postsecondary and career readiness options for students.
- During the 2023-2024 school year, there were 143,415 students participating in CTE programs across the state, representing approximately 69% of all Kentucky high school students.
- For the 2022-2023 school year, Kentucky ranked 5th in the country in terms of the percentage of undergraduate students that were also enrolled in high school, indicating a high rate of dual enrollment.

### Observations, Findings, & Recommendations

- 13.1 Finding:** KDE guidance on the use of state funds for CTSO membership may be overly restrictive and unsupported by statute.
- 13.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should explore whether restrictions on the use of state funds for memberships or chapter dues have a basis in statute.
- 13.1.b Recommendation:** KDE should create a way to fully or partially offset travel costs to national events for state Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) officers and state-level competition winners representing the Commonwealth at national-level competitions.
- 13.2 Observation:** Statutes cited in 705 KAR 4:081 do not explicitly mention the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Leadership Training Center or FFA Camp by name, nor do they mention anything that can be reasonably construed to reference the FFA Camp.
- 13.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should examine the statutory authority behind the FFA Leadership Training Center and, if necessary, initiate legislative action to properly establish the Commonwealth's fiscal and operational responsibility for the Center.
- 13.3 Observation:** KDE's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan does not specifically mention CTE or postsecondary and career readiness.
- 13.3.a Recommendation:** Identify statewide college and career readiness goals and integrate with KDE's Strategic Plan.
- 13.4 Observation:** Kentucky's Perkins goals are generally less ambitious than those of comparison states.
- 13.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should review Kentucky and comparison state data and explore setting more ambitious Perkins goals as applicable to Kentucky's CTE strategy.
- 13.5 Finding:** KDE's communications and resources around CTE are designed for educators as a primary audience and not the general public, suggesting an opportunity for additional material to support the public (including workforce industries) in understanding available statewide CTE pathways at school and ATC sites.
- 13.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should launch public information resources and campaigns to increase awareness and promote CTE programs statewide among non-educator audiences.
- 13.5.b Recommendation:** KDE should build strategic connections between secondary school counselors, CTE program directors, ATCs, and workforce industries to increase co-op and apprenticeship opportunities statewide.
- 13.6 Observation:** For some Kentucky statewide workforce advisory and resource groups and boards, connection with KDE is high level and infrequent. Examples of these groups include Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), Business and Education Alignment Taskforce (BEAT), and State Workforce Advisory Technical Team (SWATT) among others.
- 13.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should examine how information on high-level priorities gets to schools and ATCs to ensure priorities are reflected in programming and outcomes.

**13.6.b Recommendation:** KDE should assess how establishing statewide college and career readiness goals, or integrating CTE into the Department's Strategic Plan, can support the dissemination of information.

**13.7 Finding:** Statewide CTE participation and outcomes data are not easily accessible or transparently available to the public.

**13.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should create and publish online a CTE annual report with the agency's statewide CTE goals, outcomes and participation data, and performance-based metrics.

## **Area Technology Centers**

The team analyzed KDE's system of ATCs and their attributes, services, and challenges. The ATCs, collectively, make up the Kentucky Tech System of Area Technology Centers (Kentucky Tech). Kentucky Tech is part of a greater portfolio of career and technical education programming provided by KDE and the school districts throughout the Commonwealth. This work is managed by KDE's OCTE.

### **Noteworthy Accomplishments**

- Kentucky Tech's Area 50 Technology Centers educate over 20,000 students per year in resource-intensive career pathways using a shared services model.

### **Observations, Findings, & Recommendations**

**14.1 Finding:** Administering ATCs as state agency entities, rather than schools, reduces their potential efficiency and effectiveness.

**14.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should assess whether allowing ATCs to operate under the procedures of the host districts would bring procedural and fiscal efficiencies to school operations.

**14.2 Finding:** Area Technology Centers' program funding differs from comprehensive high school CTE programs.

**14.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should explore finding ways of funding CTE programs in comprehensive high schools and ATCs equally.

**14.3 Finding:** ATC staff have less earning potential when compared to teachers at comprehensive schools.

**14.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should work with the state to ensure salary parity for ATC teachers, leaders, and staff with equivalent roles in host districts.

**14.4 Finding:** ATCs do not have dedicated staff for special education, Section 504 plans, ELs, or counseling needs.

**14.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should work with the state to identify additional funding for additional ATC staff dedicated to student services such as special education, Section 504 plan support, EL services, and counseling.

**14.5 Observation:** ATCs do not consistently offer summer programming.

**14.5.a Recommendation:** ATCs should provide summer programming that includes extended learning opportunities for current CTE students and exploratory learning about CTE pathways for prospective students.

**14.6 Finding:** ATCs struggle to find and retain teacher candidates because their career pathway requirements closely resemble those of traditional teaching roles.

**14.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should streamline entry and compensation processes to attract more industry professionals to teach in ATCs and CTE programs.

**14.7 Finding:** Dual credit opportunities for students vary across the state's ATCs.

**14.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should expand dual credit opportunities for students across all ATCs.

**14.8 Finding:** Given the way ATC student outcomes data is collected and reported, students and families are unable to view ATC accountability indicators on the SRC.

**14.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should publish data on ATC students' career readiness opportunities on the SRC.

**14.9 Finding:** ATC facilities, often over 50 years old, need substantial maintenance and upgrades. Many ATC principals are unaware of how host districts use ATC facilities funds.



- 14.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should ensure that 20% SEEK funds for ATC facilities are used for the benefit of the ATCs.
- 14.10 Observation:** ATCs and feeder schools offer duplicate pathways.
  - 14.10.a Recommendation:** KDE should expand the programmatic capacity at locally run vocational programs and ATCs to minimize overlap in pathways offered by ATCs and feeder schools.
- 14.11 Finding:** As state-operated schools under KDE, ATCs must follow over thirty regulations and several laws, creating administrative complexities for KDE.
  - 14.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should assess whether efficiencies in state administrative oversight could be gained by allowing ATCs to operate under the procedures of their home districts.

### **Staffing & Support of the Education Professional Standards Board**

The team analyzed the capacity and resources of the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) to determine whether it has sufficient staff and resources to fulfill its responsibilities according to governing statutes and regulations, including KRS Chapter 161. The scope of this analysis was extended to include a review of teacher recruitment and retention in Kentucky, which has been identified as a statewide issue in the current context.

#### **Observations, Findings, & Recommendations**

- 15.1 Finding:** School districts in Kentucky are not consistently providing responses to KDE's Teacher Exit Survey, resulting in less than desirable statewide engagement.
  - 15.1.a Recommendations:** KDE and schools districts should collaborate to the extent necessary to ensure the requirements of KRS 160.382 are met. KDE should seek to increase awareness of the importance of the data required by the statute and create an opportunity for KDE and districts to meet to discuss the best collection and reporting methods.
- 15.2 Observation:** The Teacher Pipeline Dashboard is not maintained with current teacher recruitment tracking data.
  - 15.2.a Recommendation:** KDE, to the extent possible, should enter discussions with KYSTATS to determine whether teacher recruitment tracking data can be continued, updated, and maintained. To the degree that it can, KDE should collaborate with KY Stats to the extent necessary to achieve desired results.
- 15.3 Observation:** KDE's efforts to address statewide teacher recruitment and retention are focused primarily on the launch and maintenance of the GoTeachKY campaign website which limits the ability to measure the success of implementation.
  - 15.3.a Recommendations:** KDE should continue its efforts to address the issue of teacher retention and recruitment in Kentucky via the campaign and other methods. Every effort must have a solid metric of success so KDE can concretely design, implement, and track the impact of its efforts across the Commonwealth.
- 15.4 Finding:** The Kentucky Framework for Teaching (KyFFT) has not been updated since publication in 2014. The core evaluation criteria for evaluating teacher practice does not reflect the most current teaching and learning initiatives or national evaluation resources.
  - 15.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should revise the KyFFT to align with updated regulations, initiatives, and resources. Convening stakeholders to understand whether new or updated technical assistance would better support districts' local use of the KyFFT.

### **Interscholastic Athletics**

The team analyzed the requirements of KRS 156.070, which includes KBE's oversight and management of common schools and all associated programs including interscholastic athletics. To carry out the specific task of managing interscholastic athletics in common schools, KBE can appoint an organization or agency to do so on its behalf. KBE has done so by designating the Kentucky High School Athletics Association (KHSAA) as KBE's agent to oversee middle and high school interscholastic athletics.

#### **Observations, Findings, & Recommendations**

- 16.1 Finding:** KHSAA has no system for tracking Title IX and related complaints.

- 16.1.a Recommendation:** KHSAA should develop a tracking system or database for complaints received.
- 16.1.b Recommendation:** KHSAA should include the complaint information gathered in the tracking system or database in the KHSAA Staff Annual Report, as presented to KBE.
- 16.1.c Recommendation:** KHSAA should ensure that all Title IX complaints are investigated, resolved, or properly referred.
- 16.2 Observation:** KHSAA no longer provides annual reports to KBE.
  - 16.2.a Recommendation:** KHSAA should resume providing an annual report to KBE to document actions taken to comply with 702 KAR 7:065.
  - 16.2.b Recommendation:** KHSAA should expand the report to include additional key information not required by regulation, such as accomplishments, important updates, complaints, referrals, etc.
- 16.3 Observation:** Continued lack of statewide requirements puts students in danger.
  - 16.3.a Recommendation:** KHSAA, in collaboration with the General Assembly, should enact additional legislation in the 2026 Regular Session to prevent and/or mitigate abuse of minors by all coaches, regardless of their employment status.
  - 16.3.b Recommendation:** KHSAA should consider methods to centrally track investigations and charges of abuse of minors by all district employees and volunteers in school systems across the Commonwealth, and how to make such information accessible only to those parties who need access, while maintaining transparency for students and privacy for district employees.

### **Community Education Programs & Services**

The team analyzed the control and management of community education programs and services which is explicitly placed under the purview of KBE pursuant to KRS 156.070. KRS 160.156 further requires KBE to develop a State Plan for Community Education and for KDE to administer the community education grant program. A State Council for Community Education has been established to advise the Commissioner of Education and KDE on issues relating to community education programs and to make recommendations for the funding of local programs. The team reviewed the day-to-day management of the program and services which are handled by OCIS and the Division of School and Program Improvement. OCIS is also responsible for administering federal and state grant programs related to community education.

### **Observations, Findings, & Recommendations**

- 17.1 Finding:** Improvements in the administration of Community Education Program Grant are needed.
  - 17.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should consult with the Attorney General's Office for its opinion on the retention of documents for state funding where a Request for Application (RFA) covers multiple years; collaborate with the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) to amend the applicable retention schedule to the extent necessary to ensure program documentation is not prematurely destroyed.
  - 17.1.b Recommendation:** KDE should review the community education grant program requirements and ensure all supporting documentation for the requirements is met.
  - 17.1.c Recommendation:** KDE should review procedures for the community education grant program to ensure they are adequate to ensure the program is efficient and effective. This includes verifying that documentation is reconciled and confirmed for accuracy.
  - 17.1.d Recommendation:** KDE should provide sufficient oversight to ensure districts are adhering to their community education grant program plans and making progress in the right direction with the funding provided.



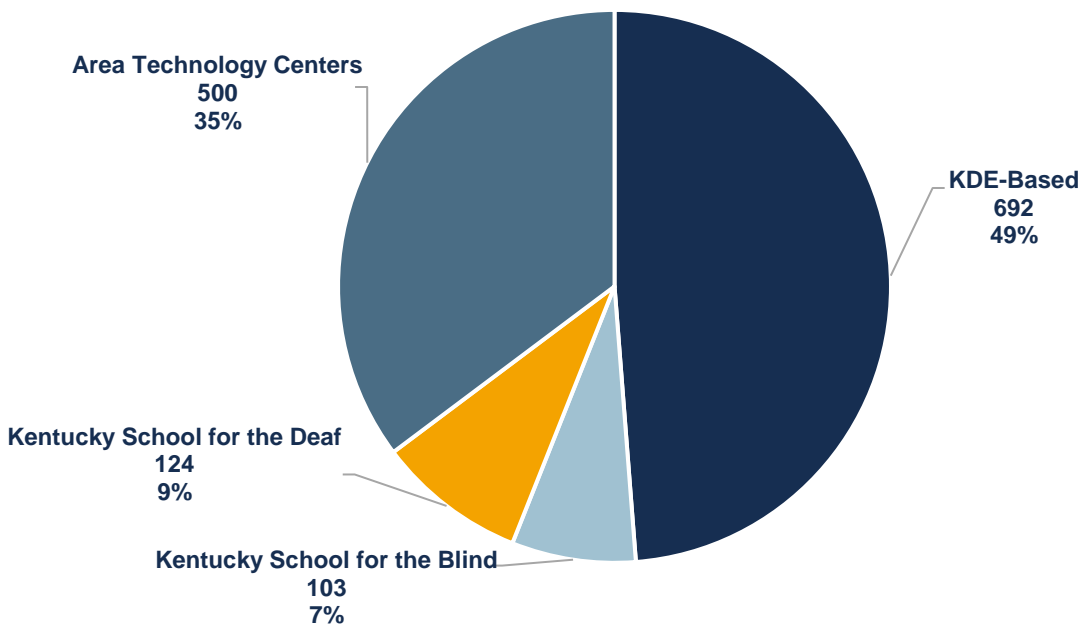
## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The following chapter outlines the number of staff by office and classification, and provides a description of each office, including its divisions and major functions.

### STAFF BREAKDOWNS

As of January 2025, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE or the Department) had 1,419 staff. This number is inclusive of regular full-time, part-time, state schools, contractor, and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) staff. Of those staff, 727 worked at state-run schools (including Kentucky School for the Deaf [KSD], Kentucky School for the Blind [KSB], and Area Technology Centers [ATCs]) and the remaining 692 worked at the Department (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9: KDE ALL STAFF BREAKDOWN



Source: Data Provided by KDE, "15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24-Staffing Levels-FTE's & Vacancies by Dept."

The staff who work in the state-run schools, including KSB, KSD, and the ATCs, are considered KDE staff. So are the administrative and seasonal temporary staff who work for the Kentucky Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization. FFA and ATC staff are part of the Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE). KSB and KSD staff are part of the Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL).

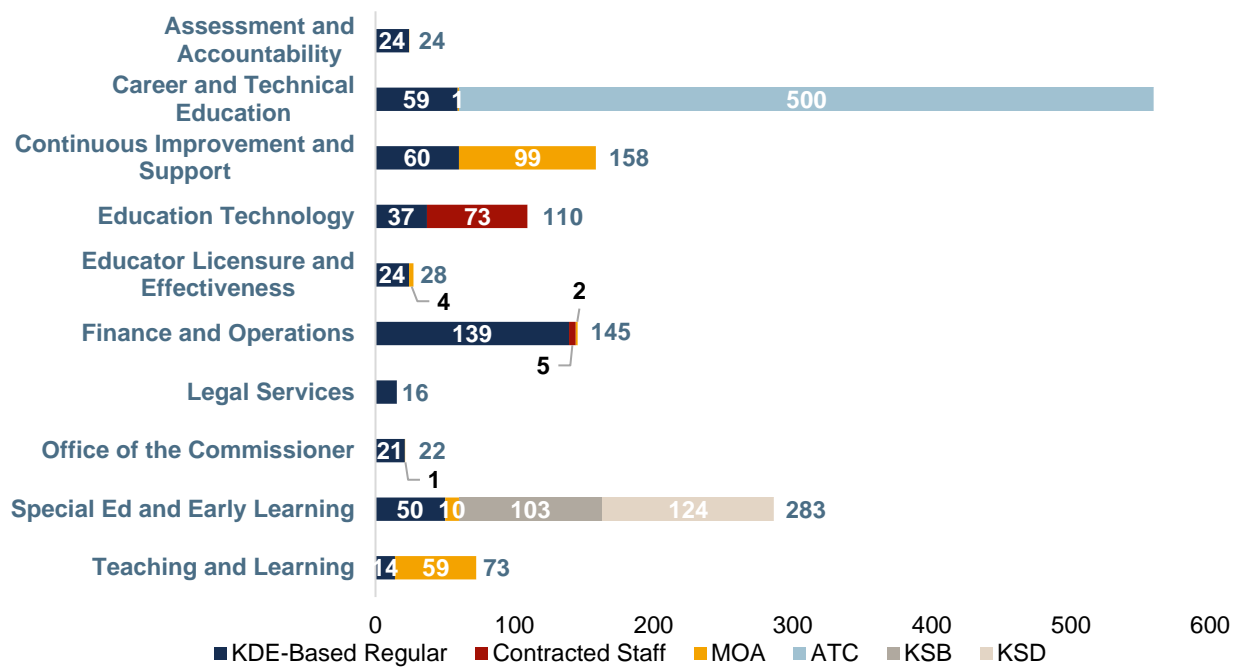
Figure 10 and Figure 11 show the breakdown of all 1,419 KDE staff by office, including the portion of OCTE and OSEEL that represent ATC, KSB, and KSD staff. The inclusion of the state school staff makes OCTE and OSEEL the largest offices in terms of total staff numbers. When excluding state school staff, the Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) is more than twice as big as the second or third largest offices (OCTE and Continuous Improvement and Support).

FIGURE 10: STAFF COUNTS BY OFFICE

Office	Total Staff (including Regular 18A, Contractor, MOA, 156, & 161 staff)
Assessment and Accountability	24
Career and Technical Education	560
Continuous Improvement and Support	158
Education Technology	110
Educator Licensure and Effectiveness	28
Finance and Operations	145
Legal Services	16
Office of the Commissioner	22
Special Education and Early Learning	283
Teaching and Learning	73

Source: Data Provided by KDE, "15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24-Staffing Levels-FTE's & Vacancies by Dept."

FIGURE 11: KDE STAFF COUNTS BY OFFICE



Source: Data Provided by KDE, "15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24-Staffing Levels-FTE's & Vacancies by Dept."

## OFFICE FUNCTIONS

### *Functions of Each Office*

#### *Office of the Commissioner*

The Office of the Commissioner oversees and supports all nine Offices within the Department of Education. The Office of the Commissioner includes the Commissioner of Education, two Deputy Commissioners, two Special Assistants to the Commissioner, the Director of Government Relations, the Director of Education Policy, the Division of Communications, and Strategic Planning and Research.

- The Commissioner of Education is the chief executive of KDE and oversees all the Department's services, including KSB and KSD.<sup>3</sup> The Commissioner of Education sets legislative priorities, which are then voted on by the Board of Education.
- The Director of Education Policy supports the functions of the Board of Education, such as bringing forward topics or calling special meetings.
- The Director of Government Relations serves as a liaison to the General Assembly and Governor's Office and advises the general assembly on education.
- The Division of Communication manages KDE's community outreach, media calls, press releases, internal and external communications, social media, public meeting notices, and emergency communications.<sup>4</sup>
- Strategic Planning and Research is spearheaded by KDE's Chief Performance Officer. Additional information on KDE's strategic plan and related objectives can be found in the Department Operations section.

#### *Office of Career & Technical Education*

OCTE works with districts and business partners to provide students with 135 four-course pathways towards industry certifications and credentials, in areas such as Health Science, Engineering Technology, Law and Public Safety, and Transportation.<sup>5</sup> OCTE oversees Kentucky Tech, which is comprised of 50 ATCs. Each ATC provides four-course CTE pathways towards certifications and credentials.<sup>6</sup>

OCTE includes the Division of Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement and the Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness.

- The Division of Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement oversees the KY Tech Schools (including 50 Area Technology Centers), the KY Tech Administrative Branch, and the Data and Investment Branch. The division also manages monitoring processes for all ATCs, and tracks CTE students.<sup>7</sup>
- The Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness aligns CTE programs to industry needs and supports school counselors in developing specific pathways towards certifications and credentials.

As highlighted in Figure 11, OCTE is the largest office, with 560 staff members. Notably, 500 of these staff members (89%) work within the ATCs. There are 60 non-ATC OCTE staff members including the Associate Commissioner who manages the Office, as well as two directors who manage the two divisions within OCTE. This total does include the three full-time administrative staff for Kentucky FFA but does not include the 33 seasonal workers who are brought on to support the FFA summer camp.

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<sup>3</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 156.010." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://statecodesfiles.justia.com/kentucky/2024/chapter-156/section-156-010/section-156-010.pdf?ts=1740006836>

<sup>4</sup> "KDE Communications." Kentucky Department of Education. February 14, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> "Career and Technical Education." Kentucky Department of Education. November 16, 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> "Kentucky Tech System of Area Technology Centers." Kentucky Department of Education. March 18, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/kytech/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

### *Office of Continuous Improvement and Support*

The Office of Continuous Improvement and Support (OCIS) conducts monitoring and aids schools in developing strong systems to bolster student performance and reduce achievement gaps through ongoing coaching and professional development sessions.<sup>8</sup>

OCIS includes the Division of School and Program Improvement (DSPI), the Division of Student Success, and the Division of Innovation.

- The Division of School and Program Improvement oversees the administration and monitoring of federal programs. The DSPI is responsible for releasing Consolidated Monitoring reports annually and providing technical assistance to districts.
- The Division of Student Success (DSS) oversees student engagement and student safety (including mental health), and spearheads drop-out prevention efforts by monitoring student data for early indicators of students not being on track to graduation, such as chronic absenteeism. DSS is also responsible for monitoring Title IV Part A implementation.
- The Division of Innovation oversees novel learning opportunities and programs, such as non-traditional instruction, micro-credentialing, project-based learning, and Kentucky's Portrait of a Learner.

There are 158 staff members in OCIS, including the Associate Commissioner who supervises the Office, five Directors and Assistant Directors who direct the three divisions within OCIS, as well as 76 field staff.<sup>9</sup>

### *Office of Education Technology*

Since creating the Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) in 1992, the Office of Education Technology (OET) has strived to be a leader in innovative K-12 education technology with a mindset for continuous improvement.<sup>10</sup> OET partners with school leadership and external vendors to provide effective digital learning solutions for teachers and students, while also ensuring equitable access to learning technologies across school districts. OET is also tasked with creating a KETS Master Plan every six years that reflects the goals and needs of the Kentucky Department of Education.<sup>11</sup>

OET includes the Division of School Technology and Project Management, Division of School Technology Services, and Division of School Data Services.

- The Division of School Technology Planning and Project Management manages technology-related projects for KDE and school districts, such as the KETS Master Plan and online testing.<sup>12</sup>
- The Division of School Data Services manages and provides support for data systems such as Kentucky's Student Information System (Infinite Campus) and the Kentucky Educator Credentialing System (KES). DSDS is also responsible for supporting schools with data use and visualization, as well as managing Kentucky's School Report Card online dashboard.
- The Division of School Technology Services (DSTS) administers technology services and supplies such as internet access and security services to KDE and school districts. DSTS also manages the technology service desk for KDE, KSB, KSD and all school districts.<sup>13</sup>

There are 110 OET staff members, including 73 contractors as well as the Associate Commissioner who oversees the Office, and six Directors and Assistant Directors who manage the three divisions within OET.

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<sup>8</sup> "Continuous Improvement for GAP Closure." Kentucky Department of Education. November 6, 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/stratclsgap/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> "OCIS Field Staff." Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Excel].

<sup>10</sup> "Office of Education Technology (OET)." Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/Documents/OET%20overview.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> "2024 – 2030 KETS Master Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. January 23, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/Pages/KETS-2024-2030-Master-Plan-Executive-Summary.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> "Office of Education Technology (OET)." Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/Documents/OET%20overview.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

### *Office of Educator Licensure & Effectiveness*

The Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness (OELE) oversees teacher and administrator certification and license renewal.<sup>14</sup> In 2022, OELE launched an online certification platform, Kentucky Educator Credentialing System (KECS), to streamline the certification process.<sup>15</sup>

OELE includes the Division of Educator Preparation and Certification (DEPC) and the Division of Educator Recruitment and Development (DERD).<sup>16</sup>

- The Division of Educator Preparation and Certification evaluates and monitors all educator preparation programs for teacher certification, advanced certification, alternative routes to certification and rank change. The Division of Educator Recruitment and Development promotes early entry to the education workforce through community engagement. DERD highlights multiple pathways for entry into the education workforce and also aims to improve teacher retention rates.

There are 28 OELE staff members, including the Associate Commissioner who directs the Office, and four Directors and Assistant Directors that supervise the two divisions in OELE.

### *Office of Finance & Operations*

OFO manages school district operations, federal nutrition programs, and financial and human resources.<sup>17</sup> The Office of Finance and Operations includes the Division of Budget and Financial Management, the Division of Resource Management, the Division of District Support, and the Division of School and Community Nutrition.

- The Division of Budget and Financial Management oversees KDE's PK-12 budget, and monitors state and federal funding, as well as state and federal audits.
- The Division of Resource Management manages payroll and benefits, property functions, and hiring and evaluation.
- The Division of District Support monitors student attendance and demographics, district finances (including Support Education Excellence in Kentucky [SEEK]), and school building inventory systems. DDS also oversees construction and renovation projects, and trains financial officers, facilities managers, and school nurses.
- The Division of School and Community Nutrition oversees federal nutrition programs and develops programming to educate students on healthy eating.<sup>18</sup>

There are 145 OFO staff members, including the Associate Commissioner who supervises the Office, and a total of nine Directors and Assistant Directors who oversee the four divisions in OFO.

### *Office of Legal Services*

The Office of Legal Services provides legal guidance on state and federal education policies and manages any legal proceedings related to the Commissioner, the Board of Education, or the Kentucky Department of Education.<sup>19</sup> The Office of Legal Services is comprised of 16 staff members, including one General Counsel and three Deputy General Counsels.

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<sup>14</sup> "Educator Certification." Kentucky Department of Education. April 1, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/epsb/Pages/Educator-Certification.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> "go TEACH KY." Kentucky Department of Education. <https://goteachky.com/>

<sup>16</sup> "Organizational Chart." Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/contacts/Documents/KDE%20Organizational%20Chart.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> "Office of Finance and Operations." Kentucky Department of Education. January 2020.

<https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting/Attachments/DisplayAttachment.aspx?AttachmentID=527477>

<sup>18</sup> "Office of Finance and Operations." Kentucky Department of Education. January 2020.

<https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting/Attachments/DisplayAttachment.aspx?AttachmentID=527477>

<sup>19</sup> "Legal Services." Kentucky Department of Education. July 16, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Pages/default.aspx>

### *Office of Special Education & Early Learning*

The Office of Special Education and Early Learning provides training and relevant policy guidance to teachers and district staff in a variety of areas, including preschool, gifted and talented programming, special education services, and deaf and blind services. The OSEEL also oversees the KSB and KSD to improve student achievement and access to relevant services.<sup>20</sup>

OSEEL includes the Division of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Monitoring and Results, the Division of State Schools, and the Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool.

- The Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results evaluates compliance for IDEA, state-funded preschool, and gifted and talented programming through routine risk assessment and mandated monitoring.<sup>21</sup>
- The Division of State Schools provides information on Deaf, Blind, and Deaf-Blind student services to districts, schools, and families. DSS also oversees the Kentucky School for the Blind and the Kentucky School for the Deaf.
- The Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool manages the execution of IDEA and gifted and talented programming and provides technical assistance for families of gifted and talent students and students with disabilities.

OSEEL has 283 staff members, making it the second largest office within KDE (see Figure 11). Notably, 237 of these staff members work at KSB or KSD. There are 46 non-KSB and KSD staff members including the Associate Commissioner who manages the Office and five Directors and Assistant Directors who supervise the Divisions in OSEEL.

### *Office of Assessment & Accountability*

The Office of Assessment and Accountability (OAA) is responsible for providing current and relevant data on school and district performance, which is publicly reported via the School Report Card.<sup>22</sup> The OAA also provides districts with guidance for facilitating Kentucky state assessments and shares important updates on test dates and procedures.<sup>23</sup> OAA includes the Division of Accountability and Data Analysis and the Division of Assessment and Accountability Support.

- The Division of Accountability Data and Analysis is responsible for analyzing and validating state assessment data and compiling state assessment data for Kentucky's School Report Card.
- The Division of Assessment and Accountability Support spearheads assessment training and implementation and provides updated information for schools on assessment dates and policies and procedures.<sup>24</sup>

OAA has 24 staff members, including the Associate Commissioner who directs the Office and three Directors and Assistant Directors who supervise the Divisions in OAA.

### *Office of Teaching & Learning*

The Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) supports the execution of all educational programming, including academic standards, early literacy and numeracy, targeted interventions, advanced coursework, and school counseling. OTL includes the Division of Academic Program Standards and the Division of Early Literacy.

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<sup>20</sup> "Exceptional Children and Early Learning." Kentucky Department of Education. October 23, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> "Monitoring." Kentucky Department of Education. November 21, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> "Assessment/Accountability." Kentucky Department of Education. February 25, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> "Assessment Support." Kentucky Department of Education. March 10, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

- The Division of Academic Program Standards oversees the Academic Standards Review Process, which requires that all academic standards and related assessments are evaluated, with one or two content areas being evaluated annually.<sup>25</sup>
- The Division of Early Literacy oversees Kentucky’s literacy coaching model, including both state and school-based literacy coaches.

OTL has 73 staff members, including the Associate Commissioner and Chief Academic Officer who manage Office and three Directors and Assistant Directors who supervise the Divisions in OTL.

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<sup>25</sup> “Kentucky Academic Standards Review Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 30, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Pages/default.aspx>



## DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

The following chapter discusses how the Department is structured to support internal and external operations. A review of operational activities within the Commissioner's office is included. An overview of the processes and procedures that the organization uses in its core finance and operations, including (human) resource management and technology systems, and district support functions is also covered.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### *Structure of Executive Team*

#### **1.1 Finding:** KDE's organizational chart at the executive level is not organized for optimal effectiveness.

The Kentucky Department of Education is led by the Commissioner of Education, who is appointed by the Kentucky Board of Education and confirmed by the Senate.<sup>26</sup> The Commissioner is supported by an executive team that includes two Deputy Commissioners, seven Associate Commissioners, the Director of Education Policy, the Chief Performance Officer, the Chief Communications Officer, the Director of Government Relations, and the Chief Academic Officer.<sup>27</sup> In practice, this executive team, along with the two Special Assistants to the Commissioner (approximately 17 staff total), are all direct reports to the Commissioner. This structure was evident through information gathered during interviews with these staff regarding reporting lines, staff structures, and communication practices. It is also how the public-facing organizational chart is designed (see Figure 12). Commissioner Fletcher has not made any changes to the organizational chart structure that was already in place when he assumed the role.

These direct reports all described regular leadership meetings with the Commissioner. Due to the size of and scheduling logistics for this group, the Commissioner split them into two groups and meets with each group biweekly. He also meets weekly with the majority of his team from the Office of the Commissioner to go over what is coming up in the week ahead. In practice, all the executive-level staff feel they report directly to the Commissioner and come to him, as needed, regarding news, challenges, and matters requiring approval or assistance. The Commissioner also has Board members, local superintendents, legislators, and other staff who come to him for various needs. This results in a wide variety and large number of stakeholders having direct access to the Commissioner. Although the Commissioner has administrative support to help with scheduling and communications, he does not currently have an executive-level leader direct report who helps to liaise with stakeholders, manage executive-level staff, and filter requests for the Commissioner's time and attention.

In the staff data reports provided by the Division of Resource Management, the reporting lines did not align with practice or with the organizational chart. According to these data reports, the only roles reporting directly to the Commissioner are the two Deputy Commissioners plus the Associate Commissioner for Finance and Operations. The remaining executive-level staff reported to those three leaders.<sup>28</sup> Of the 21 total staff direct reports to the Associate Commissioner for Finance and Operations, 12 are executive-level staff consisting of the other six Associate Commissioners, the Director of Education Policy, the Chief Performance Officer, Chief Communications Officer, Director of Government Relations, and Special Assistants to the Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner and Associate Commissioner of Teaching and Learning has one executive-level direct report (Chief Academic Officer), and the Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel has no executive-level direct reports. There is a discrepancy between personnel records and what is communicated to staff and occurring in practice. The executive-level staff interact with the

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<sup>26</sup> "About KDE." Kentucky Department of Education. January 12, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/about/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> "KDE Leadership Team." Kentucky Department of Education. February 10, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/about/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> "15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24 – Staffing Levels – FTE's & Vacancies by Dept." Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Resource Management. January 2025. [Excel].



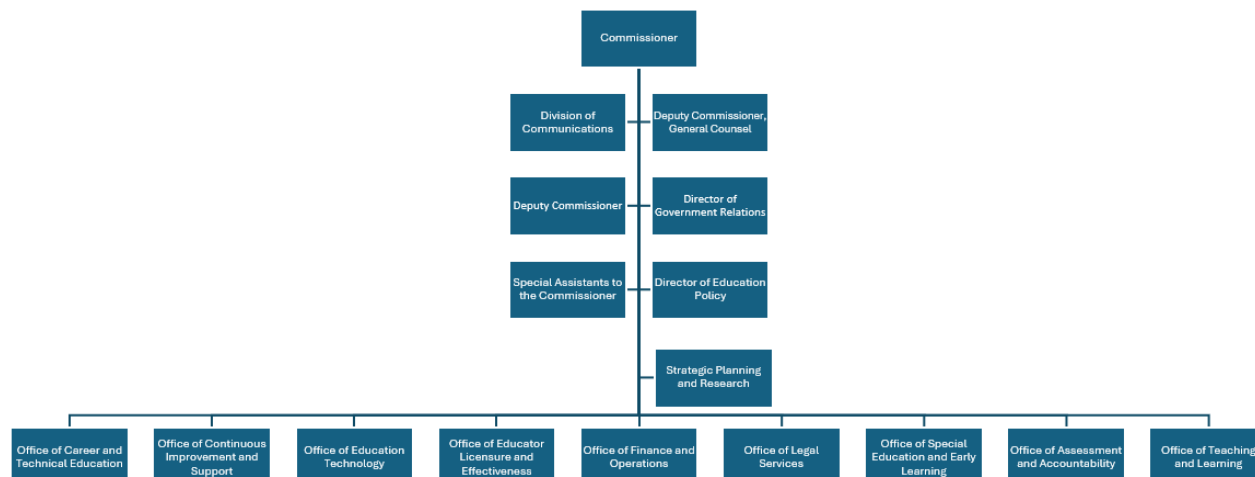
Deputy Commissioners and Associate Commissioner for Finance and Operations, but the relationship was not described by staff as a reporting relationship, nor did it appear that way to the team.

The Deputy Commissioner roles are unclear regarding scope and personnel management. One Deputy Commissioner also holds a dual title of Associate Commissioner for Teaching and Learning; however, the Office appears to be primarily managed by the Chief Academic Officer, who in practice, reports to the Commissioner. The other Deputy Commissioner holds a dual title of General Counsel and only has legal services staff as direct reports, and no clear responsibilities over any other major functions of the organization. The Deputy Commissioner roles do not have defined responsibilities as far as department management, strategy, or accountability. As it stands, these Deputy Commissioner roles are not effective leadership roles for the agency. They do not appear to manage a portfolio of work, oversee offices, or have executive-level direct reports. They are not being utilized effectively to manage portions of the agency and help reach KDE's strategic goals and objectives.

## Department Structure

Figure 12 shows the high-level KDE organizational chart.

FIGURE 12: KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATION CHART

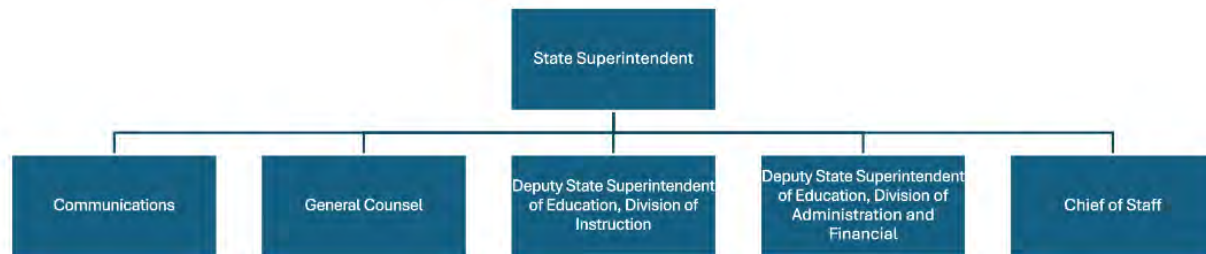


Source: Data Provided by KDE, "15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24-Staffing Levels-FTE's & Vacancies by Dept."

As shown in Figures 12, 13, and 14 the KDE organizational chart differs from the peer comparison state education agency organizational charts in several ways:

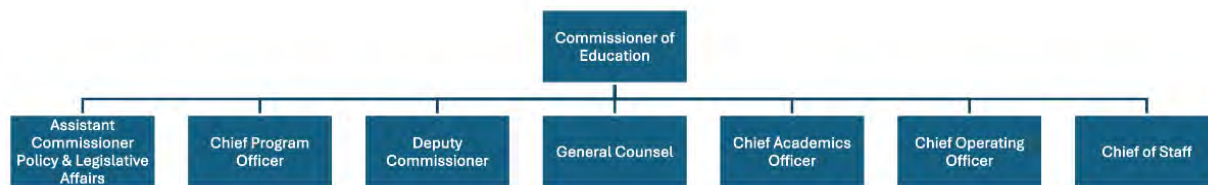
- KDE has a wider span of offices (nine) and a much greater number of direct reports to the Commissioner.
- KDE does not have a Chief of Staff.
- The KDE Commissioner has two direct report Deputy Commissioners who hold dual roles as:
  - Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel, Office of Legal Services
  - Deputy Commissioner and Associate Commissioner, Office of Teaching and Learning

FIGURE 13: ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATION CHART



Source: Data retrieved from the Alabama Department of Education website.

FIGURE 14: TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATION CHART



Source: Data retrieved from the Alabama Department of Education website

- 1.1.a **Recommendation:** The Commissioner should have two Deputy Commissioners with clearly defined management roles overseeing major functional areas of the Department, such as academics and operations.
- 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. The Commissioner needs strategic gatekeeping to help manage his time and focus.

## Government Affairs & Policy

1.2 **Finding:** KDE has a higher staff count and a more decentralized structure for staff dedicated to policy and legislation when compared with other state education agencies. KDE's policy advisors are embedded in the offices, as opposed to being housed with government and legislative affairs.

The team reviewed job descriptions for ten staff (eight full-time and two part-time) for whom the Division of Resource Management classifies as having at least a portion of their time dedicated to policy advising work, including tracking proposed and enacted legislation that impacts KDE. Those staff include the Director of Government Relations, the Special Assistants to the Commissioner (discussed in greater detail in the Department Strategy & Partnerships section), and the Policy Advisors embedded across seven offices in the agency:

- Office of Assessment and Accountability
- Office of Continuous Improvement and Support
- Office of Career and Technical Education
- Office of Education Technology
- Office of Finance and Operations
- Office of Special Education and Early Learning
- Office of Teaching and Learning

In addition to the staff described above, the three Academic Program Managers who conduct research under the direction of the Chief Performance Officer also reported spending time conducting internal research on the impact of proposed legislation. Figure 15 displays the volume of staff dedicated to government affairs and policy across select state education agencies. Comparatively, KDE has a higher number of and more decentralized structure for staff dedicated to policy and legislation.

**FIGURE 15: GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & POLICY STAFF SELECTED STATES**

State Education Agency	Staff Dedicated to Government Affairs & Policy
<b>Kentucky</b>	13 staff who spent at least a portion of their time on government affairs and policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Director of Government Affairs with no supporting staff or formal office</li> <li>• Seven policy advisors, each in a different office:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Office of Teaching and Learning</li> <li>○ Office of Assessment and Accountability</li> <li>○ Office of Continuous Improvement and Support</li> <li>○ Office of Education Technology</li> <li>○ Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness</li> <li>○ Office of Legal Services</li> <li>○ Office of Special Education and Early Learning</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Two part-time Special Assistants to the Commissioner</li> <li>• Three research staff under the Chief Performance Officer</li> </ul>
<b>Alabama</b>	Two staff in the General Counsel’s Office. The Deputy General Counsel also serves as Director of Government Affairs and is supported by a Legislative Liaison.
<b>Florida</b>	One Deputy Chief of Staff leading the Office of Legislative Affairs.
<b>Mississippi</b>	One Chief of Government Relations, Internal and External Affairs. The position resides within the Office of Communications and Government Relations.
<b>Ohio</b>	Two staff in the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs. A Director and a policy staff.
<b>Tennessee</b>	Four positions in the Policy and Legislative Affairs Office, including an Assistant Commissioner of Policy Implementation and Legislative Affairs, Senior Policy Director, Director of Legislative Affairs, and Deputy Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs.

Source: Data retrieved from State Department of Education websites.

The role of Government Relations is to be external facing and liaising directly with the legislature on behalf of KDE and KBE, whereas the policy advisors operate internally in KDE and do not play a policy advocacy role; rather, they research, track, and help interpret legislation for KDE staff.

To help manage relationships with legislators, the Director of Government Relations reports to the Commissioner and serves as a liaison for KDE and KBE to the General Assembly and the Governor’s Office. A major part of the role is to advise the General Assembly on general education. The role is also meant to serve in support of creating a feedback loop between KDE staff and the legislature.

According to senior KDE leaders and Board members, the Commissioner has worked quickly in his first year to build relationships with the legislature. Between the Commissioner and the Director of Government Affairs, they report trying to communicate with the Education Committee Chairs weekly when the legislature is not in session. They also communicate frequently with groups like the Kentucky School Board Association, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, and the Kentucky Education Association (Teacher’s Union).

The Director of Government Affairs meets weekly with the policy advisors embedded within offices to bring questions from legislators directly to the relevant office who can help answer questions. The policy advisors, in addition to tracking and analyzing the impact of proposed state and federal laws and regulations on their office, draft policy briefs on education policy landscape issues, support technical assistance and communication of policies and procedures to staff in their office, serve as liaisons on initiatives across the agency and with stakeholders, prepare KBE presentations, and support special projects for their Associate Commissioner.

In interviews, office leadership described the advantages of having embedded policy advisors who specialized in each functional area of the department. Leaders' perceptions included the belief that policy advisors helped to prevent siloing across offices, and that because some policy advisors are also attorneys, they could clarify the legal requirements and review programs and procedures for compliance. The policy advisors also help with technical writing and publishing guidance.

Some of the issues identified by the audit team related to the policy advisor role analysis, however, included the variation in the role across offices and how time was spent in the role. For example, each office has its own job description for their policy advisor, and each role has a slightly different mix of assigned duties and portion of time spent on each. Both from the policy advisor job description review, as well as the feedback in interviews, the data showed that the policy advisors are used as highly skilled, strategic special assistants to the Associate Commissioners. Several of the Associate Commissioners report the policy advisor role is helpful to the operations of their office and the department.

Data on education-related bills is shown in the Department Operations section.

**1.2.a Recommendation: KDE should reduce and consolidate all job functions related to interpreting laws that impact the Department to designated policy advisor positions that report to the Director of Government Relations.**

- Each policy advisor should have a portfolio of offices they support and specialize in (similar to how legal services is organized), to distribute work and allow for specialized knowledge and relationship building.
- Policy advisors should prioritize tracking of select bills that executive leadership has identified as high priority.
- Keep job functions related to preparation of office policies and procedures, staff communications, board presentations, technical assistance, special projects, and liaising on behalf of Associate Commissioners with the offices in (new or revised) roles designated as special assistants to the Associate Commissioners.

***Special Assistants to the Commissioner***

**1.3 Observation: The Special Assistant to the Commissioner role is a resource that can be strategically leveraged to proactively support two-way communication and to alleviate the volume of direct outreach to the Commissioner from Superintendents.**

The Commissioner has two part-time Special Assistant roles that were put in place under his predecessor. The positions are held by retired superintendents who have strong relationships with district leaders statewide. The Special Assistants are a strategic role to help KDE leaders understand the district leadership perspective and to liaise with districts in real-time to help communicate messaging from KDE leadership. A component of their formal job description is to provide counsel to the Commissioner on key policy matters and legislative considerations, including advising the Commissioner on how policies and regulations will impact school operations and decisions. In recent years, the Special Assistants have attended the Educational Cooperative meetings to bring feedback and updates from the field back to the Commissioner. Recently, the Special Assistants have been redirected to support special projects such as representing the Commissioner around the issue of facilities modernization with the Facilities Task Force.

**1.3.a Recommendation: The Commissioner should continue to engage the Special Assistant role as a communication liaison with Superintendents.**

## Legal Services

### 1.4 **Finding:** Legal Services staff do not have a dedicated private workspace in the office to conduct confidential work.

The Office of Legal Services, led by a Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel, employs seven staff attorneys and provides KDE staff and KBE with legal counsel and advice on matters pertaining to education-related state and federal laws and regulations.<sup>29</sup> Approximately half of the attorneys are assigned to offices for support and specialized knowledge. These attorneys work closely with the policy advisors across all offices to do legal research on state and federal law.

Half of the attorneys spend time working on ethics cases involving teachers. House Bill 300 amended KRS 161.120 to establish the process and procedures for the Education Professional Standards Board to receive and process a complaint against a certificate holder. It has had a major impact on the work of the legal team since it was signed into law approximately a year ago in April 2024. A massive overhaul of the case management system used to track deadlines and send communications directly to educators automatically was required. It also instituted a second complaint review in the process. This represents a large portion of work for legal services, with over 700 complaints submitted in 2022 and 2023. The volume of complaints was under 600 in 2024. The legal team perceived it may be related either to confusion by LEAs regarding the new requirements from House Bill 300 about how to complete internal investigations before submitting them to KDE legal services, or that LEAs were holding onto complaint information for longer periods of time to ensure their internal investigations were complete prior to submitting to KDE. House Bill 300 also increased the threshold for reporting to KDE around testing violations, which may contribute to the reduction in complaints.

A concern that was cited by legal services staff was the lack of private workspace in the office. Their open workspace was observed by the team during onsite visits. Due to the confidential nature of their work, the attorneys need to be able to have private conversations and display information on their computer screens without fear that someone else in the office will see or hear. The open floor plan in the office lacks privacy unless staff move to a private conference room, of which there are a limited number.

#### 1.4.a **Recommendation:** KDE should put physical office space privacy protections in place for legal services staff. This may include a privacy wall, private offices, or relocation to a private space in the office.

## Communications

### 1.5 **Finding:** The Division of Communications does not have full ownership of all KDE communications due to some offices managing their own communications staff and related functions.

The Division of Communications sits within the Office of the Commissioner. As of January 2025, the office employed eight staff and had three vacant positions. The division oversees media calls, awards, press releases, public meeting notices, and the KDE website. It employs a webmaster, accessibility consultant, and graphic designer.

While the Communication division runs the primary KDE social media accounts, some of the offices across the agency have their own communications staff who manage separate office-specific social media accounts, websites, and messaging that goes out. Examples of this include OCTE and OELE. OCTE is active on social media with independent accounts that sometimes link to KDE or are reposted by KDE. OELE manages a website ([goteachky.com](http://goteachky.com)) not housed under the [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov) URL. The site is current, well-organized, and visually appealing. The site footer helps users to see that the website is owned and maintained by OELE at KDE. It provides educator resources and a page to log in to KECS. Another

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<sup>29</sup> "Legal Services." Kentucky Department of Education. July 16, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Pages/default.aspx>

example of a site that lives outside of the education.ky.gov URL is kystandards.org, managed by KDE's Office of Teaching and Learning.

This decentralized communications structure does have built-in efficiencies and content expertise related to particular programming and audiences. A downside, however, is that the Division of Communications loses oversight of all KDE communications, as well as streamlining and aligning on branding, messaging, and timing of communications sent out from the Department. The Division of Communications reports trying to coordinate with the various communications staff across the agency to help mitigate those issues.

- 1.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should create a coherent partnership between all communications-related staff to align the Department's messaging, branding, timing, and material for both internal and external stakeholders. The Division of Communications should function as the communications experts, setting strategy and overseeing relationships. The program communications staff across the agency should work closely with the Division of Communications as content partners.

### *Internal Communications*

The Commissioner holds a monthly virtual Microsoft Teams all staff meeting. The meeting is organized by the Division of Communications, who puts out calls for presentations and forms an agenda. The Commissioner typically conducts a welcome message, shares major news, internal employee promotions and movements. Updates on major initiatives and legislative items are also shared. The meeting is guided by a PowerPoint presentation. Staff report positive perceptions of this meeting as a helpful way to get information and hear directly from the Commissioner.

Staff also get a newsletter message from the Commissioner twice per month. These email updates typically include announcements from the Division of Resource Management (Human Resources- related news). This staff newsletter also includes opportunities for staff to share aspects of their personal lives, such as photos of their pets. All staff also receive all KDE press releases.

Occasionally staff will hear from partner organizations or other agencies, including the Education and Labor Cabinet, Kentucky Center for School Safety, and the Lieutenant Governor's Office, regarding particular programs or announcements.

The audit team found the structure and mixed methods of communication from leadership to staff agency-wide to be routine, comprehensive, and meeting the needs of staff.

### *External Communications & Supports*

The Division of Communications also supports external communications, including community relations and outreach, public relations, social media, marketing, graphics, and emergency and crisis communications for KDE.<sup>30</sup> A few ways the Division of Communications interacts with school districts includes:

- Highlighting best practices from districts and sharing news, perspectives, and ideas for guiding students to higher levels of achievement through the Kentucky Teacher, a publication to communicate directly with the state's approximately 40,000 public school teachers.<sup>31</sup>
- Working with the Kentucky School Public Relations Association (KYSPRA), an organization whose mission is to meet the professional development needs of members and to advocate for the employment of public relations practitioners in all Kentucky school districts.<sup>32</sup>

The Division of Communications sends out newsletters to a wide range of stakeholders. The Gov Delivery tool from the Education and Labor Cabinet is used to send out those newsletters and mass emails. KDE captures analytics on the open and click rates in those newsletters. They report that while the newsletter

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<sup>30</sup> "KDE Communications." Kentucky Department of Education. 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> "Kentucky Teacher." Kentucky Department of Education. 2022. <https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/>

<sup>32</sup> "The Voice of Kentucky Schools." Kentucky School Public Relations Association. 2023 <https://www.kyspra.org/>

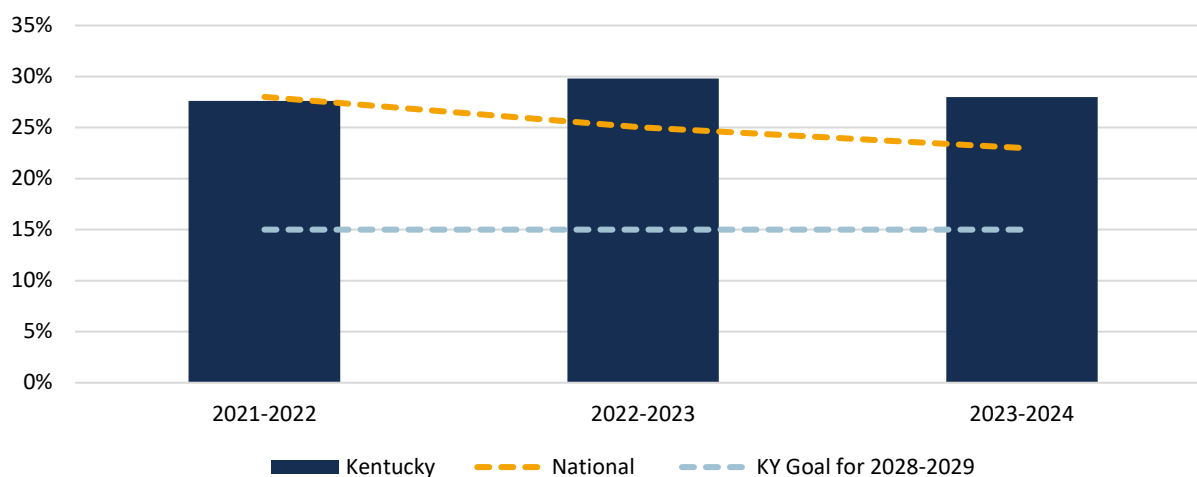


gets an average open rate of approximately 30-40%, they see a much higher open rate of 70-80% when information about the school report cards go out.

According to Division of Communications staff, some of their recent achievements include a 2024 marketing campaign around chronic absenteeism, which included billboards, television, and radio segments. Another round was conducted in January 2025. This campaign generated increased web traffic to KDE’s webpage on chronic absenteeism, with the page moving up to the third most-visited webpage within the Department’s site. Communications staff worked with the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support to put out a range of communications and training materials on chronic absenteeism for districts, school leaders and families. While KDE does not know if the campaign had a direct impact on reducing chronic absenteeism, the Office of Strategic Planning and Research has been tracking absenteeism rates monthly and reports that they are going down.<sup>33</sup>

As shown in Figure 16, Kentucky is trending slightly above the national average with a chronically absent rate of 28% in 2023-2024. As stated in the KDE 2024-2029 (draft) strategic plan, one of KDE’s goals is to decrease statewide chronic absenteeism rate to 15% by 2028-2029.<sup>34</sup>

**FIGURE 16: KENTUCKY CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM 2021-2024 AGAINST NATIONAL & FUTURE TARGET RATE**



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, “School Report Card – Chronic Absenteeism” <https://reportcard.kyschools.us/kysrc?organization=20232024:999:999000> and FutureEd, “Tracking State Trends in Chronic Absenteeism,” <https://www.future-ed.org/tracking-state-trends-in-chronic-absenteeism/>.

### Website Navigation

**1.6 Finding:** The KDE website is outdated and difficult to navigate in some areas, which creates challenges for stakeholders to access accurate and current information relevant to their needs.

The team found during focus groups that some stakeholders perceived KDE’s website to be difficult to navigate and/or lacked updated information in certain areas. Consequently, the team reviewed the website to assess navigation, ease of use, and accuracy.

**FIGURE 17: KDE WEBSITE USE CASE ASSESSMENT**

<sup>33</sup> “KBE Meeting – March 26, 2025.” Kentucky Board of Education. March 26, 2025. <https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/featured/2025/03/kentucky-board-of-education-meeting-march-2025/>  
<sup>34</sup> “2024-2029 Plan on a Page.” Kentucky Department of Education. KDE:OC:SPR:KD.2.2025. [PDF].

Website Use Case	Navigation, Ease of Use, & Accuracy
<p><b>I am a prospective teacher. How do I become a teacher in a KY school?</b></p>	<p>For those looking to become a teacher in Kentucky, they can select the “Interested in becoming a teacher?” tab featured on the home page of the website. This takes the user to an online interest form where they can subscribe to any of KDE’s nine newsletters. While these newsletters provide inspirational teacher stories and resources to help land a teaching job, the newsletter signup does not provide the user with immediate information on how to become a teacher. Notably, the “Interested in becoming a teacher?” featured tab on the home page does not link to the GoTeachKY website, which serves as the dedicated comprehensive resource for people pursuing a teaching career in Kentucky. The GoTeachKY website (discussed earlier in this chapter) is linked under the Education Professional Standards Board <i>tab</i>, but the <i>landing page</i> for the Education Professional Standards Board does not include a link to GoTeachKy.</p>
<p><b>I am a parent. How can I find out where my child will attend school, with contact information?</b></p>	<p>Families looking to find their child’s school can access the “Are you New to Kentucky?” page under the “Communications” header. This page includes links to the “Frequently Asked Questions about Kentucky’s School Enrollment Requirements” webpage, which link informs the user of enrollment steps, as well as the Kentucky School Report Card and District/School Directory, where users can find district and school accountability measures as well as contacts for each school. There is not a tool, however, where users can input their address to find their local school. This information serves as a good starting point for families, but the page may be difficult to find. There is also a quick link to the FAQs for Kentucky public school enrollment requirements under the Families and Students quick links at the bottom of the home page.</p>
<p><b>I am a parent. How do I find out about the performance of my child's school?</b></p>	<p>For families looking to find out about the performance of their student’s school, they must click on the Assessment/Accountability tab on the main page. The first header on this page provides a link to the “School Report Card.” The School Report Card page can also be accessed via the “Communities” and “Families and Students” quick links sections on the main page as well as the “Open House” tab. From here the user can click on the logo for the “SRC Dashboard.” The user can search for their school using the search bar on the right-hand side or the directory beneath it. After selecting the school in question, the user is directed to the school dashboard and will be able to sort through data under the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overview</li> <li>2. School Accountability</li> <li>3. Academic Performance</li> <li>4. Educational Opportunity</li> <li>5. School Safety</li> <li>6. Financial Transparency</li> </ol> <p>Navigating to the SRC requires that families understand what the SRC is and that it is related to assessment and accountability. The definition of the SRC and what it includes is buried on the SRC page, which must be navigated to through assessment and</p>



Website Use Case	Navigation, Ease of Use, & Accuracy
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	<p>accountability links, or through the Families and Students quick links on the home page.</p>
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<p><b>I am a parent. My child requires special education services and I am having trouble with my school district. How can I find information to support my next steps?</b></p>	<p>Families looking for information regarding special education services and support can click on the “Special Education” tab under the “Exceptional Children and Early Learning” header. The Special Education main page contains sub-headers specifically for parents and families, including “Parent and Family Resources,” “Parent and Family Rights,” and “Family and School Partnerships.” These pages contain links to resources, fact sheets, and relevant KDE trainings for parents.</p> <p>The Special Education main page is centered around the governing state and federal laws, including the Kentucky Administrative Regulations (KARs) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These laws are overtly referenced in multiple places on subpages, including the “Parent and Family Rights” subpage. While families may be interested in relevant special education laws and regulations, dense legal text may be intimidating and irrelevant to families seeking support in gaining services for their child.</p> <p>The information presented on the “Parent and Family Resources” page is the type of information that should be featured and more easily found from KDE’s home page. It defines what special education is and provides useful resources for families, including information on Individual Education Programs (IEP).</p>
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<p><b>I am a parent. How do I find out about the KY academic standards?</b></p>	<p>Users seeking information on academic standards would find it under the “Standards/Content Area” tab under “Standards” link. It links to the <a href="http://kystandards.org">kystandards.org</a> website, which organizes information on standards by content and program area. This information is duplicated on KDE’s website under the Content/Program Areas link within the Standards/Content Areas. It is confusing to know which resource to view and if the information is the same.</p> <p>The <a href="http://kystandards.org">kystandards.org</a> website does not live under the <a href="http://education.ky.gov">education.ky.gov</a> URL. It is visually appealing, but the standards icons link to long-form reports that may be challenging for families to sift through. An explanation of what academic standards are, as well as Kentucky’s vision for students, is not found until the user has accessed the long form reports.</p>
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<p><b>I am a prospective employee. What jobs are available at KDE?</b></p>	<p>Users can access the “Jobs and KDE Vacancies” page under the “Quick Links” header on the main landing page. This brings users to the “Jobs” page, which provides links to both KDE vacancies as well as the Kentucky Educator Placement Service (KEPS) landing page for finding open positions at local school districts. It also includes a link to the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet and describes it as “opportunities for employment in other state agencies.” This is misleading because applicants for KDE roles must apply through the Personnel Cabinet. Although it is likely</p>
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Website Use Case	Navigation, Ease of Use, & Accuracy
	<p>helpful in reaching more people by having job postings on both the Personnel Cabinet and KDE sites, applicants cannot apply through KDE’s website (which is not clear from the “Jobs” page).</p>
<p><b>I am a vendor. How do I find bid opportunities at KDE and the school districts?</b></p>	<p>Users looking to locate bid opportunities can click the “Bids and Proposal Opportunities” tab under the “District/School Support” header located on the main page. This page provides links relevant to districts applying for grants.</p> <p>Below the district information, instructions are given for vendors wishing to do business with KDE to register through the Finance and Administration Cabinet. A link is provided under “Vendor Self Service VSS” that redirects the user to the Commonwealth’s eProcurement site. Vendors seeking to do business with KDE may not easily find the procurement information since it is located under District/School Support tab.</p>
<p><b>I am a researcher/reporter. I would like to make a data request -- how do I do it?</b></p>	<p>To submit a Data Request, users can either click on the “Data Request &amp; Governance” tab under the “Open House” header or navigate through the “Communities” section of the main page. It is not intuitive to the user that “Open House” signifies a page for education data.</p> <p>The KDE Online Data Request Form requires all requests to both “include sponsorship from a KDE associate commissioner and be approved by the KDE Governance Committee” as well as “align to KDE’s Strategic Plan.” The Strategic Plan is hyperlinked. However, this link was broken at the time of writing.</p>
<p><b>I am in a district. I need a contact regarding secondary science curriculum. I want to speak with a human. Whom do I contact?</b></p>	<p>Users can navigate to the online directory page located under the “Communications” header on the main page, which contains a directory of school-based contacts across the state as well as the KDE organizational chart. The organizational chart only provides information on branch managers and above; it does not include contact information for staff. Users may also use the KDE staff directory search tool, which displays contact information for each KDE staff person filterable by office. There is not sufficient information, however, to find staff with particular roles or responsibilities. For example, a keyword search of science does not return the contact information for staff working on secondary science curriculum.</p>
<p><b>I am a community member. What are the educational goals and the direction for the State of KY?</b></p>	<p>The home page of the website includes both the United We Learn Vision and a mission statement for the Department. Users can find a link to KDE’s “Strategic Plan” under the “Commissioner of Education” header on the main page. This page includes a one-page PDF of KDE’s Strategic Plan. While the Strategic Plan page references United We Learn, there is no link to the United We Learn page. Users may not understand the connections and differences between the strategic plan and United We Learn.</p>

Source: Kentucky Department of Education website.

### **KDE Contacts**

A positive aspect of KDE's website is that nearly every page has a contact person for the topic area with their title, phone number, and email. This provides a level of transparency and access for families, staff, and community stakeholders. Most pages prominently cite relevant legislation which supports the team's findings related to KDE's focus on compliance.

### **Navigation**

The website appears to be primarily organized around KDE offices, divisions, and major functions, rather than stakeholder groups such as families, students, educators, and staff. While researchers would likely be familiar with Department of Education websites and educational jargon, the average parent may feel frustrated that resources for families are not centrally organized in an area of the website dedicated to families. Similarly, prospective teachers have to sift through various tabs to locate information on job openings and the certification process. KDE staff are more likely to easily navigate the website, which in many areas is organized around offices and division functions. For families, students, educators, and community members, navigating the site takes a lot of guesswork and clicking to find the information you need. Information is often buried under multiple links. There are instances of duplicate and out-of-date information. KDE's website would benefit from consolidating the existing set of tabs and quick links into a short list of key information organized by stakeholder group. For example, tabs may include:

- Educators
- Students and Families
- Districts and Schools
- Data and Reports
- News
- About KDE

### **Accessibility**

The website is difficult to navigate due to the lack of intuitive organization of the main tabs. The ability to increase text size is an important feature that is included. However, there is no translate feature built into the website, meaning users must rely on their browser to provide translation. Images do not have captions that a reading assistance device could utilize. Hyperlinks are sometimes included without context, which can be confusing and make the page feel unnecessary when it is one of the only elements featured. One such example is: "704 [Kentucky Administrative Regulation] KAR 3:285. Programs for the gifted and talented." This links to legal regulation text, rather than highlighting a list of gifted programs in the state. The abundance of regulations and associated text cited on the website is unnecessary for most users. In most cases, a simple footnote citation or brief reference would suffice.

### **Website Maintenance**

Most pages have a "published" or "updated on" date included towards the top, which is helpful for the user to know if the information is current. The team found many webpages that had been updated within the past year. However, because the website is so extensive, not all the information is routinely updated. Some superintendents in focus groups cited instances of outdated contact information and difficulty identifying the right KDE staff person to call. Various special education and technical assistance documents were found to be very dated. This is discussed in more detail in the Exceptional Children section.

In addition to this, each division is writing, editing, and maintaining their own information on the website. This contributes to inconsistencies across the board in terms of accessibility, organization, and writing style. It would be beneficial if the KDE webmaster worked with appointed individuals in each division, training them in an overarching Brand Guide developed by the Division of Communications and their graphic design staff about how to display information in the most user-friendly way. This would establish institutional knowledge, help to eliminate the siloed nature of the website and its various pages, ensure all information is up to date, and create uniformity in style. An alternative would be to have all website updates go through a webmaster.

It was noted in focus groups that the Commonwealth of Kentucky decides the platform upon which to host state websites, thus limiting KDE's options. Staff also noted the state platform may change in the coming year.

The Student Advisory Council is posted on the website with the members' full names, individual pictures, and the school they attend. While not prominently featured on the website, it is a liability and safety concern for those students. Removing some identifying information would improve safety.

Included below are a select set of well organized, user-friendly state education agency websites:

- North Carolina: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/>
- Virginia: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/>
- Ohio: <https://education.ohio.gov/>
- Tennessee: <https://www.tn.gov/education.html>

- 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. Under the direction of a designated KDE webmaster and the Division of Communications, update the visual style guide, KDE brand specifications, website style guide and best practices materials, and train relevant staff on its use.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Division of Resource Management within the Office of Finance and Operations has four branches:

- **Employee Relations** – responsible for hiring, interviewing, exit interviews, mentoring, ADA accommodations, evaluation, discipline.
- **Payroll and Benefits** – payroll and benefits management, training and development, wellness initiatives.
- **Physical Resources** – provides office space and vehicles, document archive and printing.
- **Physical Compliance and Assets Section** – oversees safety inspections at all KDE locations, emergency action plans, and inventory.

The Division oversees the resource management functions for not only KDE, but also the ATCs, KSB, KSD, and FFA. Human resource related processes used by the division are governed by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet.

### Technology Systems

All actions conducted by the two branches providing Human Resources services, Employee Relations and Payroll and Benefits, are recorded in the KHRIS (Kentucky Human Resource Information System). KHRIS is the procured software solution used by all of Kentucky state government. It is where payroll, benefits, and personnel actions are processed.

For the hiring process, KDE uses an internally developed system called the Kentucky Human Resource Application (KHRA) to manage logistics for processing job requisitions, scheduling interviews, documenting interview results, and processing employee promotions and job changes. According to Resource Management leadership, the online system provides functional workflows and allows job postings and approvals to be completed within one business day. Resource Management leaders report that other state agencies have shown interest in adopting KHRA, as it is perceived as a faster hiring system compared to what other agencies use. The system is currently being upgraded to a new version.

The Personnel Cabinet's MyPurpose system, part of the KHRIS system, is used throughout Kentucky state government as the job application system and employee training system. All KDE applicants must apply online through MyPurpose. All KDE employees are required to complete state-required trainings through MyPurpose. This is discussed in greater detail below.

Resource Management leadership did not report any major challenges with the system and felt their human resource needs are met with these systems. The team did not find any issue with these systems.

## **Hiring Practices**

### **1.7 Observation: The administrative requirements of the Personnel Cabinet make the hiring process for 18A employees difficult.**

Hiring KRS 18A merit positions requires that the job announcements be posted on both the Personnel Cabinet and KDE websites for a minimum of five days or longer, if requested by the hiring manager. The postings on each site are synchronized. KSB and KSD sometimes choose to post positions for their schools on their websites as well. Some jobs are also posted on the Kentucky Educator Placement Service (KEPS) site. The postings on each site are also synchronized. Internal and external candidates must apply for merit positions via the state's MyPurpose system career website, overseen by the Personnel Cabinet. The team did not find any issues with this process.

In focus groups, some staff noted the hiring timeline can be lengthy. Staff also noted that it is an issue that is not unique to KDE and is more of a state government issue. According to Resource Management leadership, the types of challenges or complaints about the hiring process and timeline shared by applicants and KDE staff relate to Personnel Cabinet requirements that KDE does not have control over. An example of a component of the hiring process reported by Human Resource Administrator (HRA) staff that involves the Personnel Cabinet and creates some challenges for KDE is the requirement for 18A employees to have a position description specific to the employee in the KHRIS system based on their job classification under the Personnel Cabinet. The description includes the pay schedule and experience required. According to staff, this process requires HRAs to assign job duties and percentages of time spent on those duties across approximately seven separate categories for each role. The duties must match what is suited for the job class specifications, which are sometimes not always an exact fit. This job categorization can lead to a misconstrued understanding of the position and result in several rounds of back-and-forth questions and edits between KDE and the Personnel Cabinet, slowing down the process for hiring managers seeking candidates quickly.

#### **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.**

### **1.8 Finding: KDE's hiring process does not require reference checks for candidates.**

An issue cited by superintendents was that KDE does not always require reference checks as part of the hiring process. According to the Division of Resource Management leadership and their process documentation, reference checks are left to the discretion of the hiring manager as to whether they want the Division of Resource Management to call an applicant's references. Staff report that, in many cases, the hiring manager does not request this step. In focus groups, multiple superintendents flagged that KDE often hires former district staff without calling the district to learn more about the performance of that individual. Superintendents reported, in some cases, they would have advised KDE not to hire the individual due to a variety of concerns.

#### **1.8.a Recommendation: KDE should ensure reference checks are a requirement in the hiring process for all external and internal candidates.** For candidates coming from districts, KDE should require that at least one reference should be a current or former district supervisor.

## **Staff Development**

All staff complete mandatory trainings assigned directly by KDE's Division of Resource Management. All employees have opportunities to complete trainings beyond those required, and managers can assign additional trainings for their staff as needed. The mandatory trainings include trainings required for Kentucky state government employees, trainings required by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet, and trainings required by KDE. Training topics cover a wide range of areas, including, but not limited to: Employee handbook,

ethics, benefits, mental health and wellbeing, safety, harassment, and software/systems.<sup>35</sup> The trainings are mixed-mode and include in-person instructor led “live” trainings as well as virtual PowerPoint or video-based asynchronous trainings. KDE has a staff person who works closely with the Personnel Cabinet to make sure KDE staff are completing required trainings and also tracks office-level trainings.

Staff also have opportunities to attend conferences and professional learning opportunities hosted by organizations at the national and state levels, specific to their professional area. Conference fees and travel are funded through division budgets and requests go through multiple levels of approval. Out-of-state requests must be approved by the branch manager, director, associate commissioner, and the budget director. In-state conferences are only subject to the first two levels of approval. Where possible, managers and directors encourage rotating staff who go to conferences to give more people the opportunity.

## **Personnel Policies**

### **Hybrid Work Model**

#### **1.9 Observation: Staff sentiments regarding hybrid work may impact morale if leadership does not provide clear communication and transparency regarding the Department’s policy and practices.**

The classified service general requirements outlined in 101 KAR 2:095 include a section on telecommuting and dictates that “an appointing authority may establish a telecommuting program for all or any part of the agency.”<sup>36</sup> KDE established a telecommuting policy, most recently updated in September 2023, that aligns with the state telecommuting policy and the Personnel Cabinet requirements for state employees to “permit KDE to designate employees to work at alternate locations in order to promote efficiencies.”<sup>37</sup> The KDE policy states that it does not apply to contractors. OCTE, who employs the majority of contractors for the Department, reports that some contractors do work remotely. The policy defines hybrid telecommuters to be employees who work a maximum of two days per week from their home or alternative address and three days a week from their primary workstation. Employees must sign a formal agreement between the employee, manager, and office head, that will be provided to the Division of Resource Management and be maintained in the employee’s personnel file.<sup>38</sup> The primary workstation must be at an “approved education facility.” This could include not only KDE’s primary 300 Sower Boulevard address in Frankfort, but could also be an ATC, KSB, KSD, or even a university, technical college, or other approved education facility location that does not result in an additional cost to KDE and is approved by the Associate Commissioner of that employee and the educational site.<sup>39</sup> According to Resource Management leadership, almost all staff are reporting to Frankfort for their primary workstation, with very few exceptions reporting to alternate education facilities for their primary workstation.

The hybrid telecommuter work model is reported to be the most common arrangement for KDE staff. Staff work with their managers to determine weekly schedules and prioritize being in-office for team meetings and important in-person time together. There are exceptions for staff, including those whose work requires them to routinely travel out in the field or for staff with medical circumstances. According to the policy, staff requesting to telecommute 100% are considered an exception to the policy and therefore require approval by the Associate Commissioner or office head and are considered on a case-by-case basis.<sup>40</sup> There are 19 employees approved to work in non-KDE locations.

In interviews and in the staff survey, there were mixed responses to telecommuting and hybrid work. The staff in interviews who had a more positive perception of hybrid work tended to be primarily in supervisory and leadership roles. In the staff survey, which included a mix of supervisory and non-supervisory staff,

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<sup>35</sup> “Professional Development for Staff of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).” Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Resource Management. 2022, 2023, 2024 and Recurring. [Word Document].

<sup>36</sup> “101 KAR 2:095.” Kentucky General Assembly. March 3, 2025.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/101/002/095/>

<sup>37</sup> “KDE Telecommuting Policy.” Kentucky Department of Education. September 30, 2023. [PDF].

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> “KDE Telecommuting Policy.” Kentucky Department of Education. September 30, 2023. [PDF].



many respondents provided open responses related to telecommuting and hybrid work. While some staff were grateful for the opportunity to telecommute part-time, many staff cited the lack of flexibility in telecommuting as a limitation of the Department. There were comments from staff noting the requirement to drive into the office in Frankfort three days a week hurts morale, limits the pool of job candidates, and makes recruiting high-quality staff representative of diverse geographic areas in the state difficult. The comments also indicated there is a perception among staff that telecommuting and hybrid work looks different across offices and divisions, with staff from some offices having an easier time getting approved to work remotely or work from alternative locations.

**1.9.a Recommendation: KDE should clarify and communicate the Department's telecommuting policy.**

### ***Career Progression & Compensation***

KDE compensation is set according to salary schedules that are set forth by the Personnel Cabinet.

The 18A salary schedule is reported by staff in leadership roles to be limiting for KDE offices that need to hire qualified professionals in highly technical, skilled areas (particularly in the Office of Educational Technology). KDE employees 78 contractors. In interviews, some staff in leadership and supervisory roles shared that by hiring staff as a contractor, KDE is not limited by the salary schedule requirements and can offer higher pay for highly skilled, niche, or hard-to-fill positions, to meet their needs. In focus groups with staff from the Office of Educational Technology, staff reported they often do not even know which of their colleagues are 18A versus contractor staff. In those focus groups, both regular and contractor staff believe contractors are not treated differently and function as fully integrated members of KDE teams, participating in office and Department meetings, receiving communications, and working hybrid schedules just like all regular 18A employees. Some contractors have been with KDE for decades. One difference is that contractor staff do not participate in KDE's performance evaluation process; instead, their job duties, expectations, and compensation are negotiated and outlined in their contract terms.

KDE also employs 177 MOA staff, in which KDE has a contractual agreement with other governmental organizations (typically school districts) where there is an exchange of resources or responsibilities to carry out a KDE function. KDE's MOA staff are typically employed and paid by the district on a district salary schedule while being fully or partially funded by funds transferred to the district by KDE. Some advantages of this model are that the MOA staff are not counted as regular 18A or 156 state employees, which would count as a fulltime employee (FTE) and require legislative approval. The staff in these roles also reportedly may be compensated higher on their local district salary schedule than they would if they were on the 18A or 156 salary schedule. The majority of MOA staff work under OTL and OCIS. In the case of the 22 MOA state literacy coaching specialists, the Read to Succeed Fund (established in KRS 158.806) appropriated money for the creation of the literacy coaching program, funding those roles.

When it comes to compensation, every job classification has a pay grade set by the Personnel Cabinet. According to Resource Management leadership, salaries are assigned between the entry and midpoint-level for new hires. For every new hire, Resource Management runs an in-range pay salary report with a goal of ensuring that a new external hire does not come in making more than an existing staff person. In some cases, an analysis of education and experience is conducted between the new hire and existing staff if there is a need to justify a higher salary for a new hire or adjust salaries for existing staff.

Salary inequities and the need for salary increases were frequently cited by staff in the survey and in focus groups. Staff noted the 156-salary schedule lacks annual step raises like school districts have, meaning they can work for up to four years without seeing an increase in rank. Across all salary schedules, staff noted a high level of education and certification requirements, and the inability to be paid for years of experience in lieu of a certification. Staff also noted that school districts can often pay higher salaries than KDE. Some of the superintendents who participated in focus groups perceived that KDE salaries are too low for the Department to attract and retain high-quality talent.

Figure 18 shows the salary bands for KDE Program Consultants and Program Managers compared to other state education agencies as well as the two school districts located in Frankfort. While KDE salaries are competitive with local district teacher salaries, district leadership positions have wider salary bands and



greater potential for salary growth. Similarly, analogous positions at other state education agencies often have multiple steps and/or ranks, affording staff clear opportunities for growth within their role. Neither the Education Program Consultant (13% of KDE’s non-school-based staff) nor Education Program Manager (5% of KDE’s non-school-based staff) have associated steps or ranks. The Education Program Manager position includes supervisory responsibilities.

**FIGURE 18: POSITIONS & SALARIES FOR KDE STAFF COMPARED TO DISTRICT AND OTHER SEA STAFF**

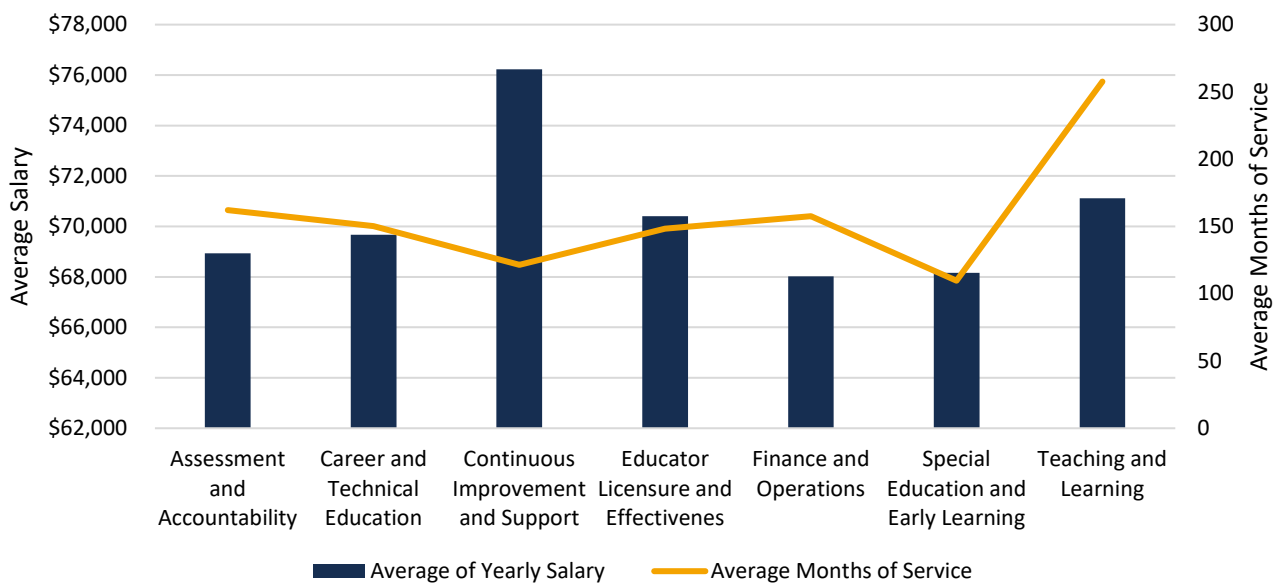
Agency	Classification Group	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Kentucky Department of Education</b>	Education Program Consultant	\$54,144	\$81,218
	Education Program Manager	\$59,557	\$89,336
<b>Alabama Department of Education</b>	Education Specialist I	\$50,254	102,665
	Education Specialist II	\$55,375	\$107,825
<b>Florida Department of Education</b>	Education Program Specialist I	\$35,217	\$76,881
	Education Program Specialist II	\$39,321	\$83,338
	Education Program Specialist III	\$44,060	\$93,416
	Education Program Specialist IV	\$49,585	\$100,797
	Educational Consultant	\$40,479	\$97,001
<b>Mississippi Department of Elementary and Secondary Education</b>	Education Program Development Specialist I	\$33,600	\$57,330
	Education Program Development Specialist II	\$40,286	\$68,739
	Education Program Development Specialist III	\$47,425	\$80,919
<b>Ohio Department of Education and Workforce</b>	Education Program Specialist	\$73,445	\$108,514
<b>Tennessee Department of Education</b>	Educational Consultant I	\$48,204	\$72,468
	Educational Consultant II	\$54,204	\$81,096
	Educational Consultant III	\$60,600	\$90,840
	Educational Consultant IV	\$67,092	\$106,980
<b>Franklin County School District</b>	Teacher (120% of 10 Month)	\$51,631	\$94,542
	Director Level Staff	\$61,841	\$122,905
	Teacher (120% of 10 Month)	\$48,906	\$80,872

Agency	Classification Group	Minimum	Maximum
Frankfort Independent School District	Director Level Staff	\$51,680	\$100,872

Source: Data retrieved from state department of education and LEA websites.

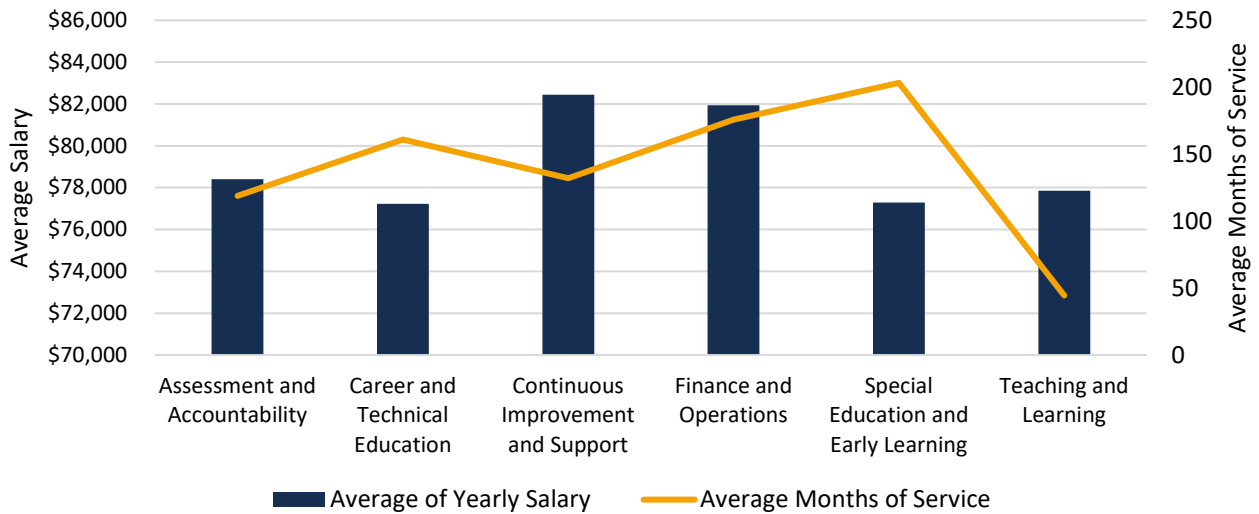
Staff also reported the perception that salaries are not equal across divisions within KDE. Figure 19 depicts the average salary of Education Program Consultant staff by office compared to their average months of service. Despite having the lowest average months of service, the Program Consultants in the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support have the highest average salary, making over 6.9% more than staff in the next highest office, the Office of Teaching and Learning, and over 11.3% more than staff in the Office of Finance and Operations. According to Resource Management leadership, staff in the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support were given raises several years ago when the office received an influx of funding, explaining why these staff earn considerably more than their peers in other offices. The discrepancy between average annual salaries across offices is lower for Program Managers, with the gap between salaries being just over 6.5% across offices (Figure 19).

FIGURE 19: AVERAGE PROGRAM CONSULTANT SALARIES BY OFFICE



Source: Data Provided by KDE, "KDE Employee Salaries 22025" and "KDE Employee Start Dates 22025."

**FIGURE 20: AVERAGE PROGRAM MANAGER SALARY BY OFFICE**



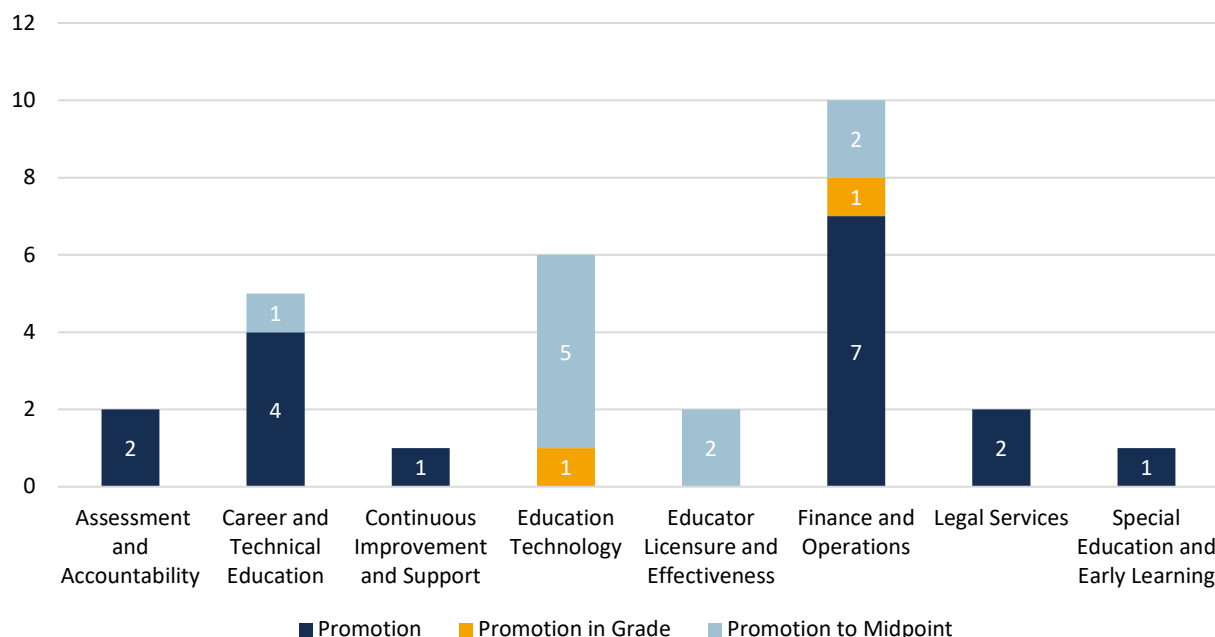
Source: Data Provided by KDE, “KDE Employee Salaries 22025” and “KDE Employee Start Dates 22025.”

According to KDE special education leadership, the 161-salary schedule for KSB and KSD classified staff is a barrier for recruitment. The perception is that candidates can often make higher salaries working for districts than they can working for the state operated schools. Similarly, the team heard that for ATCs who need to hire instructional staff with specific credentials, experience, and expertise in a professional field, the 156-salary schedule can be limiting and noncompetitive with what those professionals can make in the private sector. This creates challenges for ATCs to recruit instructional staff for some programs, including health sciences and select trades. Issues related to hiring and retaining talent for ATCs along with recommendations to help rectify these issues are discussed in greater detail in the Area Technology Centers section.

Regarding promotions, KDE staff reported they had adequate opportunities to advance in their career at the Department. As shown in Figure 21, since 2022, 29 (18A and 156) KDE staff have received promotions. Of those promotions, 17 were promotions in title, two were promotions in grade, and ten were promotions to the midpoint of the salary schedule. Unlike other SEAs, KDE does not have grades or ranks for its most common position, Education Program Consultant.<sup>41</sup> The next position up from Program Consultant is Program Manager; of the 29 promotions for KDE-based staff since 2022, five were for staff moving from Program Consultant to Program Manager.

<sup>41</sup> “Commonwealth of Kentucky Job Class Specification – Education Program Manager.” Kentucky Personnel Cabinet. April 1, 2024. [PDF].

**FIGURE 21: PROMOTIONS BY OFFICE 2022-2025**



Source: Data provided by KDE, “02162022 to 02162025 KDE PROMO TITLE CHANGES.” Data reflects all promotions from February 16, 2022 to February 16, 2025.

### Performance Management

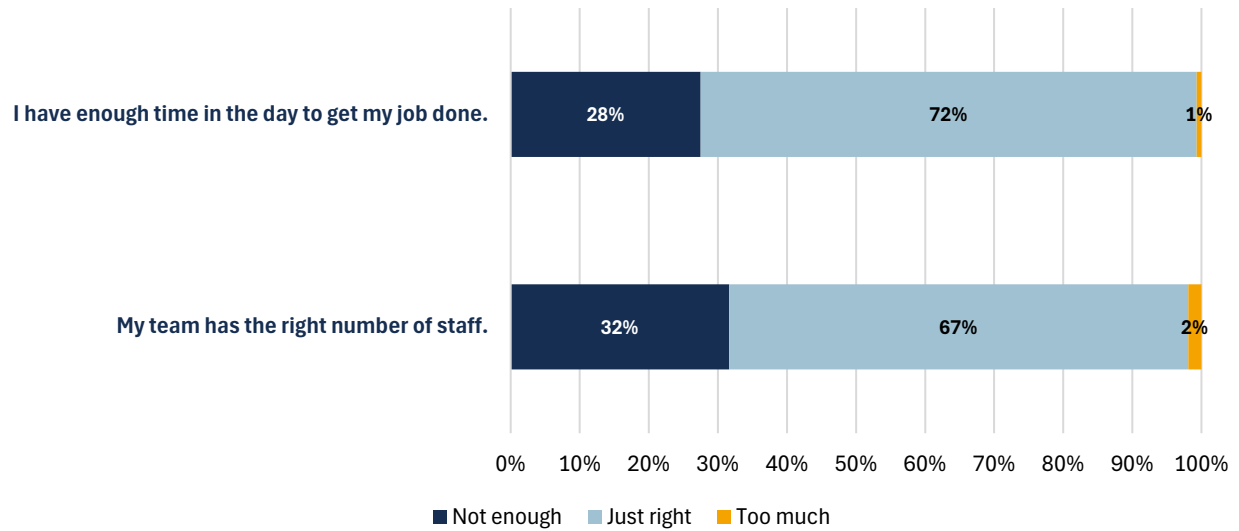
KDE migrated from a paper performance management process to the state Personnel Cabinet’s, MyPurpose system in 2018. The typical process for 18A staff is to work with their managers to complete a performance plan aligned to their job duties at the beginning of the year in January. It is also during this time that managers perform their final review and score their staff’s prior year performance. If an employee is not meeting the targets set in their performance plan, they are put on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), which can be started at any time. Resource Management leadership report that managers with staff who are not meeting expectations are good at reaching out to Resource Management quickly for support. Managers also conduct two mid-year check-ins with staff. All of these activities and details related to the performance plan and evaluation are input into the MyPurpose system.<sup>42</sup> The evaluation process for classified staff at state schools is different and is conducted at the discretion of the immediate supervisor. The audit team found no concerns with the current performance management process.

### Staff Perceptions of Workload, Resources, & Support

The figures in this section represent perceptions by KDE staff who participated in an all-staff survey conducted by the audit team related to workload, staff levels, role clarity, resources and support.

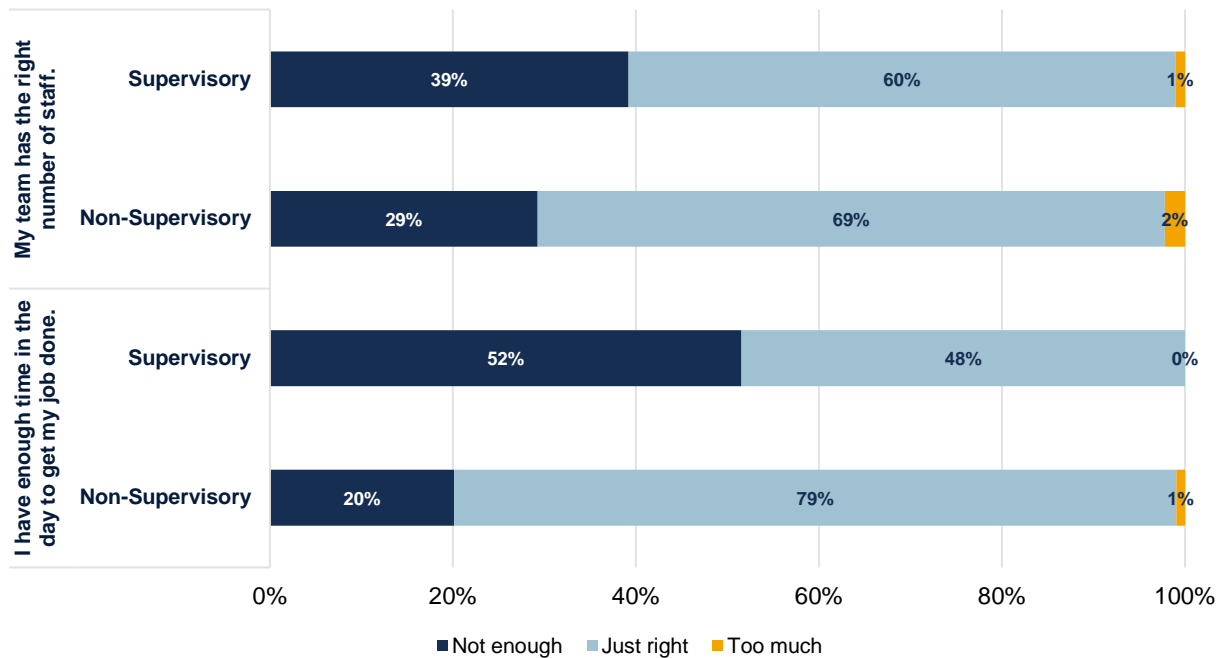
<sup>42</sup> “Guide to Performance Management Powered Through: MyPurpose.” Kentucky Personnel Cabinet. December 11, 2023. [PDF].

**FIGURE 22: WORKLOAD & WORKFORCE AT KDE**



Source: Data from the KDE Staff Survey. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

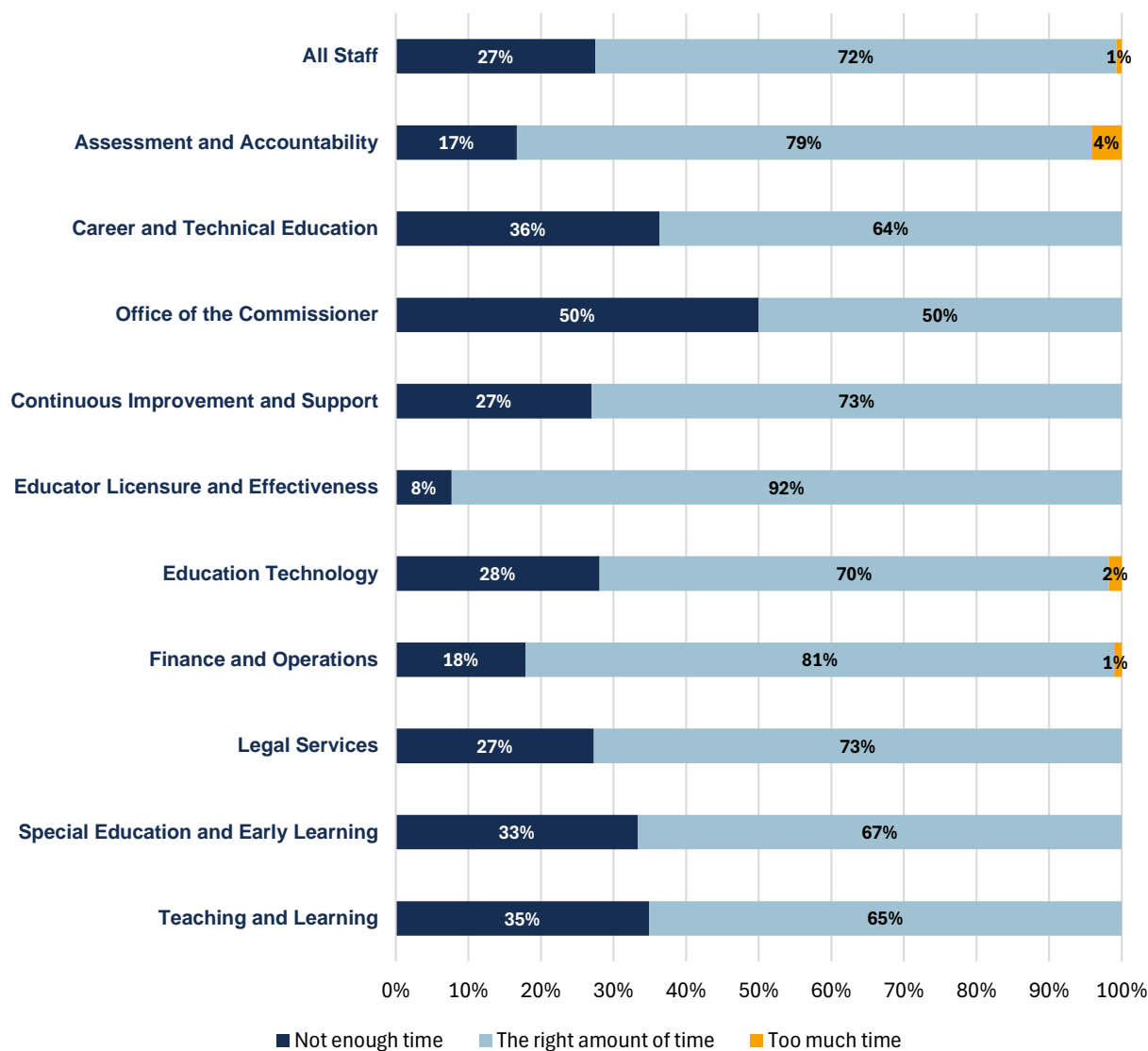
**FIGURE 23: WORKLOAD & WORKFORCE AT KDE BY SUPERVISORY STATUS**



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

According to survey results data displayed in Figure 22, the majority of KDE staff respondents believed they have enough time in the day to get their job done and that their team is equipped with the correct number of staff. Over a quarter of respondents felt that they do not have enough time to get their job done and just under a third felt that their team is understaffed. Very few staff members believed that they have too much time or that their team has too many personnel. When this data is broken down by supervisory status in Figure 23, it is notable that supervisors perceived they do not have enough staff on their team and do not have enough time in the day to get their job done at higher rates, as compared to non-supervisory staff.

FIGURE 24: WORKLOAD AT KDE BY OFFICE



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

As displayed in Figure 24, when broken out by office, most offices felt that they have the right amount of time to get their job done. Within the Office of the Commissioner, half of staff respondents felt that they do not have enough time to do their job. Around a third of staff members in the Offices of Career and Technical Education, Teaching and Learning, and Special Education and Early Learning also felt that they do not have enough time to get their job done. Over 90% of individuals in the Office of Licensure and Effectiveness felt their workload is right.

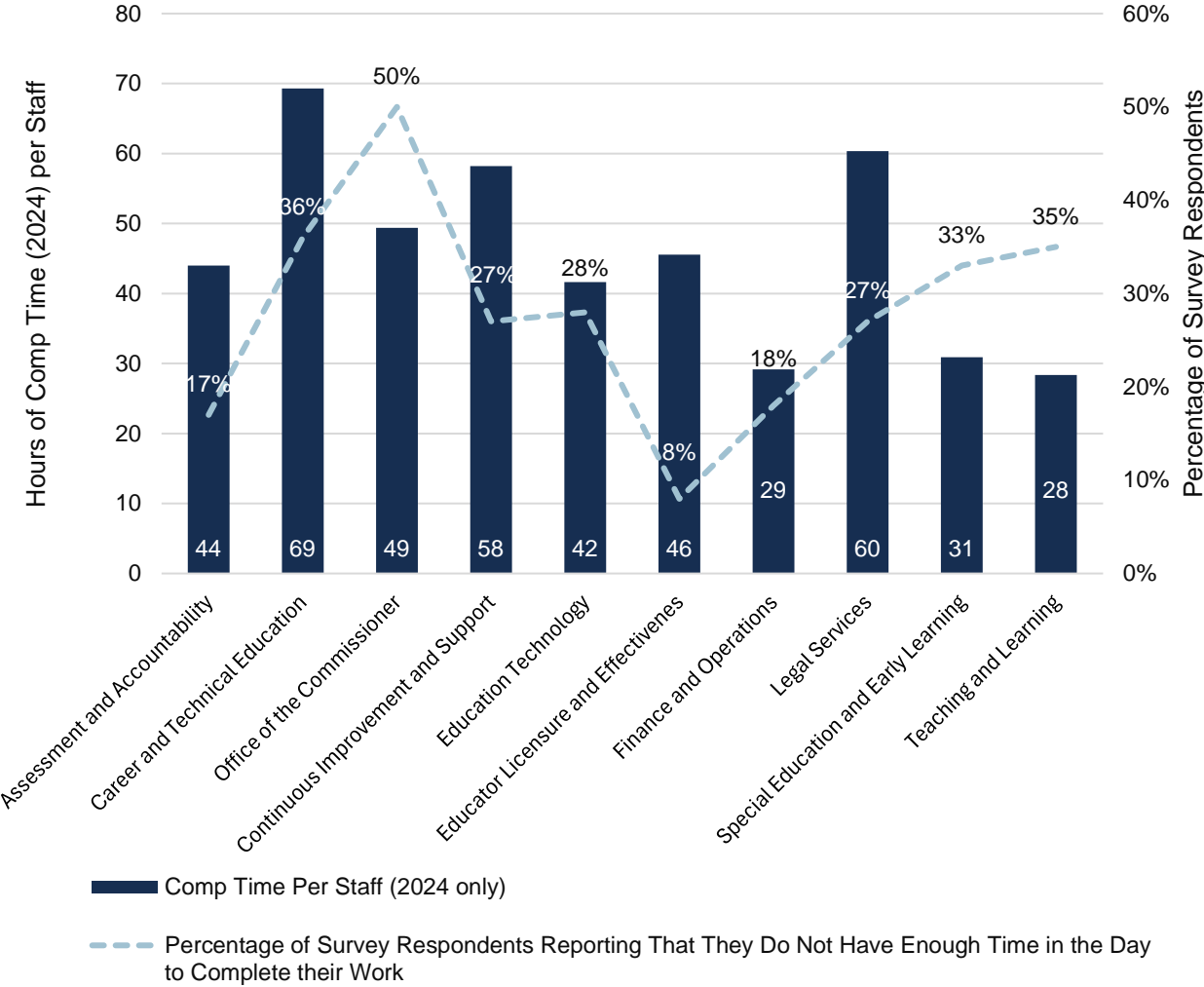
KDE employees who work over 40 hours a week are entitled to either compensatory time leave or paid overtime. Due to budget constraints, KDE’s current compensatory time policy asks for employees to only work over 40 hours a week when necessary to “prevent or eliminate public or life safety situations, or to meet critical deadlines to maintain critical operations.”<sup>43</sup> Employees must seek prior approval from their

<sup>43</sup> “Comp Time Policy.” February 27, 2025. [PDF]

supervisor as well as the Division of Resource Management before working over the required 37.5 hours a week.

The auditing team analyzed the amount of compensatory time per staff member by office (excluding ATC, KSD, and KSB staff) compared to the percentage of staff reporting that they do not have enough time in the day to get their job done (Figure 25). Compensatory time practices appear to vary by office.

**FIGURE 25: COMPENSATORY TIME PER STAFF (2024) COMPARED TO THE PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTING INSUFFICIENT TIME TO COMPLETE THEIR JOB (EXCLUDING ATCs, KSB, AND KSD)**

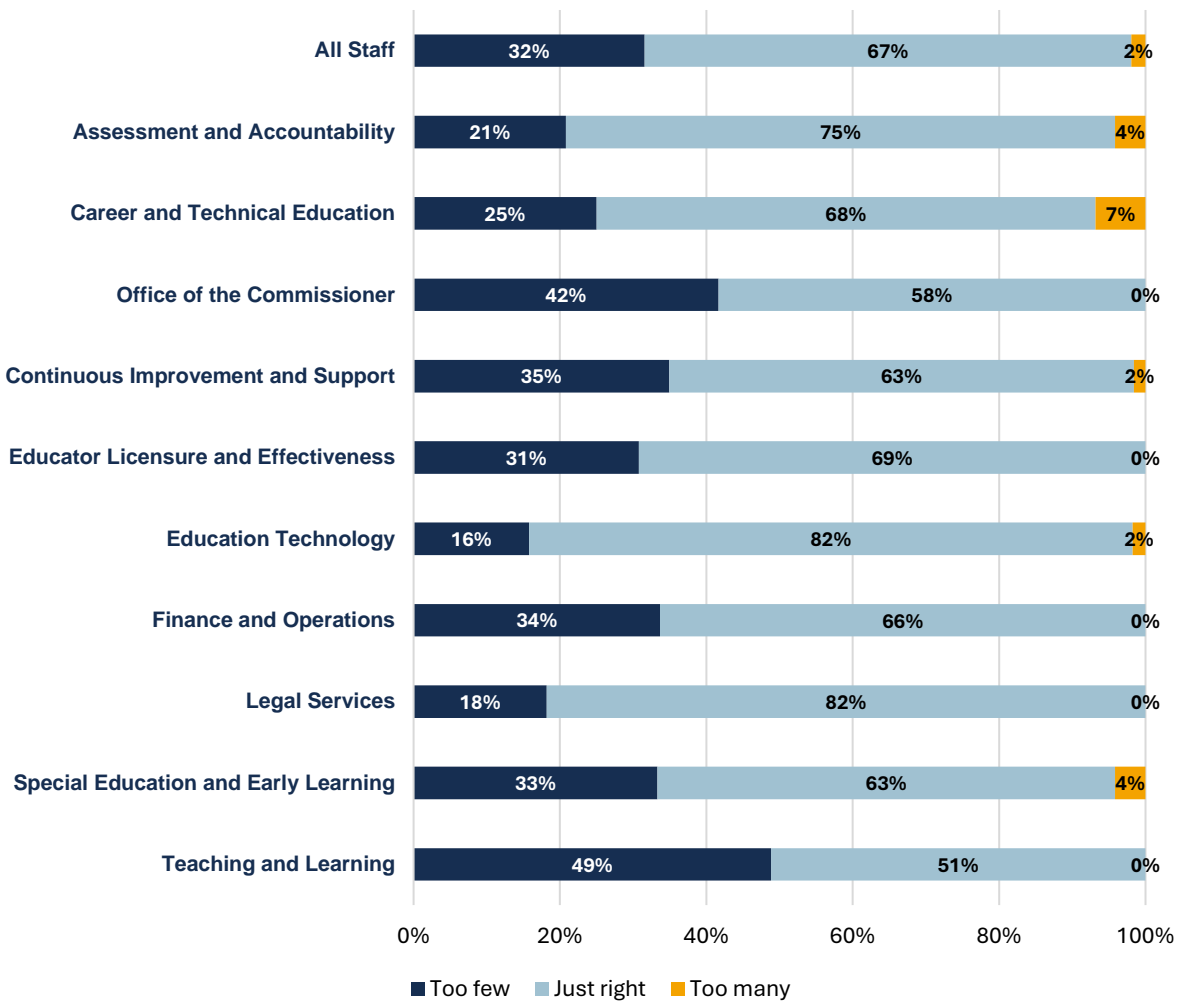


Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, “Comp Time Accrued Report 2-16-2022 through 2-15-2025” and “15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24-Staffing Levels-FTE’s & Vacancies by Dept.” These totals exclude ATC, KSB, and KSD staff.

While survey respondents in the Offices of Special Education and Early Learning and Teaching and Learning were among those most likely to report not having enough time in the day to complete their job and the most likely to report that their team has too few staff, they did not take as much compensatory time as staff in the offices of Career and Technical Education or Legal Services.



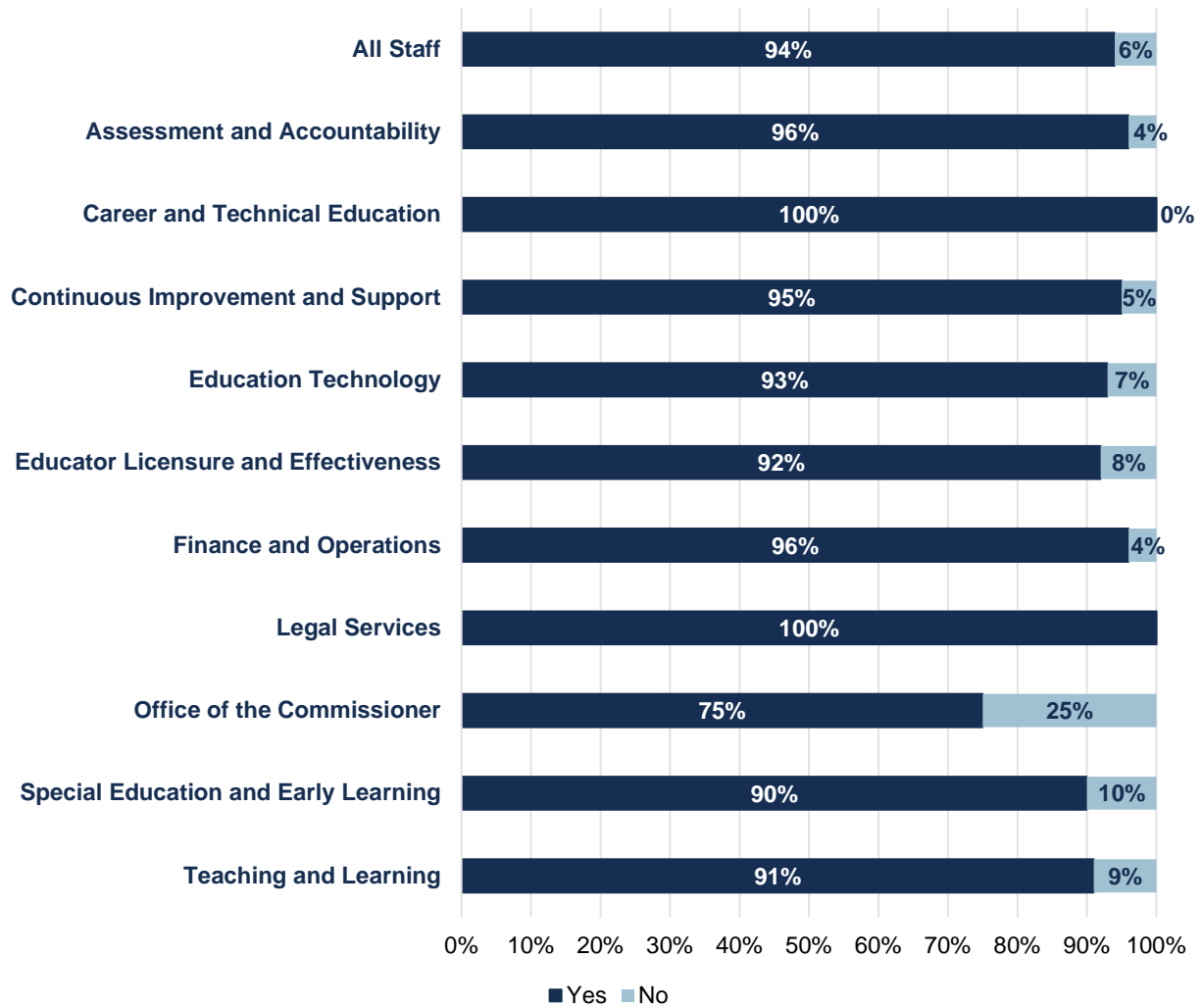
**FIGURE 26: KDE TEAM STAFFING LEVEL PERCEPTIONS**



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

As shown in Figure 26, about two thirds of KDE staff believed their team has the right number of staff. Staff in the Offices of Legal Services and Education Technology agreed their team has the right number of staff at higher rates than all staff, while those in the Offices of Teaching and Learning and the Commissioner reported feeling their team had too few staff at higher rates than the other offices. When compared to workload, 36% of staff respondents in the Office of Career and Technical Education reported they did not have enough time to get their work done (Figure 24), but 7% (higher rate than any other office) reported their team has too many people.

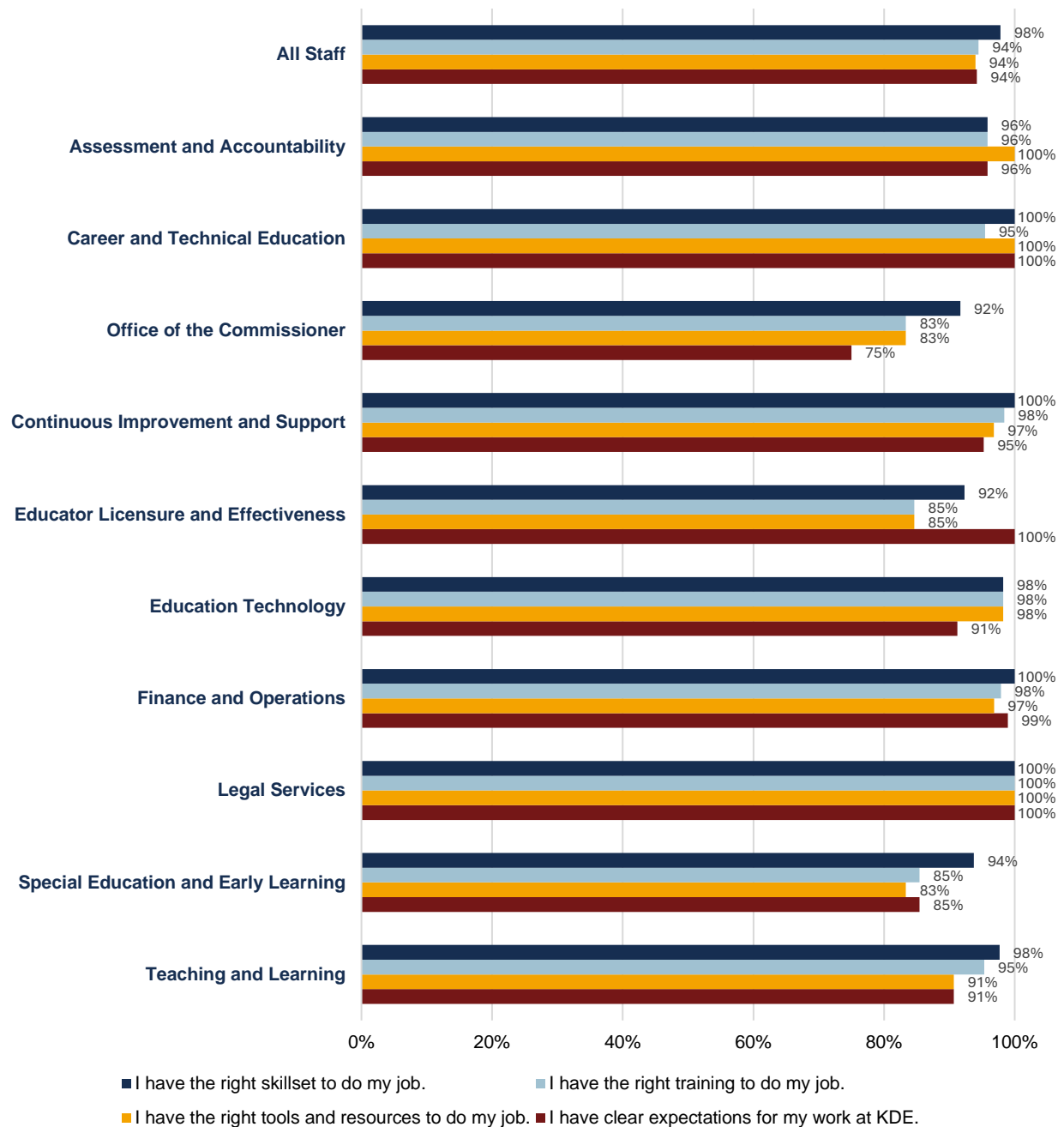
FIGURE 27: PERCEPTIONS OF CLEARLY DEFINED ROLE AT KDE BY OFFICE



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

As shown in Figure 27, most KDE staff respondents agreed that their role at KDE is clearly defined. All staff who responded to the survey in the Offices of Legal Services and Career and Technical Education agreed with this statement. The only office with less than 90% agreement was the Office of the Commissioner, where a quarter of staff did not feel that their role is clearly defined.

FIGURE 28: KDE STAFF ROLE CLARITY & ENABLEMENT



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

As shown in Figure 28, as a whole, KDE staff respondents believed they had clear expectations around their work and that they had the right skills, resources, and training to do their job. Almost all KDE staff respondents believed they had the skillset to do their job and this agreement was above 90% across all offices. While almost all staff respondents agreed they had the right training and resources to do their job, those in the Offices of Special Education and Early Learning and Licensure and Effectiveness had lower rates of agreement with those statements as compared to other offices.

## **Inventory Management**

KRS 45.313, last amended in 1997, requires a current inventory of equipment having an original cost of \$500 or more. Kentucky Administrative Regulations reinforces this requirement for the ATCs in 780 KAR 7:060 and for CTE programs in general in 705 KAR 4:231.

### **1.10 Observation: KDE may be dedicating too much time and effort to asset tagging and related management functions.**

According to law and regulation, all equipment with an original purchase price of \$500 or more must be tracked and inventoried. The team observed numerous items bearing inventory tags such as office chairs, small tables, and electronic items that did not appear to have an original price of \$500 or more. KDE staff also reported that all technology equipment items are asset tagged and inventoried, even those with an original cost of less than \$500.

KDE provided a file of active inventory for examination upon request. This file contained 26,019 individual entries.<sup>44</sup> Of these, 7,891 (30.3%) indicated an original value of less than \$500, 10,558 (40.6%) indicated an acquisition date before January 1, 2010, and 4,620 (17.8%) were less than \$500 and acquired before 2010. A brief scan through these entries yields examples of assets still on the books that are unlikely to be serviceable, useful or even present.

- 3M overhead projector, acquired 10/1/1994 for \$305.00, Webster Co. health sciences
- Sears refrigerator, acquired 7/1/1976 for \$295.00, Caldwell Co. health sciences
- Hewlett-Packard printer, acquired 2/28/2002 for \$299.00, Paducah ATC auto body
- Workstation, 21 of them acquired 1/16/2002 for \$285.48 each, Mayfield ATC business technology

KDE has a four-person Physical Compliance and Assets section within an eight-person Physical Resource Branch.<sup>45</sup> This group also manages asset tagging and inventory at the Area Technology Centers, although the administrative specialists at the ATCs do the physical work of tagging and inventory.

### **Risks**

Risks around this process are minor but potentially impactful, nonetheless. Mitigating these provides potential for increased efficiency and mission focus of Department resources. An asset tag and periodic inventory itself is not likely to stop the theft or loss of equipment. Asset tagging is mainly to quantify assets for Commonwealth financial statements and to reduce confusion where personal, Commonwealth-owned, and equipment leased or owned by other entities are present in the same physical space. Tagging also helps with compliance with state and federal capital asset accounting rules.

The team noted in interviews that three KDE staff members in the Physical Resource Branch devote a significant percentage of their time and effort toward this process. Administrative specialists at the ATCs also reported that this process, though not necessarily overburdening, comes at a time of year when many other important processes are taking place, causing stress and frustration. If KDE is tagging and tracking too much, these may be hours lost for little benefit.

#### **1.10.a Recommendation: KDE should use technological solutions to perform automated IT equipment inventory functions and disabling of devices that may be lost or stolen.**

Today's network management systems have capabilities to track computers and other devices and will indicate when they have not attached to the network in a specified time window. This could reduce the need for a local IT equipment asset tagging process. Also, devices can be rendered inoperable if they are lost or stolen, depending on system capabilities.

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<sup>44</sup> "FY15 Education Inventory.xlsx." April 14, 2025. [Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet].

<sup>45</sup> "15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts;" "24-Staffing Levels-FTE's & Vacancies by Dept." January 2024. [Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet].

- 1.10.b **Recommendation:** KDE should perform a comprehensive review of older items and clean up the inventory files by removing outdated information or data.

Numerous examples were found of items that are unlikely to be serviceable, useful, or even still present at KDE properties. This issue is very acute at the Area Technology Centers.

## FISCAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

KDE staff and stakeholders reported several potential areas for improvement in the Department's fiscal operations. Fiscal staff sometimes defended these practices at times based on their perception that current practice evolved from a valid need for internal controls and statutory compliance. Below are several themed areas presenting opportunities for cost/time savings, increased effectiveness, or risk reduction.

### Workflow

#### 1.11 **Observation:** KDE's fiscal workflow can improve.

Fiscal workflow was frequently cited as an area of frustration by internal KDE stakeholders. These concerns generally stem from lack of visibility of progress through the process and turnaround time, but others were mentioned, as well. Many suggestions were offered for ways to improve fiscal workflow processes.

- 1.11.a **Recommendation:** KDE should conduct a needs analysis and detailed workflow documentation of budgets, expenditure approvals, and disbursements. This should include consulting internal KDE stakeholders who can articulate their issues and suggest solutions for KDE to evaluate and implement.
- 1.11.b **Recommendation:** KDE should create a purchase request and payment workflow diagram.
- 1.11.c **Recommendation:** KDE should compare the Department's needs for budgeting and accounting-system capabilities with the Kentucky Budgeting System (KBUD) and the Management Administrative & Reporting System (eMARS). For unmet KDE needs, the Department should create and execute an implementation plan or explore enhancements to the systems as applicable.

### Procurement

Procurement came up frequently as a challenge among KDE staff. Therefore, the KDE internal process and staff concerns to uncover potential improvements was an area of particular focus.

- 1.12 **Observation:** KDE purchasing processes present challenges for KDE internal staff, Area Technology Centers (ATCs), the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD), and the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB), especially those processes related to the Master Agreement and technology approvals. This is especially the case at KDE-run schools, which need to operate as schools, not state agencies. These challenges result in lost purchasing power and other adverse impacts at the ATCs.

KDE follows the Commonwealth procurement law as a state agency. The Finance and Administration Cabinet Office of Procurement Services promulgates The Commonwealth of Kentucky Procurement Manual.

Routine office supply orders can be turned around in three days. Bids can take longer, depending on the complexity of the scope of work and responses from bidders. KDE staff report the layer of IT approvals, if necessary, typically adds two weeks to a month to the purchase time.

ATCs, KSB, KSD, and the FFA Camp are all subject to Commonwealth procurement law as part of KDE. The ATCs report the requirement to use the Master Agreement is an impediment to school operations in several ways:

- Items and services are often available less expensively or at higher quality locally
- Master Agreement vendors may not be local to the schools, causing shopping or delivery challenges
- Enforcement of the Master Agreement precludes local vendors from providing deeply discounted items or items at cost as a way of supporting the school
- The Master Agreement sometimes prevents schools from purchasing locally, a method of creating goodwill among trade CTE advisory groups, future employers, and internship providers

Put simply, the Master Agreement contravenes the financial limitations and needs of Kentucky's ATCs by favoring big-box corporations over local businesses—which are often cheaper and could serve as a great contact for ATCs as a future employer of ATC graduates.

The Procurement Manual, in Section 2.5.3 Master Agreements, states:

The only exception to use of the SWMA is when the aggregate dollar amount of the total agency purchase is less than \$1,000 (or the amount stipulated in the SWMA). In this instance, agencies may utilize local suppliers to acquire the goods or services required. Purchases will not be parceled, split, divided, or scheduled over a period of time in such a way as to subvert the use of the SWMA.<sup>46</sup>

This would potentially work for ATCs in some individual cases, but “the agency” is KDE which includes KDE plus the 50 ATCs, KSB, KSD, and the FFA camp.

The following information is from the KDE Procurement Assistance page, designed to support schools. This shows that KDE understands that schools need a more flexible framework to operate efficiently and effectively.

There are two methods of procurement for school districts: Bid Law and Kentucky Model Procurement Code (KMPC). As noted on KDE's website:

- **Bid Law, KRS 424.360** [sic]  
Bid Law requires less record keeping but also has little flexibility.
- **KMPC, KRS 45A.345-360**  
Model Procurement requires more written documentation but also provides more procurement options.

The Kentucky Department of Education, Division of District Support encourages school districts to use the Model Procurement Code because it has a highly flexible framework and establishes a set of ethical standards.<sup>47</sup>

The bid law reference was erroneously posted on the KDE Procurement Assistance website as KRS 424.360 but should be KRS 424.260.

ATC procurement requests go from the school to KDE CTE leadership, information technology (IT, if required), then the KDE procurement section. Deviation from the process results in a corrective action plan. After three corrective action plans the ATC is cut off from purchasing rights.

### **Risks**

- **Overpaying for goods and services at the ATCs.** The ATCs gave numerous examples where they could have saved money compared to the Master Agreement. Some of these include:
  - **Lumber.** Some of the ATCs have access to local timber mills that will provide wood at cost.

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<sup>46</sup> “Commonwealth of Kentucky Procurement Manual.” Commonwealth of Kentucky, Finance and Administration Cabinet. March 11, 2024.

<https://finance.ky.gov/eProcurement/ResourcesSupport/Kentucky%20Procurement%20Manual.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> “Procurement assistance.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 13, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/Proasst/Pages/default.aspx>

- **Compressed gases.** The Master Agreement required vendor charges demurrage (tank rental), which costs the schools more for infrequently used gases. It is to the Commonwealth's advantage for the ATCs to have a vendor that sells gases using ATC-owned tanks or no-charge demurrage, as ATCs indicated some local vendors are willing to do for the school.
- **Automotive tools and parts.** ATCs have indicated that they could leverage relationships with local shops and dealerships to get deeply discounted tools and parts. The Master-Agreement-required auto parts vendor is a national chain without convenient locations in all parts of the Commonwealth and no relationship with the ATCs as a local future employer of ATC program completers.
- **Wasted time on routine IT approvals.** This appears on both the requestor side and the IT side of the procurement. The requestor must wait an additional two to five weeks for procurement. This amount of lead time indicates either a lack of urgency on the IT approver's behalf or lack of resources to staff the approval function.

**1.12.a Recommendation: KDE should streamline IT procurement approvals.**

Assess what the common problems are and limit approvals to those items. Set a short maximum approval window for IT approvals that is more respectful of the requestor's and procurement officer's time.

**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.**

The 50 ATCs, KSD, and KSB are schools and need the proper flexibility to operate as such. They also create operational overhead at KDE to support procurements and other related transactions. Allowing the 52 schools under KDE's aegis to procure goods and services under the Kentucky Model Procurement Code (KMPC) without KDE oversight could reduce administrative overhead at KDE, allowing resources to be better targeted toward KDE's strategic objectives while enabling the flexibility the schools need. For the ATCs this could be accomplished by allowing them to purchase under their host district's procurement processes and contracts. This will likely require statutory or regulatory changes.

Additional discussion on the topic of ATCs, KSB, and KSD can be found in the Area Technology Centers section and the Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf section.

## **Grants Management**

Grants management and associated monitoring is distributed throughout KDE based on the funding source or program area. This is typical of what we see nationwide among state departments of education.

- Most federal grants are managed and monitored by the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support.
- The Office of Special Education and Early Learning manages IDEA grants.
- The Office of Career and Technical Education manages Perkins funds. State grants are managed and monitored within the Office of Finance and Operations.
- The Division of School and Community Nutrition within the Office of Finance and Operations manages U.S. Department of Agriculture funding to support student nutrition programs.

## **TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS**

KDE's technology functions are highly regarded by the district superintendents. Numerous systems and technology resources are provided statewide and KDE facilitates collaboration between the districts. There are some recommendations to improve practices, along with some to preserve or further the good progress already made.

Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) standards enable commonwealth and consistently among Kentucky's public school districts. KETS operates under a six-year technology plan, called the KETS Master Plan. This plan is a high-profile effort, requiring approval by the Kentucky Board of Education and the



Legislative Research Commission.<sup>48</sup> KDE chronicles its education technology efforts from 1992 to present in its Master Plan, reporting that “Kentucky K-12 has been and continues to be the pioneer and national leader in most aspects of education technology since 1992.”<sup>49</sup>

The 2024-2030 Master Plan is a mature plan with many “continue to do” activities as the key areas of emphasis.<sup>50</sup> To supplement this, KDE was able to prioritize some limited-term federal pandemic relief funds to provide online registration capabilities, improve cybersecurity, and online high school transcripts.

Kentucky does provide some state funding for technology to districts. This KETS funding is contingent on a district local match and is not equalized between districts of varying degrees or comparative property wealth. This fund is regulated via 750 KAR 2:010 (Education Technology Funding Program guidelines). KDE staff reported that districts are able to meet their match requirements within the statutory three-year window so they do not lose potential state funding.

### **Program Continuity**

KDE equips school districts statewide with technology systems and services that most other state departments of education do not provide. KDE provides state funding and support for these systems. Kentucky’s educational technology effort is well organized and planned under the umbrella of KETS. Some of the common technological functions and capabilities provided to public schools across the Commonwealth are:

- Student information system (Infinite Campus)
- Financial system (Enterprise ERP, formerly MUNIS)
- Bandwidth for every district
- Regional system engineer support
- Facilitation of district technology leader collaboration, instructional technology leadership, and a Student Technology Leadership Program
- Cybersecurity and internet safety functions
- Learning management system
- Email and other common applications

Several interviewed attributed much of the KETS continued success to program leadership, including certain leaders by name. Program continuity depends on process documentation, succession planning and leader training efforts.

### **Modernizing Internal KDE Tech Capabilities**

Despite leadership at the state level in providing school technologies, there are still some areas within KDE that should be considered for modernization. These may not necessarily be areas of responsibility owned by the KDE information technology group, but KDE IT is able to help other program areas in their process improvement and modernization.

- 1.13 Observation:** KDE has several paper-based, email-based, and spreadsheet-based processes, some of which involve the disbursement of billions of dollars in Commonwealth funds. Some of these are in the process of automation but are not yet complete, such as the third-party vendor creation of a system to support disbursement of SEEK funds. Others are travel reimbursement (paper/email based), purchase requests (email based), and internal budget tracking (spreadsheet based).

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<sup>48</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 156.670.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024. <https://law.justia.com/codes/kentucky/chapter-156/section-156-670/>

<sup>49</sup> “2024-2030 KETS master plan, appendix G.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 13, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/Pages/KETS-2024-2030-Master-Plan-Appendix-G.aspx>

<sup>50</sup> “KETS master plan for education technology: 2024-2030.” Kentucky Department of Education. August 2023. [https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Documents/KETS%20Master%20Plan%202024-2030%20-%20Final\\_smaller%20version.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Documents/KETS%20Master%20Plan%202024-2030%20-%20Final_smaller%20version.pdf)

1.13.a **Recommendation:** KDE should create or purchase IT systems to move away from using spreadsheet software for major processes.

1.14 **Observation:** Student data tracking audit information comes in from the 171 districts in various paper and electronic formats and is saved on a shared drive. The group responsible for student data tracking audits has three people to monitor the 171 audits for submission and content.

KDE staff reports the Kentucky Department for Library and Archives retention schedules require backup documentation for student data tracking audits to be in paper format before being sent to the archives.

### *Risks*

**Inefficiency and inaccuracy of reports.** Using paper, email, spreadsheets, or simple shared drives presents the risk that excess time is spent looking for and compiling information and that important information is missing or inaccurate. For transactional systems or systems of record, such methods also do not typically include a change log or audit trail, making information susceptible to unauthorized or unintentional changes to formulae or data.

**Failure to detect fraud, waste or abuse or process flaws during audits.** Shared drives generally have only rudimentary search capabilities, requiring each document to be opened and analyzed individually. Given the high caseload of KDE staff, it is only practical to look for narrowly targeted areas of risk or common audit findings.

1.14.a **Recommendation:** KDE should implement Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) document and/or audit management systems. Purpose-built auditing and document management software have specific functions and even artificial intelligence to automate some of the more routine functions.

1.14.b **Recommendation:** KDE should review the document retention schedule with the Kentucky Department for Library and Archives. Where it is not obvious, jointly understand the need and basis for document retention, including the format (paper, electronic, etc.) requirements. Where possible, update the retention schedule, and even statute or regulation as needed.

## DISTRICT SUPPORTS

### *Health*

The School Health Branch of KDE is relatively new as an outgrowth of the pandemic. This team supports districts with collaboration among counties as to what is working and supports districts in the school health area where needed. This group does some monitoring but is mainly working to establish networks between KDE and the districts at this time.

### *Facilities*

1.15 **Observation:** In the district superintendent focus groups and survey, KDE's District Facilities Branch (DFB) was the most frequently cited KDE branch as needing improvement.

In focus groups and in the survey, the two specific areas of concern raised by superintendents included DFBs inability to communicate and provide accurate information in a timely manner. While there were different circumstances that superintendents referenced, the overwhelming consensus is that the office needs to become more efficient and effective to support the needs of school districts throughout Kentucky.

Great communication is essential to districts requesting technical assistance from DFB. This is an area where superintendent focus groups reported that much improvement is needed. Some districts reported prompt and professional communication but also said that it depends on which staff member you get. However, many reported that slow response time, measured in weeks, is the norm. There is a perception that remote work may be a factor – facilities staff generally do not answer the phone. District staff have to

email for a callback, which can take a few days. Some responses to district questions indicate a lack of urgency or respect for the districts' needs and timelines. Superintendents have the impression that DFB and KDE Finance do not collaborate well. Also, at times, superintendents need to go up the organizational chart to get someone from Facilities to respond.

Accuracy of information received is another frequent concern of the districts which are dependent on KDE for technical assistance in facilities matters. Districts report quality of information is inconsistent among DFB staff. Getting helpful, accurate and timely answers depends on finding the right person. Some of the architects are good while others are not as good; many have limited experience with the needs of schools and are quick to disapprove other than routine requests. Some superintendents perceive that interpretations of statutes and regulations are based on personal interpretation or preference, while other staff simply read the regulation over the phone as technical assistance. Last-minute corrections or retractions of information provided sometimes occur, placing districts in a tough spot with local approvals and processes. Some of the inefficiencies cause delays in the construction and renovation process, which in turn cost districts additional money.

- 1.15.a **Recommendation:** KDE should assess district needs in the DFB's scope of responsibility and create and execute a comprehensive improvement plan for the branch.

### *Target Audience*

- 1.16 **Observation:** KDE facilities information resources are geared toward facility design and construction professionals rather than school district leaders.

Major capital school facility construction and major renovation is something that many districts encounter very infrequently unless it is a large or fast-growing district. This area also demands a high level of technical knowledge. Given these factors, the school facilities function of KDE absolutely must be staffed with helpful, patient experts and must provide incredibly easy-to-understand resources for self-service learning and reference for school boards, superintendents, and their contractors.

- 1.16.a **Recommendation:** KDE should create and post an accessible guide with funding and construction flow charts for superintendents and school boards to use in local planning. If done successfully, it should reduce emails and calls from districts and integrate many of the frequently asked questions that districts have.

- 1.16.b **Recommendation:** KDE should implement annual training for new district leaders in facilities and finance management and include superintendents and board members. Despite the qualifications of district staff, they are responsible for those roles and deserve great training.

### *Web Resources*

- 1.17 **Finding:** DFB website resources are not user-friendly for school district leadership.

DFB provides a wealth of resources via their website.<sup>51</sup> However, the information is not easy to navigate, especially for people new to school facilities. It appears to be designed for construction professionals and experienced school facilities professionals. There are several manuals and online training videos posted, but some of these are not easily searchable for guidance. One manual was a scanned printout of a 1995 document, the Facility Planning and Construction Criteria<sup>52</sup> guide, which is not searchable as a PDF. The undated Guidelines of Best Practices for School Building Projects: A Companion to 702 KAR 4:160 provides information intended to clarify a number of statutory requirements but still is not geared for a school district

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<sup>51</sup> "School facilities." Kentucky Department of Education. January 24, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> "702 KAR 4:170; Facility programming and construction criteria." Kentucky Department of Education Division of Facilities Management. March 2, 1995.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Documents/Facility%20Programming%20and%20Construction%20Criteria%20Planning%20Guide%203%206%2015.pdf>

audience. After 28 pages of introduction and glossary, there is some guidance on the applicable processes, but these refer to many other regulations and resources with no links or guidance on where to find them. One instruction regarding site selection directs, “At that time the district shall send a letter to KDE requesting a site visit.”<sup>53</sup> On its face, this may seem simple and obvious, but a district unfamiliar with the process would understandably have several questions such as:

- Who can sign the letter? Does it have to be the Board or Superintendent, or can it be the Facilities leader?
- Who is the letter sent to? Commissioner? Associate Commissioner? Someone else?
- Can the letter be emailed, or must it be U.S. Mail?
- What information is required to be in the letter?

Districts rely on these resources and DFB for information regarding projects in progress as well as many pre-decision research questions. They need to determine whether the process and chances of getting a project funded are worth the effort. The website does not have resources designed for superintendents, school board members, new finance officers or new school facilities leaders. To get questions answered, school district leaders must either engage architects or construction firms (usually at a cost) or contact DFB via phone or email.

Videos posted to the site—with emphasis on those with titles implying a more basic level audience—appeared to require at least an intermediate knowledge of school facilities. School district staff in the facilities and finance areas are not always experts at first, especially in small districts where leaders wear many hats.

- 1.17.a Recommendation:** KDE should review DFB website navigation and resources for ease of use, accessibility, searchability, and audience. The site should be useful and easily navigable by not only design and construction professionals, but also district staff new to the facilities process.

### *Facilities Funding*

**1.18 Observation:** The facility funding formula is 35 years old and may lead to inequitable facilities conditions statewide.

Enrollment projections impact which districts’ projects receive state support. Some superintendents expressed frustration with KDE enrollment projections, reporting that projections are frequently off in the early grades and that KDE is not open to discussion on local data sources on enrollment trends when districts plan for facilities changes. The KDE data team makes projections using several sources, including the University of Louisville’s forty-year population study as the primary source. Other information from state economists for trends in birth rates, employment, and interstate and intrastate migration also informs the projection process. District data may be used but must be justified and may not necessarily be accepted by the facilities branch if not well substantiated.

Kentucky’s “nickel tax” facilities funding system has been in place since 1990, established as part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). The Commonwealth pays a state share, 20% to 80%, depending on the relative wealth of the district. The district share is raised through a local property tax approved in five cent equivalent rate increments that can only be used to pay local bonds issued for facilities. At the inception of the nickel tax system, every district was required by law to levy a nickel. Additional nickels are allowed by law, subject to voter approval.<sup>54</sup>

Reviews among districts and DFB and Finance staff are mixed regarding the nickel tax system. Some wealthier districts have passed multiple nickels while others have had a difficult time passing any above the

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<sup>53</sup> “Guidelines of best practices for school building projects: A companion to 702 KAR 4:160.” Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Documents/Guidelines%20for%20Best%20Practices%20ADA.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> “Facilities support program of Kentucky.” Kentucky School Facilities Construction Commission. 2025.

<https://sfcc.ky.gov/Funding/Pages/Facilities-Support-Program.aspx>

original KERA-mandated nickel. KDE and an advisory committee are looking into ways to make the system fairer, including reaching out to other states for ideas. There are also additional efforts to improve the facilities in the worst condition with special funds appropriated by the General Assembly over and above the normal school facility funds. A special appropriation in 2010 addressed the needs of the ten school buildings with the most acute renovation needs (out of 1,600 statewide).

- 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.

### *Facilities Standards & Processes*

- 1.19 Finding:** The facilities approval process is cumbersome and causes the need for waivers and exceptions due to an outdated set of model classroom standards.

Superintendents acknowledge that the facilities process is complex and takes time but still believe that it is more cumbersome than it needs to be. The model classroom information in the 1995 Facilities Planning and Construction Criteria Planning Guide has not been updated for modern educational needs, many of which have evolved since 1995.<sup>55</sup> Some of these are:

- Educational technology
- Special education
- Safety and security
- Early learning
- Building systems (HVAC, lighting, energy efficiency)
- Career-technical education
- Instructional practices in general
- Ancillary service needs
- Library/media centers
- Innovative school models

Waivers are possible but superintendents still believe that facilities standards and processes need review and modernization. They also think that local boards should have much more influence over district facility plans than KDE.

- 1.19.a Recommendation:** KDE should accelerate the Commonwealth's work in streamlining and reforming the facilities approval process.

Over the last several years Kentucky has improved the school facilities process, but district feedback indicates that there is still room for further improvement. Superintendents report that recently things have been better and that they have fewer complaints. Some superintendents feel that DFB is making an effort to listen and improve; they have gone to some of the co-ops and superintendents for feedback and have made some changes.

In 2021, KDE brought together a Facilities Task Force to review opportunities to improve processes and systems. This effort involved a broad base of practitioners and stakeholders. The task force generated 68 recommendations.<sup>56</sup>

Some of the improvements in recent years include:

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<sup>55</sup> "Facilities planning and construction guide." Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Facilities Management. March 2, 1995.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Documents/Facility%20Programming%20and%20Construction%20Criteria%20Planning%20Guide%203%206%2015.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> "Facilities Task Force recommendations." Kentucky Department of Education. August 2, 2022.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Documents/Facilities%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations.pdf>

- Making policy interpretations promptly rather than waiting for Kentucky Board of Education bimonthly meetings
- Providing document templates online with online submission methods (FACPAC – Facilities Planning and Construction system and KFICS – Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System)
- House Bill 678 which provided temporary relief through June 30, 2024, in several areas including:
  - Shifting approval authority of capital improvements to the local boards
  - Giving KDE a 30-day deadline to approve or deny certain district requests
  - Allowing districts to prioritize extracurricular facilities as they see fit
  - Mandating that KDE update regulations to reduce burden on districts by June 30, 2023.<sup>57</sup>

House Bill 678 provisions were extended via HB 727 in the 2024 session. The provisions were not made permanent but will now expire in June 2027. KDE is working with the Legislature to make the minor language changes needed to garner legislative support for making the provisions permanent in the KRS.

Commissioner Fletcher has made improvements in the facilities improvement process an area of emphasis for his administration. He is engaging superintendents throughout the Commonwealth on the issue via his Superintendents Advisory Council and hopes to formulate recommendations for the General Assembly, particularly to improve facilities funding.<sup>58</sup> KDE staff reports they are still working on making the process and support documents more streamlined and user friendly for districts with the goals of faster timelines and less state approval needed.

**1.19.b Recommendation:** KDE should determine which of the 68 recommendations of the Facilities Task Force from 2021 should be implemented and execute those recommendations accordingly.

## Transportation

**1.20 Finding:** The KDE 18A job classification schedule detracts from finding potential transportation employees with required experience. Although the Personnel Cabinet has the authority to make any changes to the schedule, KDE has policy staff and others who can research and draft recommended improvements to the classification structure.

The KDE Pupil Transportation Branch provides a rich slate of technical support resources through their website, periodic newsletter, site visits, and state conference representation. Some statewide training is offered, such as new district transportation director training. The transportation function of KDE was not cited as either exceptional or problematic by the districts. Its major roles are safety related – ensuring that buses meet safety standards and that drivers are trained and certified. Pupil Transportation Branch staff noted most of the infractions they find during monitoring are rare and easily corrected, such as bus first-aid kits, taillights, tires for buses, and commercial driver’s license (CDL) physicals for drivers.

The two biggest challenges noted by KDE transportation staff are the driver shortage and KDE transportation staff classification and salary. The state is trying to help alleviate the driver shortage by working towards allowing other kinds of vehicles, such as vans. KDE transportation staff do not fit the mold of KDE classifications in general. In transportation, qualifications like CDLs, trainer experience, and mechanic certifications hold more value than degrees. These types of nondegree specialized certifications do not easily translate to the 18A salary schedule; therefore, it is difficult to recruit experienced pupil transportation professionals due to lack of competitive salary.

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<sup>57</sup> “HB678 – Facilities planning and construction update.” Kentucky Department of Education District Facilities Branch. May 11, 2022. <https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Documents/HB%20678%20Guidance.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> “Kentucky superintendents discuss facilities improvement funding during Superintendent’s Advisory Council.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 4, 2025. <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/KYDE/bulletins/3d5122d>

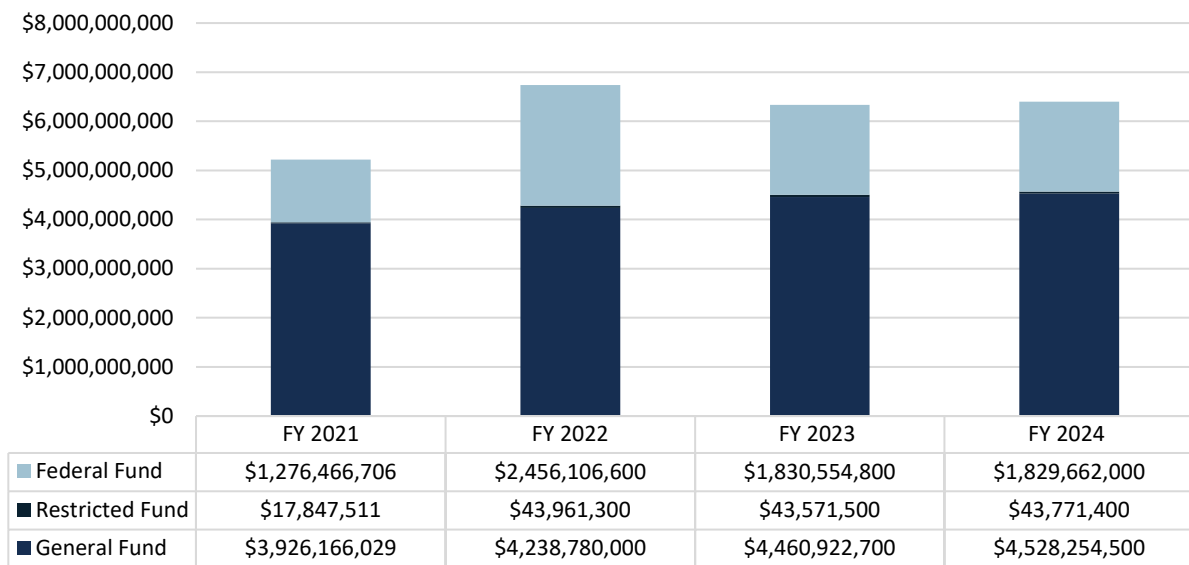
- 1.20.a **Recommendation**: KDE should recommend appropriate classifications and salaries for Pupil Transportation Branch employees that match industry standards or similar positions in the Transportation Cabinet.



## FISCAL OVERVIEW

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) received approximately \$6.4 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2024. KDE receives funding each year from the general fund, restricted fund, and various federal agencies; the largest allotment comes from the Commonwealth of Kentucky’s general fund, as shown in Figure 29 below.

**FIGURE 29: FY 2021-2024 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS**



Source: APA, based on the Budget of the Commonwealth for FY 2022-2024.

## DISTRICT MONITORING

Local school districts receive approximately 70% of KDE’s total expenditures through the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) program and various federal programs. The local school districts submit an annual working budget to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) in accordance with KRS 160.470. The districts use the SEEK and federal funding allocations calculated and posted to the KDE website to develop their budget submission. Following the approval of the district’s annual budget by KBE, the districts receive funds from KDE as allotted.

Each district receives an annual audit at the end of each fiscal year, as required by KRS 156.265. KDE reviews the annual audit submissions to monitor the district’s financial activities.

## SUPPORT EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN KENTUCKY

The SEEK program, administered by KDE, was established by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), passed in 1990. The SEEK program was created to ensure allotted state education funding is equitably distributed to the local school districts.

KDE calculates the SEEK funding amounts for each district according to the prescribed formula detailed in legislation and data provided by various sources, including the school districts and the Kentucky Department of Revenue. The SEEK calculation is performed three times annually (forecast, tentative, and final SEEK), and calculations are provided to the districts once finalized to assist them with the preparation of the districts’ required budgets. Payments are determined using the appropriate SEEK calculation and distributed at the beginning of every month in accordance with KRS 157.410.

The program is divided into 13 different subsections, to which the General Assembly allocates funding in the state’s biennial budget. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kentucky was awarded \$130,000,000 in federal funding utilized for SEEK in FY 2021. Figure 30 summarizes the total budget allocations for each SEEK subsection for fiscal years 2021 through 2024.

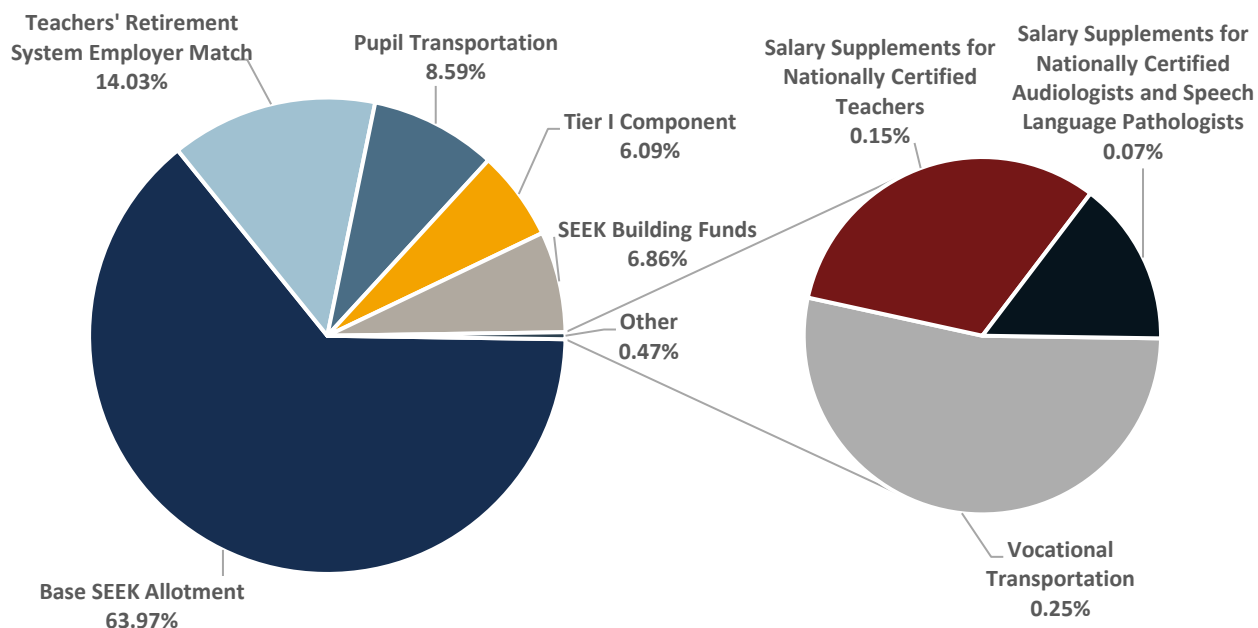
**FIGURE 30: SEEK BUDGET BY SUBSECTION FOR FY 2021-2024**

<b>SEEK Subsection</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>	<b>FY 2022</b>	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>
Base SEEK Allotment	\$1,966,553,400	\$2,081,876,500	\$2,044,568,000	\$2,044,371,700
Teachers' Retirement System Employer Match	\$425,565,500	\$435,085,500	\$438,670,000	\$448,530,000
Pupil Transportation	\$214,752,800	\$214,752,800	\$274,446,300	\$274,446,300
Tier I Component	\$174,746,300	\$168,881,500	\$200,458,100	\$194,519,400
Facilities Support Program of Kentucky	\$89,854,800	\$86,600,400	\$113,492,000	\$107,463,200
Retroactive Equalized Facility Funding	\$33,221,300	\$32,740,800	\$46,147,700	\$44,580,700
Growth Levy Equalization Funding	\$21,796,600	\$20,119,400	\$45,467,700	\$41,044,100
Equalized Facility Funding	\$8,788,900	\$8,418,400	\$15,435,900	\$14,833,300
Equalization Funding for Critical Construction Needs Schools	\$6,936,000	\$6,989,300	\$8,735,500	\$8,376,000
Vocational Transportation	\$2,416,900	\$2,416,900	\$7,833,100	\$7,833,100
Salary Supplements for Nationally Certified Teachers	\$2,750,000	\$2,750,000	\$4,600,000	\$4,655,500
BRAC Equalized Facility Funding	\$2,314,200	\$2,226,400	\$2,908,800	\$2,843,300
Salary Supplements for Nationally Certified Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists			\$2,312,000	\$2,312,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,949,696,700</b>	<b>\$3,062,857,900</b>	<b>\$3,205,077,100</b>	<b>\$3,195,808,600</b>

Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets for FY 2021-2024.

As an example of the proportional breakdown in a given year, Figure 31 illustrates the budgeted percentage for the SEEK program sections in 2024. The various facility and construction funds were summarized into the SEEK Building funds, as labeled on the calculations published by KDE.

**FIGURE 31: FY 2024 SEEK BUDGET ALLOCATIONS**



Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

## Major SEEK Components

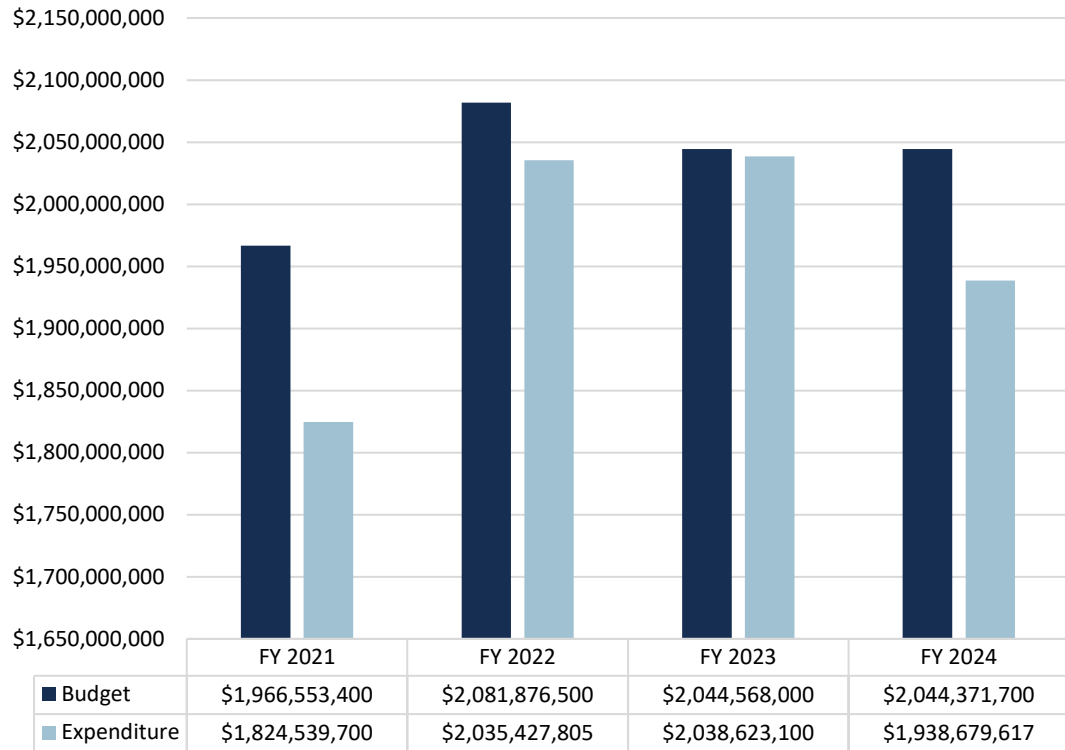
### Base SEEK

Each Kentucky school district receives a base allocation for each student enrolled in the district as indicated by KRS 157.360. This amount is determined using the adjusted average daily attendance reported by the district in the Superintendent's Annual Attendance Report (SAAR) and the per-pupil amount set in the biennial budget. The guaranteed SEEK base funding amount is adjusted based on students enrolled with additional needs, which includes the following:

- At-risk students are identified using the membership of students approved for the free lunch program.
- Home and hospital additional funding is based on the average daily attendance of students receiving instruction in the hospital or home as defined in KRS 158.033. Each district receives the per pupil amount set in the biennial budget less the capital outlay allotment for the average daily attendance of students reported in the SAAR for home and hospital.
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is based on the number of students enrolled with LEP. For each student identified with LEP the district receives an extra 9.6% of the per pupil amount set in the biennial budget.
- Exceptional child funding is based on the prior year exceptional child count (as of December 1) and types of exceptional children defined in KRS 157.200 and KRS 157.360.

The adjusted SEEK base amount (which includes the guaranteed SEEK base, adjustments, and pupil transportation, as discussed in the next section) is adjusted for the amount of locally generated tax revenue and any prior year calculation errors to determine the final SEEK base funding. Figure 32 summarizes the budget allocation and expenditure of the final SEEK Base funding by KDE for fiscal years 2021 through 2024.

**FIGURE 32: SEEK BASE FUNDING FOR FY 2021-2024**



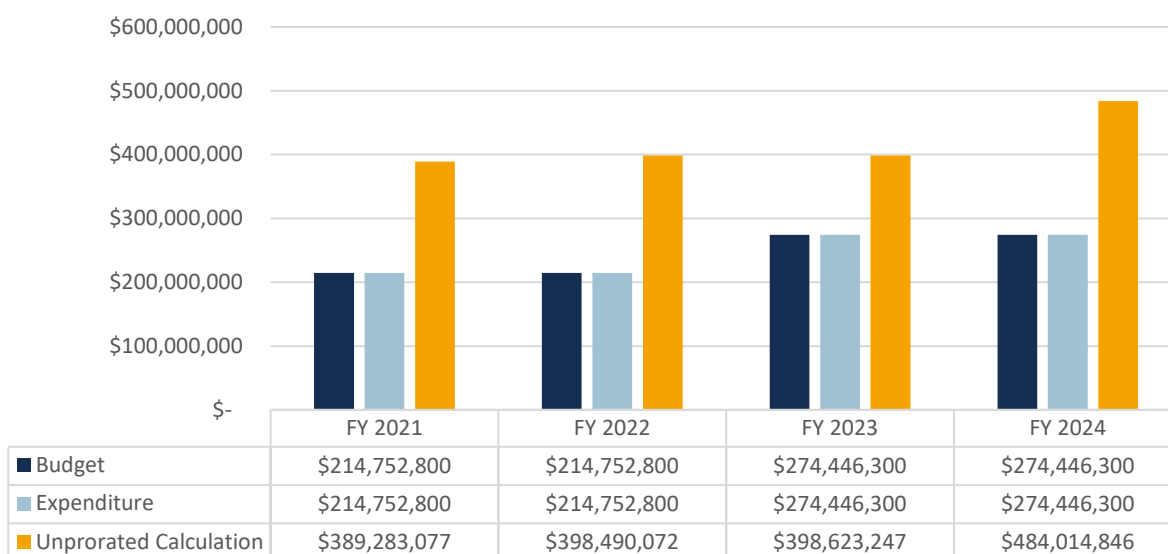
Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

### ***Pupil Transportation***

The district pupil transportation allocation is calculated based on KRS 157.370. KDE uses the transportation data reported in the district’s SAAR and pupil density figures to determine the average per-pupil transportation costs for similar districts. The average per-pupil transportation cost is then used to determine the district transportation allocation using the prior year’s student transportation data and adjusted for growth in the current year.

The total pupil transportation allocation in the biennial budgets for FYs 2021 through 2024 was not sufficient to fully fund district transportation costs as calculated based on statute, requiring KDE to adjust the district transportation allotments in accordance with KRS 157.430. Figure 33 summarizes the total transportation calculation amount, budget allocation, and expenditure of SEEK pupil transportation funding by KDE for fiscal years 2021 through 2024.

**FIGURE 33: SEEK PUPIL TRANSPORTATION FOR FY 2021-2024**

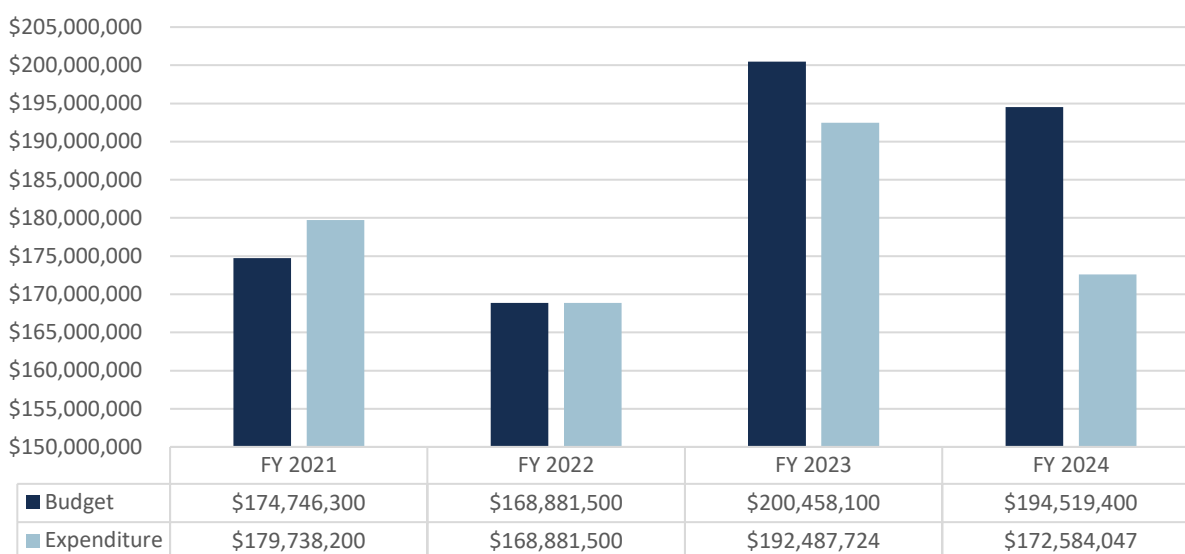


Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

### Tier I

School districts may elect to increase tax revenue above the required local effort, up to 15% as permitted by KRS 157.440. The state equalizes the additional tax revenue at 150% of the statewide average per-pupil assessment (equalization rate). Tier I is intended to assist districts whose property wealth is at or below the equalization level by providing additional state funding to supplement the local tax revenue contribution. Figure 34 summarizes the budget allocation and expenditure of the SEEK Tier I funding by KDE for fiscal years 2021 through 2024.

**FIGURE 34: TIER I EQUALIZATION FUNDING FOR FY 2021-2024**



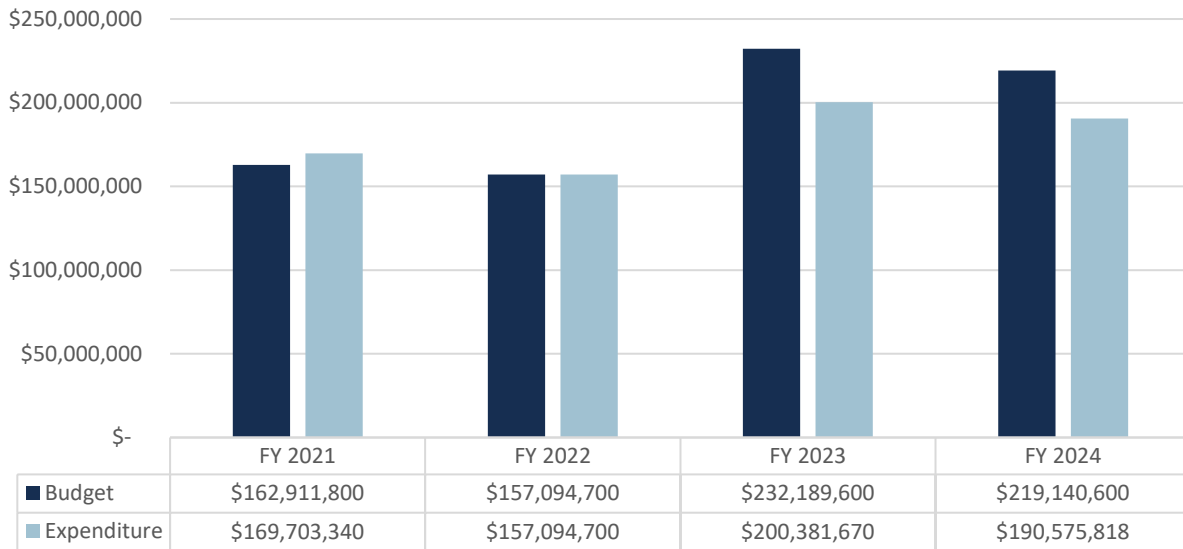
Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

### Building Funds

Districts can elect to levy additional taxes, greater than that required for participation in the SEEK program, to contribute to the district's building funds. Taxes are levied at a 5-cent equivalent for each of the building fund programs and equalized with state SEEK funding. The SEEK building funds comprise the Facilities Support Program, Equalized Facility Funding, Growth Levy Equalization, Retroactive Equalized Facility

Funding, BRAC Equalized Facility Funding, and Equalization Funding for Critical Construction Needs. Figure 35 summarizes the budget allocation and expenditure of the SEEK building funds for FYs 2021 through 2024.

**FIGURE 35: SEEK BUILDING FUNDS FOR FY 2021-2024**

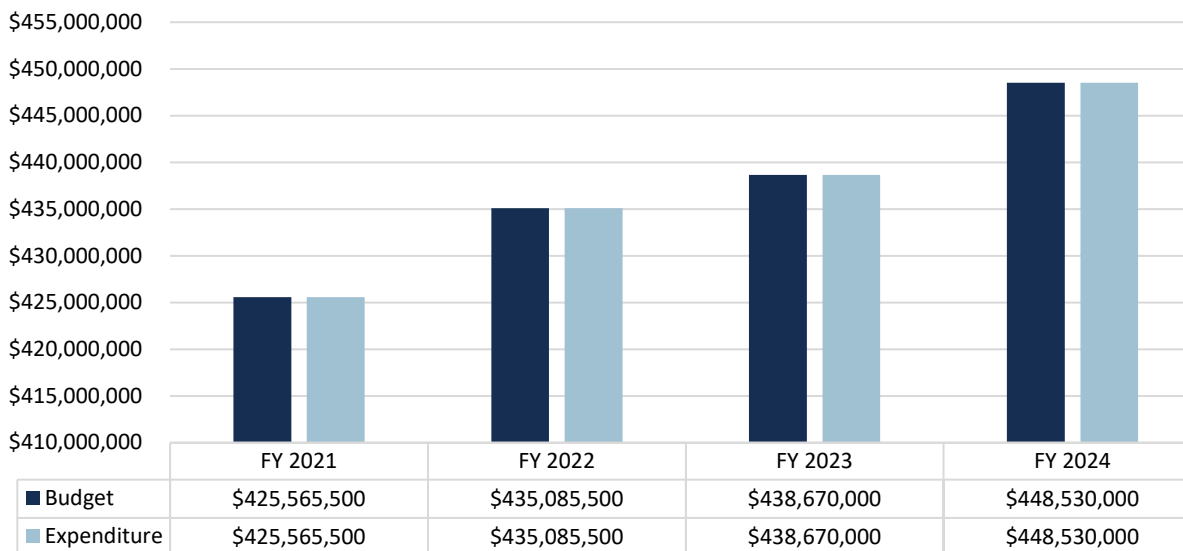


Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

### Teachers' Retirement System Employer Match

The Teachers' Retirement System Employer Match is the only SEEK subsection that is not distributed directly to the local school districts. Each month, 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the subsection allotment set forth in the biennial budget is provided to the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. Figure 36 summarizes the budget allocation and expenditure of the SEEK Teachers' Retirement System Employer Match for FYs 2021 through 2024.

**FIGURE 36: TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM EMPLOYER MATCH FOR FY 2021-2024**



Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

### COVID-19's Impact on SEEK

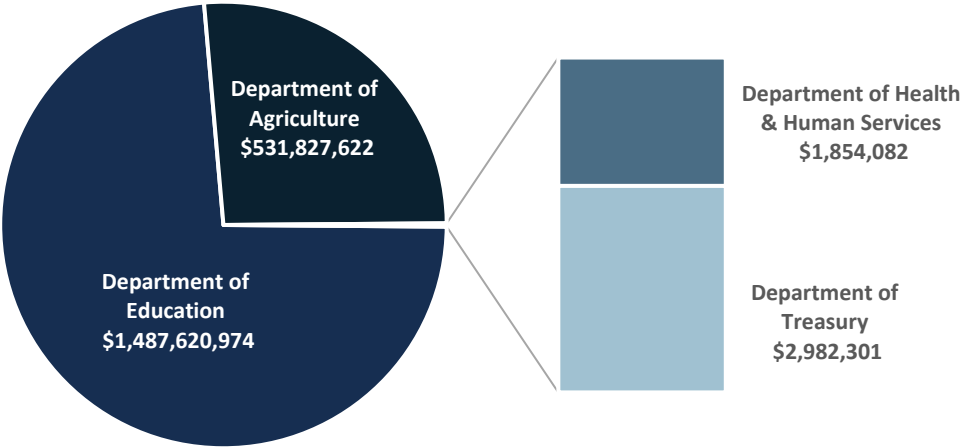
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing school districts to utilize attendance data from the 2018-2019 school year in the submission of the annual SAAR for FY 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. As attendance is a large driving force of the SEEK calculations, the ability to use pre-COVID-19 attendance data allowed districts to minimize the impact of potential COVID-19 attendance disruptions on a district's SEEK funding.

As previously mentioned, Kentucky was also awarded \$130,000,000 in federal funding utilized for SEEK in FY 2021 in response to the pandemic. KDE allocated the funds among the school districts in addition to the general fund SEEK Base allocation.

### FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING

Kentucky receives federal grant funds to support educational activities across all learning levels. For example, in FY 2024, KDE expended approximately \$2 billion in federal grant awards from the United States Department of Education (USED), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of Treasury, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Figure 37 depicts the breakdown of federal funding received by KDE in FY 2024 by source.

FIGURE 37: KDE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR FY 2024

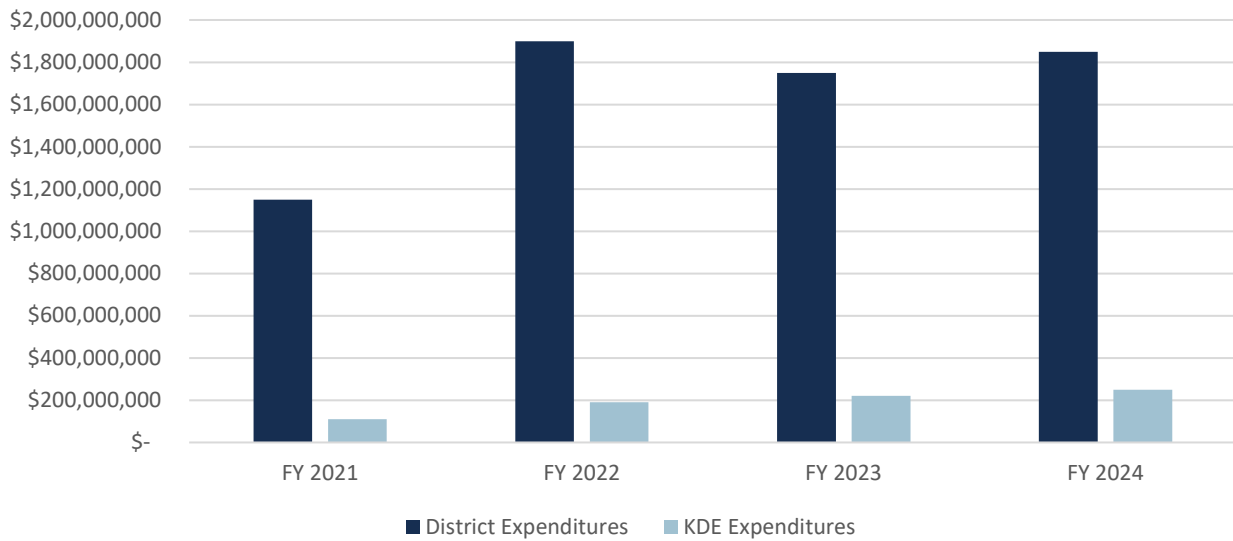


Source: APA, based on eMARS expenditure reports.

Figure 38 below indicates that the majority of this funding was passed through to the school districts as reimbursement for local education agency (LEA) activities. At the state education agency (SEA) level, KDE utilized federal funding for activities such as the provision of teacher development training, promotion of educational initiatives, and for allowable administrative purposes.



**FIGURE 38: COMPARISON OF KDE & DISTRICTS FEDERAL GRANT EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2021-2024**



Source: APA, based on eMARS expenditure reports.

### **US Department of Education Grants**

KDE applies for funding from the USED, the biggest federal grant contributor, by submitting a Consolidated State Plan. This Plan describes KDE’s goals for Kentucky students as well as proposed uses of funds and is frequently updated to reflect the changing needs of Kentucky schools. The Consolidated State Plan addresses the following titled grants:

- Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
- Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children
- Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
- Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction
- Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement
- Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
- Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program
- Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento Act)

Grant funds from the USED are awarded to KDE at the SEA level. They are then distributed to districts, community-based and nonprofit organizations, and other LEAs in the form of either formula grants or competitive grants.

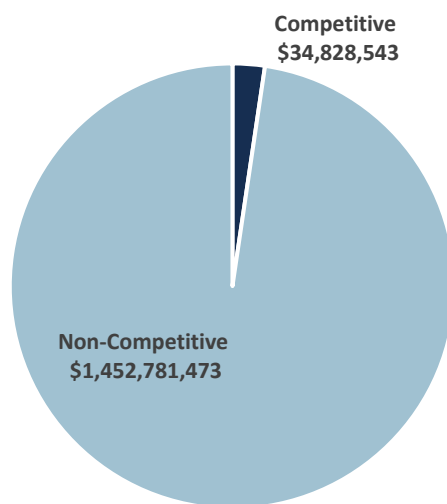
### **USED: Federal Formula Grants (Non-Competitive)**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as reauthorized and amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, established the titled federal formula grants that provide recurring funding to Kentucky schools. These formula grants were created for the purposes of improving educational outcomes in states and LEAs by supporting student and teacher populations and increasing programmatic capacity and effectiveness.

Individual districts submit a yearly application to KDE for participation in the federal formula grants, and once approved, can expend local funds on grant-approved activities over 27 months. Districts then request reimbursement from KDE for amounts expended. For each federal program, the USED sets the allocation

percentages allowed for district use based on the total amount of funding available. As shown in Figure 39, KDE reimbursed \$1,452,781,473 in Non-Competitive federal grants from the USED in FY 2024.

**FIGURE 39: USED GRANT REIMBURSEMENTS FOR FY 2024**



Source: APA, based on eMARS expenditure reports.

### **USED: Competitive Grants**

Competitive federal grants consist of finite funding for specific grant program purposes. KDE receives competitive grant funding through the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (McKinney-Vento Act), the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant, and the ESSA Title IV Part B Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center Program.

Based on grant award requirements, KDE's program office develops a contract and a scoring rubric for those LEAs that apply for the available funding. Applications are judged against the scoring rubric, and applicants must meet a minimum cutoff score to be deemed eligible. Funding is proportionally allocated to districts meeting grant requirements. In FY 2024, KDE reimbursed \$ 34,828,543 in competitive grant expenses. Figure 40 below shows the breakdown of competitive grant funding expended in FY 2024.

**FIGURE 40: USED COMPETITIVE GRANT FUNDING FOR FY 2024**

Competitive USED Program	FY 2024 Expenditures	Percentage of Total Competitive Expenditures
School Safety National Activities	\$626,030	1.80%
Education for Homeless Children and Youth	\$1,871,397	5.37%
21st Century Community Learning Centers	\$25,209,362	72.38%
Special Education - State Personnel Development	\$84,685	0.24%
Competitive Grants for State Assessments	\$574,990	1.65%
Comprehensive Literacy Development	\$6,209,487	17.83%
Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) - KY Transition 360	\$252,593	0.73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$34,828,544</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: APA, based on eMARS report.

### USDA Child Nutrition Programs

The USDA is the second largest contributor of federal grant funding to KDE, and it administers grant programs through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). FNS provides quarterly letters of credit to KDE for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program, as well as for smaller grants, such as the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). Figure 41 shows the percentage allocation of USDA Child Nutrition Program funds expended in FY 2024.

FIGURE 41: CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2024

USDA Program	FY 2024 Expenditures	Percentage of Total USDA Program Expenditures
School Breakfast Program	\$123,307,274.00	23.19%
National School Lunch Program	\$317,865,860.00	59.77%
Special Milk Program for Children	\$17,311.00	0.00%
Child and Adult Care Food Program	\$57,955,468.00	10.90%
Summer Food Service Program for Children	\$22,415,191.00	4.21%
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	\$4,118,852.00	0.77%
State Administrative Expenses for Child Nutrition	\$5,071,033.00	0.95%
Child Nutrition Discretionary Grants	\$1,076,634.00	0.20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$531,827,622.00</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: APA, based on eMARS reports.

Like the USED’s competitive and noncompetitive grants, USDA grants are administered by KDE on a reimbursement basis. Schools, districts, and other entities administering meal programs, referred to collectively as sponsors, enter into a permanent agreement with KDE to be permitted to administer USDA nutrition programs. Sponsors are evaluated for financial viability prior to participation and are instructed to operate food services in a nonprofit capacity. They must submit a yearly application to remain eligible for program reimbursement, the amount of which is based on the rate set by the USDA in the formula “number of meals x reimbursement rate.” KDE reviews each sponsor’s reimbursement request against approved applications and remits payments using the set reimbursement rate.

Within the School Meal Programs, many schools in Kentucky participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. CEP allows schools to serve meals (breakfast and lunch) at no cost to all students within the school. Schools that qualify for and enroll in CEP claim meals served based on a calculation using the percentage of students who have been directly certified in other programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). At least 25% of a school’s enrolled population must be directly certified for the school to qualify for CEP, and the school or the district decides if enrolling is financially viable. KDE provides data to the schools and districts to assist in this decision. *For FY 2024, 87% of schools participating in the school lunch programs were designated as CEP, and approximately 80% of these students received free meals.*

The State Administrative Expense Fund (SAE), a two-year grant, administers the Federal Child Nutrition Programs at the state level. SAE’s federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) amount, required by Section 7 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, is \$271,100. The NSLP requires a state match, and it is paid once every April or early May. The USDA determines NSLP’s state match amount, which is formula driven. KDE allocates the NSLP match to NSLP sponsors.

**Department of Health & Human Services and Department of Treasury**

Funding from the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Treasury represented less than 0.24% of total KDE expenditures for FY 2024. The \$4,836,382 supported remaining COVID programs, such as the ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund program for Math and Science, and the Kentucky AWARE Project, which provided teacher training in youth mental health first aid.

**REVIEW OF PRIOR YEAR WORK BY THE APA**

KDE is audited annually by the APA as part of the Statewide Single Audit of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (SSWAK), which is released in two volumes. SSWAK volume I summarizes the results of the financial statement audit and includes all related financial statement findings. The SEEK program is audited annually as part of the financial statement audit, as KDE’s financial activities are included in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. During the annual audit, the auditor reviews KDE’s expenditures, Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards (SEFA) submission, SEEK calculations, and the internal controls.

Certain federal programs administered by KDE each year are audited by the APA, and the audit results and any findings are reported in SSWAK Volume II. As discussed in 2 C.F.R. § 200 Subsection F, programs are assigned into two different categories (Type A and Type B) based on the total expenditures for the year, and selected programs from each category are audited annually. Federal program audits are guided by the Compliance Supplement released each year by the federal Office of Management and Budget and the related federal regulations. Figure 42 shows the federal programs audited in the past four FY audits.

**FIGURE 42: KDE FEDERAL PROGRAMS AUDITED BY THE APA IN FY 2021-2024**

Fiscal Year	Federal Program Assistance Listing Number (ALN)	Program Name	FY Expenditures
2021	84.027	Special Education Grants to States	\$149,268,143
2021	84.173	Special Education Preschool Grants	\$8,430,739
2021	84.424	Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program	\$15,837,876
2021	84.425	Education Stabilization Program	\$240,822,796
2022	10.558	Child and Adult Care Food Program	\$47,407,476
2022	84.367	Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants	\$33,104,133
2022	84.425	Education Stabilization Program	\$959,816,775
2023	10.553	School Breakfast Program	\$29,507,316
2023	10.555	National School Lunch Program	\$451,515,493
2023	10.556	Special Milk Program for Children	\$14,794
2023	10.559	Summer Food Service Program for Children	\$12,154,866
2023	10.582	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	\$4,127,281

Fiscal Year	Federal Program Assistance Listing Number (ALN)	Program Name	FY Expenditures
2023	84.01	Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies	\$248,387,176
2023	84.425	Education Stabilization Program	\$798,884,091
2024	21.027	Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds	\$2,982,301
2024	84.027	Special Education Grants to States	\$210,830,615
2024	84.048	Career and Technical Education – Basic Grants to States	\$21,967,415
2024	84.173	Special Education Preschool Grants	\$8,632,472
2024	84.287	Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers	\$25,209,362
2024	84.424	Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program	\$21,091,764

Source: APA, based on eMARS expenditure reports and SEFAs.

Auditors also reviewed the prior year (PY) audit reports for any findings and the SEFA. Prior year audits of KDE noted exceptions relating to program reporting and maintenance of original documentation. Figure 43 summarizes the exceptions noted in the prior year audits of KDE federal programs and the current status of the identified deficiencies.

FIGURE 43: KDE FEDERAL PROGRAM AUDIT PRIOR YEAR EXCEPTIONS

Fiscal Year	Program	Report	Finding Number	Finding Name	Finding Status
2021	Education Stabilization Program (ALN 84.425)	SSWAK Volume II	2021-038	The Kentucky Department of Education and Education & Workforce Department Cabinet Did Not Have Adequate Documentation Related to Submission Of The Education Stabilization Fund Annual Reports	Resolved
2023	Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK)	SSWAK Volume I	2023-012	Kentucky Department Of Education's Internal Controls Did Not Identify Attendance Data Errors Resulting In One School District Receiving An Overpayment Of SEEK Funds	Resolved
			2023-013	The Kentucky Department Of Education Miscoded SEEK Funds in The State's Accounting System	Resolved

Source: APA, based on FY 2021 SSWAK Volume II and FY 2023 SSWAK Volume.

## RESULTS FOR FURTHER FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

### *General Financial Analysis*

As part of the Special Examination, auditors analyzed KDE's expenditures and revenues for FYs 2021 through 2024. Auditors compared annual expenditures and revenues by state and federal programs, as well as accounting system reporting components, which are used to record expenditures and receipts. Auditors inquired with KDE regarding any unusual items or unexpected increases or decreases and evaluated the responses through additional observations and inquiry. No findings were noted as a result of these procedures.

### *Federal Grant Testing*

The auditors also selected three federal programs to review for compliance with federal regulations and internal control over compliance related to Activities Allowed and Allowable Cost. In determining the programs to be reviewed as part of the examination, auditors reviewed the expenditure totals for each program and whether the programs had been included as part of the SSWAK for FY 2021 through 2024. The three federal programs reviewed are identified by Assistance Listing Numbers (ALNs) as follows:

ALN 84.367 – Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants: Title II Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, provides grants to SEAs and subgrants to LEAs to increase student achievement; improve the quality, number, and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders; and provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers.

- ALN 84.196 – Education for Homeless Children and Youth: Title VII Subtitle B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. Title VII Subtitle B directs grant funding towards emergency food and shelter needs for homeless children.
- ALN 84.358 – Rural Education: Title VI Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title VI Part B provides grant funds to address personnel and resource deficiencies in schools that are too small to effectively lobby for the resources allocated with competitive grants.

Our work included reviewing transactions for allowability of costs and activities as directed by the federal Compliance Supplement, as well as a review of internal controls over compliance. For each ALN, 25 transactions were selected for review. Auditors reviewed supporting documentation to determine if costs were allowable per the grant requirements, verified expenditures were supported by appropriate documentation, and that expenditures were correctly recorded in the Commonwealth's accounting system (known as the Electronic Management Administrative and Reporting System (eMARS)). Auditors also verified that district submissions for reimbursement were for allowable costs and that costs were charged to the correct program. All transactions selected for review were adequately supported, reviewed, and allowable for the applicable program.

Additionally, for ALN 84.367, auditors reviewed grant award letters and allocation calculations to verify that KDE allocated and spent only 1% of the grant amounts on administrative activities and that 95% of all funding received was transferred to LEAs as reimbursement. The remaining 4% was spent on state-level activities to improve educator quality. The KDE allocation of ALN 84.367 funding is compliant with program requirements for FY 2024.

### *SEEK Review*

The auditors reviewed the SEEK expenditures, regulations, and budget appropriations for the various SEEK components during the examination period. The SEEK calculations performed by KDE were reviewed, and recalculations of SEEK pupil transportation for FY 2021-2024 were performed. Auditors also conducted an inquiry related to the SEEK processes and the provisions in the SEEK budget appropriation. One finding was noted.

#### **2.1 Finding: KDE improperly returned budgeted Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funds.**

The General Assembly allocates funding to the various SEEK components in the biennial budget of the Commonwealth. The biennial budget contains the following language:

SEEK Adjustment Factors: Funds allocated for the SEEK base and its adjustment factors that are not needed for the base or a particular adjustment factor may be allocated to other adjustment factors, if funds for that adjustment factor are not sufficient.

Excess SEEK funding for fiscal years 2021 through 2024 was not reallocated to adjustment factors that did not have sufficient funding; instead, the excess funding lapsed to the Budget Reserve Trust Fund Account (FY 2021 and 2022) and General Fund (FY 2023 and 2024). Given that the budget allocations for Pupil Transportation and Vocational Transportation were not sufficient to fully fund the programs for the fiscal years under review, the noted provision allowing excess funding from other SEEK components to be used to supplement the original allocation was not followed. Figure 44 summarizes the budget allocation, expenditure, and funding lapsed for the SEEK program in fiscal years 2021 through 2024. In total, \$251,091,583 has lapsed over the past four fiscal years instead of being reallocated by KDE to allowable adjustment factors in need of additional monies.

**FIGURE 44: SEEK FUNDING LAPSE FOR FY 2021-2024**

Fiscal Year	Budget Allocation	Expenditure	Funding Lapse
2021	\$2,949,696,700	\$2,949,466,440	\$230,260
2022	\$3,062,857,900	\$3,016,409,205	\$46,448,695
2023	\$3,205,077,100	\$3,158,228,421	\$46,848,679
2024	\$3,195,808,600	\$3,038,244,651	\$157,563,949
Total	\$12,413,440,300	\$12,162,348,717	\$251,091,583

Source: APA, based on the biennial budgets and eMARS expenditure reports.

- 2.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should heed the language of the biennial budget bill and utilize all SEEK funds as legally permitted. Excess funds should not lapse but be utilized to support allowable adjustment factors as needed.



## DEPARTMENT STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS

The following chapter outlines the Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) strategic initiatives, including the new 2024-2029 strategic plan and the United We Learn work. The chapter discusses relationships between KDE and other government agencies, educational cooperatives, advisory councils, and the legislature. It also includes an analysis of laws and regulations in Kentucky and peer states. Lastly, the chapter presents an analysis of stakeholder feedback regarding KDE culture and communications.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

#### Strategic Plan

##### 3.1 **Observation:** The 2024-2029 strategic plan does not include metrics for its key performance indicators (KPIs).

KDE spent most of FY25 developing a new 2024-2029 strategic plan, which centers around the “United We Learn” vision and a mission to “create broad partnerships to provide leadership and support so that every student is equipped for the future.”<sup>59</sup> The timing of the development of a new strategic plan aligned with Commissioner Fletcher’s first year. This meant that KDE operated without an active strategic plan in 2024-2025. The audit team has followed the development of the plan through April 2025.

KDE’s core values identified in the 2024-2029 strategic plan include:

- Equity
- Student Success
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Innovation

The mission and core values in the 2024-2029 strategic plan remain largely unchanged from the 2018-2023 strategic plan.<sup>60</sup> As shown in Figure 45, the plan includes eight objectives with associated goal statements. Each of the eight areas also has key performance indicators (KPIs) and strategies. Except for “reimagining assessment and accountability,” each goal has a stated numeric metric the Department wants to achieve by the 2028-2029 school year. Target benchmarks for each year through 2028-2029 are included.

FIGURE 45: KDE 2024-2029 STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Customer/Stakeholder Objectives and Goals
Reimagine Assessment and Accountability <b>GOAL:</b> Establish an Accountability Model that includes vibrant learning making it meaningful and useful for all learners.
Improve Early Literacy <b>GOAL:</b> Increase 3rd grade proficiency from 47% in 2023-2024 to 60% by the 2028-2029 school year.
Improve Early Numeracy <b>GOAL:</b> Increase 3rd grade proficiency from 43% in 2023-2024 to 55% by the 2028-2029 school year.
Expanding the Recruitment of Qualified Educators <b>GOAL:</b> Increase the completion rate of eligible students in a Teaching and Learning Pathway from 6% in 2023-2024 to 14% by 2028-2029.
Reduce Chronic Absenteeism <b>GOAL:</b> Decrease statewide chronic absenteeism rate from 28% in 2023-2024 to 15% by 2028-2029.
Improve Customer Satisfaction

<sup>59</sup> “2024-2029 Plan on a Page.” Kentucky Department of Education. *Working Copy. KDE:OC:SPR:KD.2.2025*. [PDF].

<sup>60</sup> “KBE Meeting – March 26, 2025.” Kentucky Board of Education. March 26, 2025.

<https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/featured/2025/03/kentucky-board-of-education-meeting-march-2025/>;

“Our Kids, Our Future. 2018-2023 Strategic Plan.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2018. [PDF].

## Customer/Stakeholder Objectives and Goals

**GOAL:** Increase average customer satisfaction percentage (index created) in the Customer Satisfaction Survey for the following statements: “I know who to contact to get information” and “KDE values feedback” from 56% in 2024 to 66% in 2029.

Improve Organizational Process Awareness

**GOAL:** Improve average favorable agreement rate of the Operations Domain in the Employee Satisfaction Survey from 82% in 2024 to 87% in 2029.

Build Leadership Capacity

**GOAL:** Improve average favorable agreement rate of the KDE Leadership Domain in the Customer Satisfaction Survey from 60% in 2024 to 76% in 2029.

Source: Draft 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. Kentucky Department of Education. [PDF].

Terms such as “increase,” “decrease,” “maintain,” “elevate,” “align,” and “encourage” are used to describe the KPIs, but do not include numerical benchmarks to show how success will be measured. For example, the objective to “Improve Early Literacy” contains KPIs to “decrease 3<sup>rd</sup> grade novice in Reading” and “increase the number of educators participating in the KY Reading Academies,” among others. It is not clear, however, how much of an increase or decrease will qualify as measurable progress and support the overall goal metric of “increasing 3<sup>rd</sup> grade proficiency from 47% in 2023-2024 to 60% by the 2028-2029 school year.” This level of detail will presumably be tracked in the implementation of the plan over the next four years.

KDE developed Monitoring Guide Templates that will be used to monitor progress on the strategic plan objectives and goals. The templates include placeholders for listing specific target metrics associated with each KPI, along with a status label and notes regarding trends. It is also set up to provide a detailed description of the work associated with the goals, a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) chart to designate key persons responsible, related initiatives, and offices involved. Strategies associated with each goal will also be tracked using the templates, including status, key updates, and next steps.<sup>61</sup> KDE also plans to launch an online dashboard to show strategic plan data.<sup>62</sup> The auditing team believes that close monitoring of metrics and transparency around progress towards goals will be critical for accountability around the implementation of this plan.

### **3.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should set KPI metrics early in the strategic plan implementation process to be transparent with stakeholders and to show progress over time.

Leaders reported that the frequent turnover at the commissioner level has made it somewhat difficult to implement a strategic plan, as priorities can change when the agency has a leadership change. Despite KDE going through many commissioners in recent years and not having an active strategic plan over the last year, staff had very high rates of agreement with statements regarding understanding goals and metrics used to define the success of the agency and their division (Figure 46). However, as illustrated in Figure 46, KDE staff respondents have a greater understanding of the goals and metrics used to define their own division than they understand those used to define the agency as a whole. Figure 46 displays data from the survey administered by the audit team. Staff in the Offices of the Commissioner and Assessment and Accountability agree that they understand the goals and metrics of the agency more than that of their division. Staff in the Offices of the Commissioner, Teaching and Learning, and Special Education and Early Learning report the lowest levels of agreement on understanding the goals and metrics used to define success in both their division and the agency as a whole.

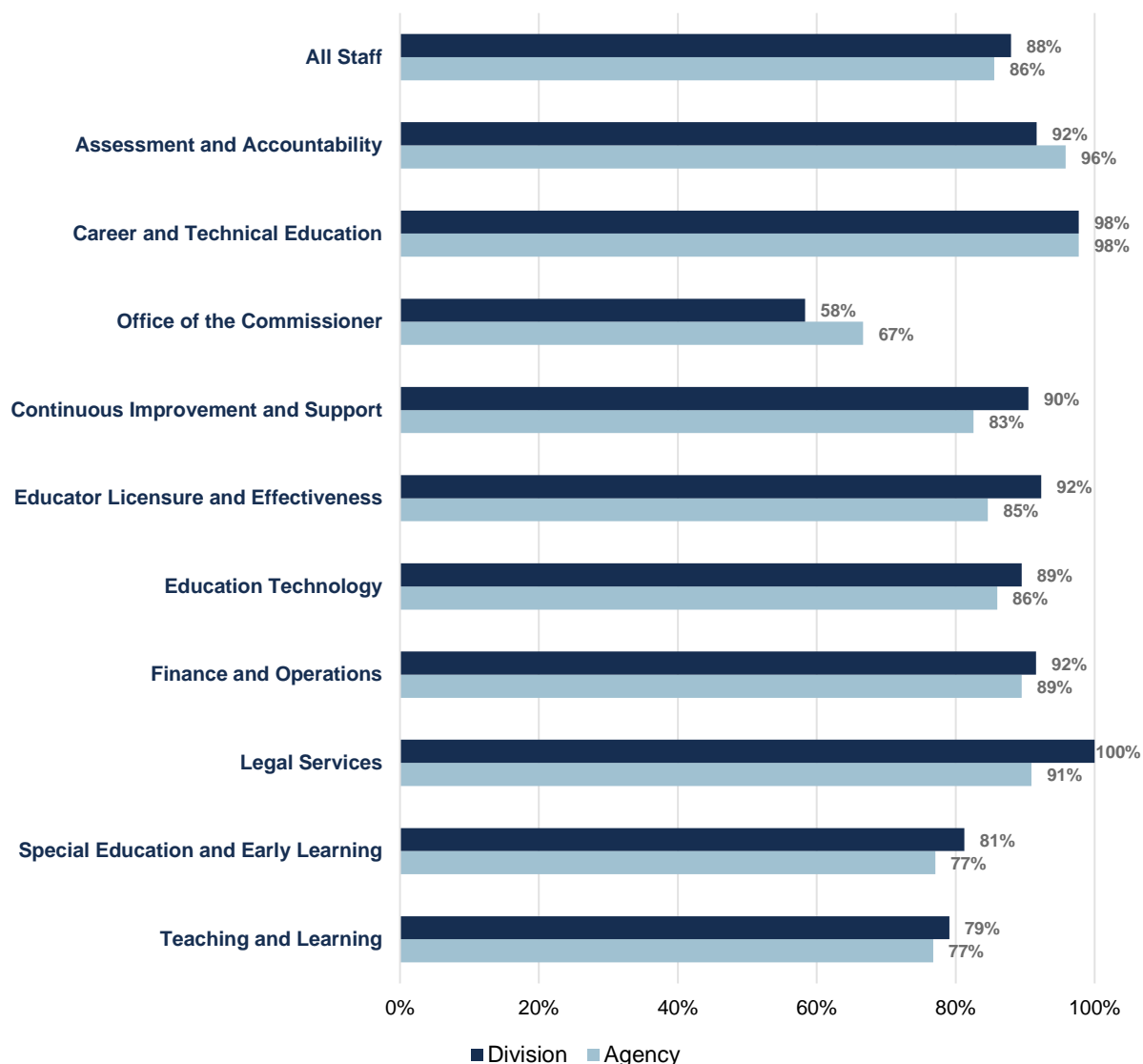
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<sup>61</sup> “Goal Level Monitoring Guide Template.” Kentucky Department of Education. *KDE:OC:SPR:SS:2.2025*. [PDF].

<sup>62</sup> “KBE Meeting – March 26, 2025.” Kentucky Board of Education. March 26, 2025.

<https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/featured/2025/03/kentucky-board-of-education-meeting-march-2025/>

**FIGURE 46: KDE STAFF UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOALS AND METRICS USED TO DEFINE THE SUCCESS OF THE AGENCY AND THEIR DIVISION**



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

As stated earlier, the mission and core values have been consistent from the previous strategic plan and Commissioner, which may help staff in understanding the overall focus and purpose of KDE. At the office and division-level, many leaders shared that they incorporate goal setting and tracking associated metrics for their functional area of the department. KDE administers surveys to both staff and external stakeholders to capture data and watch trends in stakeholder experiences and perceptions related to KDE’s leadership, customer service, district and state digital readiness, and other topic areas. Both the strategic planning and research team, as well as individual offices, report that they study and use the data collected to help inform goal setting.

### United We Learn

Part of Commissioner Fletcher’s first year in the role included continuing support of and partnership with the work of the Kentucky United We Learn Council (KUWL). The KUWL is a diverse set of stakeholders supporting the work of KDE and KBE. The KDE Chief Performance Officer serves as the project manager for KUWL, setting the agendas, updating the website, and communicating with council members. A major

focus of the Council’s work is to launch an accountability system that is meaningful and useful for all students.<sup>63</sup> The KUWL’s work is centered around creating the future of education in Kentucky by advancing three connected ideas:

- Vibrant learning experiences for every student;
- Encouraging innovation in assessment and accountability; and
- Collaborating closely with communities.<sup>64</sup>

### **3.2 Observation: The major focus on the 2024-2026 assessment and accountability work of the United We Learn Council could cause KDE to lose sight of its strategic and operational goals.**

The United We Learn initiative has become tightly interwoven with the new 2024-2029 KDE strategic plan. The title, logo, and vision statement for the strategic plan is “United We Learn” and its three “big ideas.” However, the United We Learn’s work to reimagine assessment and accountability represents only one of the strategic plan’s eight major objectives. The broader set of KDE objectives and goals outlined in KDE’s strategic plan should not be overlooked. Stakeholder understanding and perceptions of both “United We Learn” and the Department objectives at large should be monitored over time.

“United We Learn” and the three “big ideas” have become part of the KDE lexicon, making its way into marketing materials, the website, and the new 2024-2029 strategic plan. “United We Learn” is the title and vision statement in KDE’s 2024-2029 strategic plan, and the initiative’s work to reimagine assessment and accountability is one of the eight objectives in the plan. The KPIs and strategies associated with this objective relate to vibrant learning experiences, a local accountability system, and community collaboration. The United We Learn vision for assessment and accountability is a core focus of KDE in terms of its work as an agency as well as its branding and communication with stakeholders. Nonetheless, despite United We Learn’s expansive scope, it does not encompass all of KDE’s work or goals. As previously discussed, KDE also has strategic goals related to reducing chronic absenteeism, improvements in early literacy and early numeracy, and expanding recruitment of qualified educators and improvements. On the operational side, KDE has goals related to customer satisfaction, organizational process management, and building leadership capacity. It is important for KDE not to lose sight of its broader set of Department goals while spotlighting assessment and accountability work over the next few years.

The KPIs related to the 2024-2029 strategic plan goal of “reimagining assessment and accountability” include:

- Increase percentage of districts at each state of Local Accountability System implementation – Starting, Spreading or Sustaining
- Increase percentage of districts at each stage of Portrait of a Learner creation – Starting, Spreading or Sustaining
- Increase percentage of districts at each stage of Vibrant Learning Experiences development – Starting, Spreading or Sustaining

The offices involved in reaching this goal are the Office of Continuous Improvement, Office of Assessment and Accountability, and Office of Teaching and Learning. Target metrics will be set for each KPI and tracked through the monitoring of the implementation of the goal.<sup>65</sup>

As part of the United We Learn initiative, the Commissioner and other KDE staff have had the opportunity to travel to 36 districts across the state to conduct focus groups with 197 participants representing district leaders and staff, school leaders and staff, parents and community members, and students.<sup>66</sup> Meetings with advisory groups and town halls were also held to gather feedback from stakeholder groups. This work

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<sup>63</sup> “Assessment and Accountability in Kentucky Framework.” United We Learn Council. *Version 3.0*. March 2025. [PDF].

<sup>64</sup> “Kentucky United We Learn Council.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 7, 2025.

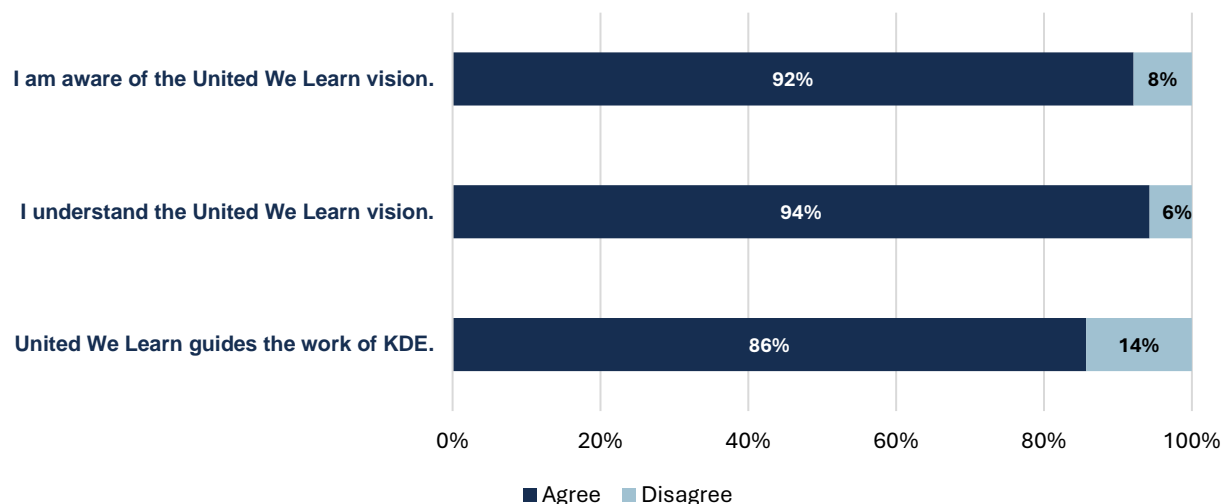
<https://www.education.ky.gov/UnitedWeLearn/KUWLCouncil/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>65</sup> “Goal Level Monitoring Guide Template.” Kentucky Department of Education. *KDE:OC:SPR:SS:2.2025*. [PDF].

<sup>66</sup> “United We Learn Teaching and Learning, KBE Committee, December 4, 2024.” YouTube. December 4, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNMyS7rMbnM>

will culminate in a new state framework for assessment and accountability that will be presented to the General Assembly for approval in spring 2026 and for implementation to begin in summer 2026.<sup>67</sup>

FIGURE 47: SUPERINTENDENTS AND UNITED WE LEARN



Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey.

As shown in Figure 47, almost all superintendent respondents agree that they are *aware* of the United We Learn Vision. Of those who are aware, almost all agree that they *understand* the United We Learn Vision. Most superintendents who are aware of the vision also agree that United We Learn guides the work of KDE, but at a slightly lower rate of agreement than those who understand the vision.

KDE has been strategic and intentional about stakeholder communication around the work of United We Learn. The focus groups and town halls discussed above reflect an effort by KDE to seek feedback and adjust the framework to reflect feedback from the local level. Internally, some offices have been more involved and connected to the United We Learn work than others. In the survey and focus groups, some KDE staff reported difficulty seeing how their work connects to United We Learn, believing that it only touches the work of select KDE offices.

**3.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should create tailored messaging for various stakeholders to support implementation that explains how United We Learn is aligned with the goals in KDE’s Strategic Plan, and how stakeholders fit into both the United We Learn assessment and accountability work and KDE’s strategic goals. Stakeholders should understand how they and/or their division fits into the United We Learn assessment and accountability work as well as the strategic objectives of the Department.

United We Learn and the work to reimagine an accountability model for the state is discussed in greater detail in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section.

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

### Research

**3.3 Observation:** There are redundancies in data exchanged, analyzed, and published across KDE, the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), and the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS).

<sup>67</sup> “Kentucky United We Learn Council.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/UnitedWeLearn/KUWLCouncil/Pages/default.aspx>

According to KRS 7.410, the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), under the direction of the Legislative Research Commission, monitors the elementary and secondary public education system, Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), KDE, the commissioner of education, and local school districts. As part of their research agenda, OEA publishes annual District Data Profiles. The primary audience for the profiles is legislators. OEA also publishes research reports. Recent reports include:

- Student Achievement: Lessons Learned from Kentucky’s Relatively Highest- and Lowest-Performing Schools (2024)
- School District Governance Models and Interventions (2024)
- Kentucky Public School Employee Staffing Shortages (2023)

Another example of an organization producing education-related research is the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), a government organization that collects and links data to evaluate education and workforce efforts in the Commonwealth.<sup>68</sup> Regarded highly by KDE leaders and staff, KYSTATS produces a wealth of data and research publications spanning early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, adult education, career and technical education, and workforce. Recent reports include:

- High School Feedback Report (2025) – interactive report to help show whether Kentucky students are successfully graduating from high school, earning credentials, and gaining employment.
- Teacher Equity Report (2025) – interactive dashboard presenting educational workforce data.
- Dual Credit Feedback Report (2024) – outcomes for high school graduates that attempted dual credit.

As noted in the Department Operations section, KDE’s strategic planning and research team collects and analyzes data, as well as produces research-based reports to help shape Department strategy.<sup>69</sup> Recent reports include:

- School Climate and Educator Well-being in Kentucky (2021)
- Novice Progression (2019)
- Are Kentucky’s Districts Closing the Achievement Gap? (2019)

KDE has not published any internal research briefs on the website since 2021.

While each agency has their own legislative requirements, research agendas, and priorities, there is concern that unnecessary resources are being expended on redundant efforts. For example, OEA’s annual District Data Profiles contain many of the same data that are published in KDE’s School Report Cards. OEA leadership reports that they obtain the data for the profiles from KDE. In this scenario, it is neither economical nor logical for the complimenting agencies to spend double the resources to report out a similar set of data. There are efficiencies to be gained by streamlining efforts related to research publications, and how staff resources and expertise are used across these organizations to produce information that meets legislative requirements and provides information to the public that helps advance Kentucky’s understanding and strategies related to education.

Student Report Cards and potential redundancies in data reporting is also discussed in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section.

**3.3.a Recommendation: KDE, OEA, and KYSTATS should collaborate and rely on each other for data collection, exchange, and analysis for similar or identical research objectives whenever possible.**

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<sup>68</sup> “Our Mission.” Kentucky Center for Statistics. 2025. <https://kystats.ky.gov/About>

<sup>69</sup> “Research.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/research/Pages/default.aspx>



## Governor's Office

### 3.4 **Observation:** KDE and the education and labor agencies have gaps in communication, in alignment around strategic resource planning, and in goal-setting for a unified state-level vision for student success in K12, postsecondary, and career.

The Governor's Office has an Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC); however, KDE is only connected to ELC administratively. KDE must follow administrative regulations set by ELC, some of which are discussed later in this chapter. ELC has its own legislative priorities and works to foster opportunities for lifelong learning, training, and career services while protecting the well-being of Kentucky's workforce.<sup>70</sup> ELC's education mission is to promote early childhood through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, postsecondary education, adult education and credentialed training to provide lifelong opportunities for Kentuckians.<sup>71</sup> Both the Secretary of Labor and Education and KDE's Commissioner expressed the importance of a strong bond between their two agencies. The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is another critical agency attached to the Governor's Office that works with KDE. CPE is a coordinating board overseeing Kentucky's state universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.<sup>72</sup> The Secretary of Education and Labor and the President of the Council on Postsecondary Education sit as ex officio members on the KBE.<sup>73</sup> In interviews, the leaders of CPE and ELC discussed the importance of collaborating with KDE on a global cradle-to-career vision and strategies for all students to be equipped to succeed in postsecondary and the labor market. The importance of continuous improvement and using data and metrics to measure progress towards goals and closing gaps was also noted.

One way CPE is driving this strategy is through the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC), a statewide initiative supporting greater degree completion and successful transition into early career attainment. Part of the work of KYSSC is to strengthen partnerships with high schools, employers, and higher education to increase access to early postsecondary opportunities. Kentucky has an educational attainment goal of 60% of the population with a postsecondary credential or degree by 2030.<sup>74</sup> State leaders noted the importance of K-12 connection with higher education and the employer community to meet these state goals.

KRS 158.645 outlines the capacities required of students in the public education system, which includes knowledge, skills, and values to be successful in life. These capacities are reflected in the state's learning frameworks. Kentucky's postsecondary learning framework, the Kentucky Graduate Profile, aligns the knowledge, skills and abilities that students gain in college with the skills needed for success in the workforce and in life. The profile defines ten essential skills and rubrics for measuring demonstration of those skills, including performance indicators and benchmarks to measure levels of student achievement.<sup>75</sup> CPE has done focused project work to support postsecondary institutions as they implement the framework, including supplying a toolkit of resources for faculty to help with integration and assessment of the essential skills outlined in the profile.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> "Cabinet Overview." Team Kentucky, Education and Labor Cabinet. 2025. <https://elc.ky.gov/About-Us/Pages/Cabinet-Overview.aspx>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> "About the Council: Who We Are." Council for Postsecondary Education. February 7, 2022. [https://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/who\\_we\\_are.html](https://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/who_we_are.html)

<sup>73</sup> "Kentucky Board of Education Members." Kentucky Department of Education. March 12, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/KBE/memb/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>74</sup> "Purpose." The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, Council for Postsecondary Education. 2025. <https://kystudentsuccess.org/purpose/>

<sup>75</sup> "Kentucky Graduate Profile." Council for Postsecondary Education. 2025. <https://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/kygradprofile.html>

<sup>76</sup> "Integrating Essential Workforce Skills into Modern College Curricula." Council for Postsecondary Education. 2024. <https://cpe.ky.gov/trusteeship/2024trusteeship/slides-gpa.pdf>



In 2022, KDE adopted the Portrait of the Learner (PoL) as Kentucky’s P-12 learning framework, which identifies a model set of skills that learners need before they leave school. CPE and KDE staff have worked together to ensure alignment of the learning frameworks, as shown below in Figure 48.

**FIGURE 48: ESSENTIAL SKILLS CROSSWALK: KDE’S PORTRAIT OF A LEARNER & CPE’S KENTUCKY GRADUATE PROFILE**

<i>Essential Skills Crosswalk: KDE's Portrait of a Learner and CPE's Kentucky Graduate Profile</i>	
<b>Portrait of a Learner (KDE)</b>	<b>Kentucky Graduate Profile (CPE)</b>
Effective Communicator	Communications
Critical Thinker Creative Contributor	Critical Thinking
Empowered Learner Critical Thinker	Quantitative Reasoning
Engaged Citizen Effective Communicator Productive Collaborator	Interpersonal Relations
Empowered Learner Creative Contributor Productive Collaborator Effective Communicator	Leadership and Adaptability
Effective Communicator Empowered Learner Productive Collaborator	Professionalism
Engaged Citizen	Civic Engagement
Productive Collaborator Creative Contributor	Teamwork
Empowered Learner	Applied and Integrated Learning
Effective Communicator Critical Thinker	Information Literacy

Source: Illustration from <https://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/kygradprofile.html>

The statewide PoL adopted by KDE was developed and approved for districts to adopt as-is or utilize as a starting point for a district to develop their own version customized to meet local needs. One of the key performance indicators in KDE’s 2024-2029 draft strategic plan is to “increase percentage of districts at each stage of Portrait of a Learner creation – Starting, Spreading or Sustaining.” This relates to KDE’s overall work to reimagine assessment and accountability.

The Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC) is another initiative spearheaded by CPE to strengthen Kentucky’s education pipeline and an example of close collaboration across K-12, higher education, and

workforce. Established in 2021, its work aims to ensure students to have access and opportunity to earn degrees and credentials that lead to sustainable, competitive-wage careers.<sup>77</sup> The Continuum is co-chaired by the Kentucky Lieutenant Governor, CPE President, and KDE Commissioner. Its members have expertise in early childhood, education, and workforce. A major focus of CEC is on stakeholder input and education data analysis to inform strategy, decision-making, and policy recommendations.<sup>78</sup>

While there are formal instances of these aforementioned education and labor state agency leaders interacting through Boards or committees, they reportedly do not meet informally or for the purposes of collaborating on strategy alignment, despite them proclaiming the importance of doing so. Since these agencies are not formally connected through oversight or state-level structures, they set their own priorities and goals. Some specific areas of opportunity for KDE to have more strategic alignment with other state agencies are around their strategic plan and PoL. KDE did not have specific mention of postsecondary or career-readiness in its 2024-2029 strategic plan. KDE has left the state PoL framework to the districts to adopt and adjust based on local needs, which reduces KDE's ability to communicate a state-level standard to which all Kentucky graduates are held. CPE reports that many K-12 graduates are entering postsecondary un- or under-prepared. The agencies have an opportunity to collaborate on shared goals for their primary overlapping stakeholder group--students who are finishing high school and transitioning to postsecondary and career opportunities. Collaborating and aligning on goals, including but not limited to postsecondary and career readiness, credential attainment, educational program alignment with industry needs, employer relationships, funding, and student supports, could go a long way in improving outcomes for students.

**3.4.a Recommendation:** KDE and Kentucky's education and labor agencies should expand their current collaboration to more closely align their efforts, resources, and goals around a state-level vision and strategies for the success of all Kentuckians.

## Educational Cooperatives

### Overview

Kentucky is one of forty-one states that have formally created Education Service Agencies (ESAs) to support local education agencies (LEAs) with implementation of the state education agency's (SEA) regulations and policies. ESAs predominantly operate through one of three primary functions:

- Type A: Intermediary school governance between the SEA and a group of LEAs where the ESA provides services and some functions of the SEA on its behalf
- Type B: Regional agencies that act as extensions of the SEA through state and federal funding
- Type C: Cooperative agencies where two or more member LEAs provide one or more services regionally but are not an extension of the SEA.<sup>79</sup>

Kentucky has nine ESAs, or "educational cooperatives" (further referred to as "cooperatives"), that operate most closely to the function of a Type C ESA, as they provide technical assistance and expertise for the benefit of their member school districts.<sup>80</sup> Figure 49 provides the number of ESAs available to Kentucky's Cooperatives as compared to those available across states:

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<sup>77</sup> "Commonwealth Education Continuum." Council for Postsecondary Education. September 3, 2024. <https://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/cec.html>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> "Educational Service Agencies: Review of Selected/Related Literature." AESA. June 2, 2021. <https://www.aesa.us/2021/06/02/educational-service-agencies-review-of-selected-related-literature/>

<sup>80</sup> "Kentucky Educational Cooperatives." Kentucky Department of Education. August 16, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/about/Pages/Kentucky-Education-and-Special-Education-Cooperatives.aspx>

**FIGURE 49: COMPARISON OF EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES (ESAs) ACROSS STATES:**

State	ESA Name	Quantity
Kentucky	Educational Cooperative	9
Florida	Educational Consortium	2
Indiana	Educational Service Center	8
Mississippi	Association for the Improvement of Schools, Center for Educational Development, Education Initiative Consortium, Regional Education Agency	7
Ohio	Educational Service Center	53
Texas	Region Education Service Center	20
Tennessee	N/A	0

Source: Data retrieved from the Association of Educational Service Agencies website <https://www.aesa.us/2021/06/02/educational-service-agencies-review-of-selected-related-literature/>

Kentucky’s nine educational cooperatives are organized across the state by geographic regions. All school districts in Kentucky have the option to participate in a range of free and fee-based services from one or more of the cooperatives noted in Figure 50:

**FIGURE 50: MAP OF KENTUCKY COOPERATIVES**



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education website <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/about/Pages/Kentucky-Education-and-Special-Education-Cooperatives.aspx>  
 Map retrieved from KYGovMaps Open Data Portal, “KY School Districts,” retrieved from <https://opengisdata.ky.gov/datasets/kygeonet:ky-school-districts/about>

### Governance

The team interviewed executive staff members from four of the state’s nine cooperatives to understand governance and strategic planning. KDE does not have regulatory authority over the cooperatives; rather, the cooperatives are independent entities that cooperate with districts and KDE. Each cooperative is governed by an executive director and a Board of Superintendents from the member districts in the assigned region. Executives noted each cooperative has its own multi-year strategic plan guided by respective Boards of Superintendents and stakeholders to address the needs of districts in the region.

Though executives described an awareness of KDE's strategic initiatives and regulatory updates through monthly meetings with KDE, plans are not intentionally aligned.

**Overall, executive staff expressed a positive working relationship with KDE and shared commitment to KDE's goals of serving districts, teachers, and students across the state through the various services offered at the nine statewide educational cooperatives.**

KDE staff, superintendents, and executives expressed that cooperatives are the most effective method for KDE to provide services and wider communications to district staff at the regional level. However, based on the governance structure, KDE does not manage or require cooperatives to provide the same range of services. The positive working relationship and shared goal to support districts statewide present an opportunity for KDE and the cooperatives to align on strategic goals and resources.

### ***Budget and Services***

Kentucky's nine cooperatives provide "comprehensive education services and programs that support the member districts and their schools."<sup>81</sup> The types and cost structure of services and programs are ample but vary based on the needs of each cooperative's regional membership. While KDE provides some no-cost statewide professional learning resources for various district audiences, most district superintendents and executive staff described the cooperatives as the primary source of professional learning for districts.

**Cooperatives generate revenue through available state and federal grants in addition to fee-for-service technical assistance for member districts in each region. All cooperatives receive some federal funding through KDE to provide special education technical assistance, though it is only a minor portion of the total budget and is not guaranteed through state statute.**

However, the inconsistency of available revenue streams for each of the cooperatives results in a range of services offered regionally. Services can range from convening statewide networks, capacity-building with grant writing and shared bidding, federal compliance training, technology services, virtual and on-site professional development to earn continuing education credit hours, and summer conferences for teachers and administrators.

### ***Communication***

Each of the nine cooperatives operates independently from, but communicates with, KDE on relevant regulations and statewide initiatives that affect regional district implementation. Executive Directors affirmed that they share KDE's goals in supporting districts with needs-based technical assistance. However, as a non-regulatory extension of KDE, participants noted that KDE does not consistently consult with cooperatives prior to determining the level and types of capacity building needed by districts in the field.

#### **3.5 Finding: Consultation between KDE and educational cooperatives is reactive, informal, and primarily focused on professional learning services for districts.**

KDE staff and executive directors for cooperatives generally described a positive, on-going, informal collaboration. Notably, cooperative directors expressed appreciation for the on-going monthly calls with KDE's Chief Academic Officer in the Office of Teaching and Learning to support districts with HQIR implementation statewide. Some cooperative executive directors expressed the need for more frequent and timely information from KDE to plan for appropriate staffing and fiscal resources. Multiple focus group participants also identified opportunities for more frequent communication and technical assistance support from KDE's Special Education and Facilities teams. District requests in these areas were described as highly specific to local context and state regulations, which at times goes beyond the scope of the cooperative's role in these areas.

In support of districts statewide, cooperative executive directors noted they communicate regularly among themselves to understand regional needs and new programs from KDE that may require coordination across entities. This informal communication structure helps cooperatives clarify the current resource

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<sup>81</sup> "Kentucky Educational Cooperatives." Kentucky Department of Education. August 16, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/about/Pages/Kentucky-Education-and-Special-Education-Cooperatives.aspx>

allocation for specific services and how to ensure districts know how and where to access those services across the state.

- 3.5.a **Recommendation:** KDE should establish a comprehensive engagement plan with the educational cooperatives to proactively align goals, success metrics, and resource allocation to support districts with the implementation of strategic initiatives.

### Advisory Groups

The Commissioner also consults with several advisory councils and stakeholder groups to seek input on education issues (see Figure 51). While some of these advisory groups are state mandated, a portion of them are coordinated by KDE and considered the “Commissioner’s Stakeholder Groups.” The membership application and selection process for the Commissioner’s Stakeholder Groups appears to be comprehensive and tailored to ensure appropriate expertise and representation from across the Commonwealth.

FIGURE 51: ADVISORY GROUPS

Stakeholder Groups & Advisory Councils	Meeting Frequency	Published Recommendations for KDE & The Commissioner
<b>COMMISSIONER’S STAKEHOLDER GROUPS</b>		
Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council	Every two months during the academic school year	Yes (2023)
Family Partnership Council (FPC)	Three times annually	Yes (2024)
Local School Board Members Advisory Council (LSBMAC)	Two times annually	
Principals Advisory Council (PrAC)	Four times annually	
School Counselor Advisory Council (SCAC)	Approximately four times annually	
Superintendents Advisory Council (SAC)	Approximately four times annually	
Teachers Advisory Council (TAC)	Four times annually	
<b>STATE MANDATED ADVISORY COUNCILS</b>		
Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee	Approximately twice annually	
Charter Schools Advisory Council*	<i>Meets as needed to review charter applications and make recommendations to KBE</i>	
Committee for Mathematics Achievement (CMA)	Approximately three times annually	Yes (2025)
Kentucky Technical Advisory Committee	Approximately three to four times annually	Yes (2024)
Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC)	One week ahead of regular KBE meetings, approximately six times annually	
Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee (Read to Achieve Grant)*	<i>Meets as needed</i>	

Stakeholder Groups & Advisory Councils	Meeting Frequency	Published Recommendations for KDE & The Commissioner
School Curriculum Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC)	Approximately four times annually	
State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education	Four times annually	
State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC)	Four times annually	Yes (2024)
State Textbook Commission	<i>Has not met since 2015 due to insufficient funding<sup>82</sup></i>	

Source: Data retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education website.

### 3.6 **Finding:** The advisory groups are inconsistent in their function and purpose.

The team reviewed publicly available meeting notes, meeting summaries, and agendas for the advisory groups listed in Figure 51. The advisory group meetings help to serve as an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, explanations of new initiatives or policies, and to gather feedback on current issues. Presenters often develop materials for members that summarize the information presented and can be shared with stakeholders. The meeting materials suggest that the Commissioner’s Stakeholder Groups’ meetings are primarily dedicated to KDE staff presenting new policies, initiatives, research, and current topics of interest to members, and holding time for feedback and discussion. Those groups all follow a similar meeting structure, and meeting recordings are often publicly available. The state mandated advisory councils each have a specific purpose and structure dictated by legislation.

In some cases, the groups appear to function more as a professional learning community rather than an advising council to KDE. In other cases, the groups have formal recommendations for KDE (noted in Figure 51), but it is unclear how those recommendations are used. There does not appear to be a mechanism for tracking recommendations that come out of the groups through either informal meeting discussion or that are voted on and published.

#### 3.6.a **Recommendation:** KDE should assess the efficacy and impact of each advisory group and revise structures as needed. This may include:

- Creating opportunities for members to drive the agenda and produce recommendations to formally advise KDE and the Commissioner.
- Establishing a clear system for recording advisory group recommendations and responding to them. This includes recommendations that come out of advisory group meetings as well as those that are formally published by select groups. KDE should be able to show how those recommendations were considered or implemented by the Department, and how they align with KDE’s larger strategic plan goals and objectives.
- Tighter alignment between formal recommendations that come out of the groups and KDE’s strategic goals and objectives.

## STATE LAWS & REGULATIONS

During focus groups and interviews, staff cited state regulations with ease and frequency when discussing their work. The team noted that compared with other state education agency reviews they have conducted, the intensity of focus on regulations by staff across all levels is unusual. While it is impressive that staff are very knowledgeable about regulations, it also appeared to create an environment in which the focus is on compliance rather than innovation and improvement.

<sup>82</sup> “High-Quality Instructional Resource Adoption.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/default.aspx>

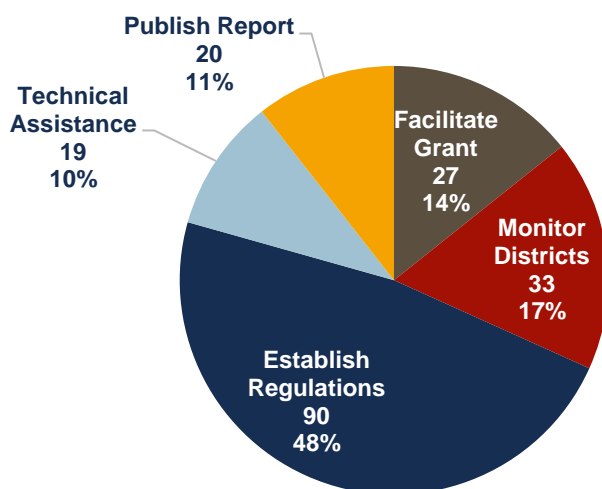


### 3.7 **Observation:** KDE appears overly focused on compliance with laws and regulations.

KRS 156.240 requires the chief state school officer to publish a complete set of Kentucky laws and regulations every two years related to schools and education. In response to this requirement, KDE publishes the Kentucky School Law Book. This document is 2,006 pages and is available for free on KDE’s website and for purchase on Lexis Nexus in paper format. The Kentucky School Law Book is annotated with applicable court opinions, attorney general opinions, and related administrative regulations. Summaries of court decisions are included, and the document is also indexed by topic. Given the volume of information and length of the document, the Kentucky School Law Book appears to require a great deal of time and resources to assemble and annotate. The utility of the Kentucky School Law Book, including the frequency of access and user type, is unknown. The most recent version was published in October 2024 under Commissioner Fletcher.<sup>83</sup>

The team reviewed over 300 state statutes related to education to determine the extent to which KDE’s activities were mandated by state legislation. The review revealed 188 legislatively mandated activities, including establishing administrative regulations, facilitating grants, and publishing annual reports for the legislature. The 188 legislatively mandated activities, as shown in Figure 52, are not mutually exclusive, as a law may require one or more activities. The most common requirement found was for KDE or KBE to promulgate administrative regulations or establish requirements related to laws and department and district activities, programs, grants, etc.

**FIGURE 52: COUNT OF KDE ACTIVITIES MANDATED BY STATE LEGISLATION**



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky’s Legislative Research Commission website.

During focus group discussions, while KDE staff noted they had a variety of workstreams that were legislatively mandated, they did not necessarily understand the “why” behind the requirements or how it connected to student success or goals of the Department. The team aimed to identify specific state regulations cited by staff that were impeding them from working efficiently and effectively. Those regulations are cited and discussed throughout this report.

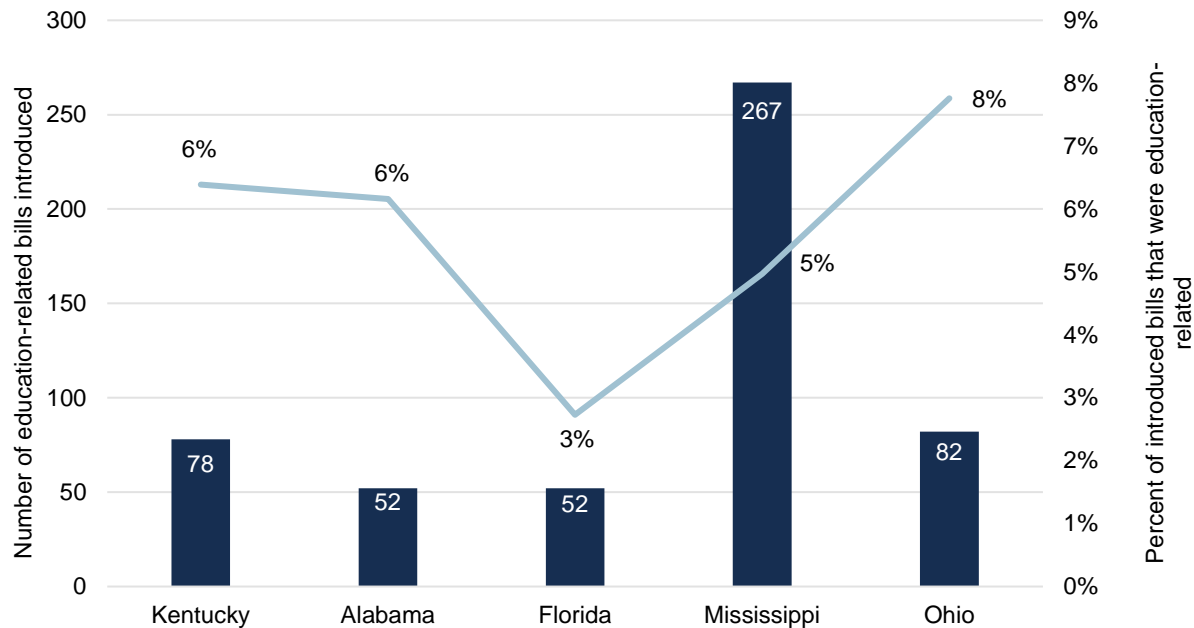
The team also reviewed Kentucky state legislation that was introduced or passed in the 2024 session and compared the volume to comparison states. As shown in Figure 53, Kentucky had a higher percentage of education-related bills introduced in 2024 than Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi. Although 78 education-related bills were introduced in 2024, only 20 became law. As shown in Figure 54, between 2022 and 2025, the number of education-related bills that become law has remained between 18 and 22 annually, despite

<sup>83</sup> “Kentucky School Law Book.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 17, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Pages/Kentucky-School-Laws.aspx>



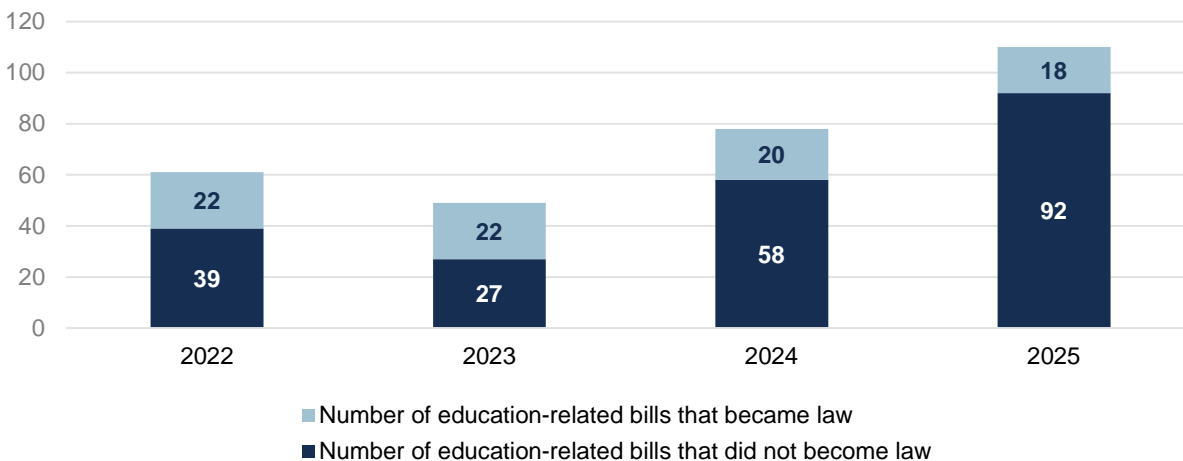
the high volume of education-related bills introduced. As part of their role, KDE’s policy advisors track and research bills before they become law. This data shows that this practice may lead to inefficiencies in time and resources, since policy advisors spend time tracking and researching many bills that never become law. The role of policy advisors is discussed in more detail in the Department Operations section.

**FIGURE 53: EDUCATION-RELATED BILLS INTRODUCED IN 2024, BY STATE**



Source: Data retrieved from Official State legislation websites. Education-related bills defined as House and Senate bills referred to House and Senate Education committees in 2024. Education-related bills addressing higher education or preschool were excluded. Tennessee is excluded as most bills introduced in Tennessee have companion bills, meaning identical bills are introduced in both houses. As a result, the education-related bill count in Tennessee is artificially high because most bills are counted twice.<sup>84</sup>

**FIGURE 54: KENTUCKY EDUCATION-RELATED BILLS INTRODUCED AND THAT BECAME LAW, 2022-2025**



<sup>84</sup> “How a Bill Becomes a Law.” Tennessee General Assembly. <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/about/billtolaw.html>

Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky’s Legislative Research Commission website. Education-related bills defined as House and Senate bills referred to House and Senate Education committees in 2024. Education-related bills addressing higher education or preschool were excluded.

**3.7.a Recommendation: KDE should strengthen its relationship with the General Assembly through consistent communication and collaboration to prioritize impactful legislation for Kentucky students.**

Consistent communication and collaboration efforts between the two entities should assist with formulating and prioritizing legislation that is likely to have a positive impact on KDE and Kentucky students. Further, to increase greater understanding of enacted legislation related to education, both parties should take reasonable steps to explain the purpose and intention behind new laws to relevant stakeholders, including impacted staff at KDE. Greater legislative awareness will likely mitigate any potential confusion or perspective of arbitrariness.

**CULTURE & COMMUNICATIONS**

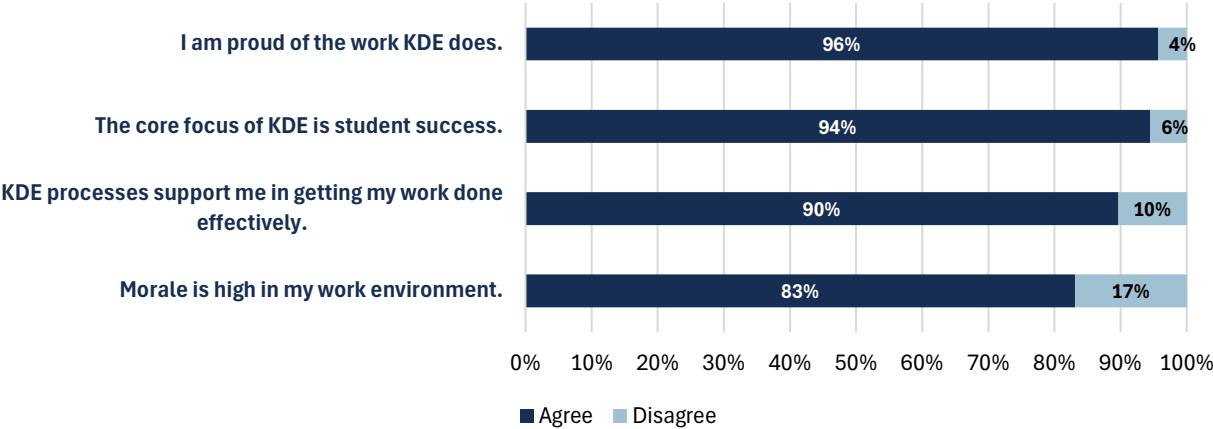
In the data collection, topics related to KDE culture, communication, collaboration, and transparency were some of the most cited themes among stakeholders who participated in interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Feedback about communication—both internal amongst KDE staff and externally to districts, families, and the public—were generally positive with some noted opportunities for improvement.

**Culture & Climate**

The team observed that 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.

**KDE has built a positive and trusting culture that can be leveraged to support improvement efforts.**

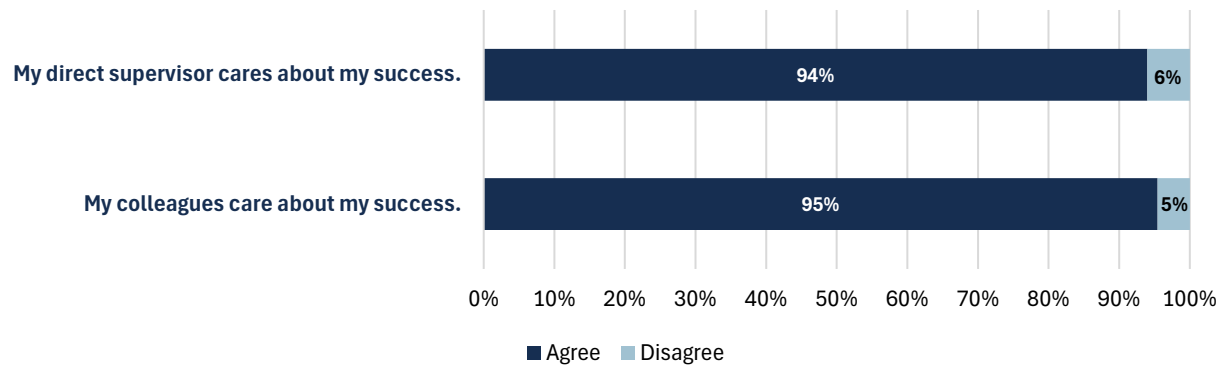
FIGURE 55: KDE STAFF AGENCY MORALE AND PRIDE



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

As shown in Figure 55, almost all KDE staff respondents are proud of the work KDE does and believe the core focus of KDE is student success. Most (90%) feel supported by KDE in getting their work done. While most respondents agreed with the statement, 17% of KDE staff respondents do not agree that morale is high in their work environment. The Office of the Commissioner had the highest rates of disagreement with this statement as compared to other offices, with half of respondents disagreeing with this statement.

FIGURE 56: KDE STAFF CLIMATE



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

Figure 56 shows almost all KDE staff respondents believe their direct supervisor and their colleagues care about their success.

### Transparency

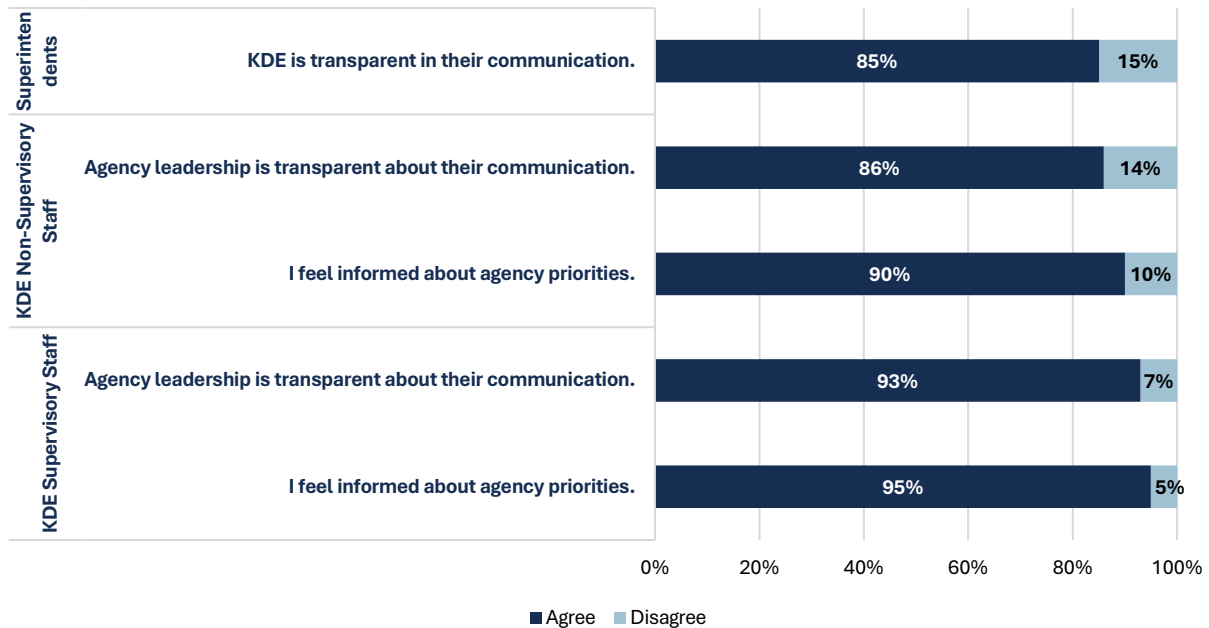
The Commissioner's Office distributes weekly updates to superintendents across the state on policy issues, state assessment reports, and upcoming events. The Commissioner's weekly updates from 2023 through 2025 are publicly available on the Kentucky Department of Education's website.<sup>85</sup> The Commissioner also holds monthly webcasts for superintendents, and then ad hoc webcasts for superintendents, principals and teachers, as needed.<sup>86</sup>

Stakeholder perceptions regarding transparency from KDE and from agency leadership were positive. Some superintendents noted in the focus groups that transparency seemed to be a priority for the new Commissioner.

<sup>85</sup> "Commissioners Weekly Messages." Kentucky Department of Education. April 9, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/Pages/Commissioners\\_Weekly\\_Messages.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/Pages/Commissioners_Weekly_Messages.aspx)

<sup>86</sup> "Commissioner's Webcasts." Kentucky Department of Education. February 29, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/web/Pages/default.aspx>

**FIGURE 57: KDE TRANSPARENCY ACROSS STAKEHOLDERS**



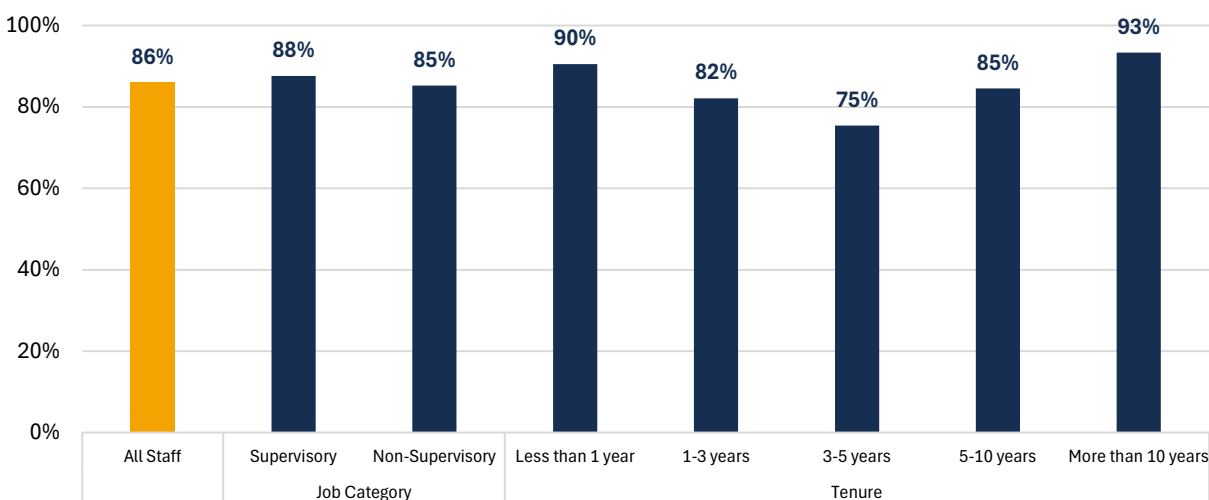
Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent and KDE Staff Surveys.

As shown in Figure 57, both superintendents and KDE staff survey respondents agreed that KDE or agency leadership is transparent in their communication. Among KDE staff respondents, supervisors had higher rates of agreement with the statements regarding agency leadership transparency in communication and feeling informed about agency priorities compared to non-supervisory staff.

### Collaboration

As shown in Figure 58, the majority of KDE staff respondents believe KDE works effectively across divisions. Rates of agreement are similar regardless of whether staff respondents were in a supervisory or non-supervisory role. Those individuals who are new (less than one year) or have been at KDE for more than ten years reported higher rates of agreement with this statement, while those respondents with tenure of three to ten years reported slightly lower levels of agreement that KDE collaborates well across divisions.

**FIGURE 58: KDE STAFF CROSS DIVISION COLLABORATION**



Source: Data retrieved from the KDE Staff Survey.

KDE staff survey respondents noted a need for increased collaboration across divisions who have shared initiatives or joint projects. For example, the Division of Early Literacy and the Office of Continuous Improvement support school turnaround work, but staff note that sometimes they have conflicting messaging to schools. While senior leaders have structured, routine opportunities for communication and collaboration across offices and divisions, front-line staff within the divisions often do not get those opportunities to hear from and talk with other offices to understand how their work might impact one another.

The belief among superintendents who participated in focus groups was that collaboration with KDE has increased since Commissioner Fletcher was appointed. They suggested it is due to the familiarity the Commissioner has with districts within Kentucky and relationships previously formed before assuming the role. The Commissioner often reaches out to get superintendent opinions and superintendents commended the Commissioner's participation in roundtables related to United We Learn.

## Customer Service

Part of KDE's mission includes "providing leadership and support." Customer service—both internally for KDE staff and externally for LEAs—is an important component of KDE's work. One of KDE's operational objectives in their 2024-2029 strategic plan is to improve customer satisfaction. The Department has a goal of increasing the average customer satisfaction index for the following indicators: "I know who to contact to get information" and "KDE values feedback" from 56% in 2023-2024 to 66% in 2028-2029 on the KDE Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The key performance indicators associated with meeting this goal include:

- Increase in the Superintendent satisfaction rate for "KDE is responsive in communications"
- Increase the District Administrator satisfaction rate for "KDE leverages social media effectively"
- Maintain high agreement level on biannual Pulse Check

The strategy associated with meeting these goals is for KDE to develop a Communication Plan. The details and timeline for this plan were not indicated.

In focus groups, superintendents shared overall positive perceptions of both the customer service and technical assistance provided by KDE, citing many examples of KDE being responsive to phone calls, questions, and providing guidance and support across a wide range of areas. The offices of Teaching and Learning, Finance and Operations, and Technology received repeated praise for their customer service and support to districts. Special Education and facilities were two KDE areas most frequently cited by superintendents where they have experienced challenges related to cumbersome processes and unhelpful staff and guidance.

This positive sentiment matches data collected in a month-long pulse survey collected by KDE in January 2025. The pulse check survey was included in the footer of every email from a KDE staff member. It included two questions.

- 96% of those who responded stated they were satisfied/very satisfied with the support they received
- 94% agreed/strongly agreed that the KDE staff member was courteous

For context, KDE made and received over one million phone calls (1,003,603) during the span of approximately six years, 2019-2024. About 27% of those calls were by or for OELE, with the majority of these calls likely related to teacher licensure questions.<sup>87</sup>

Throughout every superintendent focus group, the superintendents were optimistic that the new Commissioner understood their issues and wanted to increase responsiveness to their needs. They believed he is service-oriented, and that will make a big difference in KDE. Superintendents are encouraged the Commissioner has been asking for feedback through convenings and in one-on-one discussions. His

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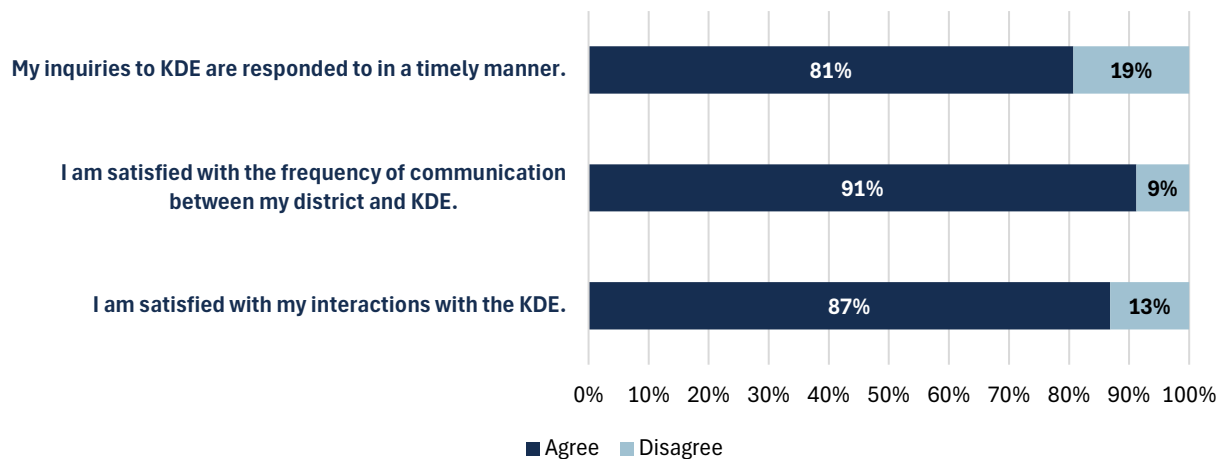
<sup>87</sup> "KDE Phone System Call Activity Dashboard 2." Kentucky Department of Education. [PDF].

actions are sending a clear message that he is committed to serving districts and helping KDE become a partner with districts in supporting students in all districts.

Nonetheless, challenges that superintendents in focus groups associated with KDE's communication and customer service included KDE's level of expertise, accuracy and response time.

- **Staff qualifications:** Superintendents in focus groups expressed the perception that new KDE staff may lack the experience necessary to support district needs. For example, they report that newly hired staff are frequently unable to answer questions asked by their district team during onsite visits.
- **Response time:** Superintendents in focus groups were aware of KDE's expectation to respond to communication from districts (i.e., emails, calls) within 24 hours. Yet, that timeline has not always been met in the district's experiences. In some instances, communication was reported to come too late to address an issue that needed immediate attention. In the survey, superintendents noted that response time and overall communication have greatly improved since Commissioner Fletcher began his role. There were minimal survey comments regarding instances of continued unresponsiveness.
- **Accuracy:** Superintendents in focus groups stated answers often vary among KDE staff. It was also noted in the superintendent survey responses that sometimes districts get different answers from KDE consultants, with a specific example cited regarding how funding can be used. Superintendents shared that as a group, they are very close, and they will call each other for clarification during these instances. They also lean heavily on the cooperatives for clarification and support.

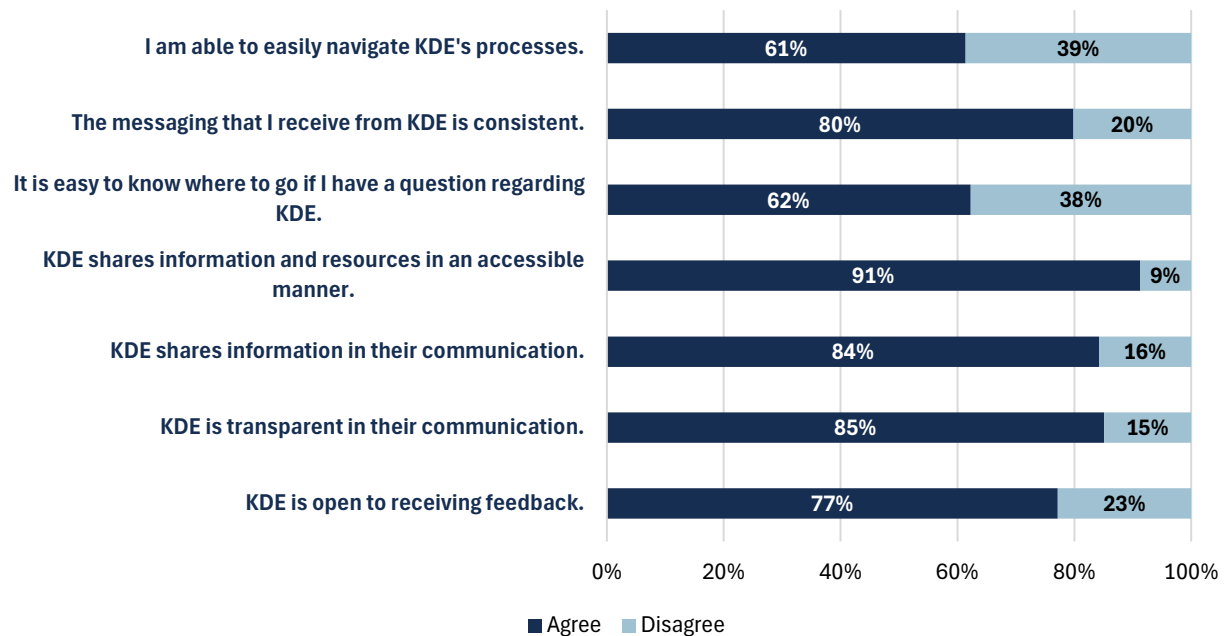
FIGURE 59: SUPERINTENDENT COMMUNICATION WITH KDE



Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey.

As shown in Figure 59, superintendent survey respondents tended to be satisfied with their communications with KDE. They had the highest rate of agreement with their satisfaction with the frequency of communication their district has with KDE but agreed at a slightly lower rate that their inquiries to KDE were responded to in a timely manner.

**FIGURE 60: COMMUNICATION FROM KDE AND NAVIGABILITY OF KDE PROCESSES**



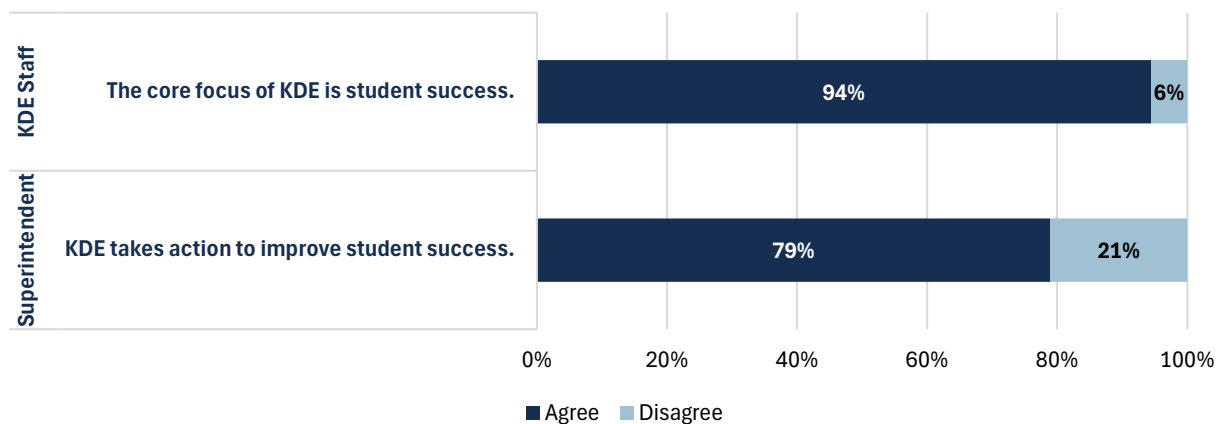
Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey.

As shown in Figure 60, superintendent survey respondents had different rates of agreements regarding communications from KDE along with the navigability of KDE’s processes. Over 90% of respondents agreed that KDE shares information and resources in an accessible manner. On the other hand, almost 40% of respondents disagreed that they can easily navigate KDE’s processes and that it is easy to know where to go when they have a question regarding KDE.

### Core Focus and Impact

KDE staff and superintendent stakeholder respondents expressed positive sentiments related to KDE’s focus on improving student success. As shown in Figure 61, nearly all KDE staff agreed the core focus of KDE is student success. Almost 80% of superintendents agreed KDE takes action to improve student success.

**FIGURE 61: KDE’S FOCUS AND ACTIONS AROUND STUDENT SUCCESS BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

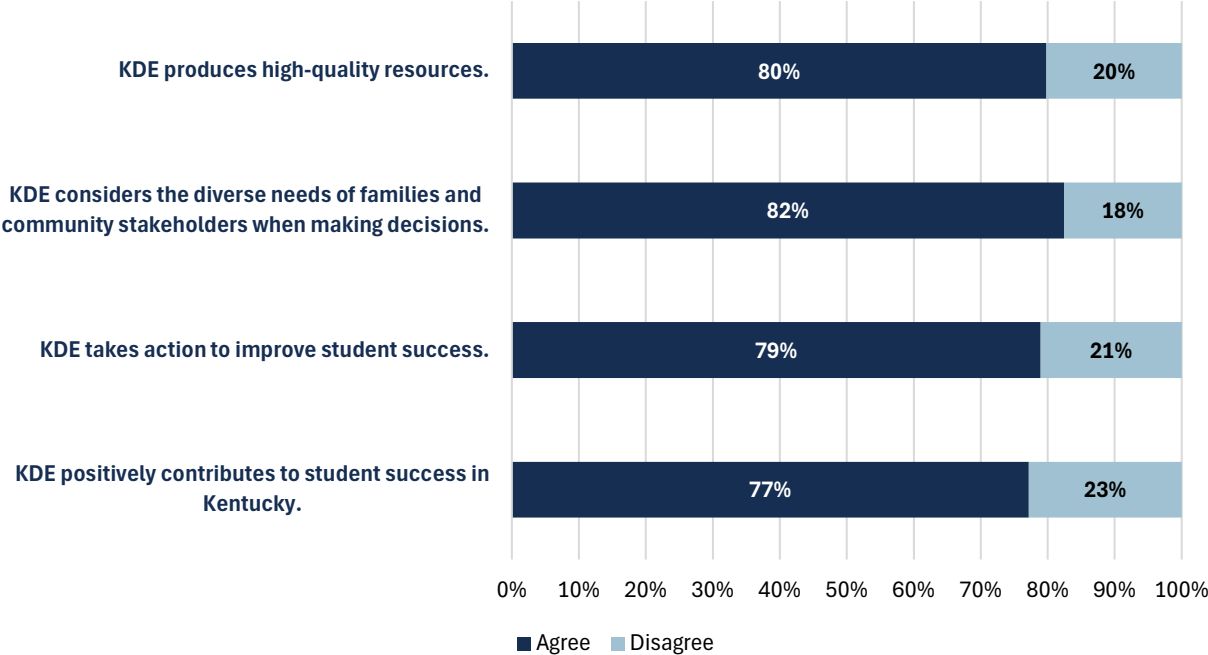


Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent and KDE Staff Surveys.



As shown in Figure 62, the majority of superintendent respondents agreed 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.

**FIGURE 62: SUPERINTENDENT VIEWS ON KDE’S IMPACT**



Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey.

# STATE BOARD OVERSIGHT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

State Boards of Education play a critical role in shaping education policy, overseeing statewide education systems and ensuring accountability at the school, district, and state level. This chapter assesses the overall function and effectiveness of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE or the Board), including its oversight of the Commissioner of Education.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Understanding the historical context of KBE helps to frame the analysis of current Board effectiveness. Over the years, there have been political shifts related to the authority of the Board over education in Kentucky.

During the 1980s, KBE members were appointed by the Governor with little structural oversight. The Board had little direct influence over local districts with much of the power resting at the district level. An elected Superintendent of Public Instruction was the chief state school officer at the time.

One of the most pivotal events in the history of Kentucky education was the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). The legislation resulted from a 1989 landmark court ruling (*Rose v. Council for Better Education*, 790 S.W.2d 186 (Ky. 1989)). That ruling declared the Kentucky public school funding system to be unconstitutional. Under KERA, KBE members were still appointed by the Governor; however, the Board was restructured to function as a more independent, policy-driven entity under KRS 156.029. KBE was also given the sole authority to appoint the Commissioner of Education, and, in turn, the Commissioner was granted more power in overseeing school accountability, curriculum, and funding. KBE was also given authority to intervene in “failing schools.”

During the mid to late 1990s, Republican and Democratic administrations clashed over the pace and direction of KERA reforms. While legislators occasionally proposed modifications to the Board’s structure, the core governance framework from KERA remained.

In 2019, Governor Andrew Graham Beshear removed and replaced all 11 voting members.

In 2022, KBE introduced a non-voting teacher member position. The Commissioner’s Teacher Advisory Council reviews applicants and recommends three candidates to the Board. KBE selects one candidate to serve from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Similarly, a non-voting student member position was established with the Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council reviewing applications and recommending candidates to the Board. The selected student serves a one-year term, aligning with the fiscal year.

In 2023, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 107, amending KRS 156.148 to alter the appointment process for the Commissioner of Education to be confirmed by the Kentucky Senate.

## BOARD COMPOSITION

**4.1 Observation: The expertise of the State Board of Education members is heavily weighted towards education professionals.** This distribution may impede the Board’s ability to fully represent Kentucky’s interests.

The current Board is made up of 15 members as outlined in KRS 156.029.

- Two Ex-Officio members – Secretary of the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet and President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.
- A teacher and student as non-voting members.
- Seven members representing each of the Supreme Court Districts of Kentucky and four At-Large members.

The Board position for District Three has the most recently appointed member, with an appointment in February 2025.

KRS 156.029(2) states that “appointments of the voting members shall be made without reference to occupation.” Of the current 11 voting members, seven have more than 30 years of experience in public schools. Of the remaining members, three are former or current education leaders in Kentucky (university president, parent/family advocate, and community college president). There is no current private industry or business representation on the Board. In Board member interviews, several members stated that having so many former educators—and in particular former superintendents—was a strength of the Board.

In contrast to appointed State Boards of Education in comparison states, Kentucky has the greatest number of former educators. All of the appointed State Boards of Education in comparison states included business representatives.

**FIGURE 63: COMPARISON STATE BOARD COMPOSITION**

States	Elected or Appointed	Number of Voting Members	Role Breakdown	Number & Percent with a Background in K-12 Education (of appointed members)
<b>Kentucky</b>	Appointed	11	At-Large Member: 4 Supreme Court Districts: 7  <i>Non-voting:</i> Ex Officio Member: 2 Student Member: 1 Teacher Member: 1	Number: 8 Percent: 73%
<b>Alabama</b>	Elected	8	State Board District Representative: 8	N/A
<b>Florida</b>	Appointed	7	Chair: 1 Vice Chair: 1 Members: 5	Number: 1 Percent: 14%
<b>Mississippi</b>	Appointed	9	Teacher Representative: 1 School Administrator Representative: 1 Supreme Court Districts: 3 At-Large Members: 4  <i>Non-voting:</i> Student Representative: 2	Number: 3 Percent: 33%
<b>Ohio</b>	11 Elected 8 Appointed	19	State Board District: 11 At-Large Members: 8	Number: 2 (of 8 appointed) Percent: 25%
<b>Tennessee</b>	Appointed	9	Congressional Districts: 9  <i>Non-voting:</i> Executive Director of Higher Education Commission: 1 Student Member: 1	Number: 3 Percent: 33%

Source: Retrieved from Official State and State Education Department websites.

KRS 156.029(2) also states the Board must reflect equal gender representation, proportional representation of the two leading political parties, and proportional minority representation. This statute includes parameters around residency length in Kentucky, minimum education requirements and a minimum age. The Board composition meets these representation requirements. The team did not identify a comparison state that had this level of composition detail included in state statute.

There are four voting members and two non-voting members with terms that expire in 2026.

- 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.

## BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

### 4.2 **Finding:** The Board has not completed a self-assessment since 2022.

School Board self-evaluations help to identify areas for improvement, ensure legal and ethical compliance, enhance decision-making, drive fidelity to a common mission, and foster community trust. It is a critical component of good Board hygiene. In December 2022, the KBE meeting included a presentation from the President and CEO of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) on the results of a Self-Assessment Survey completed by Board members.

Findings from the self-assessment were broken into four categories. These are:

- Mission, Priorities and Goals
- Agendas, Meetings and Support
- Collegiality and Collective Voice
- Stakeholder Engagement and Public Interaction

Eleven Kentucky State Board of Education members completed the Self-Assessment between October 13 and October 26, 2022. The Board assessed themselves highly across all areas.

- No Board member responded “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree” to any item.
- Of the 38 multiple choice items, 36 had 100% of respondents indicating “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree.” Of these, 21 items had 80% or more of responses scoring “strongly agree.”

Evidence could not be found that the Board had completed a subsequent self-assessment.

- 4.2.a **Recommendation:** The Board should set and adhere to a regular schedule for self-assessment.

The four categories from this self-assessment were used to organize our analysis of current Board effectiveness, based on review of all Board meetings held from December 2023 to February 2025.

## BOARD MISSION, PRIORITIES, & GOALS

### *Board's Goals*

### 4.3 **Observation:** The Board's goals are not measurable or actionable, nor do they appear to inform Board activity.

In October 2024, the Board unanimously adopted their goals for 2024-2025 and pledged to finalize a strategic plan in the spring of this year.

Goals were narrowed to three broader statements:

- Fostering Vibrant Student Learning Experiences
- Advancing Educational Innovation and Excellence
- Cultivating Collaborative Partnerships

These goals also included a vision committed to supporting equal opportunities for all students, particularly those from underserved communities. Additionally, the Board approved a much more detailed document articulating their legislative priorities.

The language of the Board goals, however, does not allow for easy measurement of progress nor a clear definition of steps to attain said goals. Some goals are multi-year initiatives, and they cannot be achieved within a one-year period. For example, they describe supporting the “development and implementation of an accountability system that values innovative teaching practices and vibrant learning experiences.” This

appears to be tied to the reimagined assessment and accountability system under United We Learn, which will take several years to achieve full-scale implementation.

The goals also do not articulate the Board's role in achieving these goals. One goal includes a subcomponent to promoting improvement through "community-based accountability measures," which would suggest that the Board and Department would not be providing oversight. Another goal discusses enhancing policies to strengthen the teacher pipeline, which seems to suggest the answer to a major national challenge of attracting people to the teaching profession rests within policy and regulation.

The goals do contain language that is aligned, in part, to the broad goals of the United We Learn initiative. There is no mention of any data or evidence that would determine whether the Board is meeting any of their goals.

Based on a review of meeting agendas and minutes, the Board did not discuss their goals in the three regular Board meetings after these goals were established. The team did not find evidence to suggest that the goals are strategically informing the Board's activities.

**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.

## Board Evaluation of the Commissioner

### Background

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) created an appointed Commissioner of Education position as the chief state school official to replace the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Education Management Selection Commission selected the first Commissioner who took office on January 1, 1991.

Today, KBE is responsible for appointing the Commissioner, subject to confirmation by the Senate, to serve for a term not exceeding four years. The Commissioner acts as the executive and administrative officer of KBE in administering educational matters and functions under KBE's control. In addition to carrying out all duties assigned by law and executing the educational policies, orders, directives, and administrative functions of the Board, the Commissioner oversees the work of all personnel employed by KDE. As noted in Figure 64, KDE has had four commissioners, including two interims, during the examination period.

FIGURE 64: TIMELINE OF KDE COMMISSIONERS FOR FY 2021 THROUGH 2024



Source: APA, based on information gathered by the APA.

**Commissioner’s Goals**

The evaluation process for the Commissioner by the Board appears to be an annual item at the Regular Meeting of the Board in October of each year. Given recent commissioner turnover, the Board has not evaluated a commissioner since 2022.

- **October 2022:** The Board evaluated Commissioner Glass
- **October 2023:** Since there was an Interim Superintendent, an evaluation did not take place
- **October 2024:** Commissioner Fletcher set annuals goals and will receive his first evaluation in 2025

The Commissioner goals were formulated for the year 2024-2025 and presented at the Regular Board Meeting on October 7, 2024. The Board unanimously approved the goals along with the Commissioner’s Evaluation and Communication Plan for 2024-2025.

As part of the Board Retreat in August 2024, a representative of the Kentucky Commissioner search firm, McPherson and Jacobsen, facilitated a workshop on High Achieving Leadership Teams with the Board and Commissioner. Board Members were also given the opportunity by the facilitator to cite the one major goal they had for the Commissioner and the evidence needed to verify success. At the end of a ten-minute discussion, several goals were put forth—move the United We Learn agenda forward, recommend a new Accountability plan, be visible, support teachers and students, build relationships with legislators and superintendents, etc. The discussion ended with several goals; however, no evidence to measure any of the goals was offered.

The Commissioner’ goals center around advancing the United We Learn Initiative, development of a new assessment and accountability system that aligns with United We Learn and has broad field support, improving KDE’s visibility and external relationships, addressing teacher recruitment and retention, and maintaining and building on the Board’s relationship with the General Assembly.

**FIGURE 65: COMMISSIONER’S GOALS**

#	Goal
1	Provide strong leadership to advance the Kentucky United We Learn initiative across all educational levels through intentional engagement and strategic communication.
2	Support the development of an assessment and accountability system that aligns with the Kentucky United We Learn moonshot and garners widespread support from educators, legislators, and stakeholders.
3	Increase KDE’s visibility and build genuine, trusting relationships with educators, administrators, students and families across the state.
4	Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address critical education workforce issues, with a focus on teacher recruitment, retention, and support.
5	Build and maintain strong collaborative relationships with members of the Kentucky General Assembly.

Source: Retrieved from the October 7, 2024 Kentucky Board of Education Regular Meeting minutes, <https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4388&PublicMeetingID=46770&AgencyTypeID=>

The Board accepted the Commissioner’s Evaluation and Communication Plan based on the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Chief Evaluation Tool and the Commissioner’s goals established by the Board.

**Commissioner’s Evaluation and Communication Plan**

In a one-page document based on the CCSSO Chief Evaluation Tool, the Commissioner indicated he will provide weekly updates to the Board, weekly emails to superintendents, Media Releases, and a summary of media headlines from Kentucky and the nation. In addition, he will continue to meet bi-weekly with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board and have targeted communication with Board members as needed. The CCSSO document is centered around five key leadership competencies: Symbolic, Cultural, Educational,

Human, and Technical. These were the same five factors used in the Board's evaluation of Commissioner Glass in October 2022.

Finally, Commissioner Fletcher will provide a self-reflection on each of the five CCSSO competencies and a narrative detailing progress on his five goals. The self-reflection and narrative are due 30 days before the date of the evaluation. Board members will review the Commissioner's self-reflection and provide comments and feedback, highlighting any strengths and opportunities for growth. The Chair and Vice Chair will summarize the materials and present them to the full Board for approval of the Commissioner's evaluation.

Commissioner Fletcher has put forth a very ambitious plan for his evaluation. The process of publicly releasing the Board's legislative priorities, the Board and Commissioner goals, and the Commissioner's Evaluation Plan makes the whole process extremely transparent. Though the Board meeting made clear that the evaluation is to be qualitative, the language of the Commissioner's goals and the CCSSO competencies are very broad. The time it will take for the Commissioner to comply with what he has promised is significant.

### **Board Action**

#### **4.4 Observation: The Board does not balance support for the Department with critical oversight of its functions and performance.**

The overall statutory and regulatory responsibilities of the Board may not be as broad as other states; however, the claim that education is strictly locally controlled is not accurate. KBE has the authority to set broad educational policies and regulations for Kentucky's public schools, from elementary through postsecondary education. Presentations by KDE staff are often on matters over which the Board has authority.

A review of the Board meetings over a 14-month period shows a pattern of moving through agenda items and finishing meetings without discussing and recommending any actions going forward. Presentations and meetings end with the Board passively accepting various reports without an action plan or next steps.

In most cases, agenda items are ongoing matters that require further action. Board members should be asking if the Department needs to do more, or the Board itself needs to follow up. For example, when the Board receives a report on the budget, are there policy changes the Board could entertain to address concerns embedded in proposed legislation? Should the Board invite a member of the General Assembly that has filed a bill, or should the Commissioner be directed to follow up with that individual? Subjects such as the difficulties of recruiting teachers or the importance of including career pathways for students are discussed at length without any consideration of the next steps for the Board or Department via the Board.

- 4.4.a Recommendation: The Board should execute its oversight role by engaging in action-focused discussions and providing critical feedback during Board meetings.** Share presentations or other materials ahead of time to allow Board members to consider questions and points of discussion.

## **BOARD AGENDAS, MEETINGS, & SUPPORT**

### **Meeting Frequency**

#### **4.5 Observation: Board meetings may not be frequent enough to make a meaningful impact on outcomes.** However, it appears efforts are made between meetings to keep the Board informed, engaged, and able to make timely decisions.

The Board typically meets every other month over two half days primarily at the KDE office in Frankfort, Kentucky. In interviews, Board members reported that the every-other-month cadence is helpful to those members who have longer travel distances to Frankfort. The Board also uses this format to accommodate Board Subcommittee meetings



KRS 156.060 states the Board must meet at least every three months. Of the comparison State Boards, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Ohio all meet at a greater frequency than the Kentucky Board of Education.

**FIGURE 66: COMPARISON STATE BOARD MEETING CADENCE**

State	Frequency of Board Meetings
<b>Kentucky</b>	Meetings are held every other month over two half days.
<b>Alabama</b>	Meeting followed by work session held once a month on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month. Retreat held twice a year.
<b>Florida</b>	Meetings are held every one to two months with eight scheduled in 2025 and nine held in 2024.
<b>Mississippi</b>	Meetings are held once a month. Hold Special-Called Board Meetings as needed.
<b>Ohio</b>	Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.
<b>Tennessee</b>	Meetings are held four times per year.

Source: Retrieved from Official State and State Education Department websites.

4.5.a **Recommendation:** The Board should assess the efficacy of its current meeting frequency.

### Meeting Duration & Attendance

Meetings vary in duration. The June 2024 meeting was a total of four hours and five minutes over a two-day period. Whereas the August 2024 meeting ran for seven hours and 58 minutes. Apart from ex-officio members who are non-voting members, Board member meeting attendance is strong.

**FIGURE 67: KBE MEETING DURATION & ATTENDANCE**

Month	Date	Duration	Members Absent
<b>December 2023</b>	12/6/2023	2:23	2 (Link, Vacancy)
	12/7/2023	3:49	2 (Link, Vacancy)
<b>February 2024</b>	2/7/2024	3:35	3 (Thompson, Link, Vacancy)
<b>April 2024</b>	4/9/2024	1:05	3 (Thompson, Pile, Vacancy)
	4/10/2024	2:29	3 (Link, Pile, Vacancy)
<b>June 2024</b>	6/5/2024	1:34	3 (Thompson, Bloodworth, Vacancy)
	6/6/2024	2:31	3 (Thompson, Vacancy)
<b>August 2024</b>	8/7/2024	4:14	5 (Thompson, Pile, 3 Vacancies) *
	8/8/2024	3:44	3 (Thompson, Pile, Poe)
<b>October 2024</b>	10/7/2024	2:21	1 (Thompson)
	10/8/2024	2:47	0
<b>December 2024</b>	12/4/2024	1:41	3 (Thompson, Link, Vacancy)
	12/5/2024	2:51	3 (Borchers, Link, Vacancy)
<b>February 2025</b>	2/5/2025	2:59	2 (Thompson, Long)
	2/6/2025	3:46	2 (Thompson, Long)

\*Riley, Bowling, and Adams left Board. Source: Retrieved from the KBE Portal.

<https://portal.ksba.org/public/Agency.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4388&AgencyTypeID=1>

Despite the variation in time, KBE meetings were remarkably similar. Most of the time is spent on presentations made to the Board by various KDE staff or other groups and organizations. The February 6, 2025 meeting, for example, included more than 90 straight minutes of presentations.

### Agenda Setting & Support

All meetings were well organized with all agenda items supported by necessary documentation. A Board portal provides Board members with information on all agenda items in advance of the meeting. Annual matters such as Budget Development and the Evaluation of the Commissioner are scheduled in a coordinated way for the year.

The Department has an assigned staff member to tend to the needs of Board members. In addition, the Board is given a great deal of information and reports through the portal. The Board Chair and Vice Chair meet with the Commissioner every other week to discuss the upcoming Board meeting and agenda and any other relevant information. In interviews, Board members provided strong endorsement of the way the Department responds to their needs. They mentioned a comfort level with getting answers to questions and other information through the Board liaison. Two Board members reported they are comfortable contacting Commissioner Fletcher directly if the issue warrants his attention and reported their satisfaction with his response.

### Operation of the Meeting

**4.6 Observation: Board members spend more than half of their meetings listening to presentations. The limited discussion rarely includes actionable follow-up steps.**

The Board Chair consistently sticks to the agenda, allowing all Board members to participate and gaining closure on agenda items before moving to the next item. Routine agenda items are acted upon through a consent agenda. Final decisions always followed full discussion and deliberation of all members.

While Board members are attentive, a significant amount of the time at all meetings (ranging from 60% to almost 80%) is taken up listening to presentations. Figure 68 shows the amount of time at six different board meetings that was spent listening to presentations.

FIGURE 68: PERCENTAGE OF KBE MEETINGS TAKEN UP BY PRESENTATIONS



Source: Retrieved from the KBE Portal.

<https://portal.ksba.org/public/Agency.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4388&AgencyTypeID=1>

Many of these presentations are scheduled periodically, such as an update on the state budget, Advance KY, Data at a Glance, and policies and regulations that require updates. The Board is required to deal with

waivers from local districts primarily around school construction and finance. There are monthly updates and reports by the President of the Postsecondary Council, the Secretary of Education and Labor, and the Commissioner.

The Board schedules several annual awards during their meeting time, including the State Teacher of the Year. Other states often schedule these awards as a separate ceremony. There are several statewide awards—named after various Kentucky leaders—where the recipients are given the opportunity to present to the Board, often accompanied by colleagues and family. The Board periodically schedules lunch provided by students involved in Career and Technical programs. The time for awards varies depending on the proceedings. In cases where the recipient also presents and brings colleagues and/or family, the time can be significant.

Good News is also shared at every meeting. Good News allows members to bring to the Board's attention and therefore the public, positive stories about individuals or programs happening around the State. This practice is not only often inspiring, but it provides a wider audience for recognition though the statewide Board meeting.

Board members are given time to freely share issues, questions, or matters they feel need to be discussed or brought forth as a future agenda item. The Board provides an opportunity for Public Comment, but very few citizens took advantage during the time of this review.

**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.**

**4.7 Observation: Notable, recent topics pertaining to Kentucky public education were not discussed by the Board in open meeting.**

During the time of this review, there were two national stories that relate to the Kentucky Public Schools that we would have anticipated to be agenda items for Board discussion. The first was the release in January 2025 of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) student results by state. Additionally, in January there was the announcement of a lawsuit brought by a group of Kentucky high school students alleging the state is not meeting its constitutional duty to provide adequate and equitable education for all children. The Board made no mention of either matter in subsequent meetings.

**4.7.a Recommendation: The Board should address any major matter that relates to Kentucky public education during open meeting.** While legal counsel might suggest some limitations in discussing a legal matter, the fact that the Board did not even acknowledge the student lawsuit that was news across the country cannot be justified.

## **COLLEGIALITY & COLLECTIVE VOICE**

The way in which KBE conducts meetings and Board members treat each other is a model for other Boards. There was unanimous agreement among all those interviewed that this Board of Education conducts business and interacts with each other in an exemplary way. There is genuine respect between Board members. Those asked to address or present to the Board are treated with that same kindness and respect. The Board Chair sets an excellent example by the way she leads the Board through to the agenda and, along with the Vice Chair, sees to it that all members are given the time to express their thoughts and opinions.

The discussions are very respectful of the challenges faced by local educators and parents, likely due to the great majority of the Board having decades of experience in teaching and as administrators.

## **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC INTERACTION**

In interviews across multiple stakeholders, Board members were given high praise for the way they work together and interact with the public and local officials. During the Board sharing portion of the meetings, it is not only particularly remarkable how involved Board members are in the schools and communities in

their own districts, but also how aware they are of what is happening across the state. Even beyond the sharing item, Board members are often able to report on conversations they have had with local leaders and events they might have attended in schools as various items are discussed.

The Board has publicly supported the United We Learn Council as it seeks input from the public and various stakeholders. Individual Board members have been part of various meetings associated with the initiative and with the Listening Tour forums that were held across the State.

It is unclear how various outside stakeholder groups view the Board and their meetings, or if they are even aware of the actions and deliberations of the Board. There were only three occasions in the 14 months examined when a member of the public addressed the Board during a meeting. Two were parents from the same district who registered complaints, at separate Board meetings, about the conduct of their local school board members. Similar to most other states, the Board does not typically schedule outside groups representing business, municipal government or parents. The Board also did not schedule meetings outside Frankfort and only held one meeting away from the Department building.

## GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

### *Adherence to State & Federal laws*

KBE appears to follow the laws and guidelines of both state and federal statutes. Examples include:

- Time was taken at various Board meetings to receive reports from Department legal staff on various items pertaining to the law. Hearing Officer's and Litigation Reports are often Board agenda items as well as Removal Hearing Procedures.
- The Board received waiver requests from districts, often around construction projects and financial issues along with the Certification of Nonpublic Schools.
- There were two occasions during this time period when the Board needed to go into an Executive Session concerning legal matters. While some routine legal matters were part of a consent agenda, Board members were provided with the necessary details needed to inform their decision.

### *Policy Implementation & Oversight*

Most of the Board discussions in the more specific local issues of standards and assessments come from the reports on the budget or legislation being filed by General Assembly members. While the issue of student cell phone use in schools caused some Board discussion about a potential policy decision, the Board has been reluctant to discuss oversight of standards—seeming to be comfortable allowing decisions to be made at the local level.

### *Student Performance & Educational Outcomes*

#### **4.8 Finding: Board meetings do not sufficiently focus on student performance outcomes on state or national tests.**

The presentation to the Board around student performance occurs once annually as an agenda item each December known as "Data at a Glance." The Board is provided with the detailed reports of the State assessments in October in a separate report via the portal. The results are presented broadly at the December meeting, two months after the release of the data.

- In December 2023, the presentation included information about areas of concern including Math and Science at the secondary level.
- In December 2024, there was a lengthy discussion about Science results at a high school that dropped from 30% proficient in 2018 to 6% in 2024.
- Board members pointed out that the other Science results were much more positive, and therefore, the design of the test should be examined. Chronic absenteeism and the teacher shortage were also mentioned as factors.

Unlike other State Boards of Education, the Kentucky Board did not discuss graduation rates. Graduation rates were only a data point during the Data at a Glance December 2023 and 2024 presentations.

- The slide in 2023 indicated “an increase in 4-year graduation rates for almost all student groups.”
- In 2024, the slide stated, “increased 4-Year and 5-Year graduation rates for most student groups.”

Despite the large national attention given to the NAEP results released in January of this year, the Board’s February or March agendas did not include the results for presentation and discussion.

- 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. As important, the discussion should lead to conclusions and action steps. The Board should focus on information on schools and districts that are performing well above expectations and those well below. Student outcomes discussions should be agenda items throughout the calendar year.

### ***Financial Management & Resource Allocation***

KBE is focused on the budget, and appropriately pairs the budgeting process with Legislative priorities because the General Assembly dictates the budget for education in the State. Very detailed, periodic presentations are made to the Board by KDE staff. This past year, there were 30- to 40-minute discussions in February, April, and October of 2024 and again in February 2025. All members, regional and at-large, are particularly focused on State funding for local schools’ districts, known as the SEEK program.

There has been a good deal of discussion about the disparities and inadequacy of the funding formula for local districts at Board meetings generally as part of the presentations of the budget or the United We Learn initiative.

### ***Innovation & Adaptability***

Discussions on technology have centered on the Department’s systems to both administratively attend to the needs of the State and school districts and to provide financial support where needed. The Board had a thorough presentation by the Department’s technology staff in August 2024, which highlighted the need for additional financial resources to maintain the current systems in place.

More futuristic technology innovations, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), have not been part of the Board’s agenda over the past fourteen months.

# ACADEMIC STANDARDS & MODEL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

This section discusses KDE’s responsibilities associated with instructional systems, including the Model Curriculum Framework (MCF), academic standards, MTSS, Reading, Numeracy, and English Learners.

## THE OFFICE OF TEACHING & LEARNING

The Office of Teaching and Learning is responsible for leading the work described in this section. There are two Divisions within OTL: Academic Program Standards and Early Literacy.<sup>88</sup> According to interviews with KDE staff, Academic Program Standards is responsible for overseeing the standards review process, supporting the implementation of standards, and providing professional learning and content support to schools and districts. The Early Literacy team supports the implementation of the Read to Succeed Act, which calls for every elementary school to implement evidence-based early literacy instruction.<sup>89</sup> There is also a Director of Mathematics Education that oversees the execution of the Numeracy Counts Act and supports Kentucky’s goal of ensuring that “all children have the skills necessary to demonstrate procedural skill and fluency, building from conceptual understanding to application, in order to solve real-world problems.”<sup>90</sup>

## STATE LAWS & REGULATIONS

**Overall, OTL staff reported a strong understanding of and commitment to implementing the state laws and regulations related to teaching and learning.**

Kentucky laws and regulations require OTL to *develop, establish, provide, instruct, assist, communicate,* and *train* stakeholders in various areas to create local instructional systems. As such, OTL is primarily focused on front-end guidance for districts through the development and dissemination of policies and technical assistance in the form of websites, guidance documents, and training opportunities that aim to orient key stakeholders to the available resources for local implementation.

## MODEL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

### Overview

Throughout the country, state education agencies often play a contributing role in supporting school districts to create a coherent K-12 instructional system. A coherent instructional system is defined as one in which components of that system—academic standards, instructional materials, assessments, professional learning, teacher evaluation, and peer collaboration—provide clear and mutually reinforcing messages through policy or guidance to teachers about what and how to teach and the resources and support needed to achieve instructional coherence.<sup>91</sup>

State education agencies can contribute to the development of coherent instructional systems through the following strategies:

- Support and incentivize the adoption of standards-aligned instructional materials
- Provide teachers supports for using those materials
- Develop and communicate a clear vision for instruction
- Create touchpoints between state and local leaders

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<sup>88</sup> “Department of Education Organizational Chart.” Kentucky Department of Education. February 1, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/contacts/Documents/KDE%20Organizational%20Chart.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> “Early Literacy.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 21, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>90</sup> “Numeracy Counts.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 15, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/NumeracyCounts/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>91</sup> Wang, E.L., Kaufman, J.H., Lee, S., Kim, B., and Opfer, V.D. “Instructional System Coherence: A Scoping Literature Review.” RAND Corporation. March 26, 2024. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA279-5.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA279-5.html)



- Break down organizational silos within a department of education.<sup>92</sup>

In Kentucky, KRS 158.6451 requires KDE to create and disseminate a model curriculum framework (MCF) that provides guidance to districts as they develop curriculum locally as part of an instructional system. The statute states the framework should include teaching and assessment strategies and instructional material resources.<sup>93</sup> The MCF is designed to set the conditions through which local districts can create coherent K-12 systems that produce better and more equitable student outcomes.

The MCF is found on KYStandards.org and is maintained by the Division of Academic Program Standards within OTL. The Framework describes curricular coherence as the “local alignment of standards, curriculum, instructional resources and practices, assessment, and professional learning within and across grade-levels in a district or school to help students meet grade-level expectations.”<sup>94</sup> The MCF includes four sections that, when implemented with fidelity, support the development of an instructional vision:

- **Section I: Curriculum Development Process:** Outlines a process for developing a local curriculum aligned to KAS and selecting a primary high-quality instructional resource (HQIR). KDE recommends a curriculum review cycle that aligns with the six-year review cycle.
- **Section II: Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** Articulates a PLC process that is based on a shared understanding of the role that teachers act as both collaborators and school leaders act to build a supportive culture.
- **Section III: Balanced System of Assessment:** Shares guidance on how to utilize high-quality and reliable assessment practices, with a focus on the formative assessment process.
- **Section IV: Evidence-Based Instructional Practices:** Advises leaders and teachers in understanding evidence-based practices.<sup>95</sup>

## **Implementation of the Model Curriculum Framework**

### **5.1 Finding: The MCF is comprehensive, but its layout and large volume of content make it difficult to use.**

Based on the team’s review of the KYStandards.org website, the MCF is comprised of more than 300 total pages of guidance documents.<sup>96</sup> This guidance includes support for adopting standards-aligned material, resources to support districts and teachers with implementing these processes, and the overarching steps toward creating a local instructional vision.

In addition to the guidance documents available online, OTL provides information to the field through a Standards Newsletter three to four times a month, website updates, and in-person and virtual sessions.<sup>97</sup> KDE recently released the Continuous Improvement Playbook for Curriculum Implementation which addresses a “district’s requests for a streamlined framing of the key actions recommended for each academic year.”<sup>98</sup> This resource represents an effort to deliver targeted, streamlined resources. However, as a next step, KDE should seek feedback to assess the overall usefulness of this resource.

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<sup>92</sup> Kaufman, J.H., Wang, E.L., Hodge, E., and Hatch, T. “How Coherent are U.S. K-12 Instructional Systems?” RAND Corporation. March 29, 2024. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/presentations/PTA2168-2.html>

<sup>93</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.6451.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3552>

<sup>94</sup> “Model Curriculum Framework.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 2023.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/MCF\\_Section\\_1\\_Curriculum\\_Development\\_Process.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/MCF_Section_1_Curriculum_Development_Process.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> “Model Curriculum Framework.” Kentucky Department of Education, KY Standards. 2025.

<https://kystandards.org/standards-resources/model-curriculum-framework/>

<sup>97</sup> “Standards Newsletter Archive.” Kentucky Department of Education, KY Standards. 2025.

<https://kystandards.org/standards-newsletter-archive/>

<sup>98</sup> “Continuous Improvement Playbook for Curriculum Implementation.” Kentucky Department of Education.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Curriculum\\_Implementation\\_Continuous\\_Improvement\\_Playbook.pdf?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Curriculum_Implementation_Continuous_Improvement_Playbook.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)



**5.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should enhance the MCF guidance documents based on educator feedback. Explore other approaches to support districts with the implementation process.

This could include the creation of streamlined overview documents, interactive tools, or short videos that describe the sequential actions required for a coherent instructional system at the local level. OTL should more formally survey districts to gather feedback on the current MCF to help inform this work. It would also be beneficial to measure the impact of any new resources that are created.

**5.2 Finding:** Little evidence was found to indicate that KDE is systematically tracking MCF implementation in districts. KDE is unable to determine the impact of the MCF on teaching quality or student outcomes.

The Office of Teaching and Learning needs to shift from guidance document creation to understanding what is happening in the field. A starting point is the creation of data systems to gather information and for use in guiding strategic priorities in the department.

KDE staff shared in interviews that they have been able to learn about district implementation through their work with a modest group of pilot districts. They also described receiving anecdotal feedback. However, they do not have any methods for systematically collecting evidence from across all 171 districts.

**5.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should create a data system to track districts' use of the MCF.

This data system should include qualitative and quantitative data that help to identify and set strategic priorities. A more thorough understanding of the MCF's use in the field will help KDE provide more targeted implementation support and technical assistance.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

### Overview

The Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) outline the “minimum required standards that all Kentucky students should have the opportunity to learn before graduating from Kentucky high schools.”<sup>99</sup> Students take the Kentucky Summative Assessments (KSA), which measure student proficiency on the state academic standards.<sup>100</sup>

The standards are provided as direction from KDE to districts to address *what* students should learn, but the standards do not specify *how* the content is to be taught locally by the district.<sup>101</sup> The revised KRS 160.345 assigns districts authority to develop the local curriculum. In 2022, Senate Bill (SB) 1 transferred the authority to choose the curriculum – and its components therein – from the school-based decision making (SBDM) council to the local superintendent.<sup>102</sup>

However, the KAS are not the complete curriculum. A district's curriculum is comprised of multiple components, including:

- Content standards which frame the skills students should learn in a respective grade level and content area
- Instructional materials through which the grade-level content and skills are taught
- Evidence-based instructional practices that ensure a rigorous sequence

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<sup>99</sup> “Standards/Content Areas.” Kentucky Department of Education. August 2, 2022.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>100</sup> “Kentucky Summative Assessment.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 7, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/KentuckySummativeAssessment-.aspx>

<sup>101</sup> “Standards/Content Areas.” Kentucky Department of Education. August 2, 2022.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>102</sup> “High-Quality Instructional Resource Adoption.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 18, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/default.aspx>

- A balanced assessment system which monitors student learning throughout the progression of learning.

KDE develops the standards for all districts in the state. Districts are then required to make decisions locally regarding the quality and cost of instructional materials, professional learning on teacher pedagogy to implement those materials, and the cost and quality of aligned assessments to investigate the use of new resources that become available. The MCF is a resource that districts can use to support this local decision-making.

**The Kentucky Academic Standards are a full set of policy guidance and resources to support districts in developing a local standards-aligned curriculum.**

KDE is responsible for developing and maintaining standards in the following content areas in accordance with KRS 158.6453:

- Reading and Writing
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Health Education and Physical Education
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Computer Science
- Career Studies and Financial Literacy
- World Language
- Library Media
- Technology

**5.3 Finding:** The KYStandards.org website is easy to navigate overall, but the PDF documents that contain the standards are difficult to navigate. For example, the Reading and Writing standards for all grade levels are embedded in a 458-page document.<sup>103</sup> The Mathematics standards are included in a 260-page document.<sup>104</sup>

Each content area has standards associated with grades K-12, except for World Language where the standards are not paired with specific grade-levels.<sup>105</sup> The Governor’s Office of Early Childhood also supports Early Childhood standards.<sup>106</sup> All standards are publicly available online at KYStandards.org.

The Division of Academic Program Standards within the OTL oversees the development of the standards, the standards review process, the creation of standards-aligned resources including KYStandards.org, as well as professional learning guidance and resources.

The team observed that the presentation of the standards was not user-friendly for educators. It is not an easy format for a teacher who is interested in viewing the standards for a particular grade-level.

**5.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should collect feedback from teachers and instructional leaders and produce more usable guidance documents.

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<sup>103</sup> “Kentucky Academic Standards: Reading.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2029. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky\\_Academic\\_Standards\\_Reading\\_and\\_Writing.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Reading_and_Writing.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> “Kentucky Academic Standards: Mathematics.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2029. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky\\_Academic\\_Standards\\_Mathematics.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Mathematics.pdf)

<sup>105</sup> “KY Academic Standards.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2025. <https://kystandards.org/home/ky-acad-standards/>

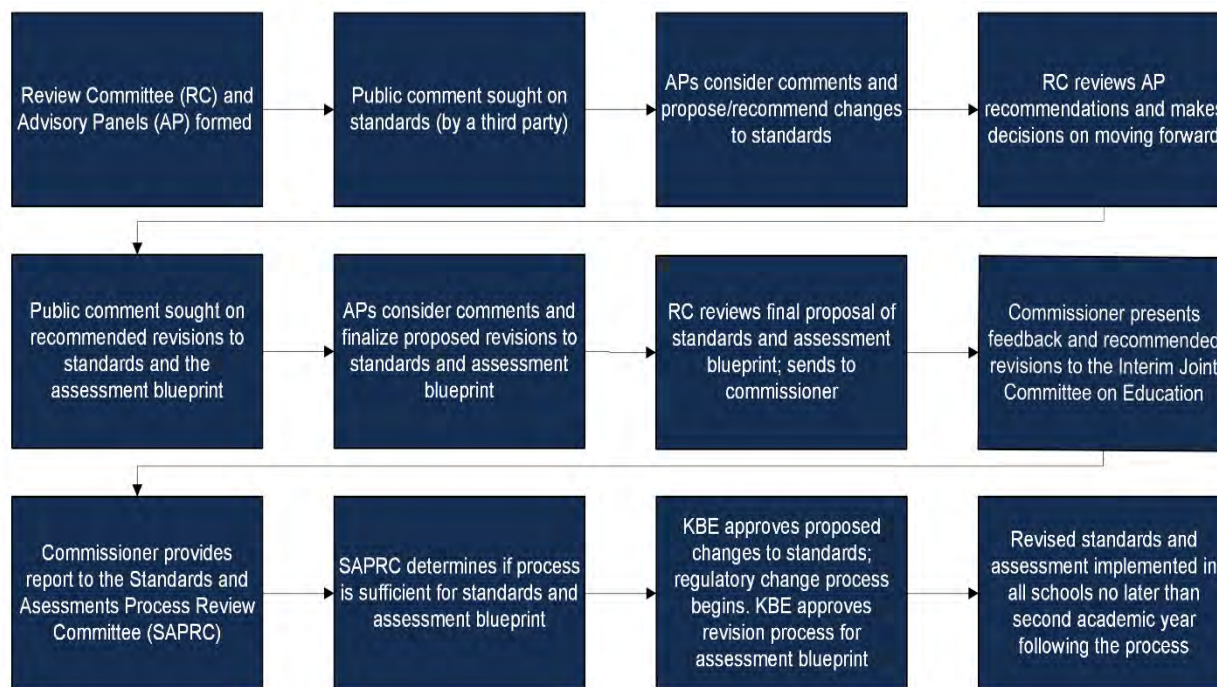
<sup>106</sup> “Kentucky Early Childhood Standards.” Team Kentucky. 2025. <https://kyecac.ky.gov/professionals/Early-Childhood-Standards/Getting-Started/Pages/Start-Here.aspx>

This should include guidance documents designed for different grade bands and materials that are shared in a different and clearer format for school-based staff.

### Academic Standards Review Process

KRS 158.6453 requires KDE to implement a comprehensive process to review and revise academic standards. The statute calls for one to two content areas to be reviewed annually, and then subsequently every six years on a rotating basis. The full review process for each content area takes approximately two years, and new standards are implemented in schools no later than the second academic year following the process.<sup>107</sup> As demonstrated in Figure 69, KDE’s process closely tracks the statutory requirements, and it includes the following components:

FIGURE 69: ACADEMIC STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT REVISION PROCESS



Source: Retrieved from KDE’s Office of Teaching and Learning YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/@kdeofficeofteachingandlear3295>

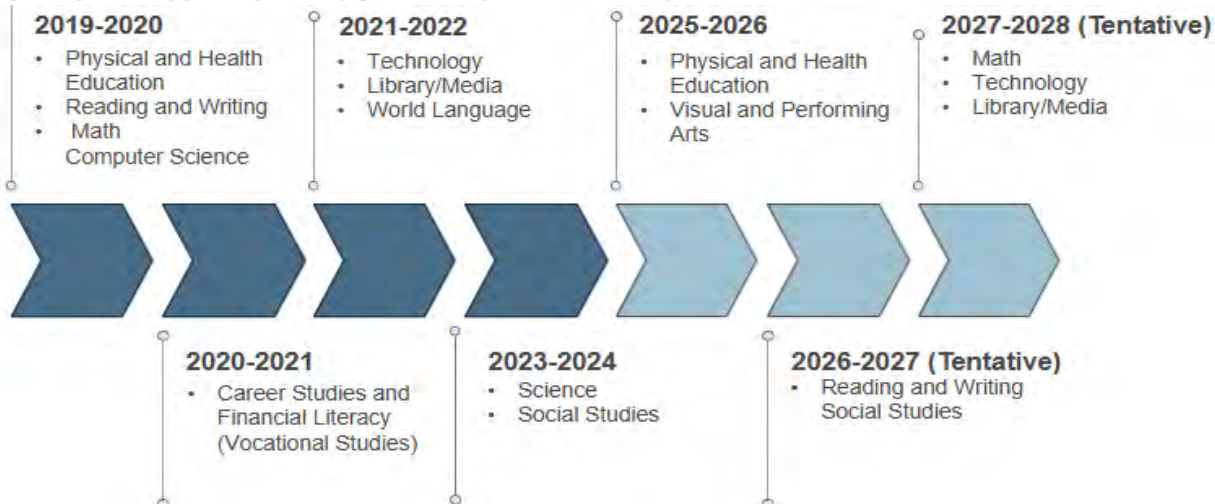
In interviews, KDE staff reported a strong working relationship with their third-party provider. KDE staff also described the standards review process as a continuous load given some overlapping review cycles for each set of standards within the six-year timeframe.

KDE staff shared that during the 2024-2025 school year, Reading and Writing and Social Studies are in year one of the two-year process, and Physical Education and Health and Visual and Performing Arts are in year two. The Mathematics standards review process will begin in the 2025-2026 school year, and the Science review process was completed in 2021-2022.<sup>108</sup> As seen in Figure 70 below, The Kentucky Academic Standards Review Timeline notes the following school years for which each set of adopted academic standards have been or will be implemented:

<sup>107</sup> “Kentucky Academic Standards Review Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 30, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>108</sup> “Kentucky Academic Standards Review Timeline.” Kentucky Department of Education. June 2024. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Documents/Kentucky%20Academic%20Standards\\_Review\\_and\\_Implementation\\_Timeline.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Documents/Kentucky%20Academic%20Standards_Review_and_Implementation_Timeline.pdf)

**FIGURE 70: KENTUCKY ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**



Source: Retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education website [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Documents/Kentucky%20Academic%20Standards\\_Review\\_and\\_Implementation\\_Timeline.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Documents/Kentucky%20Academic%20Standards_Review_and_Implementation_Timeline.pdf)

**5.4 Observation:** The next review for Technology and Library/Media standards is not included in KDE’s published Standards Review Timeline.<sup>109</sup> However, KDE staff confirmed these review windows are managed by OET and are scheduled to begin in fall 2025.

As seen in Figure 71, Kentucky’s statutorily established timeline for reviewing standards generally aligns with peer states. Standards are reviewed in these states approximately every five to ten years.

**FIGURE 71: COMPARISON STATE TIMELINE FOR UPDATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS STANDARDS**

State	Timeline for Updating Academic Standards
Kentucky	Every six years
Alabama	Approximately every ten years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mathematics standards last updated in 2019, scheduled to be updated in 2029</li> <li>English Language Arts standards last updated in 2021, scheduled to be updated in 2031</li> </ul>
Florida	Approximately every five years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mathematics standards last updated in 2021-2022, scheduled to be updated in 2026-2027</li> <li>English Language Arts are undergoing review in 2024-2025, and were last updated in 2020-2021</li> </ul>
Mississippi	Approximately every nine to ten years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mathematics standards are under review in 2025, and were last updated in 2016</li> <li>English Language Arts standards are under review in 2025, and were last updated in 2016</li> </ul>

<sup>109</sup> “Kentucky Academic Standards Review Timeline.” Kentucky Department of Education. June 2024. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Documents/Kentucky%20Academic%20Standards\\_Review\\_and\\_Implementation\\_Timeline.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/revision/Documents/Kentucky%20Academic%20Standards_Review_and_Implementation_Timeline.pdf)

State	Timeline for Updating Academic Standards
Ohio	Approximately every six to seven years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mathematics standards last updated in 2017-2018, and were previously updated in 2010-2011</li> </ul>
Tennessee	Every six years

Source: Retrieved from Official State Legislation and State Education Department websites.

**5.4.a Recommendation: KDE should update the published timeline for reviewing Academic Standards to reflect a complete timeline for all reviews.**

Based on interviews with KDE staff and a review of internal and public materials, the standard review process is operating in alignment with statutory requirements.

## SELECTING HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

### Overview

The MCF is the first step toward creating a coherent curricular system “to translate the [academic] standards into a local curriculum anchored in high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs).”<sup>110</sup> KDE defines HQIR as materials that are:

- Aligned with the KAS
- Research-based and/or externally validated
- Comprehensive to include engaging texts (books, multimedia, etc.), tasks, and assessments
- Based on fostering vibrant student learning experiences
- Culturally relevant, free from bias; and accessible for all students.<sup>111</sup>

The Office of Teaching and Learning provides guidance on the local evaluation and selection of HQIRs. In addition to the MCF, they provide instructional resources, alignment rubrics, and consumer guides for Reading/Writing, Mathematics, and Science. They also recommend districts use complementary materials from EdReports.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to supporting states and districts to select, adopt, and implement the highest quality K-12 instructional materials.<sup>112</sup>

Per KRS 160.345, districts are responsible for developing their local curriculum. Specifically, superintendents have the authority to select textbooks and instructional materials.<sup>113</sup> Should districts choose to adopt Tier One instructional resources that are not on KDE’s approved list, and are not rated on EdReports.org, districts must notify KDE by email per KRS 156.445 of the off-list selection and monitor implementation results and its impact on student learning. Districts are also required to provide evidence of the selected resource alignment with KAS.<sup>114</sup> KDE staff shared that there are only a few districts with off-list selections.

In 2000, KRS 156.405 established the State Textbook Commission (STC), with the goal of providing a recommended list of high-quality textbooks and instructional materials, as well as consumer guides to aid

<sup>110</sup> “Model Curriculum Framework.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 2023. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/MCF\\_Section\\_1\\_Curriculum\\_Development\\_Process.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/MCF_Section_1_Curriculum_Development_Process.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> “High-Quality Instructional Resources.” Kentucky Department of Education. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/High-Quality\\_Instructional\\_Resources.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/High-Quality_Instructional_Resources.pdf)

<sup>112</sup> “About Us.” Edreports. 2025. <https://edreports.org/about>

<sup>113</sup> “High-Quality Instructional Resource Adoption.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 18, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.



the district selection process.<sup>115</sup> However, KDE asserts that the Commission has not met since 2015 due to insufficient funding.<sup>116</sup> KDE currently creates and disseminates this guidance to districts in place of the STC. In the 2025 legislative session, Senate Bill 207 was passed to amend KRS 156.405 to repurpose the STC and establish the State Quality Curriculum Task Force.<sup>117</sup>

## **Guidance Provided by the Kentucky Department of Education**

### **5.5 Finding: ELA and Mathematics have extensive lists of approved HQIRs, while other content areas only offer process guidance for districts to evaluate quality locally.**

KDE developed and published “a list of approved Tier One core comprehensive instructional resources for [ELA] and Mathematics” where Tier One is defined as the primary means of instruction in a content area for a grade level or course.<sup>118</sup> The availability of consumer guides in ELA and Mathematics published through EdReports.org assists the state in developing a list of HQIRs that are at least 80% aligned to the KAS.

KDE affirms historically approved ELA and Mathematics materials will not be removed when the lists are republished.<sup>119</sup> In March 2025, KDE’s list of approved HQIRs for Reading and Writing includes ten options for grades K through five, 19 options for grades six through eight, and nine options for grades nine through 12.<sup>120</sup> KDE’s list of approved HQIRs in Mathematics includes 20 options for grades K through five, 21 options for grades six through eight, and 21 options for grades nine through 12.<sup>121</sup> It is not clear whether the number of options for ELA or Mathematics are deemed appropriate by district review teams when selecting a set of instructional materials.

#### **5.5.a Recommendation: KDE should identify the quantity and quality of approved instructional materials needed for districts to select HQIRs in all content areas.**

The department should confirm whether the number of options and the level of information for ELA and Mathematics is helpful to the district’s review and selection process. Similarly, for content areas without lists, KDE should consider whether it is feasible to create an approved list that helps districts with a starting point such as K-12 Science. Science already has publicly available consumer guides on EdReports.org.

Some states have developed solutions to provide districts with guidance for local selection of instructional materials in content areas where predetermined lists or consumer reports are not available. For instance, Alabama provides textbooks and/or supplemental materials lists across numerous subjects, including Science, Social Studies, World Languages, and Arts.<sup>122</sup> Providing lists of materials can provide districts with a starting point for areas that have limited options compared to ELA and Mathematics.

In Massachusetts, the Curriculum Ratings by Teachers (CURATE) reports are developed to support all districts in the process of making informed local decisions. Reports have been published for ELA/Literacy, History and Social Science, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, and Digital Literacy and

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<sup>115</sup> “KRS 156.405.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3177>

<sup>116</sup> “High-Quality Instructional Resource Adoption.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 18, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>117</sup> “Senate Bill 207.” Kentucky General Assembly. June 12, 2025.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/25rs/sb207.html>

<sup>118</sup> “High-Quality Instructional Resource Adoption.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 18, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> “2025 Approved K-12 High-Quality Instructional Resources for Reading and Writing.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/KY\\_HQIR\\_List\\_Reading\\_and\\_Writing.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/KY_HQIR_List_Reading_and_Writing.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> “2025 Approved K-12 High-Quality Instructional Resources for Mathematics.” Kentucky Department of Education.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/KY\\_HQIR\\_List\\_Mathematics.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/KY_HQIR_List_Mathematics.pdf)

<sup>122</sup> “Textbook Adoption and Procurement.” Alabama State Department of Education. 2025.

<https://www.alabamaachievers.org/content-areas-specialty/textbook-adoption-and-procurement/>

Computer Science.<sup>123</sup> Review teams are convened after the publisher submits a request to be reviewed. Once finalized, reports are published on the department’s website and archived when the content is deemed to be outdated from the initial review period.

## Tracking the Usage of High-Quality Instructional Resources

**5.6 Finding:** The voluntary annual HQIR statewide survey limits KDE’s ability to assess statewide HQIR usage. As a result, the statewide data sets are incomplete.

KDE relies on districts to self-report their usage of HQIR. According to KDE staff, OTL administers three related surveys annually: (1) an HQIR Math and Science survey, (2) an HQIR Reading, Writing, and ELA survey, and (3) HQIR curriculum-based professional learning survey. Based on the team’s review of the first two surveys, districts are asked to indicate the primary instructional resources they use at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as the number of years they have used them. The third professional learning survey asked questions related to the features, structure, and resources associated with their district offerings.

The most recent survey yielded 145 of 171 district responses across the Commonwealth. According to interviews, KDE’s position is that the survey cannot be required as it is not in statute, which results in less than all districts responding to the survey. While this anecdotal evidence is helpful to KDE in understanding the landscape of adopting HQIR statewide, the data are incomplete.

KDE staff also noted that if districts complete the survey, they are offered access to a data dashboard in Infinite Campus. Staff shared that the dashboard includes lists of HQIR that districts are using. It allows a district to know which of its peers are using the same materials. It is also an additional source of information that KDE can use to identify areas of collaboration and need in the field.

**5.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should create incentives for all districts to complete the annual HQIR survey to allow KDE to identify gaps among districts and opportunities for statewide collaboration. It would also be a useful input for OTL as it develops its professional learning and technical assistance strategy.

## Comparison States

As seen in Figure 72, Kentucky grants similar authority as peer states to districts related to the selection and adoption of HQIRs with K-12 curriculum. All five peer states provide, at minimum, a state-approved list of approved textbooks and/or publishers. KDE disseminates a list of approved Tier One HQIRs for Reading and Writing and Mathematics and requires districts to notify them of any off-list selections. This is a similar practice to three out of the five peer states.

FIGURE 72: COMPARISON STATES CURRICULUM AUTHORITY & STATE-ADOPTED TEXTBOOK PROVISIONS

States	Responsible for Selecting K-12 Curriculum	State-Adopted Textbook/Curriculum List
Kentucky	District superintendents	Yes, the Department of Education provides a list of HQIRs for Reading and Writing and Mathematics. Selections outside of this list must be approved.
Alabama	Local boards of education	Yes, the State Board of Education adopts textbooks based on recommendations from the State Textbook Committee. Local boards cannot use textbooks that have been rejected.

<sup>123</sup> “Curriculum Ratings by Teachers.” Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. April 23, 2025. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/reports.html>



States	Responsible for Selecting K-12 Curriculum	State-Adopted Textbook/Curriculum List
Florida	District school boards	Yes, but not required to adopt textbooks on this list. District school boards can also review and adopt materials locally.
Mississippi	Districts	Yes, but not required to adopt textbooks and instructional materials on this list.
Ohio	Districts	Yes, the Department of Education provides an approved core curriculum and instructional materials list for English Language Arts. For other subjects, the Department of Education provides a list of approved publishers but does not recommend materials or textbooks. Districts must select materials from these publishers.
Tennessee	Districts	Yes, the State Board of Education approves textbooks based on recommendations from State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Districts are required to submit waivers to use materials outside of those listed.

Source: Retrieved from Official State Legislation and State Education Department websites.

**5.7 Finding: Districts must budget locally for the adoption of HQIRs because state funds are not provided for implementation.**

Even in places where other grant funds are available, these funds are not adequate for full implementation.

Kentucky’s funding allocated for instructional resources lags in comparison to other states. Districts must follow statutory requirements for local curriculum adoption without additional funds from the state to meet this requirement sustainably. As seen in Figure 73, other states explicitly fund this work. For example, Louisiana has a comparable public-school enrollment, and they allocate \$42.5 million to instructional resource adoption.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>124</sup> “KBE Regular Meeting – February 6th, 2025.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://youtu.be/sBXIYEg26Kg>

**FIGURE 73: STATE FUNDS ALLOCATED TOWARDS ADOPTING INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES & PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

States	Funds Allocated Towards Adopting Instructional Resources	Public School Enrollment (Fall 2023)
Kentucky	Does not separate out funds for instructional resources.	657,520
Mississippi	\$40 million	436,523
Louisiana	\$42.5 million	708,190
Massachusetts	\$31.6 million	914,958
Indiana	\$160 million	1,032,723
Ohio	\$186 million	1,675,300
Texas	\$1.49 billion	5,372,806

Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Board of Education’s February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Public school enrollment retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d24/tables/dt24\\_203.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d24/tables/dt24_203.20.asp)

**5.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should evaluate its budget and/or work with the General Assembly to ensure funds can be allocated towards the adoption of HQIRs.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### Overview

Professional learning is a key component of planning for and implementing a coherent instructional system. At the state level, KRS 156.095 and 704 KAR 3:035 outline district and school requirements to “prioritize on-going professional learning that increases educators’ understanding of the local curriculum and methods of instruction appropriate for each content area based on individual school plans.”<sup>125</sup> The Professional Learning branch within the Division of Academic Program Standards within OTL manages this body of work.

Superintendents shared positive perceptions of KDE-led training that has improved district staff knowledge and had a lasting impact. Some of the specific training cited included high-quality instructional resources training and new superintendent training.

Overall, KDE plays a limited role in tracking, delivering, or prescribing professional learning as part of a district or school’s overall plan for improvement or implementation of HQIRs. However, KDE manages the Professional Learning Bulletin Board (PLBB), which provides a range of asynchronous and live offerings for a variety of audiences including teachers, classified staff, principals, and district leaders.<sup>126</sup> Offerings from KDE and external vendors that are either free or fee-based are included. The PLBB site also links to the nine Kentucky Education Cooperatives as an extension of the professional learning offerings for districts in each respective region of the state.

Districts are encouraged to invest in curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) aligned to their adopted HQIRs. Rivet Education, a national leader in defining CBPL and signaling quality for states and districts on the nation’s best CPBL providers, has developed an implementation framework which outlines the structures, types, and characteristics of CPBL that “supports and strengthens instruction” for teachers to skillfully use HQIRs.<sup>127</sup> This framework, in addition to Rivet Education’s other professional learning

<sup>125</sup> “What is High-Quality Professional Learning?” Kentucky Department of Education.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/High-Quality\\_Professional\\_Learning.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/High-Quality_Professional_Learning.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> “Professional Learning Bulletin Board.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2025.

<https://applications.education.ky.gov/PLBB/Home/PLBBHome>

<sup>127</sup> “Framework for Curriculum-Based Professional Learning.” Rivet Education. <https://riveteducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HQ-CBPL-Framework-2024-TRACKING.pdf>

resources like the [Professional Learning Partner Guide](#), are provided as complementary resources for Kentucky districts in planning and executing CBPL related to the HQIRs used locally.<sup>128</sup>

## High-Quality Professional Learning (HQPL)

KDE’s guidance on the [Characteristics of High-Quality Professional Learning](#) for districts highlights that “[r]esearch demonstrates a positive link between high-quality professional learning (HQPL), high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs), teaching practices and student outcomes.”<sup>129</sup> It is the responsibility of the district to select and implement HQPL at the local level in alignment with KDE’s defined characteristics and structures of HQPL:

FIGURE 74: STRUCTURES & CHARACTERISTICS OF HQPL

Structures of HQPL	Characteristics of HQPL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)</li> <li>• Communities of Practice</li> <li>• Peer Observation</li> <li>• Coaching</li> <li>• Consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content-focused and standards-aligned</li> <li>• Equity-focused</li> <li>• Considerate of adult learners</li> <li>• Symmetrical to a vibrant student experience</li> <li>• Uses models of effective practice</li> <li>• Provides coaching and expert support</li> <li>• Offers feedback and reflection</li> <li>• Is sustained and continuous</li> </ul>

Source: Retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education website

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Characteristics\\_of\\_High\\_Quality\\_Profes\\_sional\\_Learning.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Characteristics_of_High_Quality_Profes_sional_Learning.pdf)

KDE provides districts with multiple self-driven, asynchronous, content-based professional learning Modules in Reading and Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Health and Physical Education, and Career Studies and Financial Literacy to support local implementation of HQPL.<sup>130</sup> Once new academic standards are approved, OTL creates and facilitates a variety of professional learning opportunities to support local implementation, including “Getting to Know the KAS” modules.<sup>131</sup>

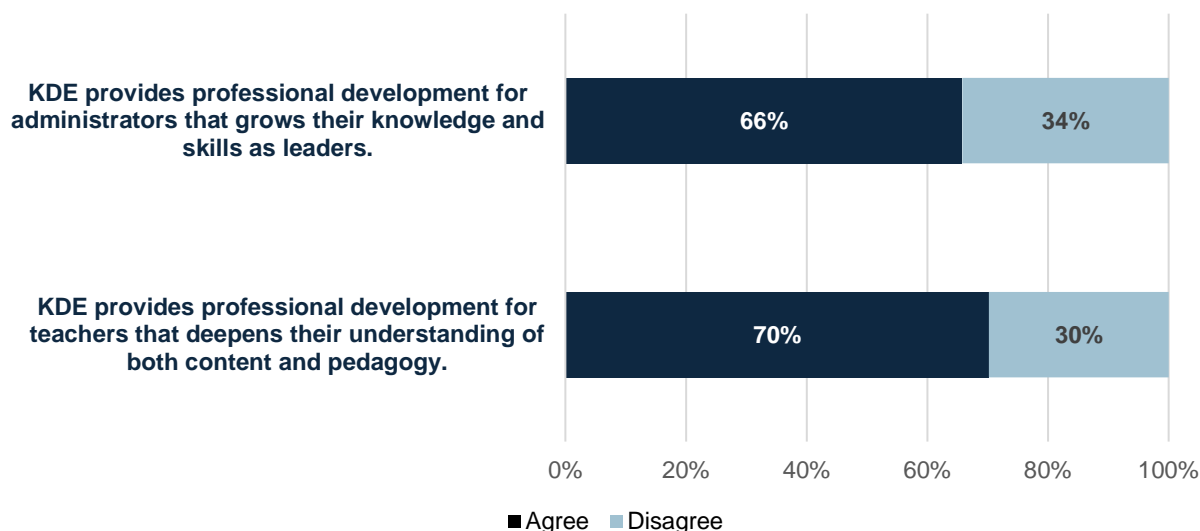
<sup>128</sup> “Professional Learning Partner Guide.” Rivet Education. <https://riveteducation.org/partner-search/>

<sup>129</sup> “Characteristics of High-Quality Professional Learning.” Kentucky Department of Education. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Characteristics\\_of\\_High\\_Quality\\_Profes\\_sional\\_Learning.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Characteristics_of_High_Quality_Profes_sional_Learning.pdf)

<sup>130</sup> “Professional Learning Modules.” Kentucky Department of Education, KY Standards. 2025. <https://kystandards.org/standards-resources/pl-mods/>

<sup>131</sup> “Getting to Know your KAS Modules.” Kentucky Department of Education, KY Standards. 2025. <https://kystandards.org/standards-resources/pl-mods/getting-to-know-your-kas-modules/>

**FIGURE 75: SUPERINTENDENT’S PERCEPTION OF KDE-PROVIDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS**



Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey.

As seen in Figure 75 above, approximately two-thirds of superintendent respondents agreed that the professional development KDE provides for teachers and administrators improves their understanding in their respective fields. In focus groups, most superintendents described Educational Cooperatives as their primary source of professional learning. This topic is further discussed in the Department Strategy & Partnerships section.

## MULTITIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

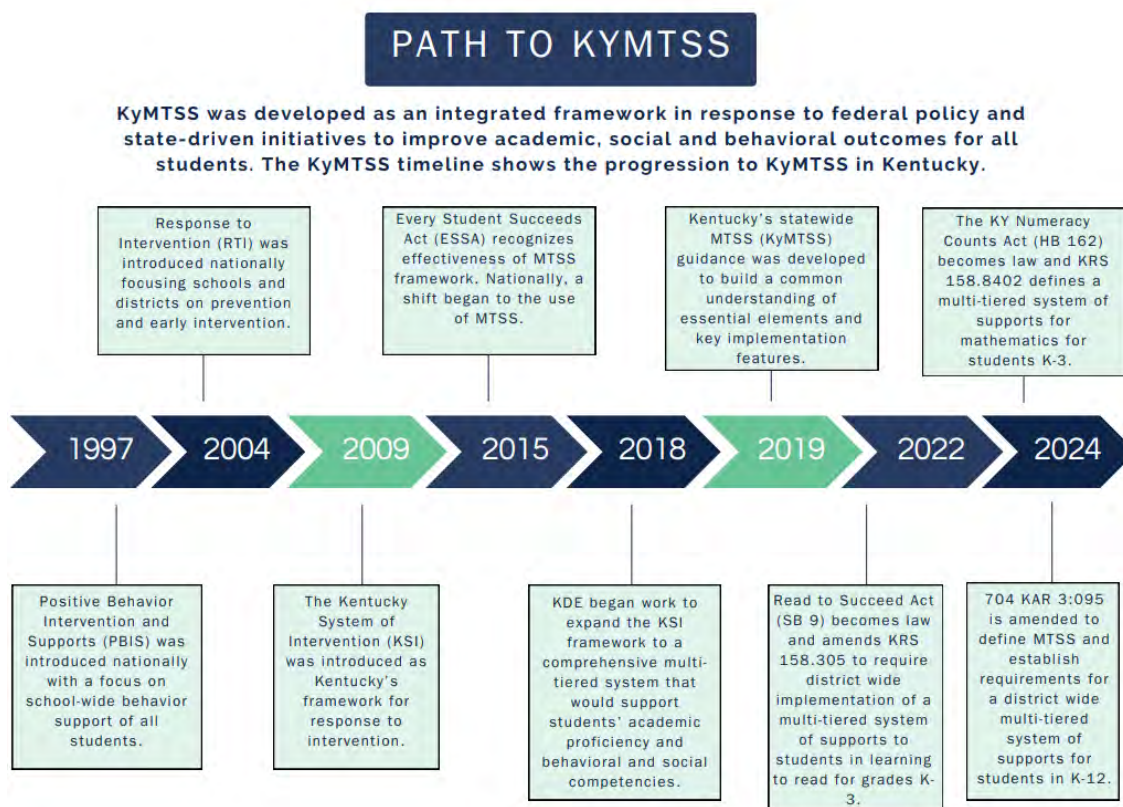
### Overview

As a result of Senate Bill 9 (2022) amending KRS 158.305, and mandated in 704 KAR 3:095, each school district within Kentucky must implement a comprehensive MTSS for K-12 with additional MTSS for K-3 literacy.<sup>132</sup> MTSS is expanded from the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems to create Kentucky’s MTSS, or ‘KyMTSS,’ which is defined as “a multi-level prevention system to support student achievement and social-emotional behavior competencies through an integration of differentiated core instruction, assessment, and intervention.”<sup>133</sup> Figure 76 displays a timeline of KyMTSS implementation from 1997 to 2024 in response to federal and state policies:

<sup>132</sup> “704 KAR 3:095. The Use of Multitiered System of Supports.” Kentucky General Assembly. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/704/003/095/>

<sup>133</sup> “Kentucky Multi-Tiered System of Supports (KyMTSS).” Kentucky Department of Education. March 25, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Pages/KSI.aspx>

FIGURE 76: DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR KYMTSS



Source: Image retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education website: [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Documents/KyMTSS\\_Timeline.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Documents/KyMTSS_Timeline.pdf)

KDE's website explains the essential elements of KyMTSS, and its alignment with the state's vision for an integrated MTSS, United We Learn, and Strategic Plan.<sup>134</sup> The KyMTSS has six essential elements:

- Equitable Access and Opportunity
- Tiered Delivery System with a Continuum of Supports
- Collaborative Problem-Solving Teams
- Data-Based Decision Making with Comprehensive Screening and Assessment
- Evidenced-Based Instruction, Intervention and Supports
- Family, School and Community Partnerships<sup>135</sup>

KDE's KyMTSS Implementation Guide from March 2025 explains that these six elements, which ground the KyMTSS framework, are designed to support districts with the "implementation, improvement, and sustainability of an effective district-wide K-12 multi-tiered system of supports."<sup>136</sup>

District implementation guidance is complemented by state and regional coordinators who offer technical assistance in MTSS. Eight of the Educational Cooperatives have an MTSS coordinator and offer regional

<sup>134</sup> "Kentucky Multi-Tiered System of Supports (KyMTSS)." Kentucky Department of Education. March 25, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Pages/KSI.aspx>

<sup>135</sup> "Kentucky's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (KyMTSS)." Kentucky Department of Education, KyMTSS. 2025. <https://kymtss.org/>

<sup>136</sup> "KyMTSS Implementation Guide." Kentucky Department of Education. March 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Documents/KyMTSS\\_Implementation\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Documents/KyMTSS_Implementation_Guide.pdf)

professional learning and technical assistance.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, KDE staff offer virtual office hours and training sessions during the year to answer questions and review guidance documents.<sup>138</sup>

## Reporting Requirements for Local MTSS

**5.8 Finding:** The required annual MTSS reporting process to KDE for K-12 districts is not standardized or addressed in the Kentucky MTSS (KyMTSS) implementation guidance documents. District reporting to KDE results in a large variance in evidence samples of local MTSS implementation.

Districts are required by 704 KAR 3:095 to implement and provide KDE with evidence of a comprehensive local MTSS in K-12 schools each year. Additional implementation and reporting requirements exist for districts to implement K-3 universal screeners, Reading Improvement Plans, and evidence-based Mathematics instruction within local MTSS according to KRS 158.305, KRS 158.840 and KRS 158.8402.

KDE staff reported they have more than 700 district submissions as required by the implementation of 704 KAR 3:095. During interviews and focus groups, KDE staff reported a wide range of evidence quality and hundreds of varying types of documents were received as part of the MTSS reporting required to the state. At a high level, it was observed that elementary systems better implement MTSS while the process was less consistent or clear at the secondary levels. KDE staff also noted they no longer have an external third-party partnership with REL Appalachia to review these required submissions due to the federal restructuring of the Comprehensive Centers in early 2025. This will slow down KDE's ability to review and respond to these submissions.

**5.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop evidence submission guidelines for elementary, middle, and high school settings to streamline the annual district reporting requirements.

The guidelines should include clear instructions and exemplars to support districts and MTSS Coordinators with the evidence collection and reporting processes.

## EARLY LITERACY & STRUCTURED LITERACY

### Overview

Improving early literacy is one of eight objectives outlined in KDE's 2024-2029 strategic plan. Specifically, KDE's goal is to "increase third grade KSA Reading proficiency from 47% in 2023-2024 to 60% by the 2028-2029 school year."<sup>139</sup> Figure 77 demonstrates the growth required over the next four years needed to achieve this ambitious goal:

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<sup>137</sup> "KyMTSS Newsletter – March 27, 2025." Kentucky Department of Education. March 2025.

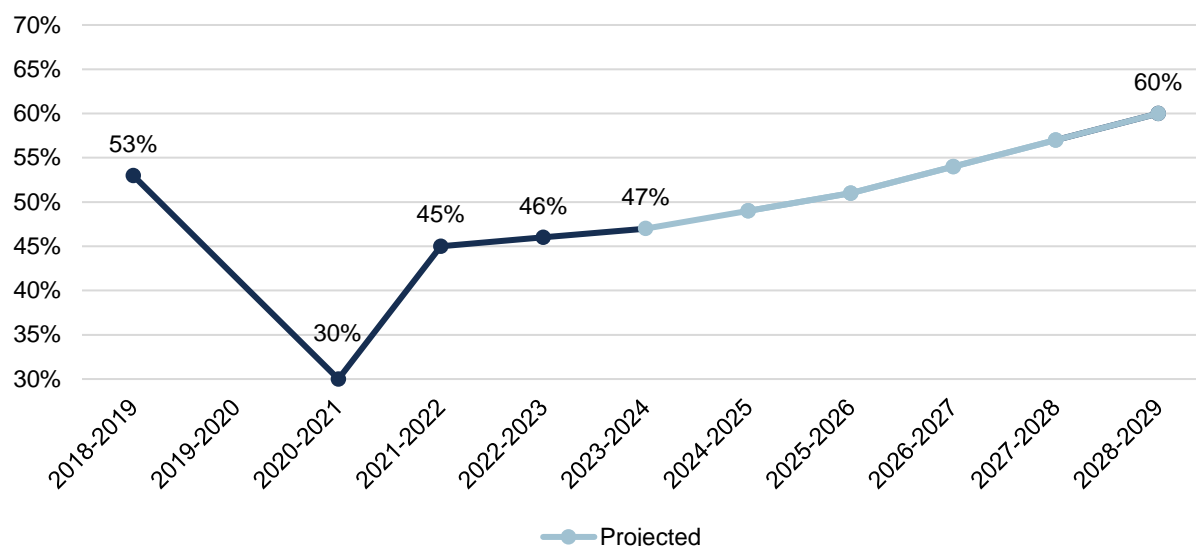
<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> "Strategic Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. April 25, 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/StrategicPlan/Pages/Strategic\\_Plan.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/StrategicPlan/Pages/Strategic_Plan.aspx)



**FIGURE 77: THIRD GRADE READING PROFICIENCY – PREVIOUS YEARS AND 2028-2029 GOAL**



Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, "Draft 2024-2029 Strategic Plan."

This work is grounded in the 2022 Read to Succeed Act (KRS 158.806). It calls for KDE to implement teacher professional learning academies related to evidence-based practices and establish a literacy coaching program. It also creates the Read to Succeed fund which financially supports these activities. Early Literacy is defined in the statute as kindergarten through third grade.<sup>140</sup> Relatedly, the Read to Succeed Act establishes KDE’s responsibilities related to structured literacy. Structured literacy is an approach to literacy instruction that “emphasizes highly explicit and systematic teaching of all essential components of literacy.” These components include decoding, spelling, reading comprehension, and written expression.<sup>141</sup> The Ready to Read Act calls for the implementation of universal screeners and diagnostic assessments, comprehensive reading programs, and reading improvement plans.<sup>142</sup>

The Division of Early Literacy within OTL oversees this body of work. Their portfolio of work includes the following:

- Early Literacy Screening and Diagnostic Assessments
- Coaching program
- Reading Improvement Plans
- Reading and Writing instructional resources
- Kentucky Early Literacy Leadership Network (KyELLN)
- Structured Literacy implementation
- Structured Literacy training for secondary educators (six through 12)
- Read to Succeed Summer Conference<sup>143</sup>

<sup>140</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.806.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=52082>

<sup>141</sup> “Structured Literacy.” Kentucky Department of Education. October 2, 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Pages/structured\\_literacy.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Pages/structured_literacy.aspx)

<sup>142</sup> “KRS 158.305.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=56358>

<sup>143</sup> “Early Literacy.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 23, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Pages/default.aspx>



The State of Louisiana has implemented several Early Literacy policies that align with Kentucky’s initiatives. For example, Louisiana has enacted Science of Reading training for all kindergarten through third-grade teachers, a universal literacy screener, and individual academic support plans.<sup>144</sup>

## Coaching Model

**5.9 Finding:** The current number of Early Literacy coaches (23) is not sufficient to meet the stated literacy goals. KDE staff described the goal of having 80 coaches, which is a number more aligned to other successful peer state models.

The implementation of the literacy coaching program is supported by five state regional literacy directors who manage a team of 23 State Literacy Coaching Specialists (SLCSs) who directly support schools that need to improve their early literacy instruction.<sup>145</sup> Mississippi, which has a smaller public-school enrollment than Kentucky, deployed 52 literacy coaches to 86 public schools in the 2022-23 school year.<sup>146</sup> Alabama, with a slightly higher public-school enrollment, deployed 93 Regional Literacy Specialists in the 2022-2023 school year.<sup>147</sup> Figure 78 demonstrates that Kentucky’s Early Literacy initiatives are broadly aligned to many other states.

FIGURE 78: PEER STATES' LITERACY INITIATIVES, 2024

State Departments of Education	Science of Reading Instruction	State Literacy Coaches	Third Grade Retention	Guidance for District Adoption of HQIM	Summer Reading Camps
Kentucky	✓	✓		✓	
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mississippi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ohio	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tennessee	✓		✓	✓	✓
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Data retrieved from Excel In Ed “Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy.” [https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ExcelinEd\\_PolicyToolkit\\_EarlyLiteracy\\_StatebyStateAnalysis\\_2021.pdf](https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ExcelinEd_PolicyToolkit_EarlyLiteracy_StatebyStateAnalysis_2021.pdf)

Coaches were placed in schools starting in the 2024-25 school year. KDE staff shared that third grade reading proficiency rates (based on the previous year KSA results) were the primary data point used to determine which schools they contacted initially. They also mentioned that schools are not statutorily required to work with their team, so the school and district must opt-in to the partnership. KDE staff reported a few cases of schools that would benefit from these supports, not being responsive to KDE’s outreach. To

<sup>144</sup> “Louisiana Comprehensive Literacy State Plan.” Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Teaching and Learning: Division of Literacy. June 2024. [https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/literacy/louisiana-comprehensive-literacy-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=500c6418\\_6](https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/literacy/louisiana-comprehensive-literacy-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=500c6418_6)

<sup>145</sup> “Coaching Handbook.” Kentucky Department of Education.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Documents/DEL\\_Coaching\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Documents/DEL_Coaching_Handbook.pdf)

<sup>146</sup> Huebeck, Elizabeth. “Mississippi Students Surged in Reading Over the Last Decade. Here’s How Schools Got Them There.” Education Week. June 19, 2023. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/mississippi-students-surged-in-reading-over-the-last-decade-heres-how-schools-got-them-there/2023/06>

<sup>147</sup> “ARI Semi-Annual and Annual Reporting 05-06-2023.” Alabama State Department of Education. May 2023. [PDF].

ensure more schools can access KDE's coaching supports, staff noted that SLCSs are not placed in Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement schools that are already supported by OCIS.

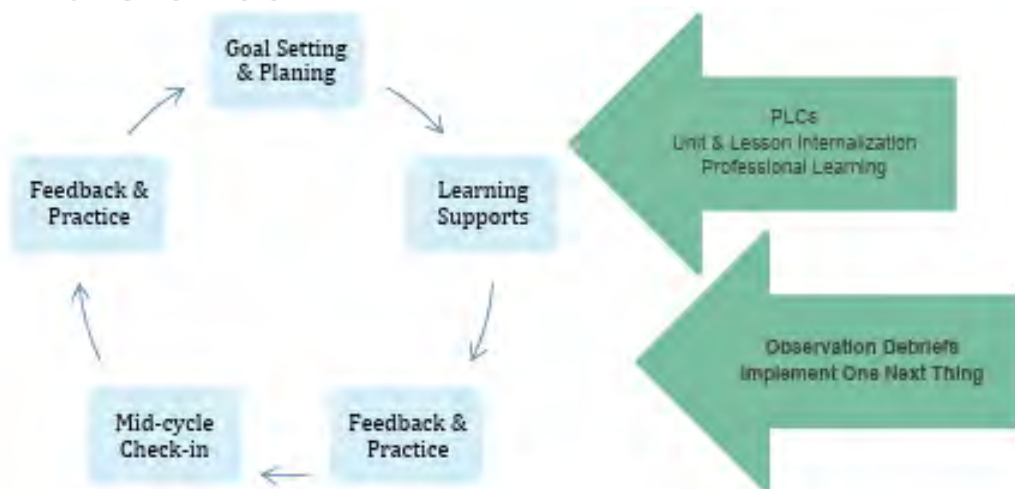
The coaching model is grounded in the Kentucky Literacy Framework, which contains nine domains that, when put together, “inform practices, processes and the overall strength of services delivered to improve literacy outcomes for Kentucky students.”<sup>148</sup> The nine domains include:

- Literacy Leadership Team
- Curriculum Implementation
- Literacy Professional Learning
- Literacy Instruction
- Data and Assessment
- Literacy Intervention Instruction
- Data-Based Decision-Making Goal
- Community and Family Involvement Goal
- Early Literacy Instruction

The framework allows for schools to reflect on the extent to which these domains are in place in their school, and the results can be used to create literacy action plans.<sup>149</sup>

Partner schools work with their SLCS to complete an initial School Literacy Planning Tool. Throughout the school year, the Coaching Cycle Frameworks guides SLCSs' partnership with schools. The following example coaching cycle is taken from the team's 2024-2025 documentation:

FIGURE 79: SAMPLE COACHING CYCLE RETRIEVED FROM “KDE DIVISION OF EARLY LITERACY COACHING CYCLE FRAMEWORK SY2024-2025”



Source: Image retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education website: [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Documents/KDE\\_Division\\_of\\_Early\\_Literacy\\_Coaching\\_Cycle\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Documents/KDE_Division_of_Early_Literacy_Coaching_Cycle_Framework.pdf)

KDE staff shared that the model calls for SLCSs to work in the same school for three to five years. To identify trends and assess effectiveness, SLCSs keep coaching logs at the school level.<sup>150</sup> In interviews

<sup>148</sup> “Kentucky Literacy Framework.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/engla/Documents/Kentucky\\_Literacy\\_Framework.docx](https://www.education.ky.gov/layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/engla/Documents/Kentucky_Literacy_Framework.docx)

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> “KDE Division of Early Literacy Coaching Cycle Framework SY24-25.” Kentucky Department of Education. [https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Documents/KDE\\_Division\\_of\\_Early\\_Literacy\\_Coaching\\_Cycle\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Documents/KDE_Division_of_Early_Literacy_Coaching_Cycle_Framework.pdf)

with KDE staff, they described the team’s broader impact by citing the number of classroom observations, feedback conversations, coaching cycles, and PLCs that were conducted by SLCSs thus far.

- 5.9.a **Recommendation:** KDE should determine the additional resources and funding needed to increase the number of State Literacy Coaching Specialists (SLCSs) in schools and communicate this need to the General Assembly.

### ***Kentucky Reading Academies: Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading & Spelling Training***

**The Kentucky Reading Academies, also known as LETRS training, has been positively received by the field. It is an example of relevant and timely professional learning provided by KDE to support the implementation of the Read to Succeed Act.**

Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training is a professional learning opportunity offered by Lexia Learning and is organized by the Division of Early Literacy. It is designed to provide early childhood and elementary educators with training in the Science of Reading. Specifically, it teaches them skills in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and written language.<sup>151</sup> KDE staff shared in interviews that the training is a two-year commitment, with a mix of learning modalities. The first cohort started in fall 2022, and the fourth cohort is slated to begin in fall 2025.<sup>152</sup> The training was offered to early childhood and elementary teachers throughout the state on an opt-in basis. According to KDE staff, 97% of all districts in Kentucky have been represented thus far. This includes 5,055 teachers and 741 administrators across three cohorts. A variety of roles have taken part in the training including, early childhood, elementary, special education, and English Learner teachers, as well as reading interventionists, instructional coaches, principals, and district administrators. In focus groups, several superintendents shared positive feedback regarding their teachers’ experiences with LETRS training. KDE staff in interviews also described hearing positive feedback from educators who participated.

Science of Reading training, such as LETRS, is offered to educators in a majority of states. In addition to Kentucky, it is a state-wide initiative in 33 other states.<sup>153</sup>

### ***The Three-Cueing Model***

- 5.10 **Observation:** Kentucky permits the three-cueing model for reading instruction. There is a national trend for states to ban three-cueing because of the empirical evidence that it hinders reading proficiency.

The three-cueing model leverages “visual memory as the primary basis for teaching word recognition or reading based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues.” There is empirical evidence to suggest that it hinders reading proficiency, and that it is misaligned with the Science of Reading.<sup>154</sup> As of 2024, 14 states have banned the use of the three-cueing model for reading instruction, including Alabama, Florida, and Ohio (see Figure 80).<sup>155</sup> Legislation was introduced to ban three-cueing in Kentucky in 2024 and 2025,

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<sup>151</sup> “Lexia® LETRS® Professional Learning (Pre-K-5).” Lexia. 2025. <https://www.lexialearning.com/letrs>

<sup>152</sup> “Kentucky Reading Academics.” Lexia. 2025. <https://www.lexialearning.com/kentucky-letrs?cache=0>

<sup>153</sup> “Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy.” ExcelinEd. January 2024. [https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ExcelinEd\\_PolicyToolkit\\_EarlyLiteracy\\_StatebyStateAnalysis\\_2021.pdf](https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ExcelinEd_PolicyToolkit_EarlyLiteracy_StatebyStateAnalysis_2021.pdf)

<sup>154</sup> “Why the Three-Cueing Model Hinders Reading Proficiency.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/86/28546/27Feb2024%20-%20Why%20Three-Cueing%20Hinders%20Reading%20handout.pdf>

<sup>155</sup> Peak, Christopher. “New reading laws sweep the nation following Sold a Story.” APM Reports. November 18, 2024. <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2024/11/18/legislators-reading-laws-sold-a-story>

but did not pass. Although three-cueing has not been banned in Kentucky, KDE released guidance in 2024 advising against the use of the three-cueing model in favor of the Science of Reading.<sup>156</sup>

FIGURE 80: THREE-CUEING BILLS BY COMPARISON STATE

States	Three-cueing system status	Information on Bill, Act, or Code	Date/Year Passed or Adopted
Kentucky	Not banned	HB 612 (2024) and HB 528 (2025) proposed banning the three-cueing system.	HB 612 passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate failed to vote on it – not passed.  HB 528 did not make it to a vote – not passed.
Alabama	Banned	Alabama Administrative Code Rule 290-3-3.61 specifically prohibits the use of the three-cueing system in Alabama.	May 2024
Florida	Banned	HB 7039 requires educators to use science-backed phonics instruction that excludes the three-cueing system model of Reading.	July 2023
Mississippi	Not banned	HB 857 (2025) bans the three-cueing system from literacy programming for students in fourth through eighth grade	The House failed to vote on HB 857 – not passed.
Ohio	Banned	ORC 3313.6028(A)(2) bans public schools from using any core curriculum, instructional materials, or intervention programs in grades PK-5 that rely on the three-cueing approach.	October 2023
Tennessee	Not banned – requires schools to use phonics/phonemic awareness.	SB 7003 “requires each LEA and public charter school to provide foundational literacy skills instruction to students in kindergarten through grade three.”	Not banned

Source: Retrieved from Official State Legislation and State Education Department websites.

5.10.a **Recommendation:** KDE should collaborate with the General Assembly to prioritize any necessary action to mitigate and/or ban the three-cueing model for reading instruction.

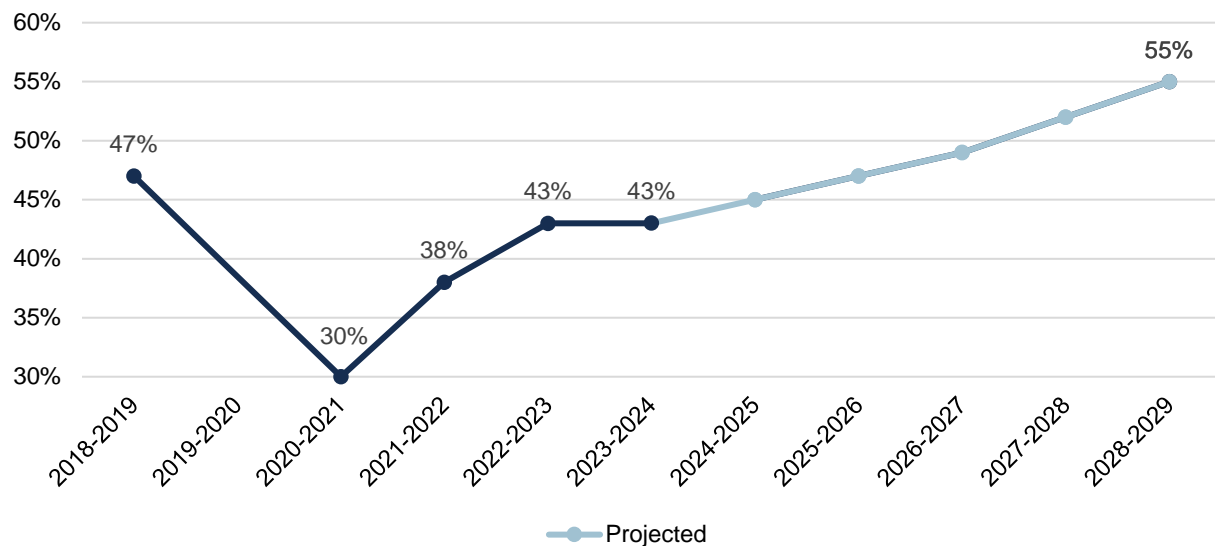
## NUMERACY

Improving early numeracy is one of eight objectives outlined in KDE’s 2024-2029 strategic plan. Specifically, KDE’s goal is to “increase third grade KSA Mathematics proficiency from 43% in 2023-2024 to 55% by the

<sup>156</sup> “Why the Three-Cueing Models Hinders Reading Proficiency.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/86/28546/27Feb2024%20-%20Why%20Three-Cueing%20Hinders%20Reading%20handout.pdf>

2028-2029 school year.”<sup>157</sup> As seen in Figure 81, proficiency rates must increase by two to three percentage points annually to meet this ambitious goal.

**FIGURE 81: THIRD GRADE MATHEMATICS PROFICIENCY – PREVIOUS YEARS & 2028-2029 GOAL**



Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, "Draft 2024-2029 Strategic Plan."

House Bill 162 (Kentucky Numeracy Counts Act) established the Numeracy Counts Fund with the goal of "training and supporting teachers to improve the Mathematics content and practices of students in kindergarten through grade eight." It requires KDE to implement the following components:

- Teacher professional learning academies for Mathematics
- A Mathematics coaching program
- A grant program for districts to purchase high-quality curriculum for kindergarten through grade three, as well as facilitate curriculum-based professional learning.<sup>158</sup>

**5.11 Finding: Mathematics education is not resourced at an adequate level to meet stated numeracy goals.**

The Director of Mathematics Education, a MOA staff member within OTL, leads this work. Given current funding levels, the Director of Mathematics Education is the only KDE staff member solely supporting the implementation of the Numeracy Counts Act. According to interviews with KDE staff, the Director coordinates professional learning opportunities, facilitates the disbursement of grant funds, supports HQIR adoption, and leads the development of a state-approved list of diagnostic assessments.<sup>159</sup> The K-8 Professional Learning Academies that have been implemented so far have reached approximately 1,200 Math teachers, 250 administrators, and 19 middle schools.<sup>160</sup> There are 486 schools in Kentucky that include grades six through eight; approximately 4% of these schools have been reached by numeracy professional learning academies thus far.<sup>161</sup> While KDE's efforts thus far are strategically aligned to the

<sup>157</sup> "Strategic Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. April 25, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/StrategicPlan/Pages/Strategic\\_Plan.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/StrategicPlan/Pages/Strategic_Plan.aspx)

<sup>158</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 158.843." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55619>

<sup>159</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 158.8402." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55617>

<sup>160</sup> "Superintendents' Webcast – March 11, 2025." Kentucky Department of Education. *KDE Media Portal*. March 11, 2025. <https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/leadership/2025/03/superintendents-webcast-march-11-2025/>

<sup>161</sup> "Kentucky Education Facts." Kentucky Department of Education. March 24, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/edfacts/Pages/default.aspx>

goals of the Numeracy Counts Act, there is a substantial need to expand the programming to more schools and districts.

All numeracy funds are dispersed to providers and programs, except for those used to support the Director's position. KDE is not able to provide targeted, school-based coaching support because of its limited staff capacity. Contingent on funding, KDE is hoping to establish a coaching program using a model similar to early literacy.

As a comparison, Alabama allocated \$95 million to support math coaches and instructional materials in the state's FY26 budget.<sup>162</sup> South Carolina allocated \$11.5 million in its 2024-2025 state budget to fund math coaching, educator professional development, high-dosage tutoring, and high-quality instructional materials.<sup>163</sup>

As mentioned in the Department Strategy & Partnerships section, KDE's numeracy work is supported by the Committee for Mathematics Achievement (CMA). The Committee was established legislatively to develop a strategic plan for Mathematics achievement.<sup>164</sup> Based on the team's review of meeting notes, summaries, and agendas, it is evident that the Committee is focused on its core mission. They frequently review the strategic plan and discuss implementation.<sup>165</sup>

**5.11.a Recommendation: KDE should assess what resources and funding are needed to support the broader implementation of numeracy initiatives across the Commonwealth.**

## ENGLISH LEARNERS

Students are identified as English Learners when their primary language is a language other than English.<sup>166</sup> The federal Title III program helps guide this work. It was enacted to ensure that ELs "develop English proficiency and meet the same academic content and achievement standards that other children are expected to meet." Currently, KDE's support of districts and their population of EL students is primarily through the management of the Title III program.<sup>167</sup>

**5.12 Finding: Kentucky does not have a comprehensive plan for how to support districts in educating English Learners (EL) despite a growing statewide EL population.**

As of 2023, there are more than 50,000 students who are considered ELs across the Commonwealth. This represents approximately 8% of the total student population. As shown in Figure 82, the population of ELs more than doubled over ten years, between 2013 and 2023.

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<sup>162</sup> "Budget Watch FY 2026." A+ Education Partnership. February 6, 2025.

<https://aplusala.org/blog/2025/02/06/budget-watch-fy-2026/>

<sup>163</sup> "South Carolina Improves Education with 2024 Budget and New Policies." ExcelinED. September 3, 2024.

<https://excelinedinaction.org/2024/09/03/south-carolina-improves-education-with-2024-budget-and-new-policies/>

<sup>164</sup> "Committee for Mathematics Achievement (CMA)." Kentucky Department of Education. March 12, 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Committee-for-Mathematics-Achievement-\(CMA\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Committee-for-Mathematics-Achievement-(CMA).aspx)

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

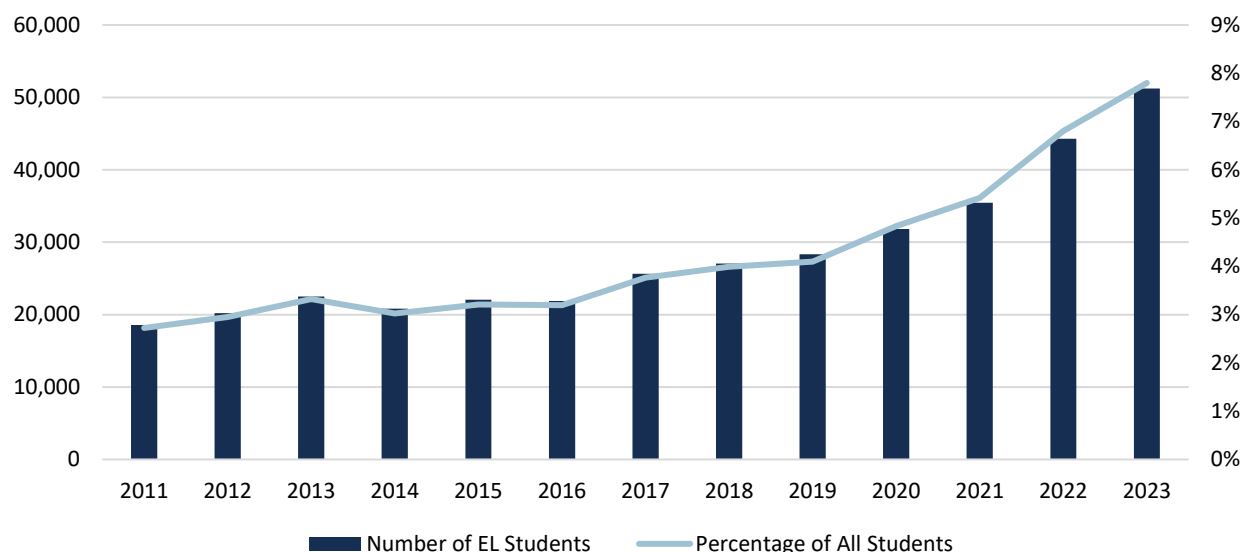
<sup>166</sup> "Title III - English Learner and Immigrant Students." Kentucky Department of Education, January 29, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/progs/eng/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.



**FIGURE 82: KENTUCKY ENGLISH LEARNER POPULATION 2011-2023**



Source: Data retrieved from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of data (CCD), “State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education,” 2011-2012 through 2021-2022; and EDFacts file 141, Data Group 678, 2011-2012 through 2021-2022.

ELs are not represented in the current version of KDE’s strategic plan.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, the team did not find evidence of any other guiding strategy within KDE that helps shape this work. Among peer states, Alabama, Ohio, and Tennessee have created EL strategic plans to guide support of their growing population of EL students. For example, Alabama’s plan outlines a vision and theory of change, as well as five strategic goals. The goals are related to increasing the use of high-quality instruction and assessments, building the capacity of schools and districts, utilizing data and research, and engaging families.<sup>169</sup>

**5.12.a Recommendation:** KDE should create and execute a strategic plan that defines the Department’s vision for supporting districts in serving EL students effectively. The plan should include professional development, resources, and ongoing support tailored to the needs of EL students.

The plan should include professional development, opportunities, resources, and ongoing support tailored to the needs of ELs. English Learners should also be incorporated more intentionally in KDE’s broader strategic plan.

**5.13 Finding:** KDE has no staff members fully dedicated to supporting districts with the specific learning needs of EL students.

Additionally, there are no on-demand instructional resources related to ELs on the KDE or KY Standards websites.

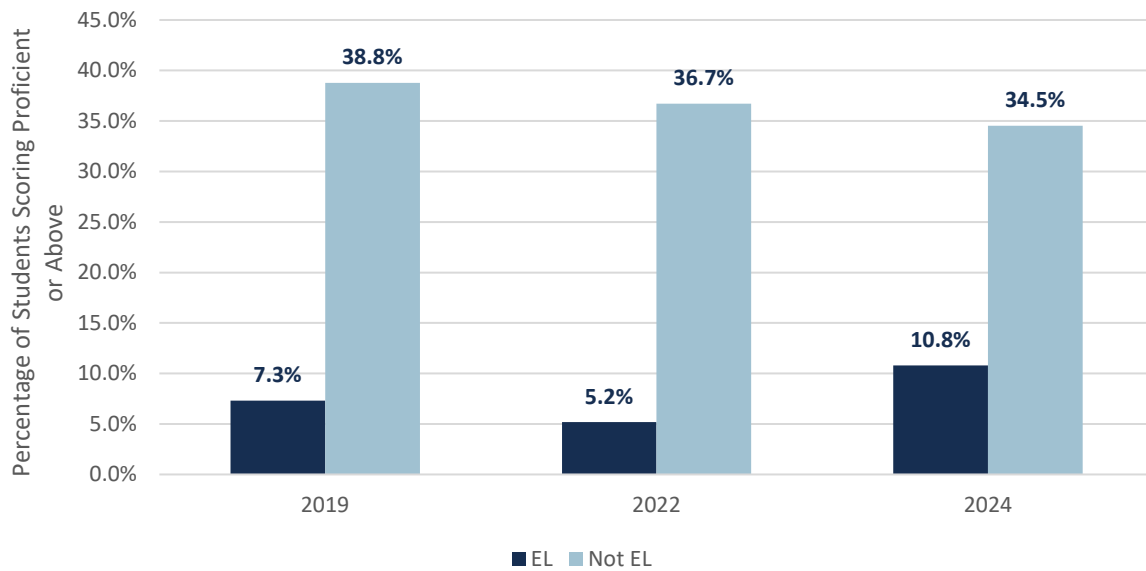
In their most recent strategic plan, KDE establishes ambitious literacy and numeracy goals. To meet these goals, they will need to improve academic outcomes for ELs. Figure 83 and Figure 84 demonstrate the significant gap that exists between EL and non-EL students in terms of Reading and Math proficiency on the NAEP exam. On the 2024 NAEP exam, there was a 24 percentage-point gap between EL and non-EL students on both the fourth grade reading and eighth grade math exams.

<sup>168</sup> “Strategic Plan.” Kentucky Department of Education. [Word Document].

<sup>169</sup> “Alabama Framework for English Learner Success.” Alabama State Department of Education. [https://www.alabamaachievers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/EL\\_2022110\\_Alabama-Framework-for-English-Learner-Success\\_V1.0.pdf](https://www.alabamaachievers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/EL_2022110_Alabama-Framework-for-English-Learner-Success_V1.0.pdf)

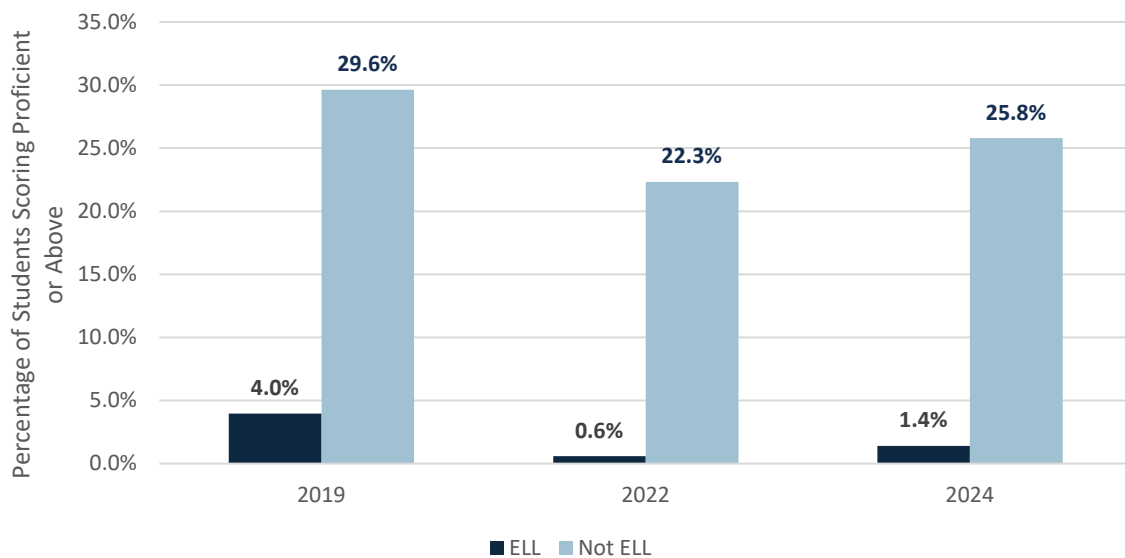


**FIGURE 83: KENTUCKY 4TH GRADE READING NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES BY EL STATUS**



Source: Data retrieved from Nation's Report Card, NAEP Data Explorer: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE>.

**FIGURE 84: KENTUCKY 8TH GRADE MATH NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES BY EL STATUS**



Source: Data retrieved from Nation's Report Card, NAEP Data Explorer: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE>.

The English Learners, Migrant and Neglected Students Branch within OCIS supports compliance components for the Title III program. There is currently no dedicated staff member primarily focused on the EL student population within OTL. KDE staff in interviews identified this as a staffing gap. They also shared KDE is in the process of hiring an instructional-focused EL specialist to support this work.

As a point of comparison, the Alabama State Department of Education has 14 staff members that support EL instruction. Within the Department’s Division of Instruction, there are two instructional-focused staff members, as well as 12 English Learners Regional Specialists.<sup>170</sup>

The only on-demand resources published by KDE are those related to legal obligations, EL assessments, and broader implementation of an EL program. These program resources are not instructional-focused, but instead, support districts with parent notification, home language surveys, and monitoring the academic progress of students who have exited the EL program. More information about the EL assessments is discussed in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section.

Below, Figure 85 demonstrates additional EL programmatic structures amongst peer states. A majority of peer states have dedicated EL programmatic staff, as well as a strategy that guides their support of EL students.

**FIGURE 85: COMPARISON STATES PROGRAMMATIC STRUCTURES**

State	Dedicated English Learner Programmatic Staff	English Learner Strategic Plan or Inclusion in Overall Strategic Plan	WIDA Consortium Member	English Learner Professional Learning	Statewide English Learner Database
Kentucky			✓	✓	
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mississippi	✓	✓		✓	
Ohio		✓		✓	✓
Tennessee					

Source: Retrieved from Official State Education Department websites and WIDA Consortium website.

**5.13.a Recommendation:** KDE should establish at least one full-time position within the Department dedicated to improving instruction and academic outcomes of ELs.

Use this additional capacity to provide personalized support to districts and create on-demand instructional resources for educators. In addition, embed differentiated support for ELs into other OTL priority areas including early literacy, numeracy, and MTSS. OTL should also collaborate with OSEEL to support districts with their EL students who are dually identified in special education or Gifted & Talented.

<sup>170</sup> “DAPS 2025.” Alabama State Department of Education. November 2024. [https://www.alabamaachievers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/COMM\\_20250106\\_DAPS-2025\\_V1.0.pdf](https://www.alabamaachievers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/COMM_20250106_DAPS-2025_V1.0.pdf)

## STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY & ASSESSMENTS

This section discusses KDE’s responsibilities associated with the Kentucky School Testing System and state and federal accountability. The United We Learn Council is currently advancing an assessment and accountability framework to the “advocacy phase” with the General Assembly.<sup>171</sup> This framework would represent a major change to assessment and accountability in Kentucky. The United We Learn Council is also discussed in greater detail in the Department Overview chapter.

The Office of Assessment and Accountability supports the work of schools and districts in implementing the Kentucky School Testing System.<sup>172</sup> OAA consists of two Divisions: the Division of Assessment and Accountability Support is responsible for communicating information on regulations, policies and procedures, and assessment dates, and the Division of Data Accountability and Analysis is responsible for the data components of the system.<sup>173</sup>

### FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is a 2015 federal law that requires, at a minimum, that every state measure annual student performance in Reading, Mathematics, and Science. Reading and Math must include testing annually in grades three to eight and once in grades nine to 12, while Science requires testing once in each of the grades three to five, six to eight, and nine to 12 grade bands respectively. State education agencies are charged with developing and administering an annual state assessment in each of these content areas aligned to grade-level academic standards.<sup>174</sup> In Kentucky, students take the Kentucky Summative Assessments (KSA), which measure student proficiency on the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS). These outcomes are required to be shared with parents through an easily understandable, online State Report Card.<sup>175</sup>

Under ESSA, states are also required to submit consolidated state plans that outline their implementation of the law and describe how they will spend federal education funds.<sup>176</sup> Kentucky most recently submitted a revised plan in February 2025. The plan outlines Kentucky’s accountability system and reporting process, as well as plans for how Kentucky will use the funds for each of the federal Title programs.<sup>177</sup>

### KENTUCKY STATE ASSESSMENTS

#### Overview

Kentucky public school students are required to participate in annual testing, and assessments results are included in the state’s accountability system. Figure 86 outlines all assessments that are considered “state assessments.” Kentucky Summative Assessments (KSA) are annual summative assessments administered in grades three through eight, ten, and 11. On average, Kentucky state assessments use less

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<sup>171</sup> “KUWL Council Virtual Meeting – March 20, 2025.” KDE Media Portal. March 20, 2025. [https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2025/03/kuwl-council-virtual-meeting-march-20-2025/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2025/03/kuwl-council-virtual-meeting-march-20-2025/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

<sup>172</sup> “Assessment Support.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 10, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> “A Policymaker’s Guide to State Summative Assessment Systems.” Education Commission of the States. December 2024. [https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/PG\\_1224\\_Policymakers-Guide-to-State-Summative-Assessment-Systems.pdf](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/PG_1224_Policymakers-Guide-to-State-Summative-Assessment-Systems.pdf)

<sup>175</sup> “School Report Card.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Pages/SRC.aspx>

<sup>176</sup> “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).” Kentucky Department of Education. January 22, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Pages/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-\(ESSA\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Pages/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-(ESSA).aspx)

<sup>177</sup> “Commonwealth of Kentucky Revised Consolidated State Plan Under The Every Student Succeeds Act.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 2017. <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Kentucky%20Consolidated%20State%20Plan%20February%202025.pdf>

than one percent of instructional time in a school year, which is in alignment with US DOE guidance for testing to be capped at less than 2% of instructional time.<sup>178</sup>

**FIGURE 86: KENTUCKY ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENTS**

Assessment	Grades	Subjects
<b>Kentucky Summative Assessments (KSA)</b>	Grades 3-8, 10	Reading and Mathematics
	Once per grade band (elementary, middle, and high) Science – 4, 7, and 11 Social Studies – 5, 8, 11 Writing – 5, 8, and 11	Science, Social Studies, Writing (on-demand and editing and mechanics)
<b>Alternative KSA</b> <i>(For students with moderate and significant disabilities)</i>	Grades 3-8, 10	Reading and Mathematics
	Once per grand bands as outlined above	Science, Social Studies, Writing (on-demand and editing and mechanics)
<b>ACT</b>	Required in grade 11, optional in grade 12	Postsecondary readiness
<b>ACCESS for ELLs</b> <i>(Language proficiency assessment for students who are English Learners)</i>	Grades K through 12	Language proficiency assessment for students who are English Learners (EL)
<b>Common Kindergarten Entry Screener (K SCREEN)</b>	Grade K	Adaptive, cognitive, communication, motor, and social-emotional domains

Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education website.

Districts have the autonomy to select and implement formative or interim assessments that provide real-time feedback to educators. Interim assessments are administered at certain benchmarks throughout the year to formally assess academic progress. Formative assessments are a more informal method of assessing student learning DE encourages the use of formative assessments as part of a balanced assessment system. Section III of the Model Curriculum Framework provides guidance on how educators can incorporate high-quality and reliable assessment practices into their systems.<sup>179</sup> According to interviews with KDE staff, Star Assessments from Renaissance, MAP Growth from NWEA, and iReady Assessments from Curriculum Associates are the most popular formative assessments among districts. A recently published document from NWEA shared that 92 districts in Kentucky administered the MAP Growth formative assessment in Spring 2022; this represents 54% of all districts in the Commonwealth.<sup>180</sup>

Some assessments, including the Alternative KSA and ACCESS for ELs are only administered to certain populations of students. State agencies must submit waivers if more than one percent of their student population participates in alternate assessments, such as the Alternative KSA. In 2024-2025, KDE submitted a waiver request in cases where they were slightly above 1%. They reported a 1.17%

<sup>178</sup> “Assessments.” Kentucky Department of Education. February 28, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>179</sup> “Model Curriculum Framework.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 2023.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/MCF\\_Section\\_3\\_Balanced\\_Assessment.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/MCF_Section_3_Balanced_Assessment.pdf)

<sup>180</sup> “Predicting Proficiency on the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) based on NWEA MAP Growth Scores.”

NWEA Psychometric Solutions. March 2023. <https://www.nwea.org/uploads/KY-MAP-Growth-Linking-Study-Report-2023-03-24.pdf>

participation rate in the Reading and Mathematics Alternative KSA, and 1.21% participation in the Science Alternative KSA in 2023-2024. Kentucky was also granted a waiver for all subjects in 2023-2024.<sup>181</sup>

The Department releases assessment blueprints that outline the structure and content of state assessments, ensuring alignment with Kentucky's academic standards. These blueprints also serve as a guide for educators, detailing the skills and knowledges students are expected to demonstrate in various subjects and grade levels. KDE leads a structured review process with input from educators to generate blueprints for Reading and Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Blueprints are updated every six years to align with the standards review process.<sup>182</sup>

Kentucky periodically releases sample items and practice tests to help familiarize students and teachers with the state assessments. KSA released items are available on the Kentucky Portal hosted by the test vendor, Pearson.<sup>183</sup> A sample of items, along with the statistics for each, are released for each grade and content area. Released items from 2020 to 2024 are currently available.<sup>184</sup> ACT, ACCESS for ELs, and Alternative KSA sample items are available on KDE's website, along with a training video and PowerPoint presentation.<sup>185</sup>

### Federal Requirements

Under ESSA, as described earlier, states are required to “annually administer State-determined academic assessments in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics in each of grades three through eight and once in high school, and to annually administer State-determined academic assessments in Science at least once in each of the three grade spans (third to fifth, sixth to ninth, and tenth to 12<sup>th</sup>).”<sup>186</sup> Students with significant cognitive disabilities are permitted to take alternate versions of these assessments. Additionally, states are required to administer an English Language Proficiency Assessment annually for all English Learners in grades K-12. English Learners with significant cognitive disabilities are similarly permitted to take an alternate version of this assessment.<sup>187</sup> Figure 86 above includes the full list of summative assessments administered in Kentucky. Figure 87 below outlines the federal assessment requirements under the ESSA and Kentucky's alignment.

FIGURE 87: FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENTS

Assessment Type	Grades	Kentucky's Alignment with Federal Requirements
<b>Mathematics and Reading/Language Arts Summative Assessment</b>	Annually in Grades 3-8, once in 9-12*	Meets
<b>Science Summative Assessment</b>	Once in Grades 3-5, once in 6-9, once in 10-12*	Meets

<sup>181</sup> “KDE: OSEEL: DIMR-Kentucky 1.0% Participation Waiver Extension Request.” Kentucky Department of Education. August 14, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/GuidanceResources/Documents/2024-2025KentuckyRequesttoExtend1.0waiver.pdf>

<sup>182</sup> “Assessment Blueprints.” Kentucky Department of Education. July 9, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Pages/Blueprint.aspx>

<sup>183</sup> “Sample Test Items.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/items/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>184</sup> “Released Items.” Pearson Education. <https://ky.mypearsonsupport.com/released-items/>

<sup>185</sup> “Sample Test Items.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/items/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>186</sup> “A State's Guide to the U.S. Department of Education's Assessment Peer Review Process.” U.S. Department of Education. September 24, 2018. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2023/11/assessmentpeerreview.pdf>

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

Assessment Type	Grades	Kentucky's Alignment with Federal Requirements
<b>English Language Proficiency Assessment</b> (for students who are English Learners)	Grades K through 12	Meets
<b>Alternative Mathematics and Reading/Language Arts Summative Assessment</b> (for students with significant cognitive disabilities, capped at 1% of all testers)	Annually in Grades 3-8, once in 9-12*	Meets
<b>Alternative Science Summative Assessment</b> (for students with significant cognitive disabilities, capped at 1% of all testers)	Once in Grades 3-5, once in 6-9, once in 10-12*	Meets

Source: Data retrieved from Federal Department of Education website. \*High school summative assessments can be replaced with nationally recognized high school academic assessments (i.e. SAT, ACT, and AP exams).<sup>188</sup>

It should also be noted that ESSA includes the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA), which allows State Education Agencies to establish, operate, and evaluate an innovative assessment system that can be included for use in the statewide accountability system.<sup>189</sup> States approved to participate in IADA are allowed to introduce innovative assessment designs such as competency-based assessments and performance-based assessments. Kentucky has not submitted an application to participate in IADA. In total, less than ten states applied and there are only five states approved to participate in IADA (Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and North Carolina).<sup>190</sup>

## Kentucky Requirements

**Kentucky has more annual state assessments than are federally required or conducted in most peer states.**

KDE is responsible for supporting the implementation of additional assessments that are required under Kentucky law. These assessments include the following:

- Common Kindergarten Entry Screener (K SCREEN)
- Social Studies KSA and Alternative KSA in grades five, eight, and 11
- Writing (on-demand and editing and mechanics) KSA and Alternative KSA in grades five, eight, and 11
- ACT in grade 11<sup>191</sup>

Figure 88 highlights how Kentucky's requirements compare to peer states. Kindergarten screeners and college admissions exams are common requirements. Writing and Social Studies assessments are only required by one of the five peer states. Unlike Kentucky, four of the five peer states require end-of-course assessments. End-of-course assessments are included in Florida, Mississippi, and Ohio's traditional

<sup>188</sup> "A State's Guide to the U.S. Department of Education's Assessment Peer Review Process." U.S. Department of Education. September 24, 2018. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2023/11/assessmentpeerreview.pdf>

<sup>189</sup> "Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA)." U.S. Department of Education. March 27, 2025. <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/school-improvement/iada>

<sup>190</sup> "2020 State Applications for the IADA." U.S. Department of Education. March 27, 2025.

<https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/school-improvement/iada#state-applications>

<sup>191</sup> "Assessments." Kentucky Department of Education. February 28, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/default.aspx>

graduation requirements, although these peer states also offer students alternative pathways to graduation if they are unable to pass these exams. Tennessee does not have graduation requirements associated with its end-of-course assessments. More discussion on the prevalence and merit of these additional assessments is discussed below.

**FIGURE 88: COMPARISON STATES: ADDITIONAL REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS**

State	Additional Subjects	College Admissions Exam ( <i>ACT or SAT</i> )	End-of-Course Assessments	Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)
Kentucky	Social Studies, Writing	✓		✓
Alabama		✓		✓
Florida	Writing		✓	✓
Mississippi		✓	✓	✓
Ohio		✓	✓	✓
Tennessee	Social Studies	✓	✓	

Source: Data retrieved from State Department of Education websites.

### Common Kindergarten Entry Screener

Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs) assess students' readiness to begin school and are usually administered shortly after students begin kindergarten.<sup>192</sup> Kentucky requires kindergarten students to complete the Common Kindergarten Entry Screener, which "assesses the domains of adaptive, cognitive, communication, motor, and social-emotional as established in Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards."<sup>193</sup> While KEAs are not federally mandated, 29 states (including Kentucky) require this form of assessment.<sup>194</sup> It is also required in four out of five peer states: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Ohio. Kindergarten Entry Screeners can be effective tools for early identification of student needs. According to the research literature, the KEA used by Kentucky (the BRIGANCE Early Childhood Screens III) is demonstrated to be "highly accurate in identifying children who may need additional supports or early interventions, including children who may need more challenging learning environments."<sup>195</sup>

### Social Studies

Kentucky students are required to take a summative Social Studies assessment in grades five, eight, and 11. While four out of five of Kentucky's peer states do not require students to take Social Studies assessments, Tennessee similarly requires students to complete a summative Social Studies assessment

<sup>192</sup> "State K-3 Policies 2023." Education Commission of the States. June 2023.

<https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/state-k-3-policies-2023-04>

<sup>193</sup> "Assessments." Kentucky Department of Education. February 28, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>194</sup> "State K-3 Policies 2023." Education Commission of the States. June 2023.

<https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/state-k-3-policies-2023-04>

<sup>195</sup> "High-Quality Early Childhood Assessment." Learning Policy Institute. August 2021.

[https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/ECE\\_Assessments\\_BRIEF.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/ECE_Assessments_BRIEF.pdf)



in grades six, seven, and eight, as well as an end-of-course assessment for U.S. History and Geography assessment in high school.<sup>196</sup>

Kentucky high school students must also fulfill a civic literacy requirement to graduate. KRS 158.141 calls for districts to implement either a civics test or a half-credit civic literacy course starting in the 2025-2026 school year. The civics test should consist of 100 questions, drawn from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (UCIS) naturalization exam.<sup>197</sup> At least 35 states have a civics literacy graduation requirement.<sup>198</sup>

### Writing

Kentucky also requires students to take a standalone writing assessment (on-demand and editing and mechanics) in fifth grade, eighth grade, and eleventh grade. While four out of five of Kentucky’s peer states do not require students to take a writing assessment (in addition to the federally mandated Reading/Language Arts assessment), Florida similarly requires students to complete writing assessments in grades four through ten.<sup>199</sup> Figure 89 below includes the seven states that scored top five in the U.S. on one or both of the fourth and eighth grade NAEP writing assessments in 2024.<sup>200</sup> None of these seven states require a standalone writing assessment. They do, however, incorporate writing into their ELA or reading assessments.

**FIGURE 89: INCORPORATION OF WRITING IN ELA/READING ASSESSMENTS IN TOP PERFORMING STATES**

State	How Writing Incorporated in the ELA Assessment
Connecticut	Short answer component in ELA assessment, no performance task
Massachusetts	Written component in ELA assessment
Delaware	Written performance task component in ELA assessment
New York	Constructed responses component in ELA assessment
North Carolina	Constructed responses component in Reading assessment
Vermont	Written response component in ELA assessment
Ohio	Written response component in ELA assessment

Source: Data retrieved from State Department of Education websites.

After conducting a review of relevant research, the team did not find conclusive evidence to discern the value of standalone writing assessments. A 2016 study found that the frequency of writing (across subjects and for varied purposes,) as well as use of the writing process and computers for writing significantly predicted NAEP writing performance. Student demographic characteristics also significantly predicted NAEP writing performance.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>196</sup> “Overview of Testing in Tennessee.” Tennessee Department of Education.

<https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/lea-operations/assessment/testing-overview.html>

<sup>197</sup> “Civics Literacy Requirement.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 4, 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/socstud/Pages/Civics\\_Literacy\\_Requirement.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/socstud/Pages/Civics_Literacy_Requirement.aspx)

<sup>198</sup> “High School Graduation Requirements 2023.” Education Commission of the States. May 2023.

<https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/high-school-graduation-requirements-2023-05>

<sup>199</sup> “FAST Assessments.” Florida Department of Education. <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/best/>

<sup>200</sup> “Data Tools: State Profiles.” The Nation’s Report Card.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?sfj=NP&chort=1&sub=WRI&sj=&st=MN&year=2002R3&sscv=MN&sscvsd=desc>

<sup>201</sup> Troia, G.A., Olinghouse, N.G., Zhang, M. et al. “Content and alignment of state writing standards and assessments as predictors of student writing achievement: an analysis of 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress data.” *Reading and Writing*, 31, 835–864. December 29, 2017.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11145-017-9816-3>

## The ACT

Post-secondary readiness assessments such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT are used to assess students' college and career readiness and are also often used in the college admissions process. Kentucky requires eleventh grade students to take the ACT; students have the option to take it again in twelfth grade.<sup>202</sup> However, districts can not include achieving a minimum ACT score as a high school graduation requirement.<sup>203</sup> While post-secondary assessments are not federally mandated, 21 states (including Kentucky) utilize post-secondary assessments in some capacity.<sup>204</sup> They are also required in four of five peer states: Alabama, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee.

## Testing System

The Office of Assessment and Accountability manages the relationship with all external assessment vendors. In interviews, KDE staff described positive working relationships with these vendors. Pearson is Kentucky's primary assessment vendor, along with the ACT, WIDA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for the ACCESS for ELLs, the University of Kentucky for the Alternative KSA assessments, and BRIGANCE (Curriculum Associates) for the K SCREEN.

### 6.1 **Observation:** KDE staff dedicate significant amounts of time to project management and collaboration calls with assessment vendors.

According to interviews with KDE staff, there are program consultants within OAA that manage each assessment. KDE staff also shared that for most of the assessment programs, staff typically meet once or twice per week with the vendors. Representatives from both divisions with OAA join these meetings, in addition to other KDE staff members where applicable.

#### 6.1.a **Recommendation:** KDE should consider ways to increase the efficiency of project management and collaboration calls with assessment vendors.

**Given the proposed changes to the Assessment and Accountability System in the United We Learn Framework, the team does not have any recommendations on the current assessment requirements.**

## STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

### Overview

KDE is responsible for implementing the statewide accountability system. Kentucky's accountability system is designed to ensure that students graduate well-rounded and postsecondary-ready. Its goals include:

- **Boost Student Achievement:** Encouraging higher levels of learning and academic success.
  - **Ensure Equity:** Addressing achievement gaps to provide fair opportunities for all students.
  - **Foster High Expectations:** Cultivating a culture of continuous growth and improvement in education.
- Transparent Communication:** Providing a clear and honest view of school and district strengths, as well as areas that need improvement.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> "Assessments." Kentucky Department of Education. February 28, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>203</sup> "Kentucky Minimum High School Graduation Requirements Frequently Asked Questions." Kentucky Department of Education. 2024.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/hsgradreq/Documents/Minimum\\_High\\_School\\_Graduation\\_Requirements\\_FAQ.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/hsgradreq/Documents/Minimum_High_School_Graduation_Requirements_FAQ.pdf)

<sup>204</sup> "State Summative Assessments 2018." Education Commission to the States. April 2018.

<https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/state-summative-assessments-2018>

<sup>205</sup> "Kentucky's Accountability System at a Glance." Kentucky Department of Education. July 2024.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Accountability\\_at\\_a\\_Glance.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Accountability_at_a_Glance.pdf)

All elements of Kentucky's accountability system are required by federal or state law.<sup>206</sup> KRS 158.6455 grants the Board authority to create an accountability system that uses multiple measures to describe the overall performance of schools, districts, and student subgroups.<sup>207</sup> Figure 90, retrieved from Kentucky's consolidated ESSA plan, outlines the Academic and School Quality Indicators and Measures used by the Commonwealth to assess performance.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> "Federal and State Accountability Requirements." Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Assessment and Accountability. June 2023. [https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Federal\\_and\\_State\\_Accountability.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Federal_and_State_Accountability.pdf)

<sup>207</sup> "KRS 158.6455." Kentucky General Assembly. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=53468>

<sup>208</sup> "Commonwealth of Kentucky Revised Consolidated State Plan Under The Every Student Succeeds Act." Kentucky Department of Education. March 2017. <https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Kentucky%20Consolidated%20State%20Plan%20February%20202025.pdf>

FIGURE 90: KENTUCKY'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

Indicators	Measures
<p><b>State Assessment Results in Reading and Mathematics</b>  <i>Reaching the desired level of knowledge and skills in Reading and Mathematics as measured on state academic assessments.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student performance on state-required tests in Reading and Mathematics (equal weight for each).</li> <li>• Schools earn credit based on student performance levels: Novice (0), Apprentice (.5), Proficient (1), and Distinguished (1.25).</li> <li>• Student performance aggregated to school, district, and state levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State Assessment Results in Science, Social Studies, and Writing</b>  <i>Reaching the desired level of knowledge and skills in Science, Social Studies, and Writing as measured on state academic assessments.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student performance on state-required tests is equally weighted in Science, Social Studies, and Writing (including on-demand and editing mechanics).</li> <li>• Schools earn credit based on student performance levels: Novice (0), Apprentice (.5), Proficient (1), and Distinguished (1.25).</li> <li>• Student performance aggregated to school, district, and state levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Graduation Rate (high school only)</b>  <i>Percentage of students completing the requirements for a Kentucky high school diploma compared to a cohort of students beginning in grade nine.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The graduation rate is measured by the number of students who graduate within a specified period divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class.</li> <li>• Kentucky uses a 4-year and an extended 5-year adjusted cohort in accountability (weighted equally), which recognizes the persistence of students and educators in completing the requirements for a Kentucky high school diploma.</li> <li>• Schools with a graduation rate of less than 80% based on the 4-year adjusted cohort rate will be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Postsecondary Readiness</b>  <i>Attainment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for a student to successfully transition to the next level of his or her education career.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools earn credit when grade 12 students achieve academic readiness or career readiness (additional credit on industry certifications for those in high-demand sectors).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Progress Toward English Language Proficiency (ELP)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Learners earn credit as they make progress toward achieving English proficiency. Kentucky's long-term goal increases the proportion of proficient English Learner (EL) students making significant progress toward becoming proficient in the English language.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality of School Climate and Safety</b>  <i>Provides insight into the school environment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measures include perception data from surveys that offer an awareness of the school atmosphere.</li> </ul>

Source: Retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education website:

<https://www.education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Kentucky%20Consolidated%20State%20Plan%20February%202020%205.pdf>

KRS 158.6455 describes KDE's responsibility to develop an online dashboard to display accountability system results for overall performance status and change by school, district, and individual subgroups. The Kentucky School Report Card (SRC) is an online tool, managed by KDE, that provides a detailed view on

the performance of schools and districts. It includes insights related to student achievement, teacher qualifications, and school safety, and is used as a tool to share data with the public.<sup>209</sup>

The accountability system includes, and equally weighs, annual performance (“status”) and improvement over time (“change”). For each Indicator, there are five status levels ranging from very high to very low, and five change levels ranging from increased significantly to declined significantly. Percentile cut scores for these levels are based on distribution and are required to be approved by KDE and the Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC).<sup>210</sup>

An overall performance rating is assigned to schools and districts based on these cut scores; federal classifications are then assigned to the bottom five percent of schools. Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) is associated with the bottom five percent of schools, and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) are associated with the performance of student subgroups.<sup>211</sup>

### ***Comparison of Federal & State Accountability Requirements***

Federal requirements, established by ESSA, are the foundation for Kentucky’s accountability system. The Kentucky General Assembly has passed additional legislation that further defines the system. Generally, federal requirements include (1) multiple indicators, (2) valid, reliable, and comparable measures, (3) disaggregation by student demographic groups, and (4) at least three distinct performance categories. Kentucky has the authority to determine indicator weights; however, ESSA requires that academic indicators have a “much greater weight” overall than non-academic indicators.<sup>212</sup>

Kentucky’s accountability system has undergone significant changes over the last several years. Senate Bill 158 (2020) is the most recent legislation with significant implications; the new accountability system was fully implemented in 2022-2023.<sup>213</sup> Figure 91 was retrieved from a published KDE document that describes the federal and state components of the current accountability system.

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<sup>209</sup> “School Report Card.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 7, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Pages/SRC.aspx>

<sup>210</sup> “KRS 158.6455.” Kentucky General Assembly. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=53468>

<sup>211</sup> “Federal and State Accountability Requirements.” Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Assessment and Accountability. June 2023. [https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Federal\\_and\\_State\\_Accountability.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Federal_and_State_Accountability.pdf)

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> “Development of School Accountability System.” Kentucky Department of Education. July 15, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Pages/SchoolAcctSystem.aspx>

FIGURE 91: FEDERAL & STATE COMPONENTS OF KENTUCKY'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Elementary and Middle Schools	
ESSA Indicator Requirements	Kentucky Indicator Requirements
Academic Achievement	❖ State Assessment Results in Reading and Mathematics (Status only)
Other Academic Indicator	❖ State Assessment Results in Reading and Mathematics (Change only) **
English Language Proficiency	❖ English Learner Progress
School Quality or Student Success	❖ Quality of School Climate and Safety Survey ❖ State Assessment Results in Science, Social Studies, and Writing

High Schools	
ESSA Indicator Requirements	Kentucky Indicator Requirements
Academic Achievement	❖ State Assessment Results in Reading and Mathematics
English Language Proficiency	❖ English Learner Progress
School Quality or Student Success	❖ Quality of School Climate and Safety Survey ❖ State Assessment Results in Science, Social Studies, and Writing ❖ Postsecondary Readiness ❖ Graduation Rate (Change only) **
Graduation Rate	❖ Graduation Rate (Status only) *

\*Independent of overall performance, high schools with a four-year graduation rate below 80% are identified as CSI.

Source: Retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education website, [https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Federal\\_and\\_State\\_Accountability.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Acct/Documents/Federal_and_State_Accountability.pdf)

## Analysis of Proficiency Standards & State Assessment Passage Rates

The Kentucky Summative Assessments (KSA) measure student proficiency on state academic standards.<sup>214</sup> Comparing KSA and NAEP assessment results is one way to assess the rigor of Kentucky's proficiency standards.

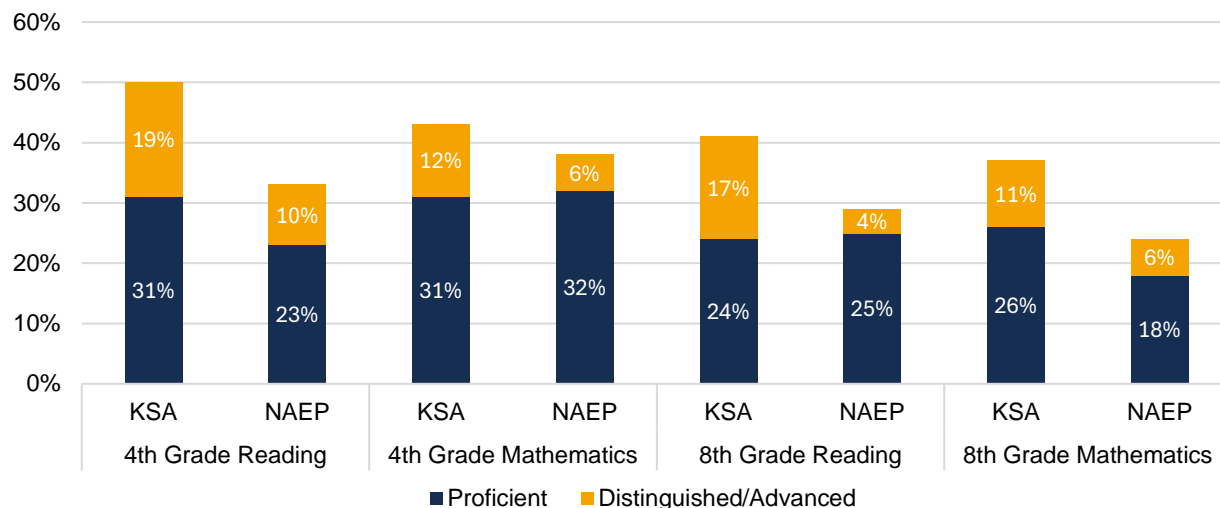
**6.2 Finding:** In 2023-24, the proportion of students scoring proficient or higher on the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) is not aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for fourth-grade Reading, eighth-grade Mathematics, and eighth-grade Reading.

As highlighted in Figure 92, for fourth grade Reading, students performed significantly better on the KSA – there was a 17 percentage point difference between the KSA and NAEP. For eighth grade Mathematics, there was a 13 percentage point gap, and for eighth grade Reading, there was a 12 percentage point gap. This suggests that the proficiency standards for these areas are less rigorous.

<sup>214</sup> "Kentucky Summative Assessments." Kentucky Department of Education. March 8, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/AA/Assessments/Pages/KentuckySummativeAssessment-.aspx>



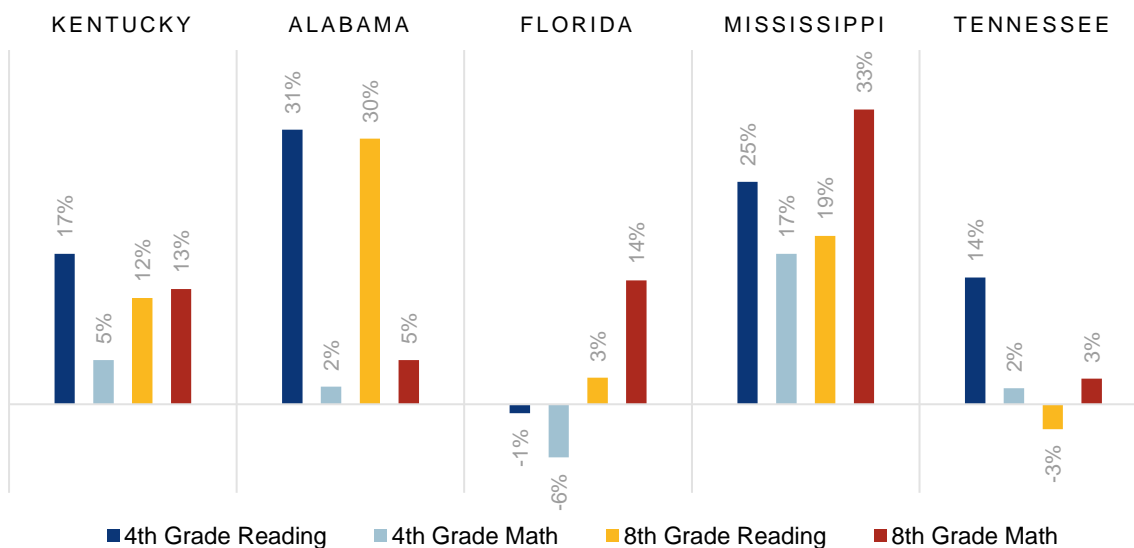
**FIGURE 92: PERCENT OF STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED/DISTINGUISHED ON NAEP & KSA, 2023-2024**



Source: Retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education Report Card Dashboard and The Nation’s Report Card websites.

Figure 93 depicts the difference in state annual assessment proficiency rates (students earning either a ‘Proficient’ or ‘Advanced’ score) in Kentucky and peer states compared to the NAEP. Notably, Florida and Tennessee have the most similarities between their state assessment and NAEP proficiency rates.

**FIGURE 93: DIFFERENCE IN PROFICIENCY RATES BETWEEN STATE ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS & NAEP**



Source: Retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education Report Card Dashboard and The Nation’s Report Card websites.

**6.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should examine the proficiency standards for fourth grade Reading, eighth grade Mathematics, and eighth grade Reading due to the misalignment with the NAEP proficiency standards.



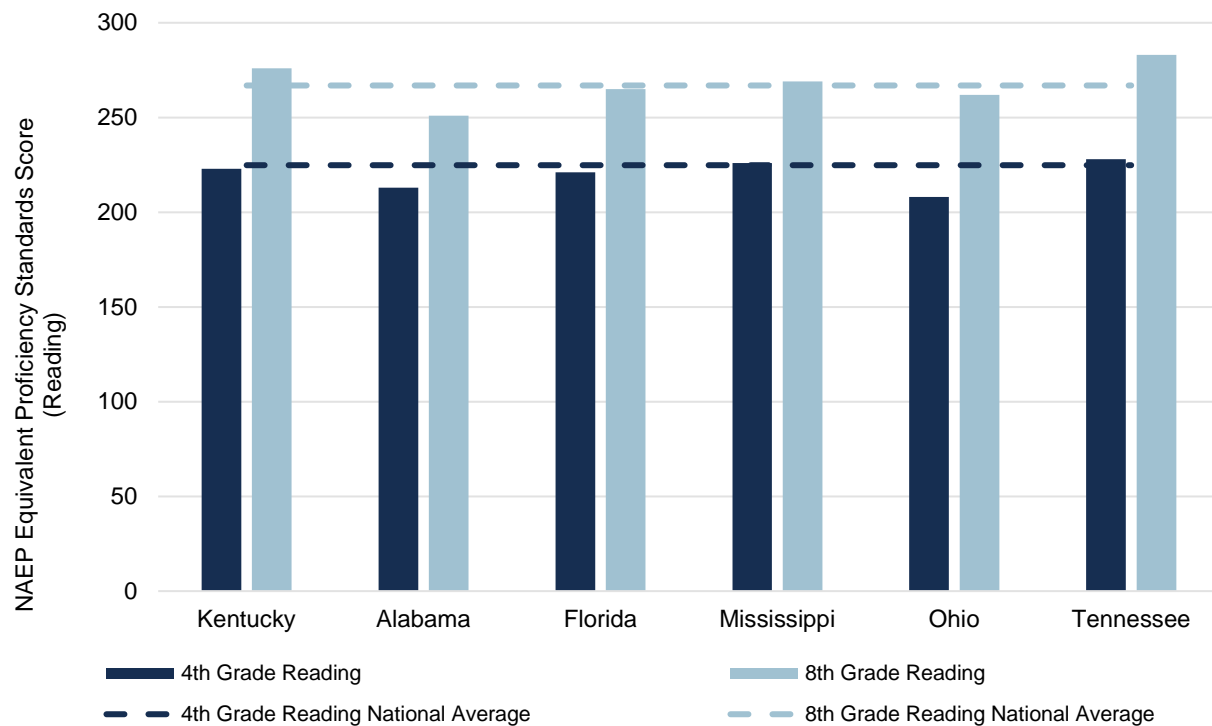
The NCES, which administers the NAEP assessment, publishes reports that compare state proficiency standards in Reading and Mathematics by placing the standards on a common scale from NAEP. This allows for an analysis of the relative rigor of states' academic standards.<sup>215</sup> Below, Figure 94 and Figure 95 describe the results for Reading and Mathematics respectively from the 2022 version of this report.

**When mapped to NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards, Kentucky's academic standards are comparable to the national average in terms of rigor.**

As highlighted in Figure 94, Kentucky's NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards score in fourth grade Reading was just below the national average in 2022. Alabama, Florida, and Ohio similarly scored slightly below the national average in fourth grade Reading, while Mississippi and Tennessee both scored slightly above the national average.

Kentucky's NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards score in eighth grade Reading was above the national average in 2022. Mississippi and Tennessee similarly scored above the national average in eighth grade Reading, while Alabama, Florida, and Ohio all scored below the national average.

**FIGURE 94: NAEP EQUIVALENT PROFICIENCY STANDARDS SCORES FOR READING BY COMPARISON STATE, 2021-2022**



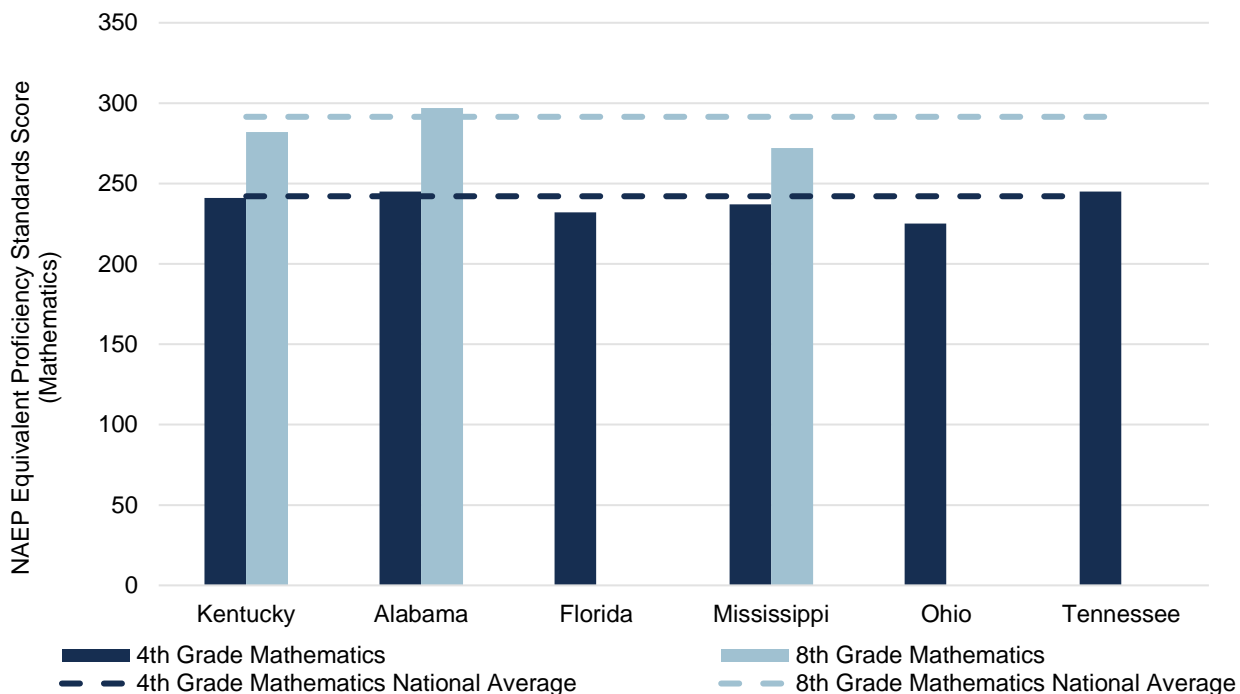
Source: Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website.

As shown in Figure 95, Kentucky's NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards score in fourth grade Mathematics was also just below the national average in 2022. Florida, Mississippi, and Ohio similarly scored below the national average in fourth grade Mathematics, while Alabama and Tennessee both scored above the national average.

<sup>215</sup> "Data Tool: Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales, 2007-22." National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemappingtool/#/>

Kentucky’s NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards score in eighth grade Mathematics was also below the national average in 2022. Mississippi similarly scored below the national average in eighth grade Mathematics, while Alabama scored slightly above. Data was not available for NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards scores in eighth grade Mathematics for Florida, Ohio, or Tennessee.

**FIGURE 95: NAEP EQUIVALENT PROFICIENCY STANDARDS SCORES FOR MATHEMATICS BY COMPARISON STATE, 2021-2022**



Source: Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website. No data available for Florida, Ohio, and Tennessee’s 8th Grade Mathematics NAEP Equivalent Proficiency Standards scores.

As mentioned above, Kentucky’s accountability system assigns all schools an overall performance rating annually. Schools and districts are assigned this rating based on the percentile cut scores approved by KDE and the LSAC. Figure 96 demonstrates the overall school performance ratings from the 2023-24 school year. For the most part, schools are evenly distributed across three groups: (1) Red and Orange, (2) Yellow, and (3) Green and Blue. There are more schools that receive a “Yellow” performance rating, compared to any other rating. Approximately one-third of all schools are rated as “Green” or “Blue.”

FIGURE 96: COUNT OF SCHOOLS BY OVERALL INDICATOR RATING

Overall Indicator Rating	Count of Schools	Percentage of Schools
<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS</b>		
Red	59	8%
Orange	145	20%
Yellow	242	34%
Green	174	24%
Blue	97	14%
<b>MIDDLE SCHOOLS</b>		
Red	24	8%
Orange	63	20%
Yellow	112	35%
Green	92	29%
Blue	27	8%
<b>HIGH SCHOOLS</b>		
Red	17	7%
Orange	44	19%
Yellow	88	39%
Green	54	24%
Blue	25	11%

Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, School Report Card Datasets. "Accountability Profile." [https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24\\_ACCT\\_Profile.csv](https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24_ACCT_Profile.csv). Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## School Report Card

2023-2024 was the first year that KDE partnered with a new vendor to create and publish the SRC dashboard.<sup>216</sup> KDE staff reported they were actively working with the vendor to improve the design and functionality of the dashboard prior to the release of the 2024-2025 data.

### 6.3 Finding: The interface, functionality, and available data on the School Report Card (SRC) requires continued improvement prior to the future release of additional data.

KDE provides a comprehensive SRC dashboard for the public's use. The data include Academic Performance, School Accountability, Educator Workforce, Discipline Resolution, Postsecondary Transitions and Financial Transparency. The team completed a review of the SRC dashboard with a consideration for multiple end-user perspectives (e.g. parents, educators, district staff) and experiences between the desktop and mobile interfaces. The review yielded the following themes:

- Interface:** Overall, the data is accessible and well organized for users to review state-, district-, and school-level data. There were no major differences between the desktop and mobile version interfaces. In both, some header text on individual pages appears to be arbitrarily broken out into multiple rows with different indentation levels. The narrative page-level descriptions do not always clarify where the data originates or how data should be used. Given the volume of data available for consumption, descriptions and additional guidance for intended use may be helpful to the end-user.

<sup>216</sup> "KSIS School Report Card Resources." Kentucky Department of Education. April 22, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/sis/Pages/School\\_Report\\_Card\\_Resources.aspx#:~:text=The%20assessment%20and%20accountability%20data,audited%20financial%20data%20is%20available.](https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/tech/sis/Pages/School_Report_Card_Resources.aspx#:~:text=The%20assessment%20and%20accountability%20data,audited%20financial%20data%20is%20available.)

- **Functionality:** Overall, the functionality is consistent across interfaces and did not produce significant errors when accessing data. The breadth of the dashboard presents a learning curve for end users to explore and understand all available options. The current version presents some loading time delays between pages or toggling filters with large data sets on the same page. Both present an opportunity for additional guidance and enhancement in the next version's release.
- **Available Data:** The dashboard provides three school years of data for public consumption: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. Users can access one year of data per page which does not allow for an opportunity to see data across multiple years. Data provided on some pages did not update or change when toggling away from the pre-loaded 2023-24 to 2022-23 or 2021-22. Where no data is available, the page should have a descriptor to this effect.

**6.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should collaborate with the vendor to enhance the SRC dashboard interface and functionality before releasing 2024-2025 data. Collect and analyze stakeholder perception data to find more opportunities for improvement.

Future planning for the SRC should account for an updated Assessment and Accountability System based on the work of the United We Learn Council.

More about the implications on the SRC are discussed below in the United We Learn: Reimagining Assessment and Accountability section.

### Other Data Reporting

As mentioned in the Department Strategy & Partnerships section, The Office of Educational Accountability (OEA) publishes District Data Profiles as part of its research agenda, and the Profiles contain much of the same data as the SRC. The static, PDF version of the report includes individual district profiles that are each two pages long and contain the following data:

- **Students:** Performance, attendance, demographics, attainment, postsecondary readiness rates, and discipline
- **Staffing:** average teacher salary, years of experience, rank, and certified salary schedule
- **Finance:** per pupil expenditure, current expenditure percentages, and SEEK funding analysis

OEA also publishes a companion data dashboard that includes the data from the static reports in a more dynamic format. They also publish heat maps and ten-year trend data for selected variables.<sup>217</sup>

Much of this data is the same as what is included in the SRC. However, the District Data Profiles include longitudinal data from previous years, which allows users to easily see change over time. Currently, the SRC does not allow for this longitudinal view. The most recent school year data that is currently available is 2022-2023 – it was released in November 2023.<sup>218</sup> Notably, these data are typically released in the SRC prior to the release of the District Profiles. The OEA reported in interviews that they received data for the Profiles from KDE. As previously mentioned, KDE and OEA should coordinate to assess the overall merit of any duplicative data reporting. The Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) is another government organization that produces complementary reporting products. Specifically, they produce data and research publications spanning early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, adult education, career and technical education, and workforce.<sup>219</sup> KYSTATS produces reports that demonstrate longitudinal trends and link data across sources. For example, a recently published [High School Feedback Report](#) shows college success metrics from 2013 to 2023, and it also includes most K-12 and postsecondary data. KDE leaders and staff regarded highly the wealth of insights produced by KYSTATS. School Improvement

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<sup>217</sup> "Kentucky District Data Profiles School Year 2023." Kentucky General Assembly, Office of Education Accountability. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/lrc/publications/interactive/DistrictData2023.html?#anchor01>

<sup>218</sup> "OEA Publications." Kentucky General Assembly. <https://legislature.ky.gov/LRC/OEA/Pages/OEA-Publications.aspx>

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

## *KDE's Approach to School & District Accountability*

### **6.4 Finding: KDE lacks a comprehensive strategy that shapes its approach to school improvement.**

KDE is statutorily charged with leading efforts across the Commonwealth related to district and school accountability. While Kentucky is a “local control” state, and local institutions can make many of their own decisions, there are places where KDE is required to provide guidance. For example, KDE is required to monitor the implementation of state and federal programs to ensure the efficient and effective use of funds.

Currently, school improvement primarily sits within OCIS and OTL. During interviews, KDE staff described some coordination amongst staff in these offices. For example, the Division of Early Literacy chooses not to partner with CSI and TSI schools because they already receive support from OCIS coaches. They also described efforts to have OCIS field staff participate in Science of Reading training. However, there was no indication of any broader framework or orientation to effectively support underperforming schools and districts.

#### **6.4.a Recommendation: KDE should develop a comprehensive strategy to guide school accountability across the Department's offices.**

This should include a vision, theory of change, and a clear articulation for how different offices support this overall vision. Also consider how local control factors into this vision. If implemented properly, school accountability should be an effective partner to KDE's compliance, technical assistance, and support work.

### **6.5 Observation: KDE does not fully balance its strong customer service priority with its responsibility to hold districts to high expectations.**

The team observed a strong customer service orientation amongst KDE staff. In interviews, KDE staff cited response time and their relationships with districts as either a strength or a priority area for their teams. Customer service is also emphasized in the 2024-2029 strategic plan. One of the eight key goals is to improve customer satisfaction. When talking about this goal, the strategic plan describes “the agency's commitment to being responsive, transparent, and service-oriented in its communication with stakeholders.”<sup>220</sup> As mentioned in the Department Operations section, the Department has also been promoting its customer service surveys and the subsequent results. In a review of a variety of public meetings, the team also found that KDE leadership referenced being in service to districts. However, KDE leadership uses language that references serving or supporting districts, rather than leading or guiding them. While this is not a bad thing, it does raise questions about how KDE sees its role in holding schools and districts accountable.

#### **6.5.a Recommendation: KDE should consider ways to provide high-quality customer service, while also holding districts to high expectations.**

## *Comprehensive & Targeted Support & Improvement*

Under ESSA, KDE is responsible for identifying Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools. After identification, schools are responsible for developing and implementing a turnaround plan. KRS 160.346 required CSI schools to be identified every three years.<sup>221</sup> However, House Bill 298 amends 160.346 and requires identification annually; this was signed into law in March 2025.<sup>222</sup> Schools are identified for CSI based on the following criteria:

- Schools in the lowest 5% of schools by level
- For high schools, a four-year cohort graduation rate below 80%

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<sup>220</sup> “Strategic Plan 2024-29.” Kentucky Department of Education, United We Learn. [PDF].

<sup>221</sup> “Comprehensive Support and Improvement/Educational Recovery.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 30, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Pages/CompSupplmproveER.aspx>

<sup>222</sup> “House Bill 298.” Kentucky General Assembly. March 26, 2025. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/25rs/hb298.html>

- Schools that fail to exit Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) status after three years<sup>223</sup>

Currently, there are 20 CSI schools within Kentucky; 19 of these 20 are in Jefferson County Public Schools.<sup>224</sup> Within 30 days of CSI identification, each school must go through an audit process. Districts can decide whether to use KDE or an outside vendor to execute audits. These audits are also referred to as diagnostic reviews. From the past three school years, 65 diagnostics were completed by an outside vendor, Cognia.<sup>225</sup> The subsequent reports are available on KDE's website from the past three school years. If a school does not make improvement for two years or does not exit CSI status after three years, they will require additional interventions and audits.<sup>226</sup> KDE staff shared that schools very rarely go back on the CSI list after exiting. They did note, however, that Jefferson County Public Schools is an outlier and does have schools that go back on the list.

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) is also a required element of ESSA. Schools are identified for TSI if they have “one or more of the same subgroups performing as poorly as all students in any of the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools or non-Title I schools by level (elementary, middle, or high school) for three consecutive years.”<sup>227</sup> Schools identified as TSI must revise their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and include the following elements:

- Turnaround leadership development and support
- Identification of critical resource inequities
- Evidence-based interventions
- Additional actions to address subgroup underperformance<sup>228</sup>

In 2024-2025, there are a total of 139 TSI schools.<sup>229</sup> According to interviews with KDE staff, TSI schools are offered support and services from Continuous Improvement coaches. These coaches also help schools and districts develop Comprehensive School and District Improvement Plans. KDE also runs an annual Continuous Improvement Summit as a professional development opportunity for TSI schools – other educators across the Commonwealth can also attend.

The Office of Continuous Improvement and Support (OCIS) has a team of approximately 76 field-based staff that work in underperforming schools.<sup>230</sup> There are typically one or two field-based staff based in each CSI school. According to interviews with KDE staff, field staff participate in National Institute for School and Systems Leadership (NISL), as well as Rutherford Learning Group training. KDE also has a partnership with the National Institute for School and System Leadership (NISL) that schools can opt into, if they are willing to pay for tuition and registration fees. Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools are prioritized for selection.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> “KRS 160.346 and 703 KAR 5:280: School Improvement Processes.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Documents/CSI%20Flowchart.pdf>

<sup>224</sup> “Comprehensive Support and Improvement Roster.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Documents/CSI%20School%20Roster.pdf>

<sup>225</sup> “Diagnostic Reviews.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 23, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Pages/Leadership-Assessments.aspx>

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> “Targeted Support and Improvement.” Kentucky Department of Education. October 24, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/focschls/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> “2024-2025 Targeted Support and Improvement Roster.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/focschls/Documents/Targeted%20Support%20and%20Improvement%20School%20Roster.pdf>

<sup>230</sup> “OCIS Field Staff.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Excel].

<sup>231</sup> “National Institute for School and System Leadership.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 24, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Pages/National-Institute-for-School-Leadership-\(NISL\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Pages/National-Institute-for-School-Leadership-(NISL).aspx)

## Management Improvement Program

KRS 158.780 and 158.785 require KBE to establish a program for management improvement services for districts that “demonstrate such a critical lack of efficiency or effectiveness in governance or administration that state-mandated corrective action or state control of a district is required.”<sup>232</sup> 703 KAR 3:205 outlines the progress steps KDE can take as part of the management improvement program. The steps include:

1. Performing a data and artifact review
2. Performing a management review
3. Performing a comprehensive management audit
4. Determining whether there is a “pattern of significant lack of effectiveness and efficiency in governance and administration”
5. Review of findings by KBE – this can result in a state-assisted or state-managed designation<sup>233</sup>

Management reviews and management audits are discussed in greater detail in the Monitoring & Consolidated Monitoring section.

### **6.6 Finding: In recent years, KDE commissioners have not leveraged their statutorily granted authority to determine a “pattern of significant lack of effectiveness and efficiency” in LEAs struggling with chronic underperformance.**

No Kentucky districts in the past five years have received a designation of state-managed.

As seen in Figure 97, Kentucky, like most of its peer states, does allow for state approved district take over. It is not expected that this authority is used frequently. However, it is a tool that can be leveraged when appropriate, including cases of critical deficiencies in governance or administration. Across the country, state takeovers of districts are typically leveraged due to fiscal challenges or poor academic outcomes.<sup>234</sup> For example, Alabama currently is leveraging their state takeover authority in three districts across the state.<sup>235</sup> Mississippi currently has two districts in state takeover status.<sup>236</sup> In 2023, the state of Texas took over Houston Independent School District (HISD). The Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath appointed a superintendent and board members with the goal of instituting widespread reforms for the district with more than 180,000 students.<sup>237</sup>

Research suggests that state takeovers do not always guarantee improved academic outcomes for struggling districts. A study of 35 state takeovers found a considerable amount of variation across districts in terms of academic outcomes. However, state takeovers with goals of improving fiscal conditions are found to improve district budgetary and long-run solvency, on average.<sup>238</sup> Given this, state takeovers require thoughtful and tailored implementation.

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<sup>232</sup> “Management Improvement Program.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 16, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/Pages/Management-Audit-Process.aspx>

<sup>233</sup> Review of Previous Management Audits.” Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/385/31060/KDE%20-%20Presentation%20-%20JCPS.pdf>

<sup>234</sup> “Do State Takeovers of School Districts Work?” Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/do-state-takeovers-of-school-districts-work/>

<sup>235</sup> Belvins, Sherri. “State Board of Education votes to assume control of Dallas County Schools.” Yellow Hammer News. March 13, 2025. <https://yellowhammernews.com/alabama-state-board-of-education-to-vote-on-dallas-county-schools-takeover/>

<sup>236</sup> “District of Transformation History of District Takeovers.” Mississippi Department of Education.

[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/District%20Trans/dates\\_of\\_takeovers\\_august\\_2024.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/District%20Trans/dates_of_takeovers_august_2024.pdf)

<sup>237</sup> Lehrer-Small, Asher and Pérez, Danya. “America’s biggest education experiment is happening in Houston. Could it change U.S. schools?” Texas Tribune. July 3, 2024. <https://www.texastribune.org/2024/07/03/houston-isd-takeover-schools/>

<sup>238</sup> Schueler, Beth, Arnold Lyon, Melissa, and Bleiberg, Joshua. “Do state takeovers of school districts work?” The Brookings Institution. October 24, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/do-state-takeovers-of-school-districts-work/>



FIGURE 97: COMPARISON STATES LOCAL CONTROL V. STATE MANDATES

States	Local Control State	State Approved District Take Over	State Approved Individual School Take Over
Kentucky	✓	✓	
Alabama	✓	✓	
Florida	✓	✓	
Mississippi	✓	✓	
Ohio	✓	✓	
Tennessee	✓	✓	✓

Source: Data are retrieved from State Departments of Education websites in Kentucky, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee.

6.6.a **Recommendation:** The Commissioner should use KDE’s statutory authority to strengthen district improvement when necessary.

## UNITED WE LEARN: REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

### Overview

As mentioned in the Department Strategy & Partnerships section, the KUWL Council is charged with creating a reimagined state framework for assessment and accountability that will go to the General Assembly for approval in the 2026 legislative session.<sup>239</sup> According to the KUWL Council meeting on March 20, 2025, KDE leadership shared that full-scale implementation would likely take at least a few years to achieve.

United We Learn is the cornerstone of KDE’s 2024-2029 strategic plan as well. As the plan describes, “United We Learn means everyone in our Commonwealth – educators, families, students, community members and business leaders – working together to support our public schools in bringing about deep and authentic learning experiences for all students.”<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, one of KDE’s eight objectives is centered on reimagining assessment and accountability. Specifically, the plan calls for creating an accountability model that includes vibrant learning that makes learning experiences meaningful and useful to all.<sup>241</sup>

### Framework 3.0

The KUWL Council designed and disseminated four prototypes and two frameworks, in 2024 and 2025, that resulted in the current version, Framework 3.0. During this process, they presented and collected feedback from several stakeholder groups including: Local Laboratories of Learning (L3), Kentucky superintendents, Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA), advisory groups, District Assessment Coordinators (DACs), and the Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC).<sup>242</sup>

<sup>239</sup> “KUWL Council Virtual Meeting – March 20, 2025.” KDE Media Portal. March 20, 2025. [https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2025/03/kuwl-council-virtual-meeting-march-20-2025/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2025/03/kuwl-council-virtual-meeting-march-20-2025/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

<sup>240</sup> “Strategic Plan 2024-29.” Kentucky Department of Education, United We Learn. [PDF].

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> “Reimagining Assessment and Accountability.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 1, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/UnitedWeLearn/KUWLCouncil/Pages/Assessment-and-Accountability-Prototype-Resources.aspx>

The Framework outlines an accountability system that is divided into two categories – Local Accountability Indicators and Federal Accountability Indicators. All Indicators are required elements; however, districts will have local choice in regard to certain elements of the Local Accountability Indicators.

The Local Accountability Indicators include vibrant learning, Writing, Social Studies, Reading and Math interim assessments, Science, and other locally determined indicators.

Federal Accountability Indicators include Reading and Mathematics (summative achievement and individual student growth), graduation rate, progress toward English language proficiency, quality of school climate and safety, transition readiness, and Science. While these federal indicators will be used to determine comprehensive and targeted support, the Commonwealth will no longer issue color ratings based on the overall performance of schools and districts.<sup>243</sup>

### **Looking Ahead to Implementation**

Framework 3.0 materials currently do not provide any implementation plans. Implementation has been briefly discussed in various forums, including KUWL Council and KBE meetings.

**6.7 Finding: The United We Learn Framework 3.0 lacks significant implementation considerations. KDE currently does not have a plan for: clear guardrails and quality control measures to hold districts accountable for high-quality accountability indicators; a clear and implementable definition of vibrant learning; a new and overhauled assessment and accountability reporting system; and comprehensive professional development offerings that build educator capacity.**

**Based on the team’s review of Framework 3.0 documentation, it appears that KDE views its implementation role as one of “support” rather than one of “accountability.”** Framework 3.0 outlines KDE’s commitment to provide the following support to districts:

- **Networked Peer Support:** “The state will support systematic, principled peer-review processes in collaboration with regional co-ops through which neighboring districts and like districts can share insights, drive meaningful change through competency-based assessments, learn from one another, and offer constructive feedback on the design of their peers’ local accountability systems.”<sup>244</sup>
- **External Feedback to Inform Improvement of Local Systems:** KDE will coordinate an independent review of local systems, on a rotating, three-year cycle. These reviews will identify strong elements of local accountability systems that can then be shared with other districts. It is also described as a “formative feedback cycle” that supports continuous improvement.<sup>245</sup>

During the KUWL Council Meeting on March 20, 2025, Commissioner Fletcher responded to a question about the guardrails necessary to ensure consistent and high-quality local accountability systems. The Commissioner shared that KDE’s role will be to review local accountability systems and assess the process they undertook to create their local system – not to say that the systems are “correct” or “valid.” He also described wanting to look at equity across districts and creating rubrics that could be used to support a review of local systems. Finally, Commissioner Fletcher emphasized that the guardrails in place are the inclusion of vibrant learning, Social Studies, and Writing into local systems.<sup>246</sup> While these are important considerations, KDE also needs to define its role in holding schools accountable to implementing a strong local accountability system.

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<sup>243</sup> “The Future of Assessment and Accountability in Kentucky.” Kentucky Department of Education, United We Learn Council. March 2025. [PDF].

<sup>244</sup> “The Future of Assessment and Accountability in Kentucky.” Kentucky Department of Education, United We Learn Council. March 2025. [PDF].

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> “KUWL Council Virtual Meeting – March 20, 2025.” KDE Media Portal. March 20, 2025. [https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2025/03/kuwl-council-virtual-meeting-march-20-2025/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/uncategorized/2025/03/kuwl-council-virtual-meeting-march-20-2025/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

**Across interviews with KDE staff and external stakeholders, there was not a clear, or implementable, definition of vibrant learning.**

KDE's 2024-2029 strategic plan defines vibrant learning experiences as those that "spark curiosity and motivation, fostering lifelong learning. This includes personalized education that recognizes each family's unique story and ensures every student feels known, supported, and challenged to succeed."<sup>247</sup>

In interviews with KDE staff and other stakeholders, the team heard a variety of definitions of vibrant learning. Vibrant learning was described as relevant, meaningful, personalized, and hands-on learning. It was also described as deeper learning. Student defenses of learning and taking part in a CTE program such as nursing or welding were also frequently mentioned as examples of vibrant learning.

Identifying a clear definition of vibrant learning is foundational to ensuring consistent implementation across districts. If different definitions are used to develop local accountability systems, it will lead to significant variation in implementation. Specific examples of what vibrant learning looks like across grade bands and content areas would also be helpful implementation tools.

**Framework 3.0 would require a complete overhaul of the assessment and accountability reporting system.** It also requires local districts to build their own reporting system, which is a significant technical undertaking for districts.

Based on the team's review, it does not appear that KDE has staff capacity or specialized technical expertise to design a reporting system capable of capturing the nuance of the local and federal indicators. KDE staff shared in interviews that achieving the UWL vision would require a major re-coding of internal state assessment data. As discussed above, KDE is currently working with a new vendor to improve the functionality of the SRC. Reimagining the SRC dashboard would require a significant investment of time and resources. KDE is currently working with the vendor to make improvements to the existing dashboard; this system would require major changes apart from these efforts.

Furthermore, under the new framework, districts will be required to "build a public reporting data display that provides a rich picture of the local system and shows strengths and growth areas in lieu of a color rating system."<sup>248</sup> This will be a significant lift for districts, in particular, small districts will have limited capabilities to develop such a complex system. Furthermore, each of the 171 districts will have a unique data display, which will make it difficult for the public to easily compare districts. KDE will need to determine what new staffing or contracts are needed to build and launch a revised data system.

**This reimagined assessment and accountability framework will require alignment with KAS and the MCF, as well as a significant investment in educator professional development.**

In interviews, KDE staff acknowledged that educators will need training and support to successfully implement vibrant learning. It needs to be integrated into existing resources and offerings from OTL so it is not viewed as a separate initiative. It will also require collaboration with educational cooperatives to ensure consistency of professional development content and messaging. These trainings will be a great opportunity to model what vibrant learning experiences look like in practice. Finally, districts will need training on how to develop effective competency-based assessments that are aligned to local vibrant learning experiences.

**While Framework 3.0 is heavily influenced by input from a variety of Kentucky stakeholders, it would be helpful to look at states who have implemented similar innovations.**

Based on the team's review of KUWL meetings, meeting notes, and other documentation, it does not appear that the Council significantly utilized the perspectives of other states. Rather, they have relied

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<sup>247</sup> "Strategic Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. April 25, 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/StrategicPlan/Pages/Strategic\\_Plan.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/StrategicPlan/Pages/Strategic_Plan.aspx)

<sup>248</sup> "The Future of Assessment and Accountability in Kentucky." Kentucky Department of Education, United We Learn Council. March 2025. [PDF].

heavily on feedback from within the Commonwealth, including superintendents, educators, and community stakeholders.

Colorado is one example of a state that has undertaken a local accountability initiative in recent years. Beginning in 2019, Colorado launched a local accountability grant system which allows education agencies to apply for three years of grant funding to develop and improve local accountability systems. In the first year of the local accountability grant program, ten grants were awarded, with awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$75,000 annually.

As these local accountability systems are supplemental to Colorado's existing state monitoring program, one of the goals of these programs is to encourage innovation and learning across schools in Colorado. Schools and districts can also apply together to collaboratively develop local accountability systems. In many cases, grantees work with external accountability partners to develop local monitoring systems and interpret subsequent data.

Local accountability programs can capture additional measures of student performance and achievement that reflect the school or district context, including non-academic indicators such as student engagement or perception of learning. The specific focus of each local accountability program varies greatly, with some grantees developing public reporting dashboards, while others hone processes for stakeholder and community engagement.<sup>249</sup>

**6.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop a multi-year United We Learn implementation plan that includes KDE's strategies for holding districts accountable for rigorous local accountability measures, that overhaul the reporting system, and that provides stakeholders with a clear, implementable definition of vibrant learning. The plan should outline specific quantitative measures to track impact.

To strengthen the implementation plan, KDE should utilize the expertise of other states who have implemented similar innovations to strengthen its plan.

### ***The Division of Innovation and their Support of United We Learn***

**6.8 Finding:** Although the Division of Innovation is effectively partnering with schools and districts to implement vibrant learning, it is not clear how the Division will scale these practices to support the UWL implementation statewide.

The Division of Innovation is responsible for supporting districts' implementation of initiatives such as vibrant learning, Portrait of a Learner, project-based learning, micro-credentialing, and non-traditional instruction (NTI). The team uses a consultancy approach to partnering with districts; there is a menu of support options that districts can choose from. They also connect districts who could benefit from peer collaboration. The team also manages the Kentucky Innovative Learning Network (KY ILN), which is a "professional learning space for education leaders dedicated to creating vibrant learning experiences, accelerating innovation, and building a bold new future with communities."<sup>250</sup> There are a total of nine staff within the Division of Innovation, including a director, assistant director, and seven program consultants.

**6.8.a Recommendation:** KDE should identify additional resources needed to scale the Division of Innovation's work. The Division of Innovation and OTL should coordinate to ensure professional development offerings are not duplicative, maximizing KDE's reach to districts.

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<sup>249</sup> Local Accountability System Grant, Colorado Department of Education. April 2025.

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier>

<sup>250</sup> "Innovative Learning Network." Kentucky Department of Education. February 13, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/innov/Pages/Innovation-Lab-Network.aspx>

## MONITORING & CONSOLIDATED MONITORING

This section discusses the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) responsibilities associated with the monitoring of school districts and programs. All related activities are discussed below, outside of monitoring for special education, Gifted and Talented, and publicly funded preschool. Monitoring for special education and for Gifted and Talented are discussed in the Exceptional Children section; and monitoring for publicly funded preschool is discussed in the Preschool section. The Office of Continuous Improvement and Support (OCIS) and the Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) are responsible for leading these monitoring activities.

### SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF MONITORING PROCESSES

Monitoring and audits were one of the most frequent topics of discussion during the superintendent focus groups. A few superintendents also referenced audits in open-ended comments on the superintendent survey. Superintendents primarily spoke in generalities about monitoring and auditing activities writ large, rather than engaging in specifics. The following findings, discussed below, were identified from these focus groups and survey responses:

**Annual audits were perceived by superintendents as a burden in terms of the time and effort required.**

Superintendents reported that annual audits take an inordinate amount of time, especially for smaller districts. Several superintendents described stress and capacity constraints associated with the consolidated monitoring process. For example, as part of the audit process, districts are responsible for all logistics, including scheduling and securing substitutes for their teachers to meet with auditors. Also related, the volume of monitoring and auditing activities were named by a few superintendents as a burden, and they also expressed that there were too many audits.

**Superintendents felt that the district selection process was not grounded in clear data, evidence, or a compelling rationale.**

Superintendents shared their opinions that KDE does not provide a clear rationale for selecting a district for monitoring. A few superintendents reported that they were either randomly selected, or that they did not receive an explanation for their district's selection. Superintendents also described examples of times when interactions with KDE, either through support requests or a monitoring visit, led to a subsequent audit.

**Superintendents shared that monitoring reports were not helpful tools to support continuous improvement.**

Superintendents cited a few different reasons for why they did not find the reports to be useful. Their reasons included: a lack of trust in KDE's legal interpretation of governing law, inconsistency across audit results, and results that hinged on a key word or two.

**Superintendents expressed concern that KDE does not have an effective method to determine auditors' conflicts-of-interest and inexperience.**

A few superintendents expressed concern that KDE does not take the necessary steps to ensure individuals sent to audit their districts are without bias or conflict and have the requisite experience. They described individuals with little or no experience implementing the program they are monitoring. This includes individuals who previously held the role of classroom teacher.

## STATEWIDE CONSOLIDATED MONITORING OF FEDERAL & STATE PROGRAMS

### Overview

OCIS coordinates a monitoring process of state and federal programs annually, with the primary goal of ensuring that "certain state and federal funds are used effectively and efficiently to improve educational

outcomes for all students.”<sup>251</sup> The following eight programs are included in Statewide Consolidated Monitoring (SCM):

- Alternative Education Programs
- State-Funded Preschool Services
- Title I, Part A – Improving Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
- Title I, Part D – Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
- Title II, Part A – Teacher and Principal Quality
- Title III – English Learner (EL) and Immigrant Students
- Title IV, Part A – Student Support and Academic Achievement
- Title V, Part B – Rural Education Achievement Program<sup>252</sup>

Alternative education programs and state-funded preschool services are monitored to ensure compliance with Kentucky Administrative Regulations. The six Title programs listed above are federally funded programs with corresponding federal monitoring requirements.

The KDE monitoring team selects a subset of districts for SCM using a risk assessment tool. KDE's OCIS leads all SCM activities. The Manager of the Title I, Part A Support and Improvement Branch and the Point of Contact for SCM are responsible for implementing the process in partnership with leadership from the participating program teams.<sup>253</sup>

## **Risk Assessment & District Selection**

**7.1 Finding: Approximately 43% of districts have not participated in Statewide Consolidated Monitoring (SCM) in the last decade. As a result, KDE has only completed comprehensive, onsite assessments of about half of all districts in the last ten years.**

Annually in August, OCIS conducts a risk assessment process to select districts for monitoring. OCIS uses a risk assessment tool that was developed in accordance with federal regulation 2 C.F.R. § 200.332 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.519. OCIS assesses factors such as time since the last monitoring visit, any unspent federal funds, and years of experience of the district's program coordinator. Each program team also evaluates districts on program-specific risk factors. For example, the Title II, Part A team considers teacher turnover rates, whether funds were used for class size reduction, and whether technical assistance was required for significant issues on the previous year's Title II GMAP application.<sup>254</sup> Each category is assigned a different point value, and districts with the highest total risk scores are usually selected. Additional consideration is given to whether a district has participated in another type of monitoring in the past two years. In interviews, OCIS staff describe avoiding multiple monitoring visits to the same school district within a particular year.

Program leadership meets to discuss the risk assessment results and typically identifies a list of ten districts and three alternates for OCIS leadership to review.<sup>255</sup> Ten districts have been selected for monitoring during each of the last five school years; approximately six percent of public-school districts in the Commonwealth are monitored annually. During the five years prior (2014-2015 to 2018-2019), between five and 14 districts were selected. As seen in Figure 98, Kentucky monitors fewer districts through SCM than Alabama and Mississippi.

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<sup>251</sup> “OCIS DSPI Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 22, 2024. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>252</sup> “Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/progs/scmi/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>253</sup> “OCIS DSPI Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 22, 2024. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>254</sup> “Risk Factors for 2024-2025 Risk Assessment.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2024. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>255</sup> “OCIS DSPI Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 22, 2024. [Microsoft Word].



**FIGURE 98: DISTRICTS SELECTED FOR STATE AND FEDERAL MONITORING IN 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR BY STATE**

States	Monitoring Process	Number Selected for Monitoring	Percentage of Districts Statewide
Kentucky	<b>State and Federal.</b> Districts are selected using a risk assessment tool.	10	6%
Alabama	<b>State and Federal.</b> The top 15% of districts with the highest risk are identified for monitoring.	27	19%
Mississippi	<b>State and Federal.</b> An annual risk assessment determines districts' potential risk of noncompliance and are assigned a risk level of high, medium, or low. The higher the risk level, the more likely they are to be selected for on-site or virtual monitoring.	62	41%
Ohio	<b>Federal.</b> All districts not selected for additional monitoring fill out a self-survey. Some districts are selected for a desk review and ¼ of those districts are identified for additional monitoring on-site.	Approximately 49 for desk monitoring Approximately 12 for on-site monitoring	Approximately 8% are selected for desk monitoring. Approximately 2% are selected for on-site monitoring visits.
Tennessee	<b>Federal.</b> Each LEA is monitored at a tier from 1 (LEAs submit an online instrument), 2 (LEAs participate in virtual monitoring), and 3 (on-site visit) based on a risk analysis comprised of 50 factors.	Not available	100% monitored on one of the three tiers

Source: Data retrieved from State Department of Education websites. The team was not able to identify monitoring participation rates for Florida and Tennessee. Florida uses a Universal Risk Assessment to identify LEAs with high risk for on-site monitoring. Program specific monitoring is provided for all LEAs. More information about Tennessee is provided above.

KDE staff also shared that the individual programs use risk assessment results to identify districts for desk monitoring. Desk monitoring allows for targeted monitoring of districts who were not selected for SCM.

Over the past ten years, a total of 97 districts have participated in SCM; this represents 57% of all districts in the Commonwealth. Eleven of these districts have been selected for SCM twice, and no district has been selected more than twice. The majority of the 11 districts had six or more years between SCM visits. Only three districts had a shorter timeframe of three to four years.<sup>256</sup>

**7.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should evaluate the feasibility of more frequent district monitoring, potentially increasing the number of districts monitored annually, depending on staff capacity. All districts can benefit from the process.

<sup>256</sup> “Consolidated Monitoring Districts for School Years 2014-15 to 2020-21.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Excel].



**7.2 Finding:** The risk assessment and district selection process for SCM is not transparent to districts and other stakeholders. The risk assessment tool is not publicly available, and this lack of information casts doubts on the selection process.

While a few examples of risk factors are listed on the KDE website and in district-facing documents, district staff are unable to look up the comprehensive list that informs SCM selection. In focus groups, superintendents reported that KDE did not provide a clear rationale for their district's selection for monitoring. Superintendents shared that selection felt random and not grounded in evidence.

As a comparison, the Mississippi Department of Education shares a full list of risk assessment indicators used to determine a district's annual risk level. They also detail the point system used to identify a district as low, medium, and high risk.<sup>257</sup>

**7.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should clearly explain to district leadership the reasons for selecting a district for monitoring. This includes sharing the last time the district participated in SCM and clearly communicating when monitoring is mandated by state and federal law. KDE should also publish the risk assessment tool on its website, as providing the risk assessment tool would address superintendents' concerns that districts are randomly selected for monitoring.

**7.3 Finding:** The names of districts selected for SCM are not publicly available until the end of the monitoring process.

Districts are notified in October of their selection for SCM; however, district names are not published until the conclusion of SCM. This practice reduces public transparency. For the 2024-2025 school year, district names were published on April 7, 2025.<sup>258</sup>

**7.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should publish the list of districts selected for monitoring in the fall once district leadership has received official notice.

**7.4 Finding:** Risk assessment results are not used to strategically inform the technical assistance process. A district's risk rating is used to determine whether it is selected for monitoring. The risk rating is not utilized beyond this step.

As a comparison, the Mississippi Department of Education describes a focused technical assistance approach on its website. Districts who are identified as medium or high risk during their annual risk rating process receive more focused technical support.<sup>259</sup>

**7.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should use risk assessment results to tailor technical assistance for each district. KDE should also employ a more holistic monitoring and technical assistance strategy to provide tiered support to districts.

## **KDE Staff and District Training**

The Title I, Part A Branch Manager and Consolidated Monitoring Point of Contact lead an annual training in late September for all KDE staff members participating in SCM. The training reviews the goals of monitoring, roles and responsibilities, implementation tools, and reporting processes. Relevant district-level

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<sup>257</sup> "Compliance and Monitoring." Mississippi Department of Education.

<https://mdek12.org/federalprograms/compliance-and-monitoring/>

<sup>258</sup> "2024-25 Consolidated Monitoring Process." Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/progs/scmi/Pages/2024-25%20Consolidated%20Monitoring%20Process.aspx>

<sup>259</sup> "Compliance and Monitoring." Mississippi Department of Education.

<https://mdek12.org/federalprograms/compliance-and-monitoring/>

staff then participate in a virtual training where they discuss the schedule, evidence submission, and reporting processes.<sup>260</sup>

## **District Visits**

Superintendents are notified of district selection in early October. In November and December, districts submit evidence into SharePoint folders prior to their onsite visits. Onsite visits occur between January and May.<sup>261</sup> District Title I Coordinators typically serve as the point of contact and are responsible for scheduling and logistics. The visits typically last one to three days, depending on district size. Each program team conducts interviews aligned with its processes and monitoring tools, and it also sometimes concludes the visit with exit interviews to share initial observations, at the discretion of the individual program.<sup>262</sup> According to staff interviews, all individual programs are assessed during SCM regardless of the individual risk rating. The team reviewed internal OCIS process documents and found evidence of clear role responsibilities, processes, and timelines associated with district visits.

## **Reporting and Follow-Up**

Two types of reports are shared with districts at the conclusion of SCM – an individual program report is provided eight weeks after a visit, and a consolidated report is issued 12 weeks after a visit. The monitoring team holds internal debrief meetings to discuss trends across programs and establish consistency across findings.

### **Individual Program Reports**

#### **7.5 Finding: The team did not observe evidence of a unified approach to tracking or monitoring outcomes of districts who have participated in SCM.**

The individual program reports include a summary of the SCM process and related actionable findings. Actionable findings include items that the district is not currently doing that are required under the law. After reports are delivered to districts, OCIS staff collect corresponding evidence related to districts' actionable findings to ensure compliance.

The team reviewed a sample of 14 individual program reports. They contained the following elements:

- Summary of program strengths
- Specific findings from monitoring, and actions required by the district to address non-compliance
- Program recommendations (districts are not required to complete these and KDE does not track them)

According to interviews with KDE staff, each program team logs and tracks findings independently. In some cases, program consultants independently track the actionable findings and upcoming due dates for their portfolio of districts rather than using a team-wide tracking system.

#### **7.5.a Recommendation: KDE should establish a data repository to centrally track monitoring outcomes and guide future technical assistance and monitoring efforts.**

This data repository could include documented strengths, areas for improvement, actionable findings, and recommendations. Deliverables and timelines for districts' corrective action plans should also be stored in a way that allows for systematic tracking and follow-up. A KDE-wide repository will ensure that all monitoring outcomes are stored in one central location, rather than individual spreadsheets.

### **Consolidated Reports**

The consolidated monitoring reports typically highlight a handful of Effective Practices and Opportunities for Improvement. Each Opportunity for Improvement includes a corresponding Common

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<sup>260</sup> "OCIS DSPI Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process." Kentucky Department of Education. March 22, 2024. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

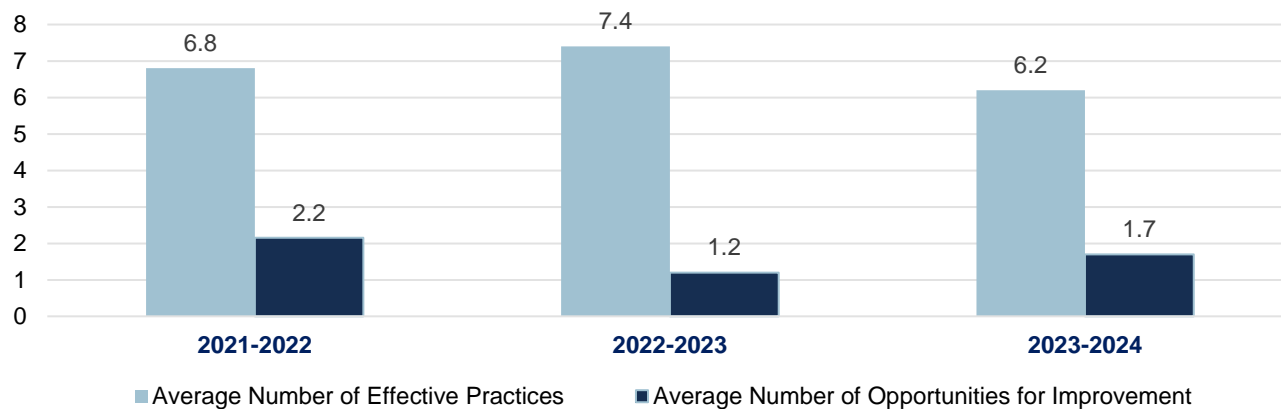
<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

Solution/Recommendation. According to interviews with KDE staff, districts are not required to implement these recommendations – they are only required to implement the actionable findings from the individual program reports. Recommendations are issued in places where a district has evidence to show that it is meeting requirements, but its practices could still be improved. Consolidated reports from the previous three school years are published on KDE’s website. KDE staff shared that reports have been published on KDE’s website for several years. Effective Practices and Opportunities for Improvement fall under one of the following ten categories; these categories can be associated with any of the programs:

- Community
- Parent and Family Engagement
- Student Services and Plans
- Finance
- Policies and Procedures
- Professional Development
- Leadership
- Communication
- Culture and Climate
- Equity Initiatives

**7.6 Finding:** The consolidated monitoring reports highlight significantly more Effective Practices than Opportunities for Improvement. Given that the core function of monitoring is to mitigate risks and help districts improve, the team expected to observe more Opportunities for Improvement and Recommendations. The reports are unable to help districts improve if they rarely mention Opportunities for Improvement.

**FIGURE 99: AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CONSOLIDATED MONITORING BY YEAR**



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky’s Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process Reports, 2021-2024.

As illustrated in Figure 99, the team also analyzed the number of Effective Practices and Opportunities for Improvement listed in each consolidated monitoring report from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024, and found that on average, reports included 6.8 Effective Practice and only 1.7 Opportunities for Improvement. This difference is especially apparent in the 2022-2023 reports, in which reports included an average of 7.4 Highlights of Effective Practice and 1.2 Opportunities for Improvement.

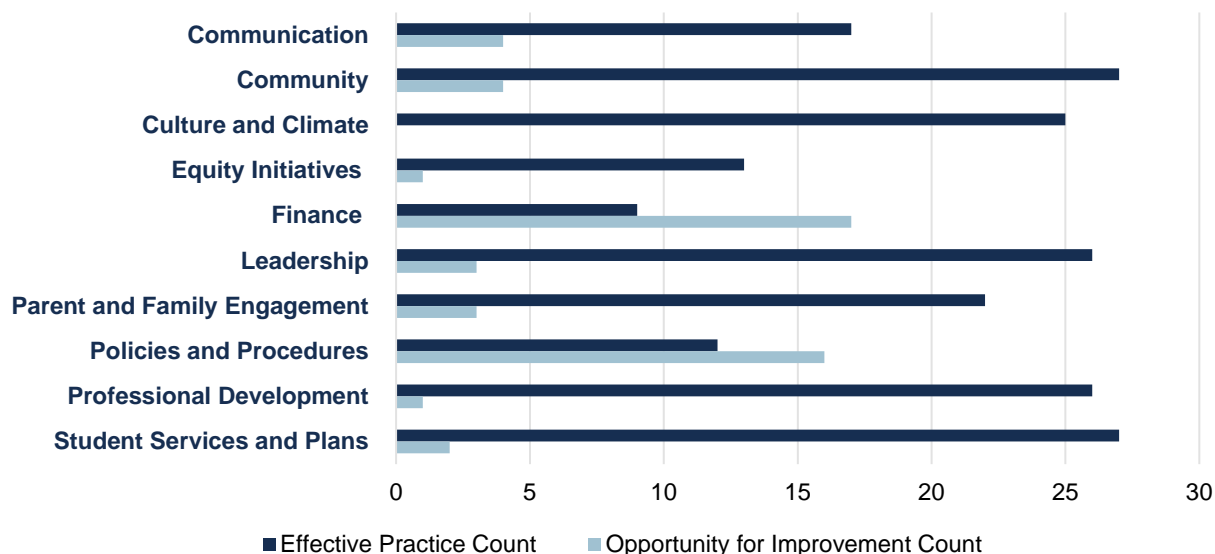
This discrepancy raises questions about the overall effectiveness of the reports for supporting continuous improvement efforts.

**7.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should offer tailored, constructive feedback to districts to promote continuous improvement in consolidated monitoring reports. Develop reports that prioritize providing applicable, actionable feedback to districts.

**7.7 Finding:** The SCM team produces a consolidated report for each district it monitors. However, the recommendations use stock language and are not tailored to districts.

The team reviewed the consolidated monitoring reports from 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 to assess trends in both Effective Practices and Opportunities for Improvement across these ten categories. As shown in Figure 100, across the thirty reports, Community, Student Services and Plans, Professional Development, and Leadership were most often listed as an Effective Practice; approximately 90% of all reports included these. Descriptions of Effective Practice often made specific references to programs or staff that were instrumental in the district’s success.

**FIGURE 100: FREQUENCY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CONSOLIDATED MONITORING REPORTS, 2021-2022 TO 2023-2024**



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky’s Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process Reports, 2021-2024.

Finance, and Policies and Procedures were most frequently identified as Opportunities for Improvement; more than half of all reports included these. Like Effective Practices, the description of the Opportunities for Improvement detailed specific district activities. However, the associated recommendations were often very similar across school districts, with some specifics shared based on unique challenges and situations. In interviews, KDE staff shared that they use a common document as a source of recommendations to ensure consistency in wording across reports.

**7.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should ensure all recommendations are tailored to the local context of each district. Assess whether using the common document hinders the development of district-specific recommendations.

### Evaluation & Planning Activities

Each summer, the Title I Support and Improvement Branch leads a process to assess what worked well and what could be improved. As part of this process, they review the results of an anonymous feedback survey that is distributed to monitored districts each year. They also hold debrief meetings with each program team. They then create work groups in places where improved processes are needed.<sup>263</sup> Based on the team’s review of internal OCIS process documents, it is evident that the SCM team considers ways to improve processes on an annual basis.

<sup>263</sup> “OCIS DSPI Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 22, 2024. [Microsoft Word].

## OTHER OFFICE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT & SUPPORT MONITORING

### Overview

The Office of Continuous Improvement and Support also engages in monitoring for the below programs outside of the consolidated monitoring process. All of these are federal programs with federal monitoring requirements, except for Nontraditional Instruction (NTI).

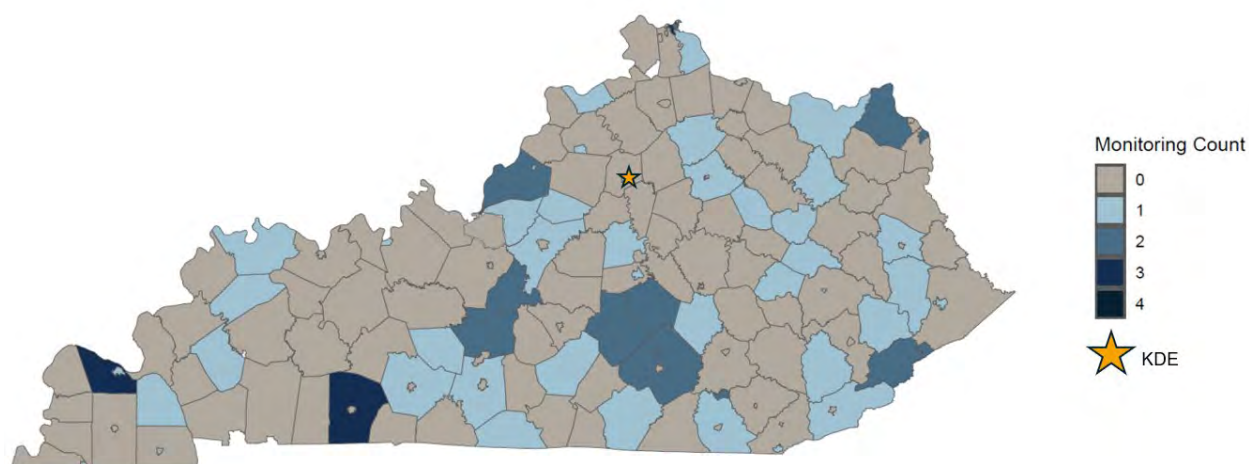
- ESSER
- Title IX, Part A – McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance
- Title IV, Part B – Nita M. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Programs
- Nontraditional Instruction (NTI)
- School Improvement Funds
- Title I, Part C – Migrant Education Program

In interviews, KDE staff members shared that, in most cases, the relevant program consultant(s) for these programs are responsible for all technical assistance and monitoring activities for all, or a subset, of districts across the Commonwealth.

#### **7.8 Observation: Twelve percent of all districts participated in two or more monitoring processes led by OCIS in the 2023-2024 school year.**

A total of 83 districts were monitored by OCIS through SCM or the six programs listed above during the 2023-2024 school year; this represents 48% of all districts in the Commonwealth. Ten districts were selected for SCM, and 73 additional, unique districts participated in other OCIS monitoring.

FIGURE 101: 2023-2024 OCIS MONITORING BY DISTRICT



Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, “2010-Present Non-Traditional Instruction Schools Monitored,” “Districts monitored for ESSER in 2023-24,” “McKinney-Vento Districts Monitored,” “Migrant Districts Monitored in School Year 2023-24,” “School Improvement Funds Monitoring,” and “Title IV, Part B Monitoring.” Additional data retrieved from Kentucky’s Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process Reports, 2021-2024. Map retrieved from KYGovMaps Open Data Portal, “KY School Districts,” retrieved from <https://opengisdata.ky.gov/datasets/kygeonet::ky-school-districts/about>.

As seen in Figure 101, of the 22 districts that participated in more than one OCIS monitoring activity during the 2023-2024 school year, 59% were monitored for compliance with Title IV, Part B, and 55% were monitored for compliance with NTI.

FIGURE 102: COUNT OF DISTRICTS PARTICIPATING IN MULTIPLE OCIS MONITORING ACTIVITIES, 2023-2024

Monitoring Activities	Number of Districts
SCM and one other program	3
Two monitoring programs (not including SCM)	14
Three monitoring programs (not including SCM)	4
Four monitoring programs (not including SCM)	1

Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, “2010-Present Non-Traditional Instruction Schools Monitored,” “Districts monitored for ESSER in 2023-24,” “McKinney-Vento Districts Monitored,” “Migrant Districts Monitored in School Year 2023-24,” “School Improvement Funds Monitoring,” and “Title IV, Part B Monitoring.” Additional data retrieved from Kentucky’s Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Process Reports, 2021-2024.

Both SCM and Title I, Part C monitoring occurs in the spring. During the 2023-2024 school year, no districts were monitored for both programs. Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER), Title IX, Part A, and NTI monitoring all occur at the end of the school year. During the 2023-2024 school year, six districts were monitored for at least two of these programs.

**7.8.a Recommendation:** OCIS should strategically coordinate district selections to minimize capacity strain. Evaluating the timing and calendar of monitoring activities will ensure site visits are appropriately spaced.

### Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief

KDE is required to monitor the implementation of this federal program. The process includes a review of districts’ ESSER Plans, programmatic implementation and outcomes, and the fiscal management of their



ESSER III funds.<sup>264</sup> Monitoring occurs in June. Selected districts are required to complete a self-evaluation, as well as submit a MUNIS expenditure report and other documentation prior to the site visit.<sup>265</sup> Fourteen school districts were monitored in the 2023-2024 school year.<sup>266</sup>

### **Title IX, Part A – McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance**

This federal program “supports homeless youth by promoting educational success for students who are experiencing homelessness.”<sup>267</sup> This program is managed by the Community Engagement and Support Branch within the Division of School and Program Improvement. Districts are tasked with submitting McKinney-Vento data to KDE at the end of the school year.<sup>268</sup> During the 2023-2024 school year, 14 districts participated in monitoring.<sup>269</sup>

### **Title IV, Part B - Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs**

This federal program supports the “creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.”<sup>270</sup> The Community Support and Engagement Branch within the Division of Student Success oversees all programmatic and monitoring activities for Title IV, Part B. According to internal KDE documents, programs are selected for monitoring based on the grant cycle, performance, or through an in-house risk assessment. Like other monitoring activities, the process entails uploading evidence and an on-site visit. Reports are shared with program and school leadership within two weeks, and they have 60 days to submit evidence for any actionable findings. During the 2023-2024 school year, 19 districts were monitored.<sup>271</sup>

### **Nontraditional Instruction**

KRS 158.070 establishes the use of, up to the equivalent of, ten NTI days per school year when a school district is closed for health and safety reasons. Districts must have nontraditional instruction plans approved by the Commissioner of Education to be eligible. The Division of Innovation within OCIS oversees all aspects of NTI, including monitoring.<sup>272</sup>

A sample of districts are selected annually for end-of-year monitoring. In the 2023-2024 school year, 37 districts were monitored.<sup>273</sup> Documents provided by KDE indicate that its goal is to monitor, within five years, all districts that leverage NTI days. Approximately 34 districts would need to be monitored annually to meet this objective. Selected districts are required to upload artifacts for each NTI day utilized. Artifacts required include:

- Teacher assignments and paired completed student work from various core content courses and electives for each grade (K-12)

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<sup>264</sup> “ARP Monitoring Checklist for Reviewers.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 24, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>265</sup> “ARP-ESSER monitoring process.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 24, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>266</sup> “Districts monitored for ESSER in 2023-2024.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>267</sup> “Title IX, Part A - Education for Homeless Children and Youth.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 21, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/progs/txc/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>268</sup> “Chapter Thirteen: Data Collection & Requirements.” National Center for Homeless Education. <https://nche.ed.gov/homeless-liaison-toolkit/>

<sup>269</sup> “McKinney-Vento Districts Monitored.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>270</sup> “Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Title IV, Part B).” U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/school-improvement/nita-m-lowey-21st-century-community-learning-centers>

<sup>271</sup> “Title IV, Part B Monitoring.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>272</sup> “Non-Traditional Instruction.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 21, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/innov/Pages/Non-Traditional-Instruction.aspx>

<sup>273</sup> “2010-Present Non-Traditional Instruction Schools Monitored.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Excel].



- Teacher participation numbers retrieved from Infinite Campus
- Student participation numbers retrieved from Infinite Campus
- Responses to end-of-year monitoring questions<sup>274</sup>

During the 2025 legislative session, House Bill 737 was introduced to amend KRS 158.070 to remove the NTI authorization; it was still in committee when the legislative session ended.<sup>275</sup> House Bill 241 was also introduced to grant additional NTI days to account for weather disruptions during the 2024-2025 school year and it became a law without the governor's signature.<sup>276</sup>

### **School Improvement Funds**

Federal law requires KDE to reserve a portion of its Title I allocation to “assist LEAs [local education agencies] that serve schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement plans or targeted support and improvement plans under ESEA section 111(d).”<sup>277</sup> The District 180 Branch within the Division of School and Program Improvement manages the School Improvement Funds financial monitoring process. Approximately 30% of eligible schools are monitored annually based on a risk assessment process. During the 2023-2024 school year, 14 schools across eight districts were monitored.<sup>278</sup> According to internal KDE documents, monitoring visits happen between October 15 and December 15.<sup>279</sup> More information about KDE's responsibilities related to school improvement is found in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section.

### **Title I, Part C – Migrant Education Program**

This federal program provides “supplementary education and human resources services to highly mobile children up to and through age 21.”<sup>280</sup> The English Learners, Migrant and Neglected Students Branch within the Division of School and Program Improvement is responsible for Title I, Part C program management and monitoring. As demonstrated in Figure 103, during the 2021-2022 school year, the Commonwealth had 3,808 migrant students for the regular school year and 2,943 for summer school. KDE staff shared that this population size is relatively stable, but the numbers were unable to be confirmed as the data from the three most recent school years was not available at the time of publication.

During the 2023-2024 school year, nine districts were monitored.<sup>281</sup> Like other OCIS monitoring, a risk assessment is used to select districts, and one-day monitoring visits take place in the spring (typically in February and March).<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> “2010-Present Non-Traditional Instruction Schools Monitored.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Excel].

<sup>275</sup> “House Bill 737.” Kentucky General Assembly. February 27, 2025.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/25rs/hb737.html>

<sup>276</sup> “House Bill 241.” Kentucky General Assembly. March 27, 2025.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/25rs/hb241.html>

<sup>277</sup> “School Improvement Funds.” Kentucky Department of Education. November 13, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/progs/sigi/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>278</sup> “School Improvement Funds Monitoring.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Excel].

<sup>279</sup> “OCIS DSPI SIF Risk Assessment Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. February 27, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

<sup>280</sup> “Title I, Part C - Education of Migratory Children.” Kentucky Department of Education. October 9, 2024.

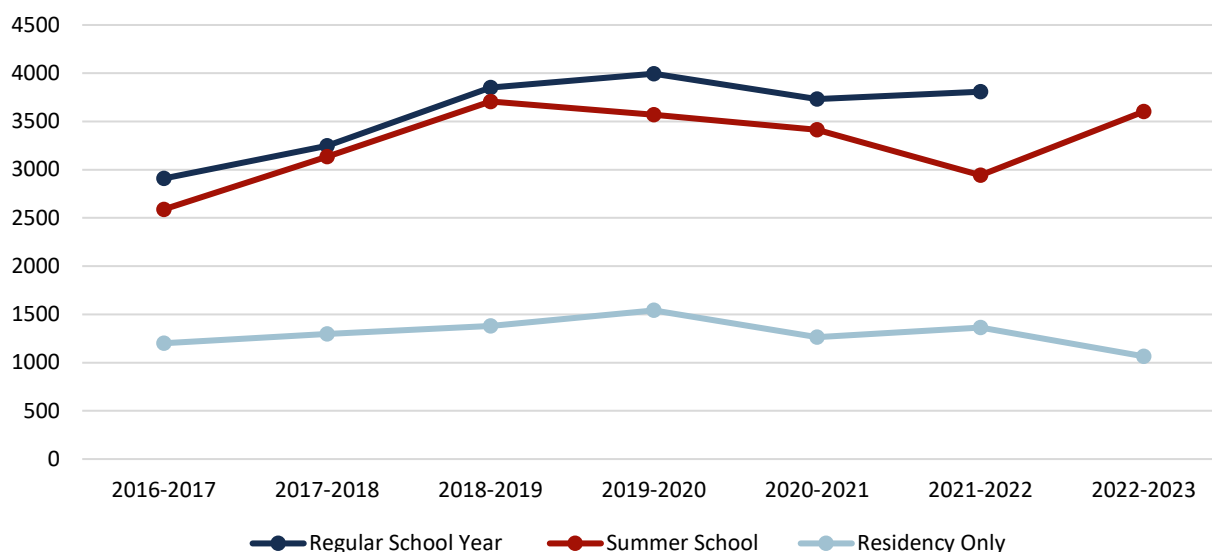
<https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/progs/tic/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>281</sup> “Migrant Districts Monitored in School Year 2023-24.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025.

[Microsoft Word].

<sup>282</sup> “Migrant District Monitoring Process.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 10, 2025. [Microsoft Word].

FIGURE 103: NUMBER OF MIGRANT ELIGIBLE STUDENTS IN KENTUCKY BY ENROLLMENT PERIOD & YEAR



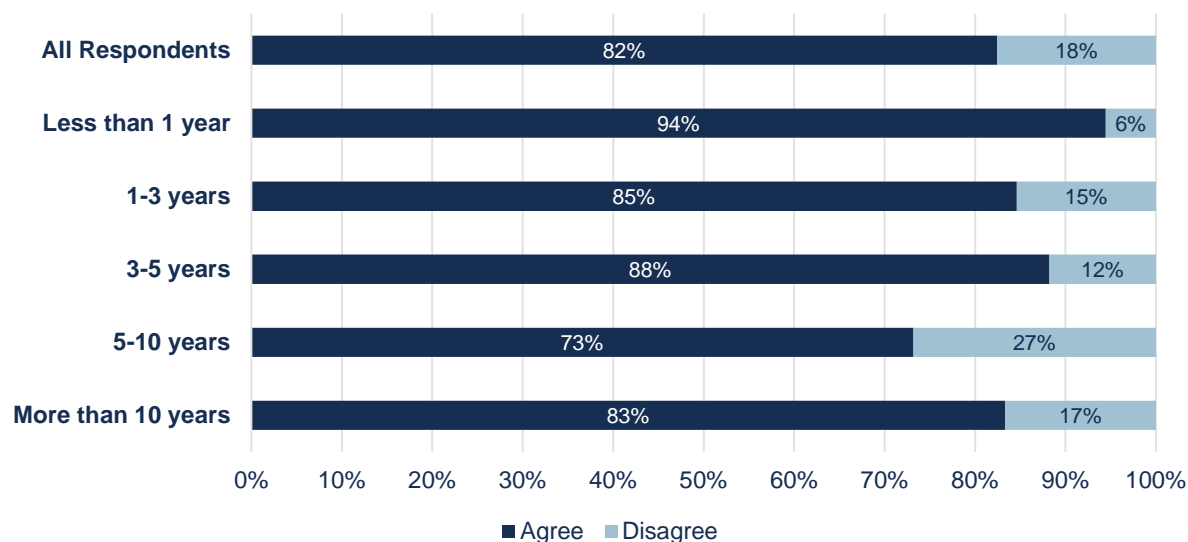
Source: Data retrieved from ‘Kentucky Migrant Education Program Service Delivery Plan March 2022’ and ‘Annual Evaluation Report 2022-2023 – Kentucky Migrant Education Program’. Data for the 202-2023 regular school year students was unavailable at the time of publication.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FEDERAL & STATE PROGRAMS

In interviews with KDE staff, the team heard about OCIS efforts to build districts’ capacity to implement federal programs with fidelity. For example, the Title I Support and Improvement Branch holds monthly Title I webinars and sends monthly newsletters with the goal of keeping district informed. KDE staff shared that their resources are high-quality, and as a testament to this, peer states have reached out to access their resources. This includes guidance documents related to allowable procedures and “supplement not supplant.” KDE staff also reported helping colleagues who work in the field better understand federal and state requirements given their proximity to districts.

Superintendents reported being satisfied with KDE’s technical assistance – 82% of superintendent survey respondents agreed that KDE provides technical assistance and support to their district in a manner that positively impacts student outcomes. As seen in Figure 104, rates of agreement among superintendent respondents with different years of experience were consistent, with two exceptions. Superintendents with less than one year of experience had higher rates of agreement on average (94%), and those with five to ten years of experience had lower rates of agreement on average (73%).

**FIGURE 104: KDE PROVIDES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TO MY DISTRICT IN A MANNER THAT POSITIVELY IMPACTS STUDENT OUTCOMES.**



Source: Data retrieved from the Superintendent Survey.

**7.9 Finding: KDE manages a Best Practices Database for schools and districts to use as a resource to improve student performance; it is neither actively maintained nor systematically used.**

KDE staff described an online form for districts to submit promising practices that are then published online in KDE’s Best Practices Database for other schools and districts to view.

The Database includes 150+ best practices on a variety of topics. However, approximately half of these practices were submitted over a decade ago; only 24 were submitted in the last two years. The team did not observe systematic or widespread use of this Database, or best practices, more generally. Furthermore, the Database is used by OCIS, but there does not appear to be usage or coordination with other KDE offices, such as OTL. The database was not referenced by staff outside of OCIS, or superintendents, in any interviews or focus groups.

While the concept of an online repository is commendable, it needs to be disseminated widely and paired with technical assistance.

**7.9.a Recommendation: KDE should create a process to collect and share best practices with districts, using them to offer tailored technical assistance.**

**MANAGEMENT AUDITS**

**7.10 Observation: KDE is underutilizing its statutory authority to conduct management reviews and audits to enhance district effectiveness.**

As mentioned in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section, KRS 158.780 and 158.785 establish KBE’s authority to establish a program for management improvement services for districts with a critical lack of efficiency or effectiveness in governance or administration. This can include significant deficiencies in student performance, data irregularities, or lack of capacity within the district. 703 KAR 3:205 outlines the progress steps KDE can take as part of the management improvement program. The steps include:

1. Performing a data and artifact review
2. Performing a management review
3. Performing a comprehensive management audit
4. Determining whether there is a “pattern of significant lack of effectiveness and efficiency in governance and administration”

5. Review of findings by KBE – this can result in a state-assisted or state-managed designation<sup>283</sup>

When appropriate, management reviews and audits can be effective tools for addressing critical deficiencies in district governance or administration. Management reviews and audits are carried out by a cross-functional group of KDE staff on an as needed basis.<sup>284</sup> KDE staff reported that in the last five years, KDE has completed three management audits for three different districts. Management reviews examine governance policy and procedures, instructional programming, fiscal management, facilities, student transportation, and community perception and support. Management audits expand on the topics covered in management reviews to comprehensively assess district performance.<sup>285</sup> State-assisted and state-management designation is discussed in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section.

**7.10.a Recommendation:** KDE should, when appropriate, utilize its authority to conduct management reviews and audits to improve efficiency and effectiveness in district governance or administration.

## OFFICE OF FINANCE & OPERATIONS AUDITS & MONITORING

### Overview

The Office of Finance and Operations leads monitoring for the programs below. These activities are required under state or federal law.

- Fiscal Compliance Audits and Monitoring
- Transportation Monitoring
- Nutrition Monitoring
- Attendance Monitoring
- Civil Rights Vocational Monitoring

All these activities occur annually for all districts, except for nutrition monitoring and civil rights vocational monitoring.

### Fiscal Compliance Audits & Monitoring

KRS 157.061 instructs KDE to “conduct internal fiscal, management, and compliance audits of each school district in the Commonwealth on an annual basis.”<sup>286</sup> The OFO, specifically the District Financial Management Branch within the Division of District Support, oversees these annual audits. KDE staff described the following process during interviews. First, independent Certified Public Accountants complete a district financial audit. The District Financial Management Branch then reviews the calculations for accuracy and confirms that the fund balances are correct with no deficits. They also review areas where they tend to see concerns, such as student activity funds.

KRS 157.060 requires school districts to report annually on all funds they receive from the state and other sources, as well as account for all expenditures for the year.

KDE staff also shared in interviews that the independent auditors are not always willing or able to accommodate major conflicts in districts’ schedules.

Fiscal audit information comes in from the 171 districts in various formats, paper and electronic, and is saved on a shared drive. The group responsible for student data tracking audits is made up of three people

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<sup>283</sup> Review of Previous Management Audits.” Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/385/31060/KDE%20-%20Presentation%20-%20JCPS.pdf>

<sup>284</sup> “Management Improvement Program.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 16, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/Pages/Management-Audit-Process.aspx>

<sup>285</sup> “Review of Previous Management Audits.” Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/385/31060/KDE%20-%20Presentation%20-%20JCPS.pdf>

<sup>286</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 157.061.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3269>

to monitor the 171 audits for submission and content. KDE attendance audit staff reports that the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives records retention schedule requires backup documentation for student attendance audits to be in paper format that then goes to archives. While a paper format is not specifically name, the Team reviewed the retention schedule and these records are required. See Figure 105 for an example entry from the retention schedule regarding student attendance reviews.

**FIGURE 105: RETENTION SCHEDULE ENTRY FOR ATTENDANCE REVIEW REPORTS**

**STATE LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND RECORDS COMMISSION**

Archives and Records Management Division

Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives

STATE AGENCY RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE		Education, Department of Finance and Operations, Office of District Support, Division of Student Tracking and Data Branch	Record Group Number 0900
Series and Description	Records Title Function and Use		
04781 Attendance Review Reports	This series documents school district attendance review information collected by the Kentucky Department of Education. Reviews are done to ensure school districts are complying with the mandated instructional days requirement by KRS 158.070 and 702 KAR 7:130. Additionally, Support Education Excellence in Kentucky funding is based on the average daily attendance, which is verified during these reviews.		
	<b>Access Restrictions</b> Agencies should consult legal counsel regarding open records matters.		
	<b>Contents</b> Series may contain: Review reports, district schedules, and district responses to the reviews.		
	<b>Retention and Disposition</b> Retain for two (2) years, then transfer to the State Records Center for an additional three (3) years. Total retention is five (5) years.		

Source: Department of Education records retention schedule retrieved from Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives.

<https://kdla.ky.gov/records/RetentionSchedules/Documents/State%20Records%20Schedules/KYEducation.PDF>

Using paper, email, spreadsheets, or simple shared drives presents the risk that excess time is spent looking for and compiling information and that important information is missing or inaccurate. For transactional systems or systems of record, such methods also do not typically include a change log or audit trail, making information susceptible to unauthorized or unintentional changes to formulae or data.

Shared drives generally have only rudimentary search capabilities, requiring each document to be opened and analyzed individually. Given the high caseload of KDE staff, it is only practical to look for narrowly targeted areas of risk or common audit findings, which audit systems can do more efficiently.

Statements made by KDE staff regarding the records retention schedule were reviewed and it appears that KDE interprets the schedule accurately with information provided, with the exception that KDE staff may be interpreting the schedule to call for paper records in some cases where the retention schedule is silent on physical format. Staff may not be aware that they can influence the retention schedule through the periodic review process required by 725 KAR 1:010. The KDE records officer can and should suggest changes and clarifications to the schedule to the State Libraries, Archives, and Records Commission.<sup>287</sup>

## Transportation Monitoring

### 7.11 Observation: KDE Transportation provides public access to limited data via the KDE website.

Information on the bus fleet and a historical mileage report is available, along with some summary data from the 2022-2023 fiscal year, which should be updated.<sup>288</sup> KDE transportation staff monitor driver records and bus safety. This is achieved using contract staff to ensure 100% annual statewide coverage. Due to the importance of safety to transporting students, this is a reasonable approach and an understandable use of resources.

<sup>287</sup> "Department of Education records retention schedule." Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. June 8, 2023.

<https://kdla.ky.gov/records/RetentionSchedules/Documents/State%20Records%20Schedules/KYEducation.PDF>

<sup>288</sup> "Pupil transportation data reporting." Kentucky Department of Education. March 14, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/trans/Pages/Reporting.aspx>

KDE monitors to ensure that drivers have the proper licenses, that buses are in safe condition with all required features, bus inspections are performed as required, and that districts are providing proper training. KDE has a SharePoint-based system for district reporting of buses and drivers. Every district superintendent is required to ensure that bus drivers and their certifications are reported.

KDE sets standards for bus features and maintenance standards. Department staff visit factories to check whether buses intended for Kentucky schools are compliant with safety standards.

- 7.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should publish an annual one-page "fast facts" document with expanded summary data and multi-year trend information including financial metrics such as total cost (state and local), cost per rider, riders versus walkers, special transportation modes (such as specially equipped buses or vans), and driver information (such as average age and hourly wage).

## **Nutrition Monitoring**

### **7.12 Observation:** Nutrition monitoring results are not easily accessible to the public.

KDE monitors local school food authorities on a five-year rotating basis. The state is required to provide administrative review reports in an "accessible, easily understood manner."<sup>289</sup>

Although KDE provides monitoring guidance for school nutrition program administrative reviews, this guidance is not available publicly online. Monitoring results are available online via CNIPS (Child Nutrition Information and Payment System), but there is no logical link to those results. This page may satisfy the technical requirement, but a link from the main website would improve access.

In addition to the federal guidelines, KDE provides extensive training materials in support of school nutrition programs. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Handbook for Sponsoring Organizations of Affiliated and Unaffiliated Child Care Centers and the Sun Meals (SFSP) Handbook for Sponsors both include valuable information and relevant resource links for those programs based on federal guidance. KDE provides extensive training and resources for the National School Lunch Program via an online platform. This content does have some standard national guidance but contains Kentucky-specific references and content as well. The Administrative Review Guide describes what will be reviewed for each school food authority, and an On-site Administrative Review Guide provides more specificity to the school food authorities on what on-site reviewers will look for and what documents will be inspected. These review guides are very clear and should help school food authorities perform better during regular operations and in their program monitoring visits.

- 7.12.a Recommendation:** KDE should add links to the nutrition monitoring manual, online training, technical assistance materials, and results search to the KDE school meal programs webpage to enhance accessibility by organizations and the public.

## **Attendance Monitoring**

### **7.13 Finding:** Attendance monitoring processes are not efficient.

The Student Tracking and Data Branch under the Division of District Support is responsible for attendance monitoring. According to interviews with KDE staff, attendance records in Infinite Campus inform districts' Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding. KDE staff reported that attendance monitoring happens year-round. This branch currently has three auditing staff responsible for monitoring. The branch had seven staff previously when they were also responsible for financial monitoring. The three current staff are responsible for the entire state, and their protocol involves on-site work, going into classrooms and ensuring that teachers are taking attendance in Infinite Campus.

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<sup>289</sup> "State Agency Administrative Review Summary." Kentucky Department of Education. *CNIPS*. <https://cnips.education.ky.gov/CNIPS/Transparency/AdministrativeReviewSummaryList.aspx>



Attendance audits are all paper based with nothing done electronically, according to KDE staff. Districts provide boxes of paper files which must be sorted and scanned into SharePoint. Any records without errors are shredded, while anything with errors is sent to state archives in paper format. Additional information regarding archiving attendance monitoring documents was discussed in the previous section on Fiscal Compliance Monitoring.

- 7.13.a **Recommendation:** KDE should update attendance monitoring protocols to use electronic/remote monitoring and electronic document receipt/storage, reserving onsite visits for random selections and follow-ups on suspected major errors or fraud. This will save time, travel costs, intrusion into district operations, printing costs, shredding waste, and archiving costs.

### **Civil Rights Vocational Monitoring**

KDE is required to conduct on-site review as part of its Vocational Education Methods of Administration federal civil rights requirements. Four districts are selected annually for comprehensive on-site reviews that occur between December and April.<sup>290</sup> This monitoring is intended to ensure that there is not unlawful discrimination in vocational programming regarding race, color, national origin, sex, or disability. The initial effort stemmed from nationwide findings that male and female students were concentrated in pathways traditionally aimed at them.<sup>291</sup> These reports are not publicly accessible via the KDE website.

## **COORDINATION ACROSS KDE**

- 7.14 **Finding:** The team did not observe consistent coordination of monitoring functions between OFO, Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL), and OCIS.

Numerous KDE program areas have monitoring functions and responsibilities that are essentially independent of each other. When they happen at the same time, districts feel overburdened. When they are spread out, it can appear that KDE is constantly monitoring or is disorganized if one KDE monitoring team is unaware that another was there or just left. In smaller districts, central office administrators typically fill multiple roles, resulting in the same person seeing multiple rounds of monitoring for different programs.

- 7.14.a **Recommendation:** KDE should create a system to track district engagements and prevent overlapping audit or monitoring activities. When more than one activity needs to occur within the same timeframe, ensure that they are appropriately scheduled.

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<sup>290</sup> "Methods of Administration for Civil Rights Monitoring." Kentucky Department of Education. October 21, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/federal/fed/Pages/Methods-of-Administration-for-Civil-Rights-Monitoring.aspx>

<sup>291</sup> "Guidelines for Vocational Education Programs, ED, Office for Civil Rights, 3/27/79." U.S. Department of Education. January 14, 2025. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/adult-education-laws-and-policy/guidelines-for-vocational-education-programs>



## STUDENT SUPPORTS

This chapter discusses KDE's responsibilities in ensuring that all Kentucky students have the supports they need to succeed. The Student Support section focuses on comprehensive school counseling, academic programs, and targeted interventions. The School Safety section examines laws and regulations, KDE's safe and supportive schools branch, PBIS, and school discipline.

## DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

### *Overview*

This chapter highlights work across two offices—the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) and the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support (OCIS). Within OTL, this chapter focuses on the role and responsibilities of the Comprehensive School Counselor. Within OCIS, it focuses on the Division of Student Success.

The Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling is situated in OTL. The Student Support section in this chapter focuses on the responsibilities of this role including comprehensive school counseling, individual learning plans, and advanced coursework.

The Division of Student Success is split into two branches—the Student Engagement and Support Branch and the Safe and Supportive Schools Branch.

- The Student Engagement and Support Branch supports alternative education programs, Title IV Part A, Persistence to Graduation, Early Warning, and Chronic Absenteeism.
- The Safe and Supportive Schools Branch provides resources for schools, parents, and districts including bullying prevention training, assistance with children experiencing bullying, and guidance on safe schools data collection tools. Additional duties of this branch will be discussed later in this section.

### *Essential Functions Overlap*

#### **8.1 Finding: The essential functions related to Student Support and School Safety overlap between OTL and OCIS.**

Within OTL and OCIS, many of the programs and supports that fall under the Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling and many of the programs and supports that fall under the Division of Student Success overlap with or complement one another. Figure 106 presents these programs along with where they are housed within KDE.

FIGURE 106: KDE ORGANIZATION OF COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS RELATED TO STUDENT SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Office, Division, Branch	Program	Description
Office of Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive School Counseling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides access and opportunity to all students through providing school counseling services that improve achievement and support the needs of the whole child to ensure students are college and/or career ready and prepared to better their community.<sup>292</sup> Also includes the Individual Learning Plan and Early Graduation.</li> </ul>
Office of Teaching and Learning, Division of Program Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MTSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-level prevention system designed to maximize student achievement and social and behavioral competencies through an integration of differentiated core instruction, assessment, and intervention.<sup>293</sup></li> </ul>
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Division of Student Success Student Engagement and Support Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistence to Graduation</li> <li>Early Warning</li> <li>Chronic Absenteeism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Persistence to Graduation</b> is a data tool that assigns every student a risk score based on attendance, behavior, course performance, and demographics.<sup>294</sup></li> <li>The <b>Early Warning System</b> allows districts and school personnel to understand what is contributing to each student's risk of dropping out and in what areas an intervention might yield the greatest impact.<sup>295</sup></li> <li><b>Chronic Absenteeism</b> provides resources to families to help them support their student with regular attendance and to educators to help them promote attendance in their school and district.<sup>296</sup></li> <li><b>Alternative Education Programs (AEPs)</b> provide remediation, acceleration, or unique learning opportunities to students that are not otherwise available in a traditional school setting.</li> </ul>
Office of Continuous Improvement and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PBIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PBIS</b> is an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students'</li> </ul>

<sup>292</sup> "Comprehensive School Counseling." Kentucky Department of Education. April 28, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>293</sup> "Kentucky Multi-Tiered System of Supports (KyMTSS)." Kentucky Department of Education. March 25, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Pages/KSI.aspx>

<sup>294</sup> "Early Warning, Insights and Persistence to Graduation Data Tools." Kentucky Department of Education. April 2, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/int/Pages/EarlyWarningAndPersistenceToGraduation.aspx>

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> "Chronic Absenteeism." Kentucky Department of Education. April 15, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/Pages/Chronic-Absenteeism.aspx>

Office, Division, Branch	Program	Description
Support, Division of Student Success Safe and Supportive Schools Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School-Based Mental Health</li> <li>Trauma-Informed Practices</li> </ul>	<p>behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health.<sup>297</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>School-based Mental Health</b> provides counseling and support services to students during the school day, at the school, provided by school-based mental health professionals including school social workers, psychologists, and counselors.</li> <li><b>Trauma-Informed Practices</b> requires local boards of education to have a plan to implement a trauma-informed approach in its schools annually. These plans include strategies for enhancing trauma awareness, assessing the school climate, developing discipline policies, collaborating with local law enforcement to establish procedures for notification, and providing services to reduce the negative impact of trauma.<sup>298</sup></li> </ul>

Source: Retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education website.

As seen in Figure 106, the above programs span two offices and four distinct organizational locations (division or branch) but all focus on supporting the whole student. Despite the areas of overlap of the above programs, focus group participants working with these programs report a lack of awareness about complementary programs occurring elsewhere in the organization.

- 8.1.a **Recommendation:** KDE should create a Student Support and School Safety strategic plan to guide cross-office collaboration on critical interdisciplinary work and establish structures to sustain these efforts. Collaboration across offices, divisions, and/or branches is needed to align efforts and maximize impact. KDE should examine services, resources, programs, and functions across the agency to establish where additional areas for collaboration exist.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

### Overview

This section covers the support KDE provides to students to help them persist in school and graduate with the necessary skills to be successful in their postsecondary endeavors. It establishes the mental health landscape and associated academic risks then goes into school counseling and academic programs. Within school counseling, it examines how KDE staffs and organizes comprehensive school counseling, the School Counselor Advisory Committee, and school counseling across Kentucky. Within Academic Programs, the section looks at Kentucky’s Individual Learning Plans, advanced coursework, and targeted interventions.

<sup>297</sup> “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).” Kentucky Department of Education. February 3, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Positive-Behavior-in-Schools-\(PBIS\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Positive-Behavior-in-Schools-(PBIS).aspx)

<sup>298</sup> “Trauma-Informed Practices.” Kentucky Department of Education. January 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Trauma-Informed-Care.aspx>

## Student Needs

Throughout the United States, youth are experiencing a mental health crisis, with high levels of self-reported sadness, hopelessness, and suicidality.<sup>299</sup> As seen in the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results for Kentucky, students in Kentucky are facing similar challenges. The statistics around this crisis demonstrate the need for the student supports discussed in this section.

- According to the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results for Kentucky students, 25% of middle school students and 30% of high school students reported that their mental health was not good most of the time or always during the 30 days before the survey.
- Thirty percent of high school students in Kentucky reported missing one or more days of school because their mental health was not good during the 30 days before the survey.
- Additionally, 10% of middle school students reported having ever tried to kill themselves. 26% reported having seriously thought about killing themselves. At the high school level, 8.6% of students reported attempting suicide one or more times and 19% reported seriously considering attempting suicide in the last 12 months.<sup>300</sup>

When mental health goes untreated or undertreated it can have direct impacts on a student's education. Some impacts include:

- Trouble with academic tasks such as completing coursework, problem solving, and recalling information
- Lower achievement on standardized tests and end-of-course grades
- Frequent absences from school
- Lower high school graduation rates.<sup>301</sup>

## Comprehensive School Counseling

### Overview

The vision of comprehensive school counseling at KDE is to provide access and opportunity to all students through effective counseling services. These services are meant to improve student achievement and support the needs of the whole child to ensure they leave school both college and career ready.<sup>302</sup>

Many of the school counseling requirements for schools and districts throughout the state are dictated by KRS 158.4416. This statute articulates the following expectations for schools, districts, school counselors, and the Department:

- All schools must have a place for students to feel safe and supported to learn throughout the school day.
- Personnel requirements:
  - School counselors should spend at least 60% of their time providing direct services to students.
  - School districts should have at least one school counselor and aim to meet the national recommended ratio.

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<sup>299</sup> "Mental Health." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. May 1, 2024.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm>

<sup>300</sup> "2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results: Kentucky Middle School Survey." Kentucky Department of Education. 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/WSCC/data/Documents/2023%20Middle%20School%20Trend%20Report.pdf>; "2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results: Kentucky High School Survey." Kentucky Department of Education. 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/WSCC/data/Documents/2023%20High%20School%20Trend%20Report.pdf>  
<sup>301</sup> "Mental Health and Academic Achievement." Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Now Is The Time Technical Assistance Center.

<sup>302</sup> "Comprehensive School Counseling." Kentucky Department of Education. April 16, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/Pages/default.aspx>

- The Department maintains The Kentucky Framework of Best Practices for School Counselors to support the work of counselors through the Commonwealth.<sup>303</sup>
- A school counselor or school-based mental health services provider should lead the trauma-informed team. It also lays out duties of the team including providing training, guidance, and assistance to other administrators, teachers, and staff.
- District superintendents must report the number of school-based mental health service providers along with additional information including funding sources for each position, job duties, work undertaken, and the percent of time devoted to each duty.
- The Department must provide a toolkit that includes guidance, strategies, behavioral interventions, practices, and techniques to assist in the development of trauma-informed approaches in schools.
  - The toolkit, Trauma-Informed Toolkit, is posted on the KDE website.<sup>304</sup>
- Districts must develop a trauma-informed approach in schools.<sup>305</sup>

### *Staffing & Organization*

#### **8.2 Finding: The OTL is not structured or staffed to maximize impact in school counseling. School counseling does not have a long-term vision that can be achieved with the current staffing structure.**

The Chief Academic Officer and the Associate Commissioner lead the Office of Teaching and Learning. Of the 35 individuals within this division, only the Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling and the Chief Academic Officer report directly to the Associate Commissioner and the other 33 report to the Chief Academic Officer. This reporting structure reduces the ability to align school counseling work to student outcomes and student instruction since school counseling does not fall directly under the Chief Academic Officer and thus requires an extra step to coordinate between the two positions.

Within KDE, Comprehensive School Counseling is staffed by a single individual, the Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling (“the coordinator”). This role is currently staffed as a MOA position, meaning the coordinator is on loan from a district and not permanently employed by KDE. The temporary nature of this position may limit the coordinator’s ability to set and implement a longer-term strategic vision for school counseling across the Commonwealth.

The responsibilities of the Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling provided by the Chief Academic Officer and described in the data collection process include:

- Supporting schools with developing and implementing proactive comprehensive school counseling programs including Individual Learning Plans, minimum high school graduation requirements, Early Graduation Program, and advanced coursework and postsecondary readiness.
- Working with over 1,400 stakeholders including school counselors, principals, superintendents, and other school-based mental health staff fielding questions on the above programs in an effort to build a comprehensive school counseling program and system of support across the state.
- Holding four virtual half-day trainings, called school counselor summits, where hundreds of counselors participate.
- Overseeing the School Counselor Advisory Council (SCAC) through leading quarterly meetings (see next section for more information).
- Collaborating across KDE and other organizations on alternative school monitoring, trauma-informed practices, and implementation of the Safety and Resiliency Act.
- Developing and strengthening partnerships with primary Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) that include sharing data on performance and teacher effectiveness, student placement needs, etc.

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<sup>303</sup> “Kentucky Framework of Best Practices for School Counselors.” Kentucky Department of Education. [https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/Documents/KY\\_Framework\\_of\\_Best\\_Practices\\_for\\_School\\_Counselors.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/Documents/KY_Framework_of_Best_Practices_for_School_Counselors.pdf)

<sup>304</sup> “Trauma-Informed Practices.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Trauma-Informed-Care.aspx>

<sup>305</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.4416.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55385>

- Developing, modifying, and/or disseminating guidance, presentations and technical assistance around the Kentucky Framework of Best Practices for School Counselors.

In interviews, multiple individuals in the Office of Teaching and Learning suggested a need for additional counseling staff to adequately address and assist the coordinator with the range of responsibilities required.

**8.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should update the organizational reporting structure of OTL, so the Comprehensive Coordinator for School Counseling directly reports to the Chief Academic Officer.

**8.2.b Recommendation:** KDE should further develop a detailed, long-term vision for Comprehensive School Counseling, including:

1. Prioritize the responsibilities of the coordinator role to align with this vision and ensure the coordinator has sufficient time to devote to these priorities. Establish which priorities might be best met by an additional staff member and, if needed, hire the necessary staff to fully support the long-term vision.
2. Ensure this long-term vision is resilient enough to withstand turnover given the comprehensive coordinator for school counseling is a MOA position.

### *School Counselor Advisory Council (SCAC)*

**8.3 Observation:** The School Counselor Advisory Council (SCAC) meeting time is spent primarily on KDE dispersing information to school counselors rather than intentional time for the Council to advise the Commissioner.

The SCAC (or “the Council”) consists of 25 practicing school counselors who serve in the state’s public schools. They are selected and appointed to the SCAC for three-year terms. The Council is designed to provide the Commissioner of Education with direct input from those on the ground and advise the Commissioner on priorities that meet the needs of the whole child.<sup>306</sup>

The SCAC holds meetings four times a year and OTL maintains a web page for the SCAC that includes publicly posted meeting agendas, meeting summaries, and video recordings of council meetings. Through a review of the meeting summaries and recordings, these meetings include presentations and reviews of relevant information for school counselors. Topics include, but are not limited to, the Use of Time Report, human trafficking, Portrait of a Learner, chronic absenteeism, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey results. The counselors on the Council are encouraged to participate in discussion, ask questions, provide feedback, and comment on materials presented. SCAC does not appear to have a formal set of priorities or recommendations for KDE. The council’s advising function appears to consist primarily of informal discussion during meetings and agendas are driven by KDE.

**8.3.a Recommendation:** SCAC should define the educational priorities that meet the needs of the whole child to help drive the Council’s agenda and to more strategically advise KDE.

### *School Counseling in Kentucky*

**8.4 Finding:** Kentucky does not meet the student-to-counselor ratio recommended in KRS 158.4416.

As mandated by KRS 158.4416, district superintendents are required to provide a report of school-based mental health service providers to the district that includes information on the number of school-based mental health service providers, funding sources, responsibilities, and time allocated to direct and indirect student services. The Department is required, by the same statute, to maintain the district-provided information and provide the information to the Interim Joint Committee on Education no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>

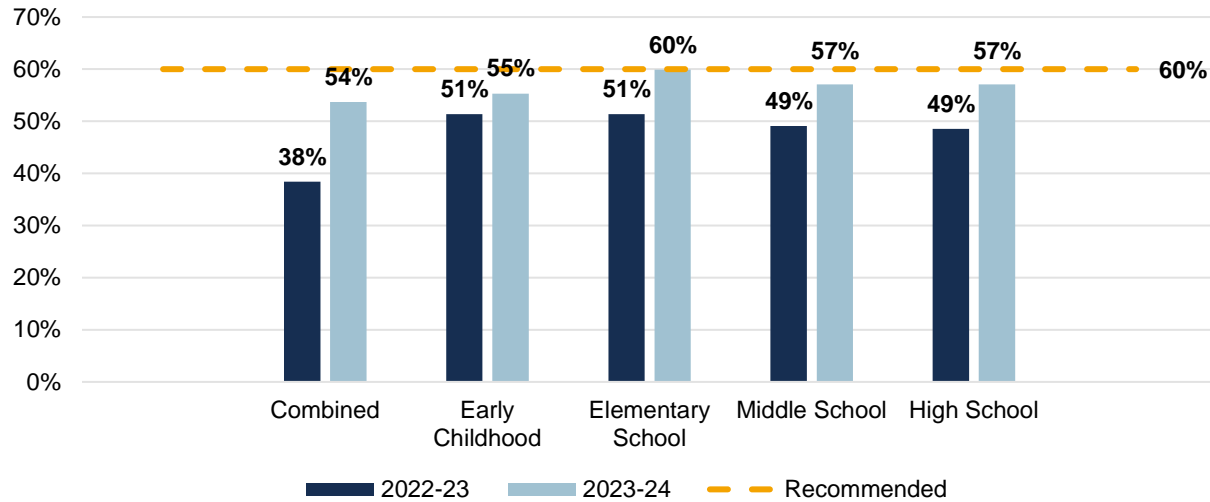
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<sup>306</sup> “School Counselor Advisory Council.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 16, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Counselor-Advisory-Council.aspx>

of each year through the School-Based Mental Health Professional Use of Time Report and the School Counselor Use of Time Report.<sup>307</sup>

Focusing on the School Counselor Use of Time Report, Figure 107 shows the percentage of time school counselors spend providing counseling and related services directly to students. It compares the actual percentage of time spent to the 60% goal laid out in KRS 158.4416 across different school levels and Use of Time Reports.

**FIGURE 107: SCHOOL COUNSELOR TIME SPENT PROVIDING SERVICES DIRECTLY TO STUDENTS**



Source: Data derived from the Counselor Use of Time Reports from 2023-2024 and 2022-2023.

School counselors are, in general, not meeting the recommended 60% of their time spent on providing counseling and related services directly to students. Elementary school counselors are the only group meeting this metric in the 2023-2024 Use of Time Report. Counselors at all school levels, however, have improved on spending time providing direct services from the 2022-2023 report to the most recent report in 2023-2024.<sup>308</sup>

Kentucky also reported the following personnel statistics for 2023-2024:

- There are 2,002 school counselors in Kentucky.
- Over 90% of schools currently employ a certified school counselor.
- Nearly half of school districts in the state report they do not meet the recommended counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250.
- The state reports its overall school counselor ratio is 1:306 students. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) reports a ratio of 1:328 for Kentucky for the 2023-2024 school year.<sup>309</sup>

<sup>307</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.4416.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55385>

<sup>308</sup> “Counselor Use of Time Report: Summary Report 2022-23.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/Documents/2022%20School%20Counselor%20Use%20of%20Time%20Report.pdf>; “School Counselor Use of Time: Summary Report 2023-24.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2024. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a2SFbFqa\\_YinQXvklk4iVI07aur64soc/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a2SFbFqa_YinQXvklk4iVI07aur64soc/view)

<sup>309</sup> “Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio 2023–2024.” American School Counselor Association. 2024.

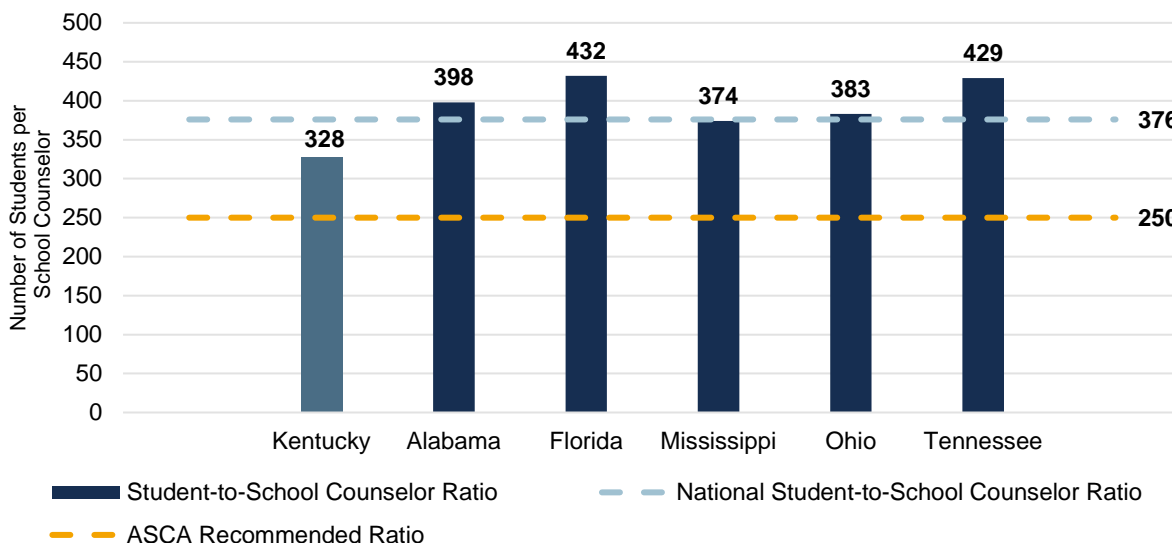
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/f2a319d5-db73-4ca1-a515-2ad2c73ec746/Ratios-2023-24-Alpha.pdf>



Kentucky would need a total of 2,630 counselors (628 additional counselors) to meet the target outlined in KRS 158.4416 and the recommended counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250.<sup>310</sup> Using the annual median wage of \$64,390, Kentucky would have to invest an additional \$40.4 million to meet its target.<sup>311</sup>

When compared nationally, Kentucky’s reported ratio of 1:306 or the ASCA’s reported ratio of 1:328 ranks 13<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> among all states. Going forward, this report will use the numbers provided by the ASCA for the purpose of comparing Kentucky to other states. Figure 108 shows how Kentucky compares nationally and to the comparison states.

**FIGURE 108: STUDENT-TO-COUNSELOR RATIO 2023-2024, COMPARISON STATES**



Source: Retrieved from <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/f2a319d5-db73-4ca1-a515-2ad2c73ec746/Ratios-2023-24-Alpha.pdf>.

Kentucky and Mississippi are the only two comparison states that have a lower student to counselor ratio than the national average. None of the comparison states meet the national recommended ratio. Vermont, New Hampshire, and Hawaii are the only three states in the country that meet the ASCA recommended ratio. Figure 109 shows that Kentucky also fails to meet the recommended ratios for other staff roles that support the whole student such as school psychologists and school social workers.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics: Kentucky.” May 2024. <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/area/2100000>

**FIGURE 109: SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST & SOCIAL WORKER RATIOS BY STATE**

State	School Psychologist Ratio <sup>312</sup>	State Rank	School Social Worker Ratio <sup>313</sup>	State Rank
<b>Recommended Ratio</b>	<b>1:500</b>	---	<b>1:250</b>	---
Kentucky	1:1,448	31 <sup>st</sup>	1:3,400	28 <sup>th</sup>
Alabama	1:106,950	50 <sup>th</sup>	1:8,615	43 <sup>rd</sup>
Florida	1:2,023	43 <sup>rd</sup>	N/A	N/A
Mississippi	1:10,611	49 <sup>th</sup>	1:4,956	33 <sup>rd</sup>
Ohio	1:815	12 <sup>th</sup>	1:4,854	32 <sup>nd</sup>
Tennessee	1:1,837	37 <sup>th</sup>	1:4,428	31 <sup>st</sup>

Source: Data retrieved from the National Association of School Psychologists website <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard> and the School Social Work Association of America website [https://426a18cd-da3e-4ce5-bd09-cd6062cfc6d6.usrfiles.com/ugd/426a18\\_8c6f41ccdc694bdb892f88b3516cd1b5.pdf](https://426a18cd-da3e-4ce5-bd09-cd6062cfc6d6.usrfiles.com/ugd/426a18_8c6f41ccdc694bdb892f88b3516cd1b5.pdf)

Figure 109 shows that no comparison states meet either the School Psychologist or School Social Worker ratios recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists and the School Social Work Association of America. Nationally, only two states meet the recommended student-to-school psychologist ratio, and no states meet the student-to-school social worker ratio.<sup>314 315</sup>

The School-Based Mental Health Professional Use of Time Summary Report presents the use of time data in aggregate for mental-health service providers, then breaks out use of time by Educational Cooperative, school level, and position in school. The most recent report available was from the 2022-2023 school year. Across the state, 82% of districts reported having at least one school-based mental health provider. This coverage varies by Education Cooperative with Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC) representing the most districts with at least one mental health provider at 88% and Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC) representing the fewest districts with at least one mental health provider at 62%.<sup>316</sup>

Within Kentucky, the oversight of school psychologists and school social workers reside within School-based Mental Health in the Safe Schools branch of the Division of Student Success.

**8.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should conduct a statewide landscape analysis of school counseling and school-based mental health to determine where mental health and counseling needs are underserved. This landscape analysis should also assess whether Kentucky should prioritize meeting the nationally recommended ratios for school-based mental health professionals as they do for school counselors.

<sup>312</sup> “State Shortages Data Dashboard.” National Association of School Pathologists. February 2025.

<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>

<sup>313</sup> “The National Census: The Status of School Social Work.” School Social Work Association of America.

[https://426a18cd-da3e-4ce5-bd09-cd6062cfc6d6.usrfiles.com/ugd/426a18\\_8c6f41ccdc694bdb892f88b3516cd1b5.pdf](https://426a18cd-da3e-4ce5-bd09-cd6062cfc6d6.usrfiles.com/ugd/426a18_8c6f41ccdc694bdb892f88b3516cd1b5.pdf)

<sup>314</sup> “State Shortages Data Dashboard.” National Center for School Psychologists. February 2025.

<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>

<sup>315</sup> “The National Census: The Status of School Social Work.” School Social Work Association of America.

[https://426a18cd-da3e-4ce5-bd09-cd6062cfc6d6.usrfiles.com/ugd/426a18\\_8c6f41ccdc694bdb892f88b3516cd1b5.pdf](https://426a18cd-da3e-4ce5-bd09-cd6062cfc6d6.usrfiles.com/ugd/426a18_8c6f41ccdc694bdb892f88b3516cd1b5.pdf)

<sup>316</sup> “School-Based Mental Health Professional Use of Time: Summary Report 2022-23.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/Documents/2022%20School-based%20Mental%20Health%20Provider%20Use%20of%20Time%20Report.pdf>

## Academic Programs

### Individual Learning Plan

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are part of Comprehensive School Counseling. ILPs are defined by 704 KAR 19:002 and mandated by 704 KAR 3:305. The ILP is a Personalized Career and Academic Plan (PCAP), and it lays out an education plan that aligns with the student's postsecondary goals. It focuses on career exploration and the associated postsecondary education and training needs with the goal of helping students to understand their options after high school and beyond.<sup>317</sup>

#### **8.5 Observation: ILPs are not connected to a larger strategy that ensures all students graduate with skills and experiences that will help them be prepared for college and career.**

Kentucky began using ILPs in 2006 with the Career Cruising platform. ILPs were designed for students to explore options and plan out their future and for their teachers, in turn, to use that information to guide student lessons and increase engagement and relevancy. Kentucky was one of the first states nationally to require a PCAP.

By 2018, ILPs were reported to have become more about compliance.<sup>318</sup> As a result, in the 2018-2019 school year, KDE implemented the current ILP and provided districts more autonomy over the development and use of the plans. This new ILP was intertwined with the new graduation requirements and included components such as Extended School Services, early graduation, and a plan to both evaluate the process and make it available to all stakeholders (students, families, and teachers).

Along with the development of the new ILP, KDE developed a framework for schools to assess their ILP programs to ensure they are meeting regulations laid out in 704 KAR 3:305 at the district, school, and individual levels. For example, districts are required to implement an advising and guidance process from grades 6-12 to provide support for the development and implementation of an individual learning plan for each student and to develop a method to evaluate the effectiveness and results of the individual learning plan process that includes specific elements. KDE's framework lays out each action and describes what it looks like at four different performance levels, the exemplary level of development and implementation (4) to little or no development and implementation (1).<sup>319</sup>

As mandated by 704 KAR 3:305 students must have their ILP developed within the first 90 days of 6<sup>th</sup> grade starting in the 2023-24 school year. KDE uses three avenues to gather data on and assess that the ILPs are implemented with fidelity: district assurances, digital readiness survey, and school support visits. District assurances are completed by a district representative each year and commit that all ILP requirements are being met using the self-implementation rubric. The digital readiness survey is used to inform current and future ILP strategies. School support visits are used to ensure full implementation and include reviewing ILP samples for selected students.<sup>320</sup>

In February 2025, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) launched Futuriti with the assistance of KDE and the Kentucky Center for Statistics. Futuriti is a career and college access platform that helps students explore job descriptions and wages, understand careers that are in high demand, understand the full cost and financing options of all different post-secondary education options, explore majors at Kentucky universities, and explore career pathways offered at high schools and technical centers

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<sup>317</sup> "Individual Learning Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. April 16, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/ILP/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>318</sup> Sweeny, Damien. "This school year a transition year for ILPs." Kentucky Teacher. September 20, 2018.

<https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/student-support/school-counselors/2018/09/this-school-year-a-transition-year-for-ilps/>

<sup>319</sup> "Individual Learning Plan Self-Implementation Rubric." Kentucky Department of Education. November 2018.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/ILP/Documents/ILP\\_Self-Implementation\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/ILP/Documents/ILP_Self-Implementation_Framework.pdf)

<sup>320</sup> "Kentucky's Individual Learning Plan (ILP)." Kentucky Department of Education.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/ILP/Documents/Kentucky's\\_New\\_ILP.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/compschcouns/ILP/Documents/Kentucky's_New_ILP.pdf)

throughout Kentucky.<sup>321</sup> However, despite these recent additional requirements and resources for the ILPs, there is no mention of them in KDE's United We Learn Vision or its strategic plan.

Further, in the focus group and interview data, those who work with the ILPs emphasized the need for additional capacity to implement these plans with fidelity through partnering with the Office of Career and Technical Education and including other individuals such as content consultants. While KDE is responsible for assessing implementation of ILPs, the actual implementation is at the school level.

Looking at PCAPs or individualized learning plans (ILPs) from a national level, 44 states (88%) and the District of Columbia require or encourage implementing individualized learning plans for K-12 students.<sup>322</sup> Figure 110 examines Kentucky's PCAP along with the PCAPs in comparison states.

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<sup>321</sup> <https://cpe.ky.gov/news/stories/new-futuriti-website.html>

<sup>322</sup> Solberg, V. Scott; Martin, Judith; Larson, Mindy; Nichos, Kathryn; Booth, Heidi; Lillis, Jennifer; Costa, Leo. "Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans Through the Lifespan: A Revised and Updated "ILP HOW TO GUIDE 2.0." National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Institute for Education Leadership. <https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Promoting-Quality-Individualized-Learning-Plans-Throughout-the-Lifespan-Guide-2.0.pdf>

FIGURE 110: PCAPs BY COMPARISON STATE

States	Have PCAP?	PCAP Name	PCAP Description
Kentucky	Yes	Individual Learning Plan	Each student develops their ILP within the first 90 days of sixth grade. ILPs are focused on career exploration and related to postsecondary education and training needs. These plans take students through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade.
Alabama	Yes	Alabama Career Development Model	Provides all students enrolled in Grades K-12 the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to be college and career ready and prepared to enter postsecondary education or the workforce. It includes three levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Awareness: Elementary Grades</li> <li>• Career Exploration: Middle Grades</li> <li>• Career Preparation: High School</li> </ul> During Career Exploration, students develop personal education plans of study that will follow them each year.
Florida	No		
Mississippi	Yes	Individual Success Plan (ISP)	Personalized plan for all students grade 7-12. Selected activities guide students in setting career and academic goals and is a framework for students to see the connections between school coursework and activities in relation to their future career and college goals.
Ohio	Yes	Student Success Plan (SSP)	Part of Ohio’s Career Connections Framework. Career Connections provides a framework by which students develop a vision and realistic plan for their futures. It includes three parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Awareness: Elementary Grades</li> <li>• Career Exploration: Middle Grades, this is when students develop their Student Success Plan</li> <li>• Career Planning: High School</li> </ul>
Tennessee	Yes	High School and Beyond Plan	Student plan that begins in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade and extends two years beyond high school. Document that outlines and connects the students’ post-high school goals to the courses or training aligned with their student readiness and career pathways interests and equips the students with the skills necessary to meet these goals.

Source: Retrieved from <https://www.ccd-center.org/state-resources> and State Education Department Websites.

As seen in Figure 110, Florida is the only comparison state that does not have a PCAP. All remaining comparison states have a PCAP that starts during or before middle school and goes through at least high school.

**8.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should better promote current ILP tools, such as the ILP Playbooks and Futuriti, to encourage LEAs to more effectively implement the ILP with fidelity.

Some steps KDE can take include:

- Incorporating OCTE in the ILP process as a way to promote CTE pathways and use them to their fullest extent.
- Develop ILP-focused professional learning to not only increase district and school level capacity in aiding students in their ILP development, but also to help all stakeholders understand the why behind ILPs.

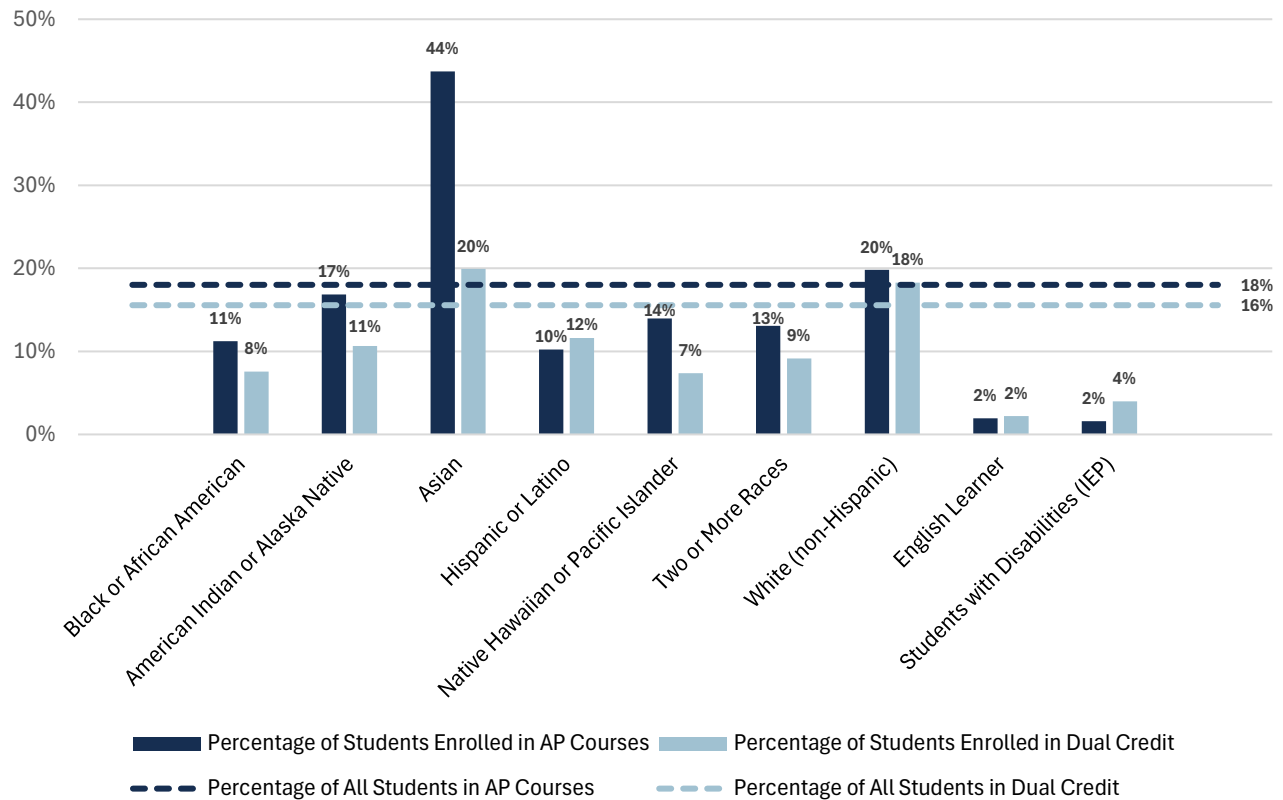
### Advanced Coursework

Kentucky schools offer students opportunities to learn at an accelerated pace and/or earn college credit before they graduate. These opportunities include Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, Early Graduation Program, International Baccalaureate, Performance-Based Credit, Cambridge Advanced International, and Advanced Coursework in middle school.<sup>323</sup>

#### 8.6 Finding: There are demographic disparities in high-school-student participation in advanced coursework.

Figure 111 shows Kentucky’s enrollment data in Advanced Placement courses and Dual Credit across race, English learners, and students with disabilities.

FIGURE 111: ENROLLMENT IN ADVANCED COURSEWORK BY DEMOGRAPHIC



Source: Data derived from KDE’s Report Card Dashboard for Advanced Coursework.

Sixteen percent of Kentucky high school students are enrolled in Dual Credit and 18% are enrolled in Advanced Placement courses. Asian students and white students participate in advanced coursework opportunities at a higher rate than their peers. Black or African American students, Hispanic or Latino

<sup>323</sup> “Advanced Coursework.” Kentucky Department of Education. August 27, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/AL/Pages/default.aspx>

Students, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students have the lowest participation rates across all race/ethnicity categories.

English Learners and students with disabilities have exceptionally low participation rates, with only two percent to four percent of these subgroups enrolled in advanced coursework opportunities. For reference, the national AP participation rate for English Learners is seven percent.<sup>324</sup> And, while students with disabilities account for 15% of public-school students nationally, they only make up 2% of AP enrollments.<sup>325</sup>

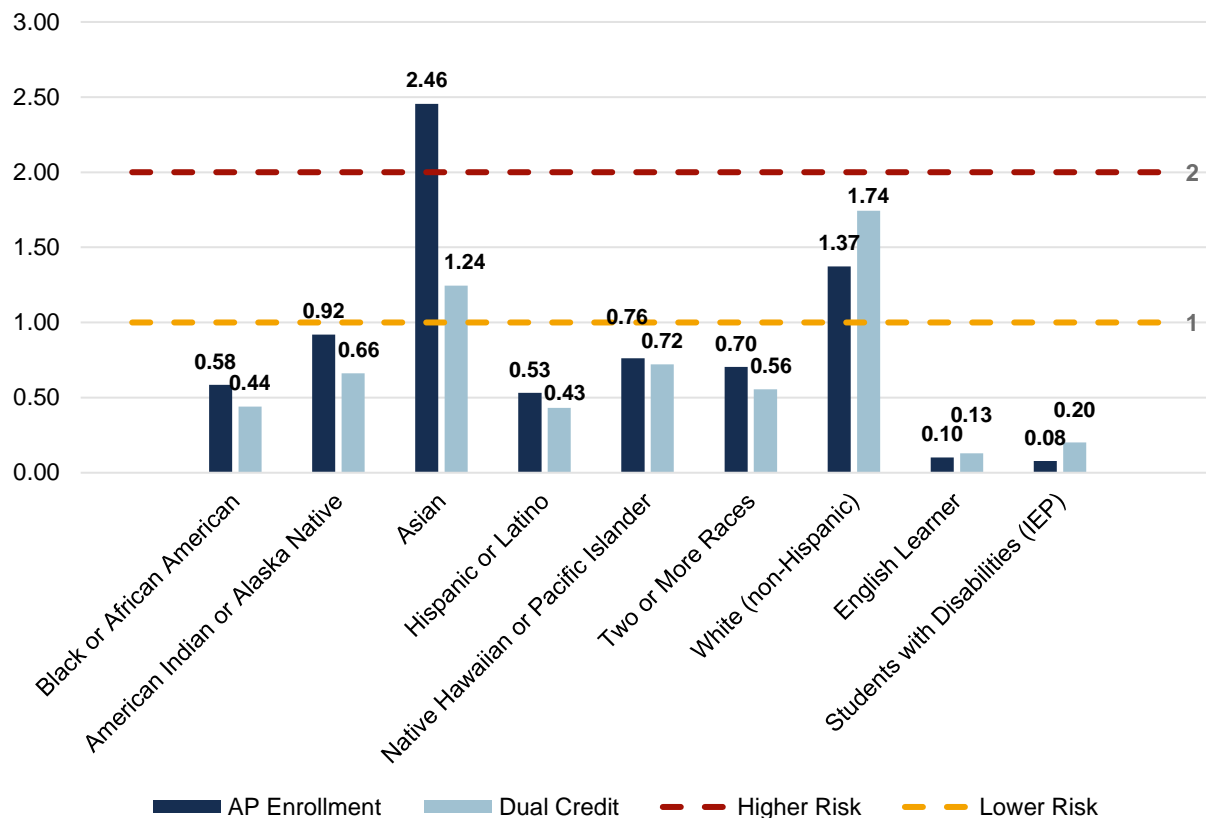
Figure 113 uses risk ratios to illustrate that certain groups are more likely to be overrepresented or underrepresented in advanced coursework. These ratios are calculated using the following formula:

**FIGURE 112: RISK RATIOS FOR ADVANCED COURSEWORK ENROLLMENT**

$$\frac{\text{Students from subgroup enrolled in advanced courses}}{\text{Students from that subgroup}} \div \frac{\text{Students enrolled in advanced courses excluding the same subgroup}}{\text{Students excluding that subgroup}}$$

A risk ratio of 1.0 means there is no association between a student’s demographic group and their likelihood of being enrolled in advanced coursework. A risk ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a risk of overrepresentation in advanced coursework, while a risk ratio of less than 1.0 indicates possible underrepresentation.

**FIGURE 113: RISK RATIOS FOR ADVANCED COURSEWORK ENROLLMENT**



Source: Data derived from KDE’s Report Card Dashboard for Advanced Coursework.

<sup>324</sup> “Ensuring Meaningful Participation in Advanced Coursework and Specialized Programs for Students who are English Learners.” United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. June 2023. <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/ocr-factsheet-ap-participation-el-33821.pdf>

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.



Asian and white students are the demographic groups most likely to be overrepresented in advanced coursework. Asian students have 2.46 times the likelihood of being enrolled in AP courses as all students. Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino students are the most likely racial subgroups to be underrepresented in advanced coursework. Black or African American students are 0.58 times as likely to be enrolled in AP courses and 0.44 times as likely to be enrolled in Dual Credit as all students. English Learners and Students with disabilities see the greatest underrepresentation in advanced coursework opportunities.

One barrier to accessing advanced placement courses may be the associated cost.

- While funding is not sufficient to pay the costs of all AP exams, HB6 (2024) allocated \$1,000,000 in each fiscal year to pay the cost of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams for those students who meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price meals, and \$2,600,000 in each fiscal year to pay the cost of Advanced Placement exams for students on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- 702 KAR 3:220 states that districts must waive AP or IB examination fees for any student who qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

KDE covers the cost for the majority of these exams. Standard-fee students pay \$25 per exam and fee-reduced students may take the exam for free. All students are eligible to take AP computer science examinations for free.

**8.6.a Recommendation: KDE should identify the root cause of enrollment discrepancies and implement strategies to promote student access to advanced coursework statewide.**

One way KDE could encourage enrollment from underrepresented groups could be to assess how schools and districts communicate these opportunities to students to understand if KDE should strengthen recruitment strategies for certain groups in advanced and specialized academics. KDE should encourage school leaders to provide exposure programs and host AP and Dual Credit information sessions.

## Targeted Interventions & Data Tools

### Overview

Targeted interventions are “planned, carefully considered interventions that occur when students do not meet grade level expectations” necessary for academic progress.<sup>326</sup> Districts receive support for implementing targeted interventions from different KDE staff across multiple offices and divisions. Targeted interventions for students can be provided during the school day as part of the required KyMTSS.<sup>327</sup> Targeted Transitional Interventions are assigned to students that do not meet benchmarks on state assessments, specifically the ACT.<sup>328</sup> Both types of targeted interventions are managed by the KyMTSS Coordinator at KDE in the Division of Program Standards within the Office of Teaching and Learning. A third type of targeted intervention can be provided for students outside of the school day as part of Extended School Services (ESS) which is managed by the Office of Special Education and Early Learning.

### Data Tools

KDE has Early Warning, Insights, and Persistence to Graduation Tools which are supported by Program Consultants in the Student Engagement and Support Branch. These tools were designed to aid in the goal of equipping every student to pursue a successful future. All three of these tools operate within Infinite Campus and are available to districts and schools free of charge.

- The **Early Warning System** assesses students’ risk of dropping out by comparing each student’s current data points (e.g., attendance, behavior, grades, enrollment history, demographics, guardian involvement) with those from previous students at the same school who have dropped out. KDE’s

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<sup>326</sup> “Targeted Interventions.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 5, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/int/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

website includes resources on how to use the tool along with resources on how to use the data to prevent students from dropping out.

- The **Insights** tool allows districts and schools to visualize the data on Early Warning indicators while filtering by subgroup.
- The **Persistence to Graduation Report** uses data on attendance, behavior, course performance, and demographics to assign every student a risk score.<sup>329</sup>

Within Infinite Campus different individuals in schools and districts have different levels of permission to access this data depending on their role.

## SCHOOL SAFETY

### *Statewide Laws & Regulations*

**Kentucky has fewer statutes related to behavioral and mental health than the national average.**

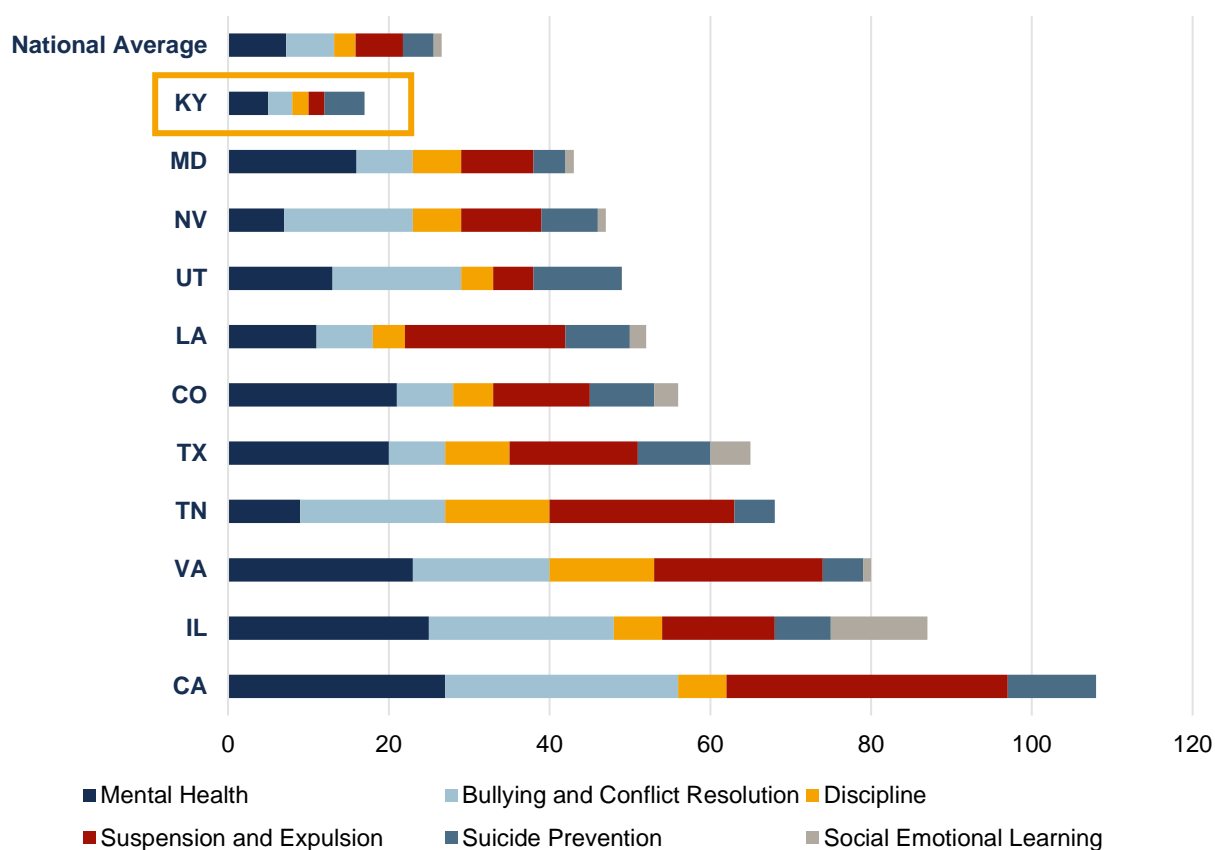
The team identified 40 statutes and regulations governing work related to Student Support and School Safety. Of the 40 statutes and regulations shaping this work, 14 require reporting. Based on the team's analysis, it is one of the areas under KDE's purview with the greatest volume of state-required reporting and overall number of state statutes and regulations guiding their work. This is particularly true for the Division of Safe Schools, whose work includes providing guidance and monitoring related to mental and behavioral health supports to schools and students—addressing mental health, bullying, discipline, suspension and expulsion, suicide prevention, and social emotional learning.

While within KDE, School Safety sees some of the largest numbers of statutes and regulations governing its work, data from the Education Commission of the States displayed in Figure 114 show that Kentucky has fewer statutes governing this work than the national average. Figure 114 shows how Kentucky compared to the national average and to the ten states with the most statutes that focus on Safe Schools topic areas.

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<sup>329</sup> "Early Warning, Insights and Persistence to Graduation Data Tools." Kentucky Department of Education. April 2, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/educational/int/Pages/EarlyWarningAndPersistenceToGraduation.aspx>

FIGURE 114: STATES WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF STATUTES FOCUSED ON SAFE SCHOOLS TOPIC AREAS (2024)



Source: Data derived from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) State Policy Database.

In 2024, Kentucky had a total of 17 state statutes, ranking it 27<sup>th</sup> among all states for number of statutes informing Safe Schools topic areas. The topic areas that are most common for Kentucky, with five statutes each, are Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Nationally, the most common topics for state statutes within the area of Safe Schools are Mental Health, Bullying and Conflict Resolution, and Suspension and Expulsion. California had the most statutes for 2024 with 108. Tennessee is the only comparison state within the top ten states, with 56 statutes.

## Overview

All supports and programs housed under KDE’s Safe Schools are informed by at least one statute as laid out in the Statewide Laws and Regulations included in Appendix B: Relevant Laws & Regulations Reviewed. While these supports and programs represent a range of topics, the goal of the branch is to provide resources on school safety to families, schools, districts, and other stakeholders. These resources include bullying prevention training, suicide prevention training, assistance with children experiencing bullying, and guidance on Missing Children in Kentucky.<sup>330</sup> As part of the School Safety and Resiliency Act, KRS 158.442 and KRS 158.444 require KDE to collaborate with the Kentucky Center for School Safety to provide training and professional development to school districts. It also provides resources, training, and assistance to school districts throughout the year. Figure 115 shows the topics included under Safe Schools along with a brief overview of some resources they provide.

<sup>330</sup> “Safe Schools.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 8, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/default.aspx>

FIGURE 115: SAFE SCHOOLS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Safe Schools Component	Information & Resources Provided
<b>Bullying &amp; Harassment</b>	<p>Provides information to assist students, families, educators, and community members on the topic of bullying and identifying solutions. When stakeholders experience an issue, they can access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource developed by KDE:</li> <li>• How to Prevent Bullying for schools and districts</li> <li>• How to Get Help for parents and guardians</li> <li>• Bullying FAQs</li> <li>• Bullying Statistics</li> <li>• Training/Assistance request form where stakeholders can request:</li> <li>• To speak with a consultant</li> <li>• Additional information on PBIS/ISF</li> </ul> <p>Stakeholders can request specific training (trainings offered are: Compassion and Resilience, Olweus Bullying Prevention, PBIS, SEL trainings for district/school staff, Sources of Strength, Trauma Informed Practices, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Early Warning Tool/Insights Training, Chronic Absenteeism, Restorative Practices, Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness, Catch My Breath Training) or another training not listed and gain access to additional State and Federal Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe Schools Tipline operated by the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security</li> <li>• S.T.O.P.! Safety Tipline</li> <li>• Stop Bullying, U.S. Department of Education</li> <li>• Suicide Prevention and Awareness</li> <li>• Bullying Prevention Training Course</li> <li>• Kentucky Youth Bullying Taskforce Report<sup>331</sup></li> </ul>
<b>District and Public School Building Emergency Management Plans (EMPs)</b>	<p>To remain compliant with KRS 158.162, all public-school buildings must review their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) annually and make the necessary updates. All superintendents must verify that all public-school buildings in their district are in compliance.</p> <p>KDE provides the following resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EMP FAQs</li> <li>• Continuous Improvement Platform User Manual</li> <li>• Sample EMP</li> <li>• U.S. ED/FEMA: Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans</li> <li>• Link to the Kentucky Center for School Safety Emergency Procedure Resources<sup>332</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence-based Prevention &amp; Cessation Materials</b>	<p>HB 142 (2024) affects the way Kentucky's public schools implement tobacco-free campus policies. To help school districts remain compliant,</p>

<sup>331</sup> "Bullying and Harassment." Kentucky Department of Education. March 4, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Bullying.aspx>

<sup>332</sup> "District and Public School Building Emergency Management Plans." Kentucky Department of Education. February 20, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/District%20and%20Public%20School%20Building%20Emergency%20Management%20Plans.aspx>

Safe Schools Component	Information & Resources Provided
	this page provides resources and recommendations for requirements for the beginning of the school year and throughout the school year. <sup>333</sup>
Human Trafficking	Provides Human Trafficking posters with the National Human Trafficking Reporting Hotline that schools can display to be compliant with KRS 156.095. It also provides additional resources on identifying and preventing human trafficking. <sup>334</sup>
Juvenile Justice Reform & Education	Walks through SB 200 (2014)'s overhaul of Kentucky's juvenile justice system and creation of new obligations for numerous stakeholders including KDE, school resource officers, school security officers, and schools. The resource provided related to this topic is SB 200 FAQs. <sup>335</sup>
Missing Children	Describes the flagging process in Infinite Campus for missing students along with the reporting requirements of schools and school personnel with information regarding missing students per KRS 156.495 and KRS 158.032. Resources include Missing Children FAQs and Missing Child Process and Procedures to help schools and districts prepare. <sup>336</sup>
PBIS	<p>Provides a brief overview of PBIS and resources schools can access if they are interested in implementing PBIS or already are implementing it and need additional assistance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly describes PBIS and links to the official PBIS website.</li> <li>• Includes the link for schools and districts to request assistance and/or training described in bullying and harassment.</li> <li>• Includes link to KDE's PBIS training document.</li> <li>• Promotes PBIS fidelity and celebrates schools that achieved recognition.</li> <li>• Additional resources</li> <li>• Links to Educational Cooperative Partners.<sup>337</sup></li> </ul>
Safe Schools Data Collection & Reporting	<p>Schools are required to provide data on discipline events, resolutions, reporting timeline, and requirements in Infinite Campus.</p> <p>KDE provides resources on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data standards and guidance documents</li> <li>• Training around data entry, data standards, and end of year processes</li> <li>• School Report Card</li> </ul> <p>KDE also shares the most recent Safe School Annual Statistical Reports.<sup>338</sup></p>

<sup>333</sup> "Evidence-based Prevention and Cessation Materials." Kentucky Department of Education. August 31, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Evidence-based-Prevention-and-Cessation-Materials.aspx>

<sup>334</sup> "Human Trafficking." Kentucky Department of Education. February 14, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Human-Trafficking.aspx>

<sup>335</sup> "Juvenile Justice Reform and Education." Kentucky Department of Education. August 2, 2022. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Senate%20Bill%20200.aspx>

<sup>336</sup> "Missing Children." Kentucky Department of Education. October 14, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Missing-Children.aspx>

<sup>337</sup> "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)." Kentucky Department of Education. February 3, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Positive-Behavior-in-Schools-\(PBIS\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Positive-Behavior-in-Schools-(PBIS).aspx)

<sup>338</sup> "Safe Schools Data Collection and Reporting." Kentucky Department of Education. February 24, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Safe-Schools-Data-Collection-and-Reporting.aspx>

Safe Schools Component	Information & Resources Provided
<p><b>School Crisis &amp; Emergency Response/ Recovery</b></p>	<p>Includes resources to help schools and districts recover from a crisis or emergency.</p> <p>KDE resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing a continuum of tiered behavioral health supports for stakeholders</li> <li>• Trauma-informed toolkit</li> <li>• Resources for dealing with traumatic events in the community</li> <li>• Guidance on grief and loss</li> </ul> <p>KDE also includes relevant state and national resources.<sup>339</sup></p>
<p><b>School Safety &amp; Resiliency Act</b></p>	<p>Discusses the School Safety and Resiliency Act (SB1 2019) and how it impacts statutes related to school safety. Topics KDE discussed on its website include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-informed practices</li> <li>• School Safety Coordinator</li> <li>• School Safety Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Terroristic Threatening, 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree</li> <li>• Active Shooter Training</li> <li>• Handle with Care Notification System</li> <li>• Threat Assessment Resources<sup>340</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>School-based Mental Health</b></p>	<p>Describes school-based mental health and its importance. Includes the following resources on addressing mental health in schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health/Social-Emotional-Behavioral Well-Being</li> <li>• Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (MHTTC)</li> <li>• Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities</li> </ul> <p>It also includes the request for assistance and/or training discussed in Bullying and Harassment.<sup>341</sup></p>
<p><b>Social, Emotional, &amp; Behavioral Learning/ Health</b></p>	<p>Includes many resources on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of SEL</li> <li>• How schools can get started</li> <li>• Building staff and organizational social emotional skills and supports</li> <li>• Resources for promoting equity</li> <li>• Resources to promote collaborating with students</li> <li>• Additional free activity banks and evidence-based curricula</li> <li>• Program and Intervention Clearinghouse sites</li> <li>• KDE’s request for assistance and/or training described in Bullying and Harassment</li> </ul>

<sup>339</sup> “School Crisis and Emergency Response/Recovery.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 16, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/School-Crisis-and-Emergency-Response-Resources.aspx>

<sup>340</sup> “School Safety and Resiliency Act.” Kentucky Department of Education. October 30, 2024. [https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/School-Safety-and-Resiliency-Act-\(Senate-Bill,-2019\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/School-Safety-and-Resiliency-Act-(Senate-Bill,-2019).aspx)

<sup>341</sup> “School-based Mental Health.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 8, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/School-based-Mental-Health.aspx>

Safe Schools Component	Information & Resources Provided
	<p>Additional resources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources on school mental health, trauma-informed practices, and crisis recovery</li> <li>Resources on universal screening</li> <li>Additional trainings and programs that are available for free through KDE (Youth Mental Health First Aid, Sources of Strength, PBIS, and You're Not Alone).<sup>342</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Student Discipline Guidelines &amp; Model Policies</b></p>	<p>KDE is required by KRS 158.148(2)(c) to publish and distribute Student Discipline Guidelines and model policies.</p> <p>This page also describes that KDE has completed the work required by SB 2 (2024), which required KDE to collaborate with the Center for School Safety to develop interagency agreements between local school districts and other local public agencies.</p> <p>This page also includes request for assistance and/or training detailed in bullying and harassment.<sup>343</sup></p>
<p><b>Suicide Prevention &amp; Awareness</b></p>	<p>Provides information on KRS 156.095, which requires all students in middle and high school to receive suicide prevention information at the start of each semester. It also states the requirement for staff to receive training on suicide prevention.<sup>344</sup></p>
<p><b>Supporting LGBTQI Plus Students</b></p>	<p>KDE is prohibited from providing guidance related to use of requested names and pronouns (SB 150 [2023]).</p> <p>KDE provides internal and external resources along with relevant crisis hotlines on its webpage.<sup>345</sup></p>
<p><b>Trauma-Informed Practices</b></p>	<p>To comply with KRS 158.4416, local boards of education must develop a plan for implementing a trauma-informed approach in schools each year. KDE lays out what this plan must include and provides a template for boards of education to submit their plans.</p> <p>KRS 158.4416 also requires KDE to have a toolkit that includes guidance, strategies, behavioral interventions, practices, and techniques to assist school districts in developing these trauma-informed approaches. KDE provides the following tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding Trauma and Traumatic Stress</li> <li>What is a Trauma-Informed School?</li> <li>Trauma-Informed Teams</li> <li>Trauma-Informed Active Shooter Drills</li> <li>Handle with Care</li> <li>Trauma-Informed Lockdown Drills</li> </ul>

<sup>342</sup> "Social, Emotional and Behavioral Learning/Health." Kentucky Department of Education. March 24, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Social,-Emotional-and-Behavioral-Learning-Health.aspx>

<sup>343</sup> "Student Discipline Guidelines and Model Policies." Kentucky Department of Education. November 12, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Student-Discipline-Guidelines-and-Model-Policy.aspx>

<sup>344</sup> "Suicide Prevention and Awareness." Kentucky Department of Education. January 7, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Suicide-Prevention-and-Awareness.aspx>

<sup>345</sup> "Supporting LGBTQI Plus Students." Kentucky Department of Education. April 21, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Supporting-LGBTQ%20Plus%20Students.aspx>



Safe Schools Component	Information & Resources Provided
<b>Youth Substance Use &amp; Vaping Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-Informed Discipline Response and Behavior System<sup>346</sup></li> </ul> <p>KDE provides resources on prevention strategies, school-wide campaign materials, evidence-based curriculum and information about legislation to be enacted in Kentucky Schools in relation to youth substance use and vaping.</p> <p>KDE includes information and data on the growing problem of substance use in schools. It walks through guidance provided on HB 142 in regards to nicotine and vaping in schools.</p> <p>In compliance with HB 3 (2018), KDE published its Drug Use Curriculum Resource Guide.</p> <p>KDE also shares district resources, additional resources that are currently available and coming soon, and the request for assistance and/or training discussed in Bullying and Harassment.<sup>347</sup></p>

Source: Derived from the Kentucky Department of Education website.

## Resources and Tracking

**8.7 Observation:** The Safe Schools Branch provides many resources, but individuals within the branch are unsure of stakeholder awareness or use of these resources. The branch also does not do enough to formally track whether stakeholders are accessing these resources.

The Safe and Supportive Schools branch offers a number of trainings and resources to help schools and districts implement promising practices (e.g. PBIS) and comply with state regulations (e.g. implementing a trauma-informed approach). While individuals within or associated with the branch feel they offer a comprehensive array of rich resources, they do not always feel that the intended stakeholders are aware of all the supports provided. As heard in focus groups, however, the Safe Schools branch does not have a formal process to track the use of resources. The branch is not currently uniformly tracking attendance at or gathering feedback on training sessions related to these topics. As a result, areas in the other branch within the Student Success Division—Student Engagement and Support—indicated they track all trainings offered and audiences reached.

**8.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop a standardized process for tracking usage of training, presentations, or other information sharing events from the Safe Schools Branch.

This includes tracking the number of events, attendance, and gathering feedback from attendees to inform future events and offerings.

## Resource Gap

**8.8 Observation:** KDE does not appear to have resources related to sexual assault prevention and raising awareness in schools.

According to the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey for High School students, 11% of students reported they were physically forced to have non-consensual sexual intercourse, 14% of students who had been in a relationship in the last year reported experiencing sexual dating violence at least once in that time, and nine percent of students who had been in a relationship in the last year reported experiencing physical dating

<sup>346</sup> "Trauma-Informed Practices." Kentucky Department of Education. January 7, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Trauma-Informed-Care.aspx>

<sup>347</sup> "Youth Substance Use and Vaping Resources." Kentucky Department of Education. December 16, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Youth-Substance-Use-and-Vaping-Resources.aspx>

violence at least once in that time.<sup>348</sup> Despite these numbers, the only resource for sexual violence on the KDE website is [Recommendations for Educational Institutions on Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Dating Violence: Issued by the Task Force on Sexual Violence in Education](#). This federal document provides vague guidance and federal resources for preventing and responding to sexual and dating violence. There are no Kentucky-specific resources provided anywhere on KDE's website.

The Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs (KASAP) has developed evidence-based primary prevention programs that target middle school, high school, and the community.<sup>349</sup> The program for Middle Schools, "It's My Space," is a prevention program that teaches students about personal boundaries.<sup>350</sup> The program for High Schools, "Green Dot," "teaches participants safe ways to intervene in situations of bullying, dating violence, and sexual harassment and assault." While KASAP does not explicitly state how many schools it operates either of these programs in, it lays out its Green Dot 2040 Plan, which involves implementing the program in 55 schools between 2022 and 2028, adding an additional 100 schools between 2028 and 2034, and operating in all 255 high schools by 2040.<sup>351</sup> Despite these programs occurring in schools, there is no reference to KDE on the KASAP website and there is no reference to KASAP on KDE's website.

One way states have mandated child sexual abuse prevention is through introducing and passing Erin's Law, which "requires that all public schools in the state implement a prevention-oriented child abuse program which teaches: students in grade preK-12 age appropriate techniques to recognize child abuse and tell a trusted adult; school personnel about child abuse; and parents and guardians the warning signs of child sexual abuse, plus needed assistance, referral or resource information to support sexually abused children and their families." Nationally, 38 states have passed Erin's Law, including Alabama, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee. Florida and Kentucky are the only comparison states that have not passed the law.<sup>352</sup> In 2022, Erin's Law was introduced as HB 270 but failed to become a law.<sup>353</sup>

**8.8.a Recommendation: KDE should provide resources on how best to prevent, respond to, and support victims of sexual violence for relevant stakeholders including students, school personnel, and families in the Commonwealth.**

KDE could look into formally partnering with KASAP to provide these resources.

### **Commissioner's Student Advisory Council**

**8.9 Observation: Several recommendations in the 2023 report from the Commissioner's Student Advisory Council have not been addressed or discussed since.**

The Commissioner's Student Advisory Council advises the Commissioner on issues relevant to high school students. This Council frequently covers topics related to safe schools in their meetings including, vaping and substance use in schools, the Annual Safe Schools Statistical Report, and Human Trafficking. In addition to these topics discussed in recent meetings, the Council also published a report in January 2023, [A Focus on School Safety](#).<sup>354</sup> This report, which began on May 31, 2022, details steps that schools, districts, and the state can take before an incident to minimize the chance of an event, during an incident to ensure the best response, and after an event to support the community impacted. It lays out nine recommendations

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<sup>348</sup> "2023 Youth Behavior Survey Results." Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/WSCC/data/Documents/2023%20High%20School%20Summary%20Tables.pdf>

<sup>349</sup> "Prevention." Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs. <https://www.kasap.org/prevention/>

<sup>350</sup> "It's My Space." Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs. <https://www.kasap.org/itsmyspace/>

<sup>351</sup> "Green Dot for High School." Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs. <https://www.kasap.org/green-dot-highschool/>

<sup>352</sup> "What is Erin's Law?" Erin's Law. <https://www.erinslaw.org/erins-law/>

<sup>353</sup> "House Bill 270." Kentucky General Assembly. 2022. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/22rs/hb270.html>

<sup>354</sup> "Commissioner's Student Advisory Council." Kentucky Department of Education. April 22, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Next-Generation-Student-Advisory-Council-.aspx>

to minimize or prevent school violence incidents.<sup>355</sup> These recommendations and any action around them are discussed in Figure 116.

**FIGURE 116: STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL A FOCUS ON SCHOOL SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS & FOLLOW-UP**

Recommendation	Follow-up
<p><b>Ensure awareness of the STOP tipline</b></p>	<p><b>Addressed</b></p> <p>In the April 2023 meeting the Executive Director of Kentucky Center for School Safety suggested the creation of an app for the tipline along with a pamphlet.<sup>356</sup> Based on the KCSS website, it appears that a poster does exist, but an app does not. They do, however, have a texting option for the tipline.<sup>357</sup></p>
<p><b>Improve the rate of intervention in concerning behaviors</b></p>	<p><b>Not discussed again in meetings and does not appear to have formal department follow-up.</b></p>
<p><b>Promote and support gun legislation that would make it harder for an active shooter to occur in the first place</b></p>	<p><b>Not discussed again in meetings and does not appear to have formal department follow-up.</b></p>
<p><b>Improve the quality of active assailant drills and enforce existing requirements</b></p>	<p><b>Not discussed again in meetings and does not appear to have formal department follow-up.</b></p> <p>KRS 158.162 requires 2 lockdown drills each year. KDE's Lockdown Drills Guide and Resources was published in April 2021.</p>
<p><b>Improve training for staff, school resource officers, and all first responders to ensure quick response times</b></p>	<p><b>Not discussed again in meetings and does not appear to have formal department follow-up.</b></p> <p>KRS 156.095 was amended by HB 48 (2025) to require school district employees to have one hour of active shooter training every four years. New hires must complete the training within 12 months of the initial hire date.</p>
<p><b>Create a system to notify students and parents of an event</b></p>	<p><b>Addressed</b></p> <p>Handle With Care notification system described in the School Safety and Resiliency Act. School districts collaborate with law enforcement. Kentucky State Police have implemented the notification system statewide.<sup>358</sup></p>
<p><b>Provide access to therapy sessions and other mental health professionals</b></p>	<p><b>Addressed</b></p> <p>Per KRS 158.4416, which was amended in 2024, districts' trauma-informed education plans must include providing services and programs designed to reduce the negative impact of trauma.</p>

<sup>355</sup> "A Focus on School Safety." Kentucky Department of Education. January 2023. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Documents/Commissioner%27s%20Student%20Council/A%20Focus%20on%20School%20Safety.pdf>

<sup>356</sup> "Commissioner's Student Advisory Council Summary." Kentucky Department of Education. April 11, 2023. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Documents/Commissioner%27s%20Student%20Council/2023April11%20Commissioner%27s%20Student%20Advisory%20Council%20Summary.pdf>

<sup>357</sup> "Hotlines." Kentucky Center for School Safety. <https://kycss.org/hotlines/>

<sup>358</sup> "School Safety and Resiliency Act." Kentucky Department of Education. October 30, 2024. [https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/School-Safety-and-Resiliency-Act-\(Senate-Bill,-2019\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/School-Safety-and-Resiliency-Act-(Senate-Bill,-2019).aspx)

Recommendation	Follow-up
Host town-hall style meetings for the community	Unclear – supposed to be in direct response to an event.
Repair and rebuild the school building	Unclear – supposed to be in direct response to an event.

Source: Derived from the Kentucky Department of Education website, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council summaries, and the Kentucky Center for School Safety website.

Figure 116 shows that several recommendations the Student Advisory Council put forward in their A Focus on School Safety report were addressed after the report was published, but that a number of them were not addressed either in a council meeting or in associated actions taken by KDE.

**8.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should encourage the Student Advisory Council to evaluate progress on recommendations in the A Focus on School Safety report and, if necessary, make additional recommendations for KDE to consider in School Safety.

## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

### Overview

KDE defines PBIS as an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students’ behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health.<sup>359</sup> It is required per 704 KAR 7:160 that all school personnel be trained annually in PBIS. KDE provides this training to districts through two primary options: districts can (1) search for available training options through the Professional Learning Bulletin Board (PLBB) or (2) submit a training request to KDE’s PBIS Consultants in the Safe and Supportive Schools Branch of the Division of Student Success.<sup>360</sup> The PBIS trainings offered by KDE address a variety of topics: PBIS as part of a Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS), Restorative Practices (RP), Mental Health Integration through the Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF), data collection tools, and Tiers I, II, and III structures and systems. Additional information on district requirements for implementing Kentucky’s MTSS (KyMTSS) is found in Academic Standards & Model Curriculum Framework chapter.

### Fidelity of Implementation and Applying for Recognition

**8.10 Observation:** Fewer than 15% of all schools have been recognized for implementing PBIS with fidelity.

When implemented with fidelity, PBIS improves the overall school climate along with students’ social emotional competency and academic success.<sup>361</sup> While KDE staff did not report knowing exactly how many schools implement PBIS statewide, it estimates 20-25% of schools on average implement it with fidelity.

Fidelity checks are part of the implementation process for all schools. Fidelity checks are completed by the district locally. KDE provides data collection tools through PBISApps.<sup>362</sup> It is not clear whether districts have free access to this tool, if there are associated costs, or if KDE reviews this data for all schools beyond the districts that opt to apply for recognition.

Schools can opt to apply to be recognized by KDE for implementing PBIS with fidelity.

<sup>359</sup> “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).” Kentucky Department of Education. February 3, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Positive-Behavior-in-Schools-\(PBIS\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Positive-Behavior-in-Schools-(PBIS).aspx)

<sup>360</sup> “KDE PBIS/ISF Trainings.” Kentucky Department of Education. Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Division of Student Success. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Documents/KDE%20PBIS%20Trainings.pdf>

<sup>361</sup> James AG, Noltemeyer A, Ritchie R, Palmer K. “Longitudinal disciplinary and achievement outcomes associated with school-wide PBIS implementation level.” *Psychol Schs*. 2019; 56: 1512–1521. August 30, 2019.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pits.22282>; “Why Implement PBIS?” Center on PBIS. 2025. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/why-implement-pbis>

<sup>362</sup> “KDE PBIS/ISF Trainings.” Kentucky Department of Education. Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Division of Student Success. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Documents/KDE%20PBIS%20Trainings.pdf>

The criteria all schools must meet for recognition incorporates PBIS resources—such as the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI), the Self-Assessment Survey, and the School Climate Survey—and additional action items and data checks. Since the criteria required to be recognized incorporates PBIS resources, specifically the TFI, KDE’s fidelity recognitions align with the PBIS fidelity definition. KDE evaluates evidence submitted by school-based applicants against the criteria for the *bronze*, *silver*, or *gold* levels. The primary difference between each level of recognition is that bronze recognition involves implementation at Tier I, which involves systems, data and practices supporting everyone across all settings.<sup>363</sup> Silver recognition goes to schools that are implementing Tier II supports as well, which include practices and systems that enable targeted interventions for students who are not served by Tier I supports alone.<sup>364</sup> And schools that receive gold recognition are implementing Tier III supports as well, which involves providing more intensive and individualized support to students who do not connect with the Tier I and II supports.<sup>365</sup>

In the 2023-2024 school year, 218 schools applied for recognition and KDE recognized all of them at one of the respective levels.

- In all, 218 schools from 23 districts applied and all were recognized. These represent 13% of districts and just under 15% of schools in the state.
- Of the schools who applied and were recognized, 37% received gold level recognition, 37% received silver, and 26% received bronze.
  - Silver and Gold applications are verified by a KDE PBIS consultant.

The list of schools and districts recognized is published on KDE’s website.

**8.10.a Recommendation: KDE should make efforts to support and help increase the number of schools and districts implementing a PBIS framework with fidelity across the state.**

Ways that KDE can do this include:

- Communicating with schools and districts to determine why schools do not currently elect to implement PBIS; to understand how the process went, for schools that did implement PBIS; and determine the best practices utilized by schools and districts that are implementing PBIS with fidelity at the gold level.
- Ensuring schools and districts know about the training and resources provided by the state for PBIS implementation.
- Partnering with the MTSS Coordinators at each Educational Cooperative to increase PBIS implementation regionally and ensure it is being implemented with fidelity.
- Creating additional incentives for schools to implement PBIS with fidelity and increase awareness of these new and existing incentives.
- Collecting evidence of PBIS implementation as part of the annual MTSS reporting requirements.

## School Discipline

The two statutes that dictate reporting on school discipline are KRS 158.148 and KRS 158.444.

- **KRS 158.444** requires KDE to collaborate with the Center for School Safety in carrying out the center’s mission along with establishing and maintaining a statewide data collection system for all incidents by demographic group. These instances include violence and assault, possessions of weapons, possession of illegal substances (alcohol, drugs, controlled substances) on school property, and all incidents in which a student has been disciplined by the school. It also requires KDE to present the Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report to present the data collected.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> “Tier 1.” Center on PBIS. 2025. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1>

<sup>364</sup> “Tier 2.” Center on PBIS. 2025. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-2>

<sup>365</sup> “Tier 3.” Center on PBIS. 2025. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-3>

<sup>366</sup> “KRS 158.444.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3519>

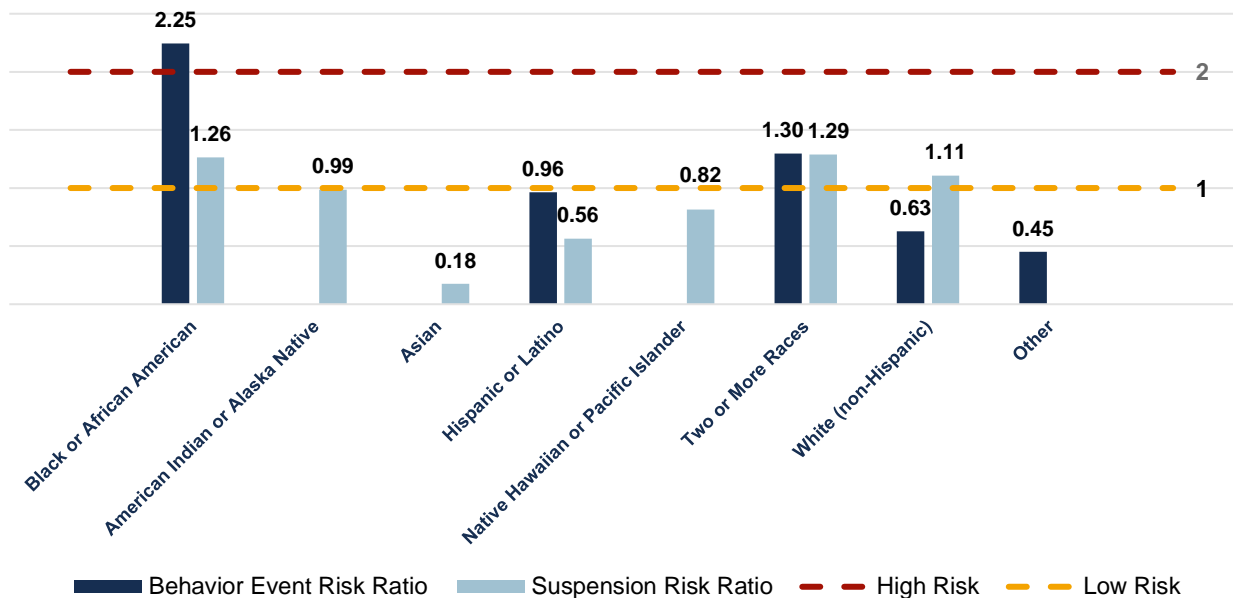
- **KRS 158.148** requires KDE to develop statewide student discipline guidelines to ensure safe schools that takes into account data and definitions presented in the Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report.<sup>367</sup>

The *2023-2024 Safe School Annual Statistical Report* “presents a summary of behavior events that resulted in an expulsion, in-school removal, in-district removal, out-of-school suspension, or corporal punishment.” It includes events involving assault, violence, weapons, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, bullying, or harassment. It presents the data longitudinally over the last five years and disaggregates it by different demographic variables including race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.<sup>368</sup>

**8.11 Finding: Black or African American students and males are more likely to receive at least one disciplinary referral compared to their peers.**

The statute referenced above, KRS 158.148, stipulates that the discipline code should be applied uniformly and fairly, without partiality or discrimination. However, the *2023-2024 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report* shows that certain groups have disproportionately higher discipline events than others.<sup>369</sup> Risk ratios were derived using the data from that report to examine whether students from different subgroups are overrepresented in disciplinary referrals. Figure 117 shows the risk ratios by race and economic status.

**FIGURE 117: BEHAVIOR EVENTS & SUSPENSIONS RISK RATIO ANALYSIS BY RACE/ETHNICITY**



Source: Data derived from KDE’s 2023-2024 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report and KDE’s Report Card Dashboard for Behavior Events.

The above risk ratios show Black or African American students in Kentucky have 2.25 times the risk of receiving at least one disciplinary referral as all other students in the state and have 1.26 times the risk of being suspended. Multiracial students have about 1.3 times the risk of having at least one disciplinary referral and/or being suspended. With 0.18 times the risk of being suspended, Asian students are potentially underrepresented in suspensions.

<sup>367</sup> “KRS 158.148.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

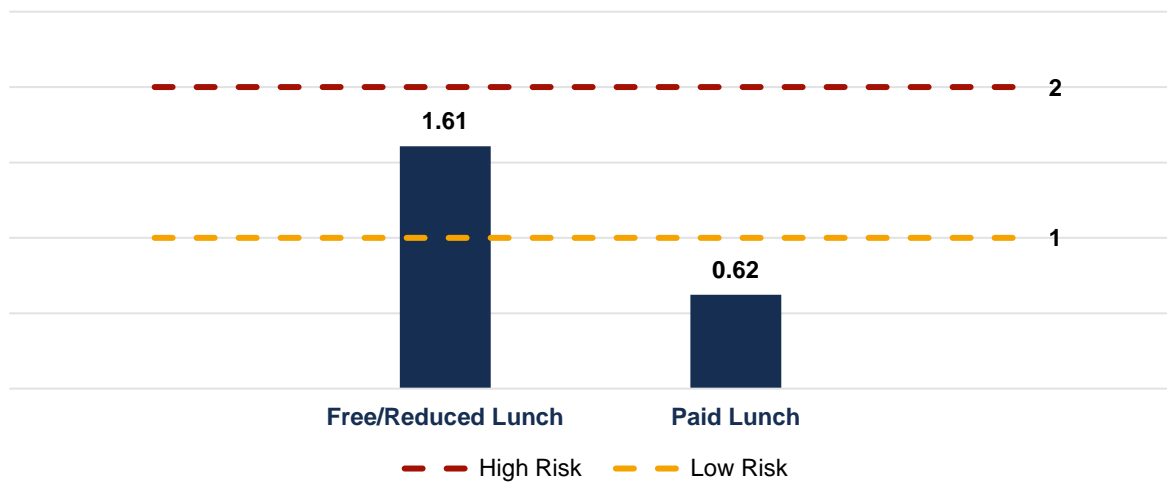
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54760>

<sup>368</sup> “2023-2024 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report.” Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support. October 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Documents/2023-2024%20School%20Safety%20Annual%20Statistical%20Report.pdf>

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.



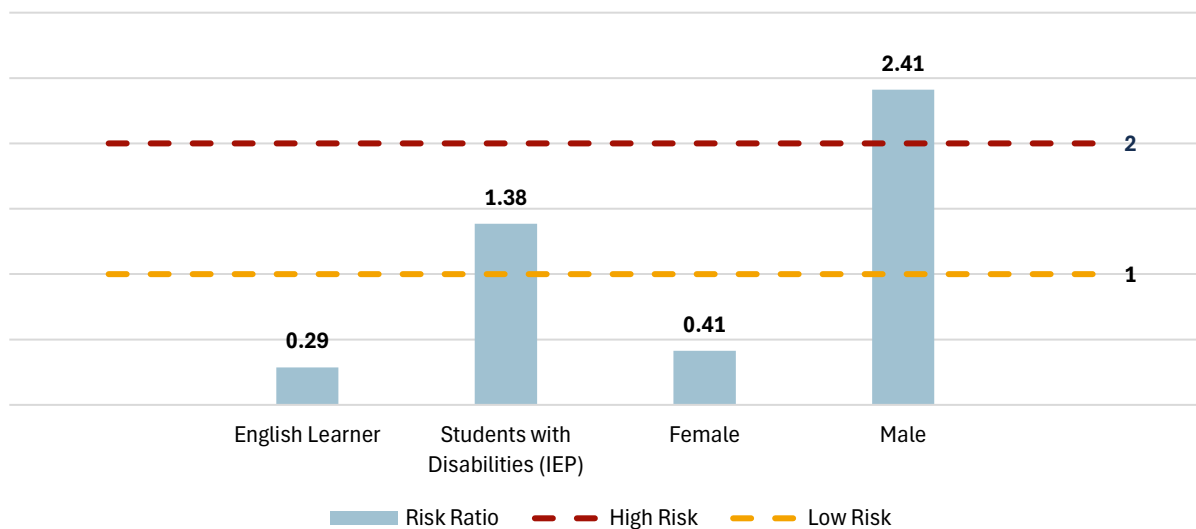
**FIGURE 118: BEHAVIOR EVENT RISK RATIO ANALYSIS BY ECONOMIC STATUS**



Source: Data derived from KDE’s 2023-2024 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report.

As seen in Figure 118, students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch have 1.61 times the risk of receiving a disciplinary referral, while students who do not qualify have 0.62 times the risk.

**FIGURE 119: SUSPENSIONS RISK RATIO ANALYSIS BY ENGLISH LEARNER, DISABILITY STATUS, AND GENDER**



Source: Data derived from KDE’s Report Card Dashboard for Behavior Events.

Figure 119 shows male students and students with disabilities are at risk of possible overrepresentation in suspensions while EL students and female students could be underrepresented. The data presented in Figures 117, 118, and 119, suggest that across the state the disciplinary code is not being applied uniformly and fairly, without partiality or discrimination as is required by statute.



These trends in discipline overrepresentation for certain groups are seen at a national level and are not unique to Kentucky. Nationally, Black boys and girls, white boys, boys of two or more races, and students with disabilities are overrepresented in suspensions and expulsions.<sup>370</sup>

- 8.11.a **Recommendation:** KDE should monitor, share, and discuss disaggregated disciplinary data with school leadership and staff, highlighting disparities. KDE should also facilitate professional development for LEAs to understand the root cause of these disparities.

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<sup>370</sup> "2020-21 Civil Rights Data Collection: Student Discipline and School Climate in U.S. Public Schools." U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. November 2023.  
<https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-discipline-school-climate-report.pdf>

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

The chapter outlines practices, programs and initiatives related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that are administered by KDE.

**The team did not observe any program or activity at KDE that indicated non-compliance with current federal guidance.**

During the course of this audit, the federal government issued new guidance specific to the interpretation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI provides that no program or activity that receives federal financial assistance may exclude from participation, deny benefits to, or discriminate against any person because of race, color, or national origin. Kentucky received \$1.9 billion in federal funding for education in 2023-2024, accounting for 28% of the state's total education funding.

On February 14, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL).<sup>371</sup> The DCL states its purpose is to "clarify and reaffirm the nondiscrimination obligations of schools and other entities that receive federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Education" under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution, and other relevant authorities." A DCL does not have the force of law.

The DCL states that Title VI's prohibition of discrimination should be applied to restrict DEI programs at educational institutions receiving federal funds. The letter pertains to "all preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions, as well as state educational agencies, that receive financial assistance." The DCL advises all educational institutions to:

- Ensure that their policies and actions comply with existing civil rights law;
- Cease all efforts to circumvent prohibitions on the use of race by relying on proxies or other indirect means to accomplish such ends; and
- Cease all reliance on third-party contractors, clearinghouses, or aggregators that are being used by institutions in an effort to circumvent prohibited uses of race.

The DCL states that institutions that fail to comply with Title VI may face possible loss of federal funds.

On February 28, 2025, U.S. ED released a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to provide additional clarification on how educational institutions comply with federal civil rights law.<sup>372</sup> Among other items, the FAQ clarified that cultural programming is acceptable if it is open to all students.

On April 3, 2025, U.S. ED sent letters to all SEAs requiring certification of their compliance with the current interpretations of civil rights law. At the time of the letter, SEAs were provided ten days to sign and return the certification to U.S. ED. SEAs were given responsibility for certifying their state overall and for collecting certification responses from their LEAs. The certification due date was later amended to April 24, 2025.

KDE signed and submitted the certification form prior to the deadline and encouraged LEAs to do the same. In an email to superintendents, the Commissioner also stated that "for those school districts that choose not to sign the Certification Form, KDE will propose no enforcement action to OCR on the grounds that the Certification Form does not comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995."<sup>373</sup> 169 public school districts signed the certification stating adherence to the federal guidance on DEI programs in public schools. Fayette and Jefferson counties did not sign the certification form but provided alternative documents saying

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<sup>371</sup> Trainor, Craig. "Dear Colleague." U.S. Department of Education, Office For Civil Rights. February 14, 2025. <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/dear-colleague-letter-sffa-v-harvard-109506.pdf?tgk528m7c7s>

<sup>372</sup> "Frequently Asked Questions About Racial Preferences and Stereotypes Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act." U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. 2024. <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/frequently-asked-questions-about-racial-preferences-and-stereotypes-under-title-vi-of-civil-rights-act-109530.pdf>

<sup>373</sup> Musgrave, B., and Spears, V. H. "Kentucky Dept. of Education: We have officially axed DEI programs." Lexington Herald Leader. April 15, 2025. <https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article304201266.html>

they comply with federal and state laws.<sup>374</sup> Nationally, 21 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico said they would sign the certification form.<sup>375</sup>

On April 24, 2025, three different federal district courts, in Maryland, New Hampshire, and Washington, D.C., ruled the guidance letter should not be enforced. The Maryland court issued a nationwide stay of the DCL. The court said the DCL has the effect of a legislative rule and therefore was required to go through a mandated notice and comment period. As the DCL was issued without a notice and comment period, the court found the DCL violated the Administrative Procedures Act.

Federal guidance has continued to evolve during the writing of this report and remains dynamic. The team made our assessments based on our best understanding of compliance with federal civil rights law as of May 2025. Universally, there were no programs identified that are administered by KDE that privileged or excluded one group of individuals over others based solely on their race/ethnicity.

There are currently no state statues in Kentucky specific to restricting DEI programming in public K-12 schools. In the 2025 legislative session, Senate Bill 156 was filed, but did not receive a committee hearing. The bill laid out specific prohibitions related to DEI programs and initiatives in the state's public schools.

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION

### 9.1 **Finding:** Kentucky still has significant work to do related to closing achievement gaps and ensuring all students are prepared for future success.

The Kentucky Board of Education adopted a resolution affirming its commitment to racial equity in Kentucky public schools on July 10, 2020.<sup>376</sup> The stated goal of this resolution is to close the opportunity gap for all students and to prepare them for life and future success.

The resolution highlights several focus areas for Board and KDE action related to closing the opportunity gap. Identified areas for action include:

1. There has been no significant reduction in closing the achievement gaps between racial subgroups.
2. The teaching population does not reflect the makeup of the student population.
3. The Commonwealth must make a concerted effort to address the social and emotional health of students and staff as a result of the pandemic.

The team conducted analysis of each of these action areas to better understand their current status.

#### **Action Area 1: There has been no significant reduction in closing the achievement gaps between racial subgroups.**

KRS 158.649 requires every school in Kentucky to annually develop a comprehensive school improvement plan to address the achievement gap among student subgroups to the extent that such a gap exists. Monitored student subgroups include “male and female, students with and without disabilities, students with and without English proficiency, minority and nonminority students, and students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch and those who are not eligible for free and reduced lunch.” The Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (CDIP) and Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) address these requirements. OCIS supports the development and professional learning associated with these plans.

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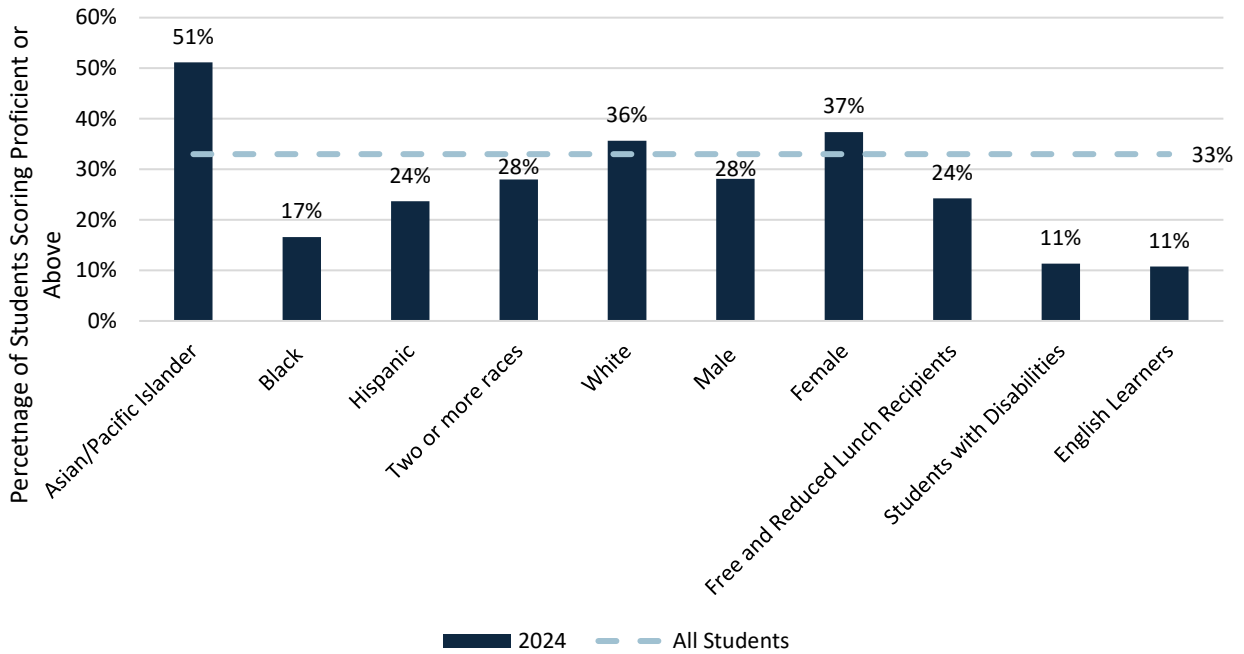
<sup>374</sup> McKenna. “Nearly all Kentucky public schools sign DEI compliance form.” The News-Enterprise. May 3, 2025. [https://www.thenewsenterprise.com/news/education/nearly-all-kentucky-public-schools-sign-dei-compliance-form/article\\_f1738870-63a1-5b73-b3ac-9a7d1d108e04.html](https://www.thenewsenterprise.com/news/education/nearly-all-kentucky-public-schools-sign-dei-compliance-form/article_f1738870-63a1-5b73-b3ac-9a7d1d108e04.html)

<sup>375</sup> Lieberman, M. S. “Illegal” DEI: See which states are telling Trump their schools don’t use it. Education Week. April 30, 2025. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/see-which-states-are-telling-trump-their-schools-dont-use-illegal-dei/2025/04>

<sup>376</sup> “Affirming its Commitment to Racial Equity in Kentucky Public Schools.” Kentucky Department of Education, Resolution. July 10, 2020. <https://www.education.ky.gov/KBE/Documents/ResolutionRace%207-10-20%20Final%20LSY%20signed.pdf>

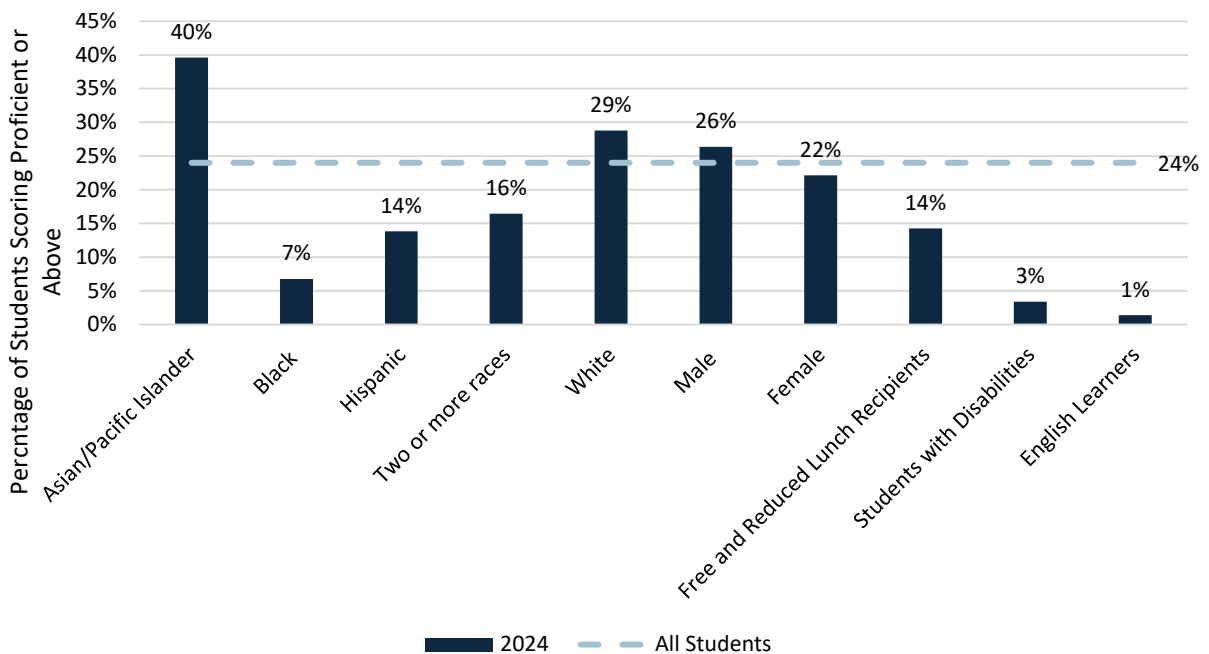
As highlighted in other sections of this report, an achievement gap continues to exist statewide for most subgroups based on analysis of student performance on both state and national assessments. Figure 120 and Figure 121 show the NAEP proficiency rates by subgroup for fourth grade Reading and eighth grade Math. Black or African American students, students with disabilities and students who are English Learners have the lowest proficiency rates on both exams.

**FIGURE 120: 2024 4TH GRADE READING NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES BY SUBGROUP**



Source: Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics Website.

**FIGURE 121: 2024 8TH GRADE MATH NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES BY SUBGROUP**



Source: Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics Website.

**Action Area 2: The teaching population does not reflect the makeup of the student population.**

KRS 161.165 states the teaching population should reflect the makeup of the student population. It requires the creation of a plan to address discrepancies in the educator workforce. It states the plan shall include, among other items, recommendations on programs to increase the diversity of educators, and that KDE must submit a periodic status report to the Interim Joint Committee on Education.

KYStats publishes a Teacher Equity Report dashboard.<sup>377</sup> Per the most recent dashboard update on August 14, 2023, Kentucky students are:

- 201% more likely to be Black or African American than their teachers
- 316% more likely to be Asian than their teachers
- 840% more likely to be Hispanic or Latino than their teachers
- 23% less likely to be White (non-Hispanic) than their teachers.

Governor Beshear relaunched the Kentucky Academy for Equity in Teaching (KAET) initiative in 2021 to address significant teacher shortages and expand the diversity of the teacher workforce in the state.<sup>378</sup> The Board resolution named KAET as a promising program to address educator diversity. KAET was run through an educational cooperative. KAET was renamed to the Kentucky Academy for Excellence in Teaching and transitioned into a program designed to offer Praxis prep support for any aspiring educator.<sup>379</sup> It continues to be run through an educational cooperative. There are a number of other educator recruitment programs designed to build Kentucky's educator pipeline that are open to any prospective teacher. These include initiatives like Educators Rising, a program for middle and high school students interested in the teaching profession.

Expanding the recruitment of qualified educators is identified as a key priority in KDE's current strategic plan. Specifically, KDE strives to increase the completion rate of the high school Teaching and Learning Pathway from 6% in 2023-2024 to 14% in 2028-2029. KDE identifies the Teaching and Learning Pathway as an essential tool for "ensuring a strong, diverse workforce for the future."<sup>380</sup>

**Action Area 3: The Commonwealth must make a concerted effort to address the social and emotional health of students and staff as a result of the pandemic.**

The resolution specifically mentions the Kentucky Framework of Best Practices for School Counselors, which was published by KDE in 2020. This framework reimagines and realigns the role of school counselors. The document is comprehensive and has been updated since its original publication date. KDE's full scope of work related to the social and emotional health of students is addressed in the Student Support section.

**9.1.a Recommendation:** The Commonwealth should increase its focus on closing achievement gaps.

## KDE EQUITY INITIATIVES UNDER ESSER

KDE no longer engages in equity initiatives that were funded through federal stimulus dollars.

Under the previous Commissioner, there was the creation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) division in the Office of Teaching and Learning in 2021. The division aligned their work to the commitments outlined in the Board Resolution described above and the goals of UWL. The division included a Chief Equity Officer, a Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and three DEI coordinator positions, along with the Coordinator for School Counseling.

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<sup>377</sup> "Kentucky teacher Equity Report." KyStats. <https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/TeacherEquity>

<sup>378</sup> "Kentucky Academy for Equity in Teaching (KAET)." KDE Media Portal. <https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/featured/2021/03/kentucky-academy-for-equity-in-teaching-kaet/>

<sup>379</sup> Renamed to Kentucky Academy for Excellence in Teaching

<sup>380</sup> "Strategic Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. [Word Document].

The Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and DEI coordinator positions, along with several equity-specific initiatives, were funded using federal ESSER dollars. ESSER funds were intended to address the short and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational systems. Funds could be used for various purposes, including addressing learning loss, supporting student behavioral and mental health, and ensuring safe school environments. Funding these positions through ESSER was an appropriate and allowable use of funds. Once all ESSER funds were expended, the positions and programs associated with this funding stream ceased. Positions were eliminated in July 2024.

ESSER funds were also used to support the KAET teacher diversity recruitment initiative described above. Additionally, funds were used to support nine Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Coordinators at the regional educational cooperatives (one at each). These coordinators met with school and district leaders to offer proactive strategies that will help assess and implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts.

The Coordinator of School Counseling is an MOA position. This role is discussed in the Student Supports section.

The DEIB division focused on the following activities:

- Developing KDE's Equity Toolkit
- Implementing a statewide SEL framework
- Working on alternative school audits to ensure equity in policies and procedures
- Implementing MTSS
- Leading districts in the implementation of inclusive curricula
- Working with OTL to ensure standards are inclusive
- Creating an equity task force inclusive of community partners
- Developing and strengthening partnerships with primary educator preparation programs.

Some programs and initiatives transitioned to other parts of KDE, such as overseeing the implementation of MTSS. MTSS, as an example, is a universally adopted practice across most SEAs nationally and is a framework that benefits all students.

Several initiatives that were significant investments by KDE no longer exist. These include:

- **Equity Dashboard:** The Equity Dashboard was a suite of visualizations available in Infinite Campus for school and district leaders. The Equity Dashboard provided data on the under- or over-representation of various demographic groups on several indicators: special education, chronic absenteeism, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, gifted and talented, advanced coursework/dual credit, CTE coursework, CTE completers, and benchmarks.
- **Equity Toolkit:** The Equity Toolkit was a web resource that compiled multiple equity resources into one, centralized location.
- **Equity Playbook:** The equity playbook was a coaching initiative to train school leaders on how to coach educators on student access and opportunity. KDE partnered with an external vendor and regional educational cooperatives to support the Playbook initiative. A third-party evaluator found that Equity Playbook schools significantly improved key academic outcomes, particularly among economically disadvantaged students.<sup>381</sup>
- **Equity Professional Learning:** Approximately 60 districts participated in virtual and in person professional learning over a two-year period.

Based on the team's review, there has been a shift in KDE priorities and a minimized focus on DEIB.

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<sup>381</sup> Schechter, R., Chase, P., Lam, K., & LXD Research. "Equity Playbook Initiative Implementation in Kentucky." Charles River Media Group, engage2learn. 2024. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED656145.pdf>

# EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

## OVERVIEW

This section addresses the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) efforts to monitor and support Local Education Agencies (LEA) with programming for exceptional children including federally required general supervision responsibilities and state support for gifted and talented students. Preschool supports and monitoring, including programs for preschool children with disabilities, are addressed in greater detail in the Preschool section and KDE's monitoring systems for other program areas are addressed in the Monitoring & Consolidated Monitoring section.

## OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION & EARLY LEARNING

Kentucky public schools enroll approximately 115,000 students with disabilities, about 18 percent of total state student enrollment. A review of publicly available data published by KDE indicates the percentage of students with disabilities has increased slightly each year between the 2021-2022 school year and the 2023-2024 school year.

White students make up 74 percent of students with disabilities statewide while Black or African American students represent 11 percent of all students with disabilities. Hispanic or Latino students represent eight percent, Asian students represent one percent, and students who are two or more races represent six percent.<sup>382</sup> White students make up about 71 percent of overall statewide enrollment, Black or African American students make up just under 11 percent, Hispanic or Latino students represent about ten percent, students who are two or more races represent just over five percent, and Asian students make up about two percent.

KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) is responsible for overseeing KDE's responsibilities for exceptional children. The mission of OSEEL is to improve educational outcomes for exceptional and early learners through training and coaching for local district and state school staff and teachers, technical assistance, guidance and policy documents, and providing support to students and their families.<sup>383</sup> OSEEL is led by an Associate Commissioner and includes three Divisions and five Branches. Each Division is led by a Director and Assistant Director. Branches are sub-units of Divisions and are led by a Branch Manager who reports to the Division leadership team. Divisions and Branches of OSEEL include:

- **Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results (DIMR)**
  - Individual Programming Branch
- **Division of State Schools**
  - Kentucky School for the Blind
  - Kentucky School for the Deaf
- **Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool**
  - Guidance and Support Branch (includes Gifted and Talented)
  - School Readiness Branch

This chapter focuses on special education monitoring and data systems supported by DIMR and state supports related to special education and gifted education by OSEEL's Division of IDEA Implementation and preschool. State schools are addressed in the Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf section and preschool is addressed in the Preschool section.

The Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results consists of fourteen staff members. Figure 122 summarizes the organizational reporting structure of DIMR. The Director supervises six staff members including an Assistant Director, Branch Manager, data analyst and a formal complaint investigator. The Branch Manager

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382 "Report Card Dashboards." Kentucky Department of Education. 2024.

<https://reportcard.kyschools.us/kysrc?organization=20232024:999:999000>

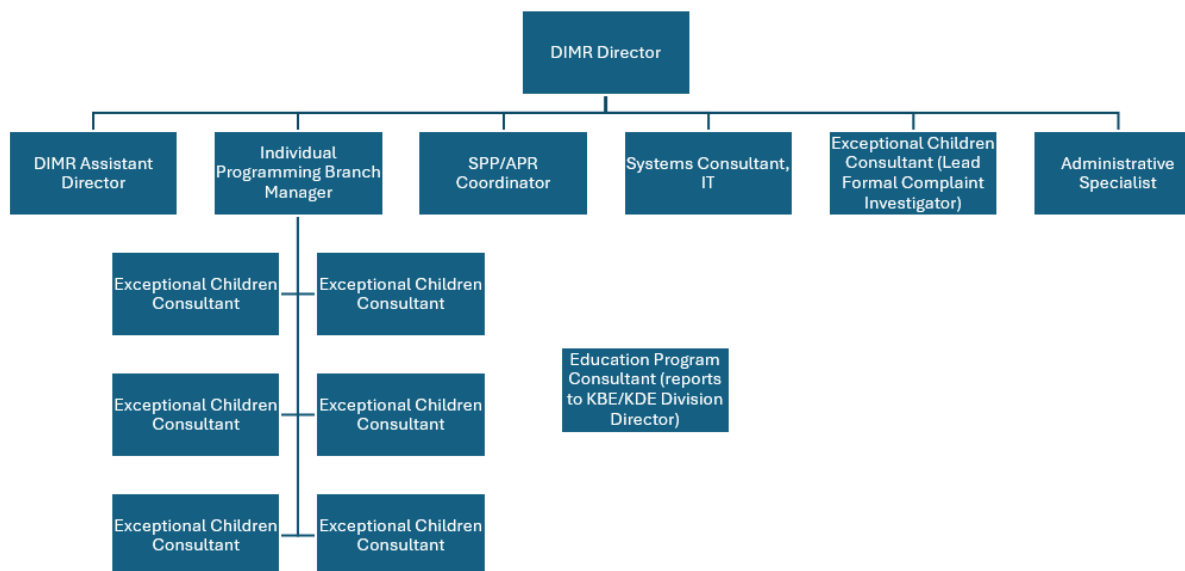
383 "Exceptional Children and Early Learning." Kentucky Department of Education. October 23, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/Pages/default.aspx>



leads six Exceptional Children Consultants whose primary responsibilities are conducting Risk Focused Monitoring, desk reviews for Indicator compliance, and issuing and overseeing Corrective Action Plans. An Education Program Consultant sits in the Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results but is supervised by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE)/KDE Division Director.

FIGURE 122: DIVISION OF IDEA MONITORING & RESULTS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Source: Data provided by KDE, “15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24- Staffing Levels-FTE’s & Vacancies by Dept

### Special Education General Supervision Responsibilities

State education agencies, including KDE, are responsible under the IDEA of 2004 for implementing a general supervision system designed to ensure each LEA meets the requirements of the IDEA. State systems of general supervision must focus on: 1) improving educational results and functional outcomes for infants with disabilities, their families, and children with disabilities; 2) ensuring that LEAs meet the requirements under IDEA: 20 U.S.C §§ 1412(a)(11), 1416(a); 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.149, 300.600-300.604, and 300.608; and 3) ensuring that the state has a system that collects and reports valid and reliable data.<sup>384</sup>

States are required to make annual determinations about the performance of each of its LEAs in meeting the requirements of the IDEA, enforcing IDEA-Part B requirements, and addressing IDEA implementation for each educational program for children with disabilities administered within the state, including programs administered by any other state or local agency (but not including elementary schools and secondary schools for Indian children operated or funded by the Secretary of Interior), Section 619 (preschool) programs, public charter schools, children with disabilities residing in nursing homes, and educational programs in juvenile and adult correctional facilities.

The United States Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) defines eight components of a “reasonably designed” system of state general supervision. These eight components include:

- The State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR)
- Data on Processes and Results

<sup>384</sup> “Guidance on state general supervision responsibilities under Parts B and C of IDEA.” U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. July 24, 2023. [https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance\\_on\\_State\\_General\\_Supervision\\_Responsibilities\\_under\\_Parts\\_B\\_and\\_C\\_of\\_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance_on_State_General_Supervision_Responsibilities_under_Parts_B_and_C_of_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf)

- Integrated Monitoring Activities
- Improvement, Correction, Incentives, and Sanctions
- Effective Dispute Resolution
- Fiscal Management
- Policies, Procedures, and Practices Resulting in Effective Implementation
- Targeted Technical Assistance and Professional Development<sup>385</sup>

OSEEL monitors LEA implementation of federal requirements under the IDEA as well as state regulations and statutes related to special education as defined in the KARs and KRS.

To gather input about the impact of KDE’s general supervision systems for special education, the team conducted a statewide survey of LEA special education directors. LEA directors were asked to identify the most recent state determination level assigned to their special education program, enrollment size of the LEA, the length of time they have served in their role as special education director, whether their LEA has participated in OSEEL special education monitoring activities within the last year, and whether they supervisor additional program areas in the LEA beyond special education.

A total of 128 LEA Special Education Directors responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 74 percent. Most of these respondents (87 percent) were from LEAs that Meet Requirements (i.e., LEAs whose special education programs meet most of the state performance targets and compliance requirements). A similar number (88 percent) had participated in KDE Special Education Monitoring in the past three years. Many of these Special Education director respondents (87 percent) supervised other programs as well—with 504-related and preschool-related programs cited most often. Additional information about the respondents is included in Appendix C: Survey Results.

- Survey results reveal that LEA special education directors who have not engaged in KDE monitoring within the past three years, generally perceive KDE systems as less effective than directors in LEAs who have more recently engaged in monitoring with respect to improving federal and state compliance, improving the quality of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and improving academic or functional outcomes for students served by special education.
- Survey results indicate similar levels of agreement about getting timely responses from KDE when compared to LEAs who have and have not been monitored recently.
- LEA directors who have not been monitored recently also reported stronger positive sentiment about the frequency of KDE communication over directors of LEAs who have been monitored in the last three years.

Analysis of survey results by the length of time a respondent has served in their role as LEA special education director reveals some variations across directors.

- Respondents who have been in the special education director role for under one year through three years generally viewed KDE special education monitoring systems as more impactful in improving compliance with state and federal requirements, improving IEP quality, and improving academic or other functional outcomes for students with disabilities.
- As the length of time in the director role increases, the perception of effectiveness across each of these areas decreases.
- Special education directors across all lengths of time in their role indicated low levels of agreement that KDE special education monitoring supports improved academic or functional student outcomes. Directors in the role less than one through three years reported the highest level of agreement (41%) and directors in the role over ten years reported the lowest level of agreement (34%).

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<sup>385</sup> “Guidance on state general supervision responsibilities under Parts B and C of IDEA.” U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. July 24, 2023. [https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance\\_on\\_State\\_General\\_Supervision\\_Responsibilities\\_under\\_Parts\\_B\\_and\\_C\\_of\\_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance_on_State_General_Supervision_Responsibilities_under_Parts_B_and_C_of_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf)

- Special education directors across all tenures in the role reported similar levels of satisfaction, 68% to 73%, with the quality of interactions with KDE staff.
- Satisfaction with the frequency of communication from KDE increased in correlation to length of time in the special education director role with newer directors indicating 74% satisfaction with the frequency of communication, directors in the role for five to ten years reporting 80% satisfaction, and directors in the role for ten or more years reporting 85% satisfaction.

## **State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report & Special Education Data Systems**

OSEP requires all states to submit data related to 17 indicators of the SPP/APR as a component of the Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) monitoring system used to ensure both compliance with the federal requirements under Part B of the IDEA of 2004 as well as to improve performance outcomes for students with disabilities served through special education programs within each respective state. Data collected by the state must be valid and reliable for the purpose of meeting IDEA reporting requirements, including those under IDEA Section 618 and under Section 619, such as the SPP/APR.

The state must also provide an assurance in its annual IDEA Part B grant application to the U.S. ED that the state has policies and procedures that: (1) ensure the state examines data, including data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, to determine if significant discrepancies are occurring in the rate of long-term suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities among LEAs in the state or compared to such rates for nondisabled children and (2) are designed to prevent inappropriate overidentification or disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity of children as children with disabilities, including children with disabilities with a particular impairment. Where significant discrepancies occur, the state must review and revise (or require the affected LEA to revise) its policies, procedures, and practices relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards to ensure that such policies, procedures, and practices comply with IDEA.<sup>386</sup> In addition to reporting these data to OSEP, all states are required to annually report on the performance of each LEA in the state in relation to the state's SPP indicators and targets. While the SPP indicator areas are federally required, state performance targets for each indicator are established through input from stakeholders that include parents, school administrators, educators, advocacy groups, and community members.

KRS 157.224(3) requires Kentucky LEAs to submit data to KDE in annual applications and reports to include, at minimum, 1) suspension, expulsion, and drop-out rates; 2) performance of students with disabilities placed in a variety of educational settings; and 3) student transition from school to adult life. OSEEL uses an annual process for collecting, reviewing, and verifying data to determine the level of performance of each LEA in alignment with the federal and state requirements described. This process includes assigning each LEA a determination level of :

- Meets Requirements
- Needs Assistance
- Needs Intervention
- Needs Substantial Intervention

Special education data standards are established for Infinite Campus, the statewide Student Information System. OSEEL publishes data standards guides for each special education area. Data standards documentation provide LEA users with step by step guidance to complete required activities in Infinite Campus as well as flow charts and scenarios. Infinite Campus serves as the data source for most state-level special education data collections with some exceptions where LEA self-report mechanisms conducted outside of Infinite Campus are used to collect and report on federally required data elements. This is comparable to practices found in most state education agencies. Figure 123 includes a list,

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<sup>386</sup> "34 C.F.R. § 300.170 - Suspension and expulsion rates." Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/300.170>

description of each indicator, corresponding data source used by OSEEL to report performance against each respective indicator, and the frequency of data collection per indicator.

FIGURE 123: SPP INDICATORS & DATA SOURCES<sup>387</sup>

Indicator	Description	Data Source	Collection Frequency
<b>SPP 1: Graduation Rates</b>	Students with IEPs ages 14-21 who graduate with a regular diploma	Infinite Campus Special Ed Exit Report	Annual
<b>SPP 2: Drop-Out Rates</b>	Students with IEPs ages 14-21 who drop-out of school	Infinite Campus Special Ed Exit Report	Annual
<b>SPP 3: Statewide Assessment</b>	Participation rates and proficiency rates of students with IEPs on statewide assessments, including statewide alternate achievement assessments	Infinite Campus Student Data Review and Rosters	Annual
<b>SPP 4: Suspension/Expulsion</b>	Suspensions and expulsions of students with IEPs of greater than ten days within a school year	Infinite Campus Safe Schools Data	Annual
<b>SPP 5: Least Restrictive Environment</b>	Percentages of students with IEPs ages six to 21 who are educated in different setting types (general classroom, separate school, etc.)	Infinite Campus December first Child Count and LEA verification survey	Annual
<b>SPP 6: Early Childhood Settings</b>	Percentage of students with IEPs enrolled in preschool who are age three to five educated in different setting types (regular early childhood program, special education class, etc.)	Infinite Campus December first Child Count and LEA verification survey	Annual
<b>SPP 7: Preschool Outcomes</b>	Percentage of preschool students with IEPs with improved social and emotional skills, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and use of appropriate behaviors.	Infinite Campus Child Outcomes Summary Process rating	3x per year
<b>SPP 8: Parent Involvement</b>	Parent involvement in the IEP process	Parent survey distributed by OSEEL	Annual

<sup>387</sup> “State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator Support Guide.” Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Learning. September 2023. [https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Documents/SPP\\_Indicator\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Documents/SPP_Indicator_Guide.pdf)

Indicator	Description	Data Source	Collection Frequency
		to families through LEA Directors of Special Education	
<b>SPP 9: Disproportionate Representation in Special Education</b>	Disproportionate racial and ethnic group representation in special education	Infinite Campus December first Child Count. Policy, procedure and student record review.	Annual
<b>SPP 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories</b>	Disproportionate racial and ethnic group representation in specific disability categories.	Infinite Campus December first Child Count. Policy, procedure and student record review.	Annual
<b>SPP 11: Child Find</b>	Percentage of students evaluated for special education eligibility within 60 school days of parental consent	LEA Self-Assessment	Annual
<b>SPP 12: Early Childhood Transition</b>	Percentage of students eligible under IDEA Part C with an IEP implemented by their third birthday	LEA Self-Assessment	Quarterly
<b>SPP 13: Secondary Transition IEP Goals</b>	Students ages 16-21 with an IEP that includes all required elements to support post-secondary transition from school to adult life.	LEA Self-Assessment	Annual
<b>SPP 14: Secondary Transition</b>	Percentage of students with IEPs who are not longer in school enrolled in higher education or employed within one year of leaving high school.	Youth One Year Out student interview and online survey.	Annual
<b>SPP 15: Hearing Requests Resolved*</b>	Percentage of hearing requests resolved through resolution settlement agreements.	EdFacts IDEA-B Dispute Resolution Survey	Annual
<b>SPP 16: Mediation Agreements*</b>	Percentage of mediations held resulting in mediation agreements.	EdFacts IDEA-B Dispute Resolution Survey	Annual
<b>17: State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)*</b>	Multi-year plan for improving results for students with disabilities	State Identified Measureable Result	Annual

Source: KDE's State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator Support Guide.  
 \*Indicator applies to state education agency only and is not collected from LEAs.

### ***State Special Education Performance & Compliance Data***

KDE is annually required to submit special education performance and compliance data to OSEP related to each SPP indicator as part of the federal RDA system. An RDA matrix is completed that includes results indicators, the degree to which students with disabilities in the state achieve positive outcomes, and a compliance score based upon the degree to which the state meets the regulatory requirements of the IDEA. A state must obtain a minimum of 80% across all results and compliance indicators to meet requirements within the federal RDA system. Kentucky's results for 2017 through 2024 are as follows:<sup>388</sup>

- 2024: Meets Requirements
- 2023: Meets Requirements
- 2022: Meets Requirements
- 2021: Meets Requirements
- 2020: Meets Requirements
- 2019: Meets Requirements
- 2018: Meets Requirements
- 2017: Meets Requirements

It is commendable that Kentucky has achieved and sustained a "Meets Requirements" determination within OSEP's RDA system for this period of time. Such a designation shows the state's commitment to IDEA implementation and general supervision systems that support students with disabilities. In 2024, only 34 percent of U.S. states and territories met IDEA requirements under OSEP's RDA model while 66 percent of states and territories required assistance or intervention. Across the eight years for which state RDA determinations were reviewed, only six other states obtained a "Meets Requirements" determination each year for the same time period: Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.<sup>389</sup>

The statewide survey of LEA special education directors provided an option for open-ended responses. A total of 44 of 138 LEA special education directors provided open-response feedback about their experiences with KDE. Of the 44 responses, 38 special education directors reported serving LEAs who were determined by KDE to "Meet Requirements" for special education while six directors reported serving districts who received a "Needs Assistance" determination.

Twenty-two of the 38 special education directors serving "Meets Requirements" LEAs reported negative experiences with OSEEL staff and/or systems related to special education. All six special education directors serving districts determined to "Need Assistance" provided negative feedback about their experiences with OSEEL's special education systems. A consistent theme emerged across LEA special education director responses regarding a perceived lack of support from OSEEL related to high-quality instructional supports for students served by special education. Respondents also highlighted what they perceive as a burdensome, overly-bureaucratic compliance focused system that does not provide actionable support to districts or students and takes LEA special education director time away from serving as instructional leaders in their districts due to the heightened focus on compliance.

Respondents also highlighted the need for KDE to provide stronger training to school leaders and educators. Areas where additional instructional support were mentioned included clear guidance for educators around impactful accommodations to support student access to general education learning, effective methods for providing specially designed instruction (especially for special education teachers who are newer practitioners), and an increased emphasis on effective strategies for teaching Mathematics to students with disabilities.

Responses from the survey conducted of LEA superintendents reveals similar sentiments in open-responses regarding KDE and special education. Superintendents reported a perception of OSEEL as

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<sup>388</sup> "State Performance Plans/Annual Performance Reports (SPP/APR)." IDEA. 2024. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr/>

<sup>389</sup> "2024 Determination Letters on State Implementation of IDEA." IDEA. June 25, 2024. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/2024-determination-letters-on-state-implementation-of-idea/>



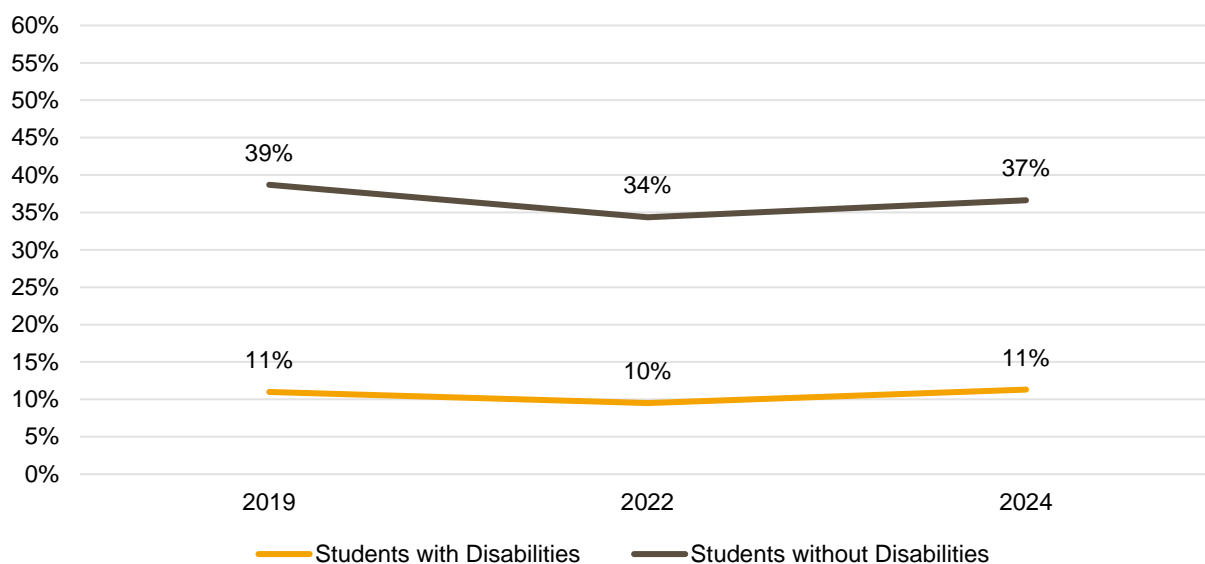
overly focused on compliance to the point of becoming burdensome to an LEA's ability to effectively serve students. Superintendent recommendations called for OSEEL to place greater emphasis on student outcomes and high-quality instruction rather than a compliance-first approach to special education supports for LEAs.

Across several focus groups conducted with KDE staff, statements were made describing KDE's understanding of the relationship between compliance and student outcomes. This relationship was commonly explained as viewing special education compliance as the floor of opportunity necessary for stronger student outcomes. Survey responses collected from LEA special education directors echoed this messaging regarding KDE's view about compliance as the floor of outcomes.

**While KDE has developed a robust and intentional system for ensuring LEA compliance with federal and state special education regulations, students with disabilities served by special education in Kentucky have not demonstrated meaningful academic outcomes over time.**

Recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data illustrated in Figure 124 demonstrates students with disabilities in Kentucky underperform academically when compared to students without disabilities and have underperformed consistently across NAEP administrations in 2019, 2022, and 2024. In fourth grade Reading, students with disabilities demonstrated 11% proficiency in 2019, 10% proficiency in 2022, and 11% proficiency in 2024 whereas students without disabilities demonstrated proficiency levels of 39%, 34%, and 37% for the same three tested years.

**FIGURE 124: 4TH GRADE READING NAEP PROFICIENCY BY DISABILITY STATUS**

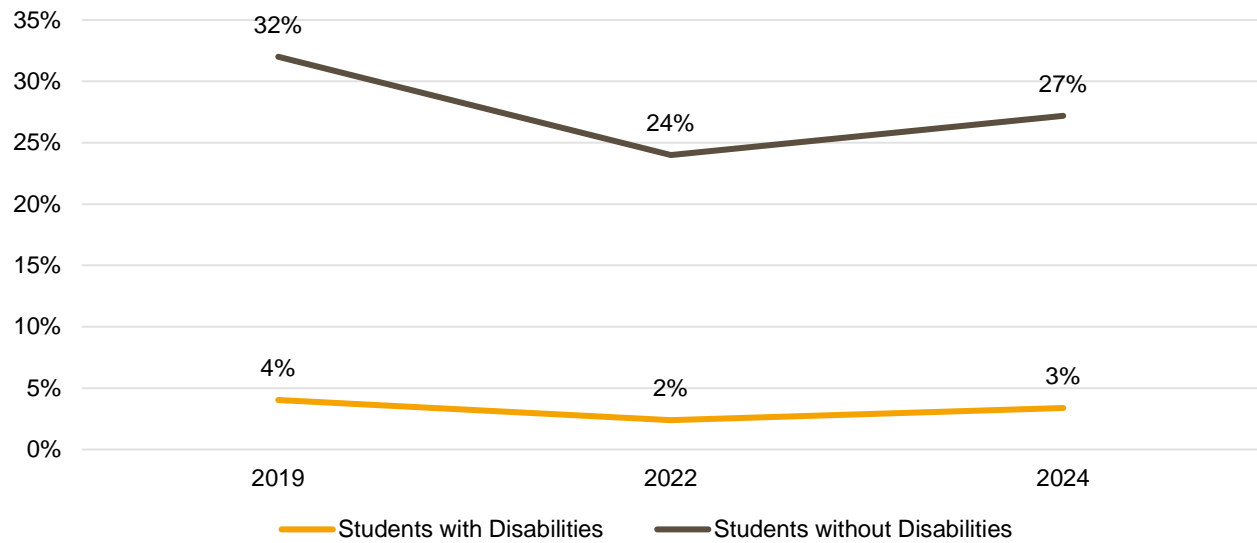


Source: Data retrieved from *The Nation's Report Card*, "NAEP Data Explorer."  
<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE>

Similarly, Figure 125 illustrates a similar trend related to the Mathematics achievement of eighth grade students with disabilities. Students with disabilities have demonstrated a slight decrease in performance from 4% proficiency in 2019 to 1% proficiency in 2022 and 2024. While the performance of students without disabilities in eighth grade Mathematics also decreased during this time, based on the 2024 NAEP assessment results, a 24 percentage point gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in this area exists.



**FIGURE 125: 8TH GRADE MATH NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES BY DISABILITY STATUS**



Source: Data retrieved from The Nation’s Report Card, “NAEP Data Explorer.”  
<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE>.

Federally reported SPP indicator 3D data regarding gaps in proficiency between students with IEPs served by special education in comparison to the performance of all students across Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 through FY 2022 also reveals persistent performance gaps over time. Figure 126 outlines data reported by Kentucky related to federal SPP Indicator 3D illustrating proficiency levels of students with IEPs and all students in fourth grade, eighth grade, and high school Reading and Mathematics respectively. These data are based on student performance on the Kentucky Summative Assessment.

**FIGURE 126: PROFICIENCY RATES FOR CHILDREN WITH IEPs & ALL STUDENTS AGAINST GRADE LEVEL ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS.**

	FY 2020 IEP Proficiency	FY 2020 All Students Proficiency	FY 2021 IEP Proficiency	FY 2021 All Students Proficiency	FY2022 IEP Proficiency	FY 2022 All Students Proficiency
<b>4th grade Reading</b>	26.26%	42.91%	26.03%	46.14%	28.27%	47.85%
<b>8th grade Reading</b>	19.24%	50.07%	12.93%	44.16%	13.1%	43.84%
<b>High School Reading</b>	11.17%	38.01%	11.84%	45.67%	13.44%	46.03%
<b>4th grade Math</b>	18.62%	33.33%	20.59%	39.43%	23.04%	42.28%
<b>8th grade Math</b>	8.26%	26.95%	11.92%	36.44%	10.93%	35.64%

	FY 2020 IEP Proficiency	FY 2020 All Students Proficiency	FY 2021 IEP Proficiency	FY 2021 All Students Proficiency	FY2022 IEP Proficiency	FY 2022 All Students Proficiency
High School Math	7.84%	30.33%	8.53%	37.66%	9.26%	34.36%

Source: Data Retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Analysis of this data indicate slight gains in academic performance by students with IEPs in fourth grade Reading, high school Reading, fourth grade Mathematics, eighth grade Mathematics, and high school Mathematics when comparing student performance in FY 2020 to student performance in FY 2022 and a decrease in student performance in eighth grade Mathematics for the same time period. While increasing student proficiency rates should be positively acknowledged, the gains illustrated within these data also demonstrate persistent proficiency gaps when comparing the performance of students with disabilities to the performance of all students. FY 2022 data reveals a 19.5 percentage point gap in performance between students with disabilities and all students in fourth grade Reading, a 30.7 percentage point gap in eighth grade Reading, and 32.5 percentage point gap in high school Reading. Proficiency gaps in Mathematics are comparable at 19.2 percentage points in fourth grade Mathematics, 24.7 percentage points in eighth grade Mathematics, and 25.1 percentage points in high school Mathematics.

Further analysis and consideration regarding the way in which student performance and compliance data are used by OSEEL to inform annual determinations about LEA performance and associated monitoring activities are discussed in greater detail in the proceeding section.

### ***LEA Special Education Performance & Compliance Data***

OSEEL collects data from LEAs to make annual determinations about the degree to which LEAs are meeting state and federal special education requirements. This data reflects SPP indicators one through 14 and are made publically available on the KY Special Education Indicator Dashboard powered by the Kentucky Center for Statistics. The Special Education Indicator Dashboard includes data for each Kentucky LEA, the Kentucky School for the Blind, and the Kentucky School for the Deaf across the 14 performance and compliance indicators for the most recent three reporting years. The data is filterable by indicator, year, and region.

OSEEL's Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results uses selected SPP indicators to make annual LEA determinations. The indicators used to make determinations include:<sup>390</sup>

- Indicator 1: Graduation
- Indicator 2: Drop-Out
- Indicator 4B: Suspension/Expulsion
- Indicator 9: Disproportionate Representation
- Indicator 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories
- Indicator 11: Child Find
- Indicator 12: Early Childhood Transition
- Indicator 13: Secondary Transition

Additional factors in LEA determinations are:

- Participation in Kentucky Summative Assessment for fourth and eighth grade Reading and Math

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<sup>390</sup> "Annual Determinations on the Special Education Performance of Districts." Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results. March 26, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Documents/KyDeterProcess.pdf>

- Eighth grade Math performance
- Findings on noncompliance during an onsite
- Persistent failure or inability to comply with IDEA requirements and its implementing regulations

The indicators that drive LEA annual determination are aligned with state and federal data reporting requirements related to discipline of students with disabilities, disproportionate representation of racial or ethnic groups in special education programs, school completion rates for students with IEPs, and post-secondary preparation.

An analysis of LEA determinations by OSEEL across the most recent four years – 2021 through 2024 – reveals that a majority of LEAs in the state are determined to meet state and federal requirements for the indicators noted above; however, there has been a decline in the number of LEAs determined to meet requirements between 2022 and 2024. A review of the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) and noncompliance data provided by KDE suggest this increase in LEAs who need assistance related to their special education program is due to findings of noncompliance identified through monitoring. Notably, no LEAs have been determined to Need Intervention in the past two reported years. In 2021 and 2022, less than 1% of LEAs in the state were assigned to this determination level on the basis of their SPP indicator data.

**FIGURE 127: LEA SPECIAL EDUCATION DETERMINATIONS 2021-2024**

Determination Level	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	160 (92%)	163 (94%)	158 (91%)	147 (85%)
<b>Needs Assistance (Year 1)</b>	8 (4%)	7 (4%)	15 (9%)	22 (13%)
<b>Needs Assistance (Year 2)</b>	2 (1%)	1 (<1%)	0	4 (2%)
<b>Needs Intervention (Year 1)</b>	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0	0
<b>Needs Intervention (Year 2)</b>	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0	0
<b>Needs Intervention (Year 3)</b>	1 (<1%)	0	0	0
<b>Total LEAs</b>	173	173	173	173

Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “LEA Determinations Final Scores – Current Year and Prior Three Years.”

OSEEL has special education monitoring processes in place to verify LEA compliance with SPP Indicators 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. These activities are authorized under federal statutes at 34 C.F.R. § 300.600 and state statutes at 707 KRS 1:380. State practices for the utilization of SPP results and performance indicator data to drive annual LEA performance determinations and aligned monitoring varies across states.

- Ohio, like Kentucky, uses SPP Indicators 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 to make annual LEA performance determinations.
- Similarly, Alabama, makes annual LEA performance determinations using Indicators 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.
- Other states such as Tennessee and Mississippi use all 14 SPP indicators applicable to LEAs, including academic assessment participation and proficiency for fourth grade, eighth grade, and high school reported within SPP indicator 3 and post-secondary outcomes related to higher education enrollment, competitive employment, or other workforce training programs reported in SPP indicator 14.

IDEA regulations at 34 C.F.R. § 300.600(b) clarify that a state’s monitoring process has two purposes: (1) to improve educational results and functional outcomes of all children with disabilities and (2) to ensure public agencies meet IDEA-B requirements with an emphasis on IDEA requirements most closely related

to improving educational results. Given the weight placed on promoting educational results as a primary function of monitoring and general supervision, it is reasonable that when a state makes determinations about the performance of LEAs related to IDEA requirements an emphasis on educational results should factor prominently in making such determinations.

FIGURE 128: SPP INDICATOR VERIFICATION THROUGH MONITORING<sup>391</sup>

SPP Indicator	Selection Criteria	Process	Frequency & Timelines
<b>SPP 4: Suspension/Expulsion</b>	<p>Districts are selected through a two-part process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Step 1: A review of district-reported data from Infinite Campus (IC) to identify if discrepancies by race exist in out-of-school removals.</li> <li>Step 2: If a discrepancy three times greater than the state target exists, DIMR conducts off-site desk reviews of student IDEA due process files to determine if the policies, procedures or practices violate the IDEA.</li> </ul>	Virtual Review	Annual March - April
<b>SPP 9: Disproportionate Representation in Special Education</b>	<p>Districts are selected through a two-part process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Step 1: A review of district reported data from IC to determine if disproportionate representation exists.</li> <li>Step 2: If disproportionate representation exists, DIMR conducts off-site desk reviews of student IDEA due process files to determine if the policies, procedures or practices violate the IDEA.</li> </ul>	Virtual Review	Annual October - November
<b>SPP 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories</b>	<p>Districts are selected through a two-part process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Step 1: A review of district-reported data from IC to determine if disproportionate representation exists.</li> <li>Step 2: If disproportionate representation exists, DIMR conducts off-site desk reviews of student IDEA due process files to determine if the policies, procedures or practices violate the IDEA.</li> </ul>	Virtual Review	Annual October- November
<b>SPP 11: Child Find</b>	<p>Districts are selected based on self-reported data. OSEEL DIMR uses online randomization tools to random reviews 10% of LEAs reporting 100% compliance with the Indicator requirements to validate LEA self-report results.</p>	Virtual Review	Annual September - October

<sup>391</sup> "OSEEL Monitoring Brief." Kentucky Department of Education.  
[https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/forms/Documents/Monitoring\\_Brief.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/forms/Documents/Monitoring_Brief.pdf)

SPP Indicator	Selection Criteria	Process	Frequency & Timelines
<b>SPP 12: Early Childhood Transition</b>	Districts are selected based on self-reported data. OSEEL DIMR uses online randomization tools to random reviews 10% of LEAs reporting 100% compliance with the Indicator requirements to validate LEA self-report results.	Virtual Review	Annual September-October
<b>SPP 13: Secondary Transition IEP Goals</b>	Districts are selected based on self-reported data. OSEEL DIMR uses online randomization tools to random reviews 10% of LEAs reporting 100% compliance with the Indicator requirements to validate LEA self-report results.	Virtual Review	Annual September-October

Source: Data retrieved from KDE's "OSEEL Monitoring Brief."

For each respective indicator (if selected for virtual review), a sample of IEP records is reviewed using OSEEL's Compliance Record Review Document. This protocol is used to maintain a consistent standard for LEA compliance determinations. For indicators 11, 12, and 13, a minimum of 10% of the district's special education records related to the indicator are reviewed to ensure a valid sample. For indicator 11, the sample includes at least 10% of students evaluated for special education eligibility within the current year, including students who were determined eligible as well as students determined ineligible. When an LEA has 100 students or fewer within an indicator area, ten files are reviewed at minimum. If an LEA has ten or fewer students related to the indicator area, all student files are reviewed.

Where noncompliance is identified, LEAs must correct the student records determined to be noncompliant. In many cases, the LEA is required to convene the student's Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) to complete such corrective measures. If an LEA is found to have 95% compliance or less within an indicator area, such noncompliance is deemed systemic under the OSEEL protocols. LEAs found to be systemically noncompliant are required to develop and complete a CAP to address the noncompliance in addition to correction of student records. Required activities for systemic noncompliance include: a root cause analysis completed within 30 days, training conducted by a KDE approved trainer, and a follow up activity such as peer reviews of student records or PLCs to discuss identified noncompliance. These corrective actions are approved within 30 days of the issuance of noncompliance, are monitored monthly by OSEEL, and must be completed by the LEA within one year.<sup>392</sup>

Figure 129 outlines CAPs issued to LEAs for noncompliance related to SPP indicator validation between 2020 and 2024. A higher number of CAPs were issued in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 with more LEAs requiring corrective action for timelines associated with SPP Indicators 11 and 12 related to timely evaluations and transition from IDEA Part C to IDEA Part B by a child's third birthday. Requirements for special education timelines remained in effect during COVID-19 related educational disruptions, which impacted LEA compliance with requirements during that time period.

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<sup>392</sup> "Compliance Record Review." Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results. August 2024.  
[https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/forms/Documents/Compliance\\_Record\\_Review.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/forms/Documents/Compliance_Record_Review.pdf)

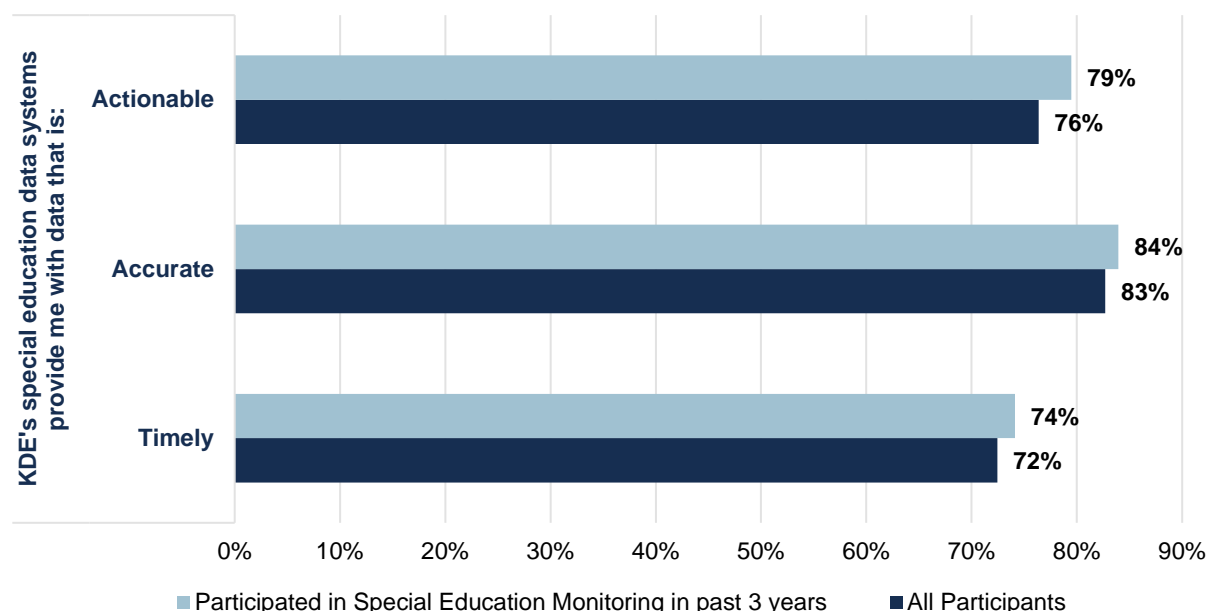
**FIGURE 129: CAPS ISSUED FOR INDICATOR NONCOMPLIANCE**

School Year	Number of Districts that received at least one CAP related to Indicator noncompliance	Number of Districts that received two or more CAPs related to Indicator noncompliance
2020-2021	40	2
2021-2022	51	8
2022-2023	26	5
2023-2024	35	2

Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “51 OSEEL CAP\_Tracker.”

LEA special education directors were surveyed to determine their perceptions of special education data systems in Kentucky. Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the degree to which KDE’s special education data systems provided actionable, timely, and accurate data to inform LEA program continuous improvement efforts. Survey responses are summarized in Figure 130.

**FIGURE 130: DATA RECEIVED FROM KDE’S SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA SYSTEMS**



Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.

About three quarters of special education directors agree that the data they receive from KDE’s special education monitoring system is actionable, accurate, and/or timely. Approximately one-quarter of directors do not agree that they receive timely, accurate, and actionable data from KDE’s systems.

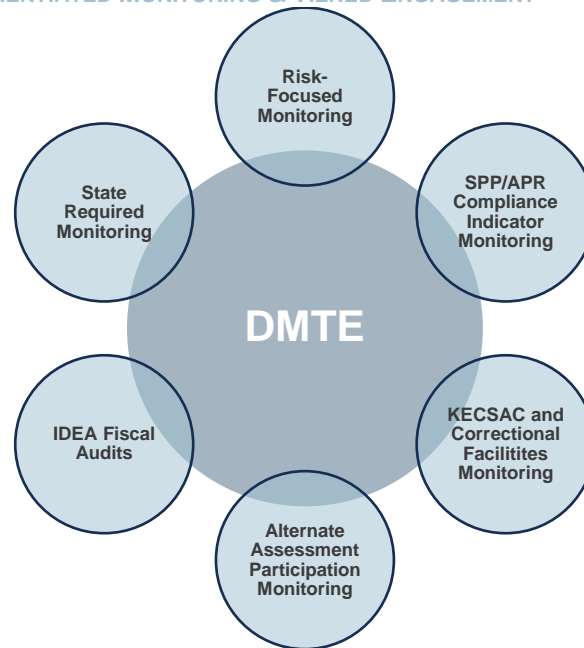
### **Integrated Monitoring**

Integrated monitoring activities are a required and critical component of a general supervision system. These activities should be designed to examine and evaluate LEA implementation of IDEA with a focus on educational and functional outcomes as well as compliance with IDEA requirements. Integrated monitoring activities can include, but are not limited to, interviews with LEA program staff, listening sessions with families of students with disabilities in LEAs, IEP file reviews, data analysis, and reviews of LEA policies, procedures, and practices. When the state determines a LEA is out of compliance with an applicable IDEA requirement, the state issues a written notification of noncompliance (i.e., a finding) to the LEA and the LEA

must correct the noncompliance within one-year of notification.<sup>393</sup> 707 KAR 1:380 provides the state regulatory authority for the monitoring of LEA special education programs and requires KDE to conduct monitoring to determine LEA compliance with state and federal requirements and to take corrective action when necessary.

OSEEL conducts six types of special education monitoring within its Differentiated Monitoring and Tiered Engagement (DMTE) system. Figure 131 demonstrates the types of monitoring activities that may be conducted through the DMTE.<sup>394</sup>

FIGURE 131: OSEEL DIFFERENTIATED MONITORING & TIERED ENGAGEMENT



Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “Monitoring Brief.”

Risk-Focused Monitoring (RFM) is a risk-based, cyclical, and individualized monitoring process of LEA special education programs. RFM includes desk reviews, on-site monitoring activities, and CAPs when necessary. Monitoring activities are driven by an LEA’s level of risk which is informed by that LEA’s annual determination and score on a Risk Assessment Rubric. Annual LEA determinations and Risk Assessment Rubric scores are combined to identify the LEAs who will engage in RFM. Once identified, OSEEL staff analyze each LEA’s local data to determine monitoring focus areas. In 2023-2024, 15 LEAs were monitored through the RFM process. Each RFM review includes two to three focused monitoring areas based on the LEA’s identified areas of risk.

The Risk Assessment Rubric used to determine an LEA’s level of risk includes:

- Percentage of students receiving special education and related services
- Timely and accurate submission of IDEA data annually
- IDEA Formal Written Complaints with substantiated noncompliance
- Director of Special Education experience in the school district

<sup>393</sup> “Guidance on state general supervision responsibilities under Parts B and C of IDEA.” U.S. Department Of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. July 24, 2023. [https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance\\_on\\_State\\_General\\_Supervision\\_Responsibilities\\_under\\_Parts\\_B\\_and\\_C\\_of\\_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance_on_State_General_Supervision_Responsibilities_under_Parts_B_and_C_of_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf)

<sup>394</sup> “Differentiated Monitoring and Tiered Engagement.” Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Learning. August 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/forms/Documents/DMTEManual.pdf>



- Significant Disproportionality and
- SPP Indicators:
  - 4A: Suspension/Expulsion
  - 5A: Educational Environments
  - 6A: Preschool Childhood Settings
  - 7: Preschool Outcomes
  - 8: Parent Involvement
  - 14C: Post-School Outcomes

Bonus points are awarded to reduce an LEA's level of risk. These points are awarded based upon:

- Submitting the Grant Management Application and Planning (GMAP) application in a timely and substantially approvable form
- Participating in the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Director of Special Education Mentorship program through OSEEL GUIDES
- Participating in Transformation Zone for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
- Receiving "Meets Requirements" for LEA Determinations for the last five years

At times, OSEEL may conduct comprehensive special education reviews that include both a desk audit and an on-site visit. OSEEL's DMTE manual indicates that a comprehensive special education review may be initiated based on factors such as a high-volume of IDEA formal written complaints or parent calls, allegations concerning the denial of free appropriate public education for eligible students, failure to comply with the requirements of an established CAP or correct noncompliance within one-year, or inaccurate data submission. Although the DMTE manual describes comprehensive reviews, it is unclear—based on a review of internal documentation such as records of monitoring activities and CAPs—with what frequency comprehensive reviews are conducted.

OSEEL maintains detailed and thoroughly documented processes and procedures for special education monitoring activities. OSEEL tracks the status of each CAP issued to a LEA via identification of noncompliance through CAP closure, which includes the LEA identified with noncompliance, date noncompliance was identified, the type of monitoring through which the noncompliance was identified, area of monitoring, current CAP status, aligned regulatory requirements and statutes where the LEA was determined noncompliant, and the number of student IEPs determined non-compliant.

KECSAC and Correctional Facilities monitoring utilize OSEEL's Compliance Record Review Document to review student level IEP records. Sample sizes for each type of monitoring are based on the number of enrolled students in the LEA and the type of monitoring to be conducted and are described in the DMTE Manual. The Compliance Record Review Document includes compliance checklists for the following areas:

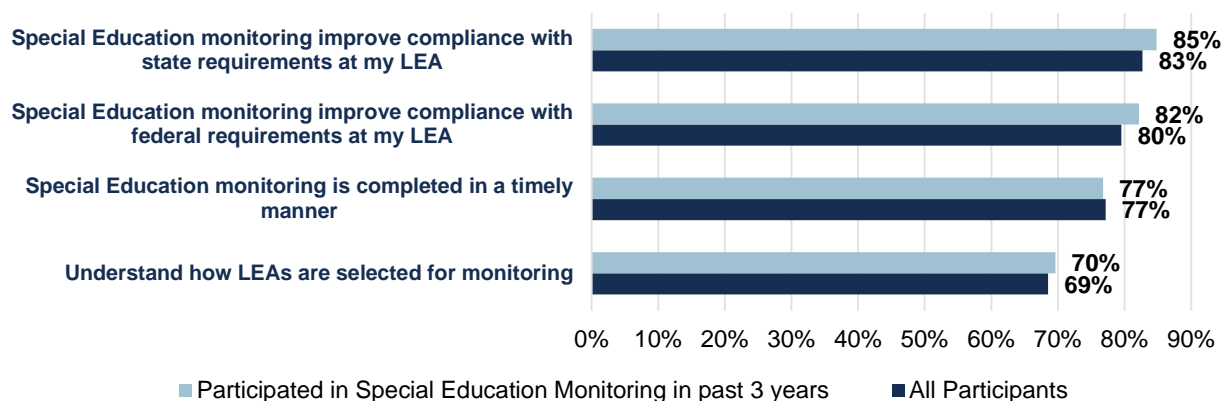
- Meeting Notice and Membership of the ARC
- Prior Written Notice to Parent(s)
- Preschoolers Transitioning from Part C
- IEP
- Transition Services
- Evaluation Timelines
- Initial Evaluation and Reevaluation

Alternate Assessment Monitoring is conducted to support state compliance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by ESSA, Section 1111(b)(2)(D)(i)(I). Students with disabilities who are working toward alternative academic achievement standards may participate in a state's alternative assessment. However, only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and no more than one percent of students in a state, should participate in the alternate achievement assessment. OSEEL conducts student file reviews for LEAs in the state who have greater than one percent of their students participating in the state alternative achievement assessment. These file reviews evaluate the extent to which ARCs within LEAs are appropriately determining the need for a student to participate in the state's alternate achievement assessment program.

OSEEL staff engage in state-required monitoring activities with other monitoring teams within KDE on an as-needed basis. These state monitoring activities include Management Audits initiated based on data from LEAs that indicate significant deficiencies in student performance, lack of capacity within the LEA, or data irregularities. The need for a Management Audit is determined by the Commissioner of Education and may include, but is not limited to, the LEA’s governance policies and procedures, instructional programming, fiscal management, physical maintenance or facilities construction, or student transportation. The frequency, volume and focus of Management Audits, however, is unclear, given the audit, CAP reports and analyses provided by KDE did not indicate a Management Audit had occurred between 2022 and 2025. In addition, OSEEL documentation stated there are no specific protocols for this type of monitoring activity.

LEA special education directors were surveyed to determine the degree to which they feel informed about the requirements of KDE special education monitoring, the efficiency of KDE staff in completing monitoring activities with LEAs, and the overall impact of special education monitoring systems on improving the performance of LEA special education programs. A summary of results is provided in Figure 132.

**FIGURE 132: LEA PERCEPTIONS ON SPECIAL EDUCATION MONITORING**

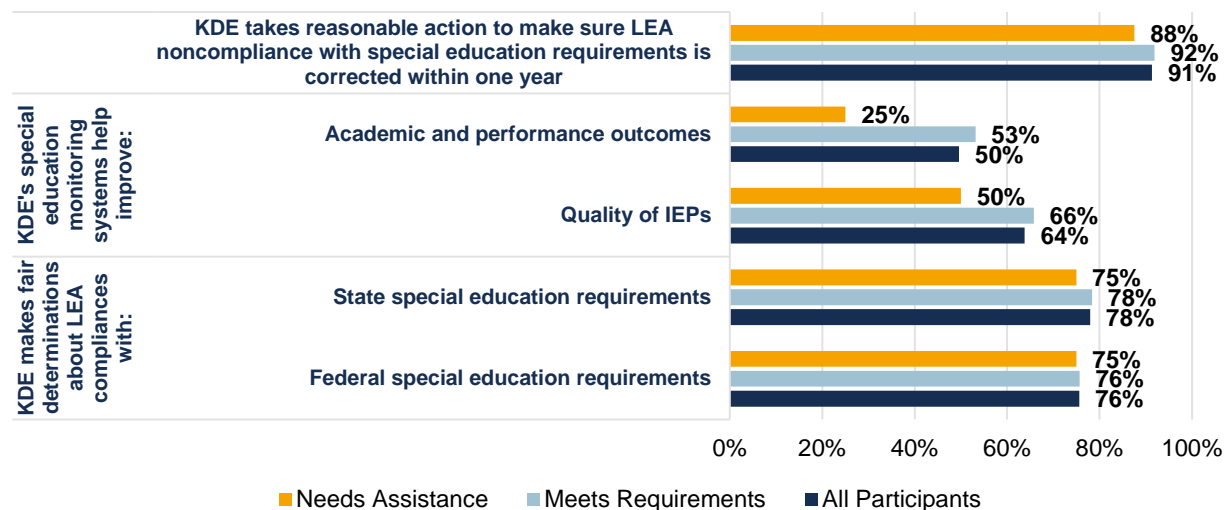


Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.

Almost a third of special education directors do not understand how LEAs are selected for monitoring. Special education directors whose LEAs have participated in special education monitoring in the last three years generally agree with statements around special education monitoring at a higher rate than those who have not participated in monitoring. Over three quarters of all directors agree that special education monitoring is completed in a timely manner.

LEA special education directors also responded to several survey items to specifically evaluate their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of OSEEL special education monitoring in improving educational and functional outcomes for students with disabilities as well as perceptions about the impact of monitoring on improving compliance with state and federal compliance requirements in the KAR, KRS, and IDEA.

FIGURE 133: IMPACT OF KDE'S SPECIAL EDUCATION MONITORING SYSTEM



Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.

There is low agreement among LEA directors that KDE’s special education monitoring systems help improve the quality of IEPs and academic performance and outcomes. Directors at LEAs designated as Needs Assistance agree with these statements at a much lower rate than directors in LEAs who Meet Requirements. Most special education directors, however, regardless of LEA designation, agree that KDE takes reasonable action to make sure LEA noncompliance with special education requirements is corrected within one year.

**10.1 Finding: Special education data systems and monitoring activities are ineffective to support LEAs in closing performance gaps for students with IEPs.**

KDE special education data systems and monitoring are intentionally designed to facilitate LEA regulatory compliance as part of the state’s general supervision system. The primary purpose of a state’s general supervision system as described by OSEP is to improve educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities. KDE stakeholders have highlighted a need for a stronger focus on student achievement and outcomes. Data from Kentucky state assessment and national assessments illustrate persistent gaps in student proficiency and academic outcomes over time when comparing the performance of students with IEPs to the performance of other student groups. During focus groups OSEEL staff did not discuss performance gaps between students with disabilities and non-disabled students beyond reference to OSEEL’s operating perspective as compliance being a floor for outcomes.

**10.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should utilize all aspects of State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators 1 through 14, including the results-oriented aspects of those indicators, when establishing annual LEA determination levels. KDE incorporates state assessment participation data as part of its annual process for determining LEA special education performance and minimally addresses student achievement or proficiency data by incorporating Math performance for eighth grade students with IEPs as an additional factor in annual determination.

**10.1.b Recommendation:** KDE should refine special education monitoring and support processes to ensure the system is focused on improving educational and functional outcomes for students with disabilities. This includes:

- Balancing outcomes with federal and state compliance elements of general supervision given IDEA regulations at 34 C.F.R. § 300.600(b) clarify that a state’s monitoring must focus on improving educational results and functional outcomes and ensure LEAs meet

IDEA-B requirements with an emphasis on requirements most closely related to improving educational results.

- Align monitoring and support activities and protocols to revised LEA determinations to support LEAs in closing proficiency gaps for students with IEPs.

### **Identification & Correction of Noncompliance & Corrective Action Plans**

When a state education agency determines that a LEA is out of compliance with an applicable IDEA requirement (that is, a compliance level is less than 100%), the state must issue a written notification of noncompliance, or finding, to the LEA in a timely manner (generally within three months). A written notification is not required where a noncompliant LEA immediately corrects the identified noncompliance, and the state is able to verify the correction. In other instances, correction of noncompliance must occur as soon as possible, but no later than one year after the state's written notification of noncompliance. The state education agency must verify that the LEA has, where applicable, corrected each individual case of child-specific noncompliance and is correctly implementing the specific regulatory requirements based on a review of updated data and information, such as data subsequently collected through integrated monitoring activities or the state's data system. The state must also maintain documentation of evidence demonstrating that the LEA has corrected each individual case of the previously noncompliant files, records, data files, or whatever data source was used to identify the original and that the review of updated data and information did not reveal any continued noncompliance.<sup>395</sup>

DMTE activities through any type of monitoring may result in a CAP for the LEA and CAP procedures are consistent regardless of how noncompliance was identified within a LEA. OSEEL has developed detailed standard-operating procedures for the determination of noncompliance, requirements for CAPs, and closure of CAPs within one-year of the citation of noncompliance in a LEA. Once a CAP has been initiated for a LEA, OSEEL uses a CAP tracking system to monitor the status of correction for each LEA with an active CAP.

OSEEL's processes are consistent with OSEP requirements and guidance to ensure the correction of all noncompliance at the systemic and student record level within one year of identification. OSEEL provides LEAs with a CAP template that addresses each instance of student level or systemic noncompliance, outlines action steps and activities, identifies the required evidence of completion, and provides timelines for required activities. A LEA must complete a CAP template for each area of noncompliance. As a result, some LEAs have multiple CAPs during the same school year.

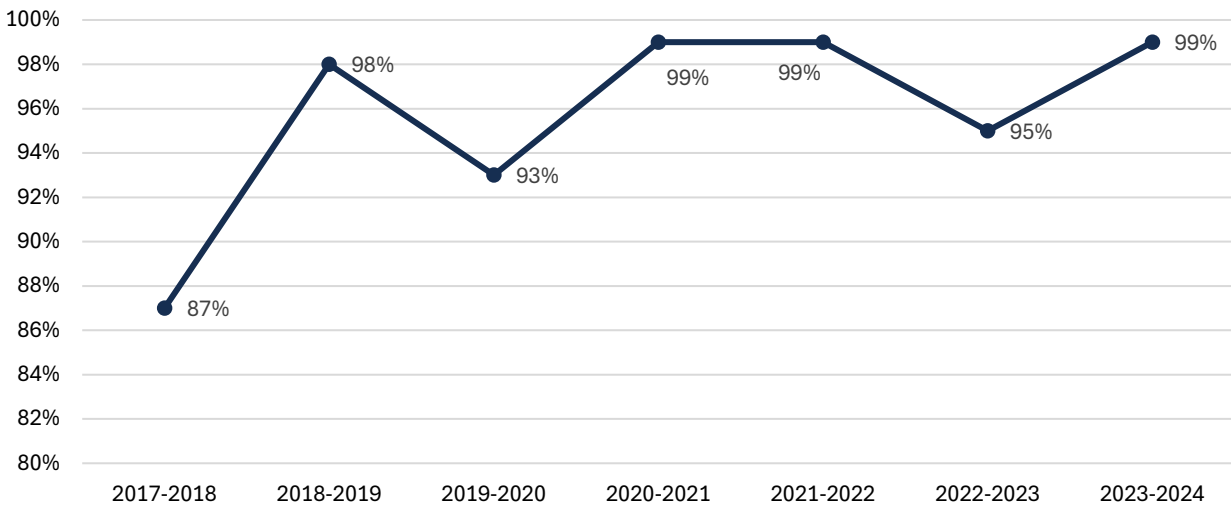
As LEAs complete the required corrective actions, OSEEL DIMR staff assigned to support the LEA through the correction process note updates for each activity and timeline within the CAP and provide ongoing feedback to the LEA regarding the designated corrective actions. OSEEL defines systemic noncompliance as less than 95% compliance with a specific regulatory requirement. For an instance of systemic noncompliance, the LEA is required to engage in a root cause analysis process prior to the development of CAP activities to ensure the activities are aligned to the problem area and are reasonably determined to improve compliance in that area.

A review of historic data between 2017-2018 and 2024-2025 reflects OSEEL issues approximately 40 to 98 CAPs to LEAs per year. As of the time of this report, OSEEL has issued 36 total CAPs during the 2024-2025 school year. On average, 96.3% of CAPs are closed within one year of the identification of noncompliance with a regulatory requirement in an LEA. Figure 134 illustrates the closure rate of CAPs within one year after issuance.

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<sup>395</sup> "Guidance on state general supervision responsibilities under Parts B and C of IDEA." U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. July 24, 2023. [https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance\\_on\\_State\\_General\\_Supervision\\_Responsibilities\\_under\\_Parts\\_B\\_and\\_C\\_of\\_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance_on_State_General_Supervision_Responsibilities_under_Parts_B_and_C_of_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf)

**FIGURE 134: CAP CLOSURE RATES: PERCENTAGE OF CAPS CLOSED WITHIN ONE YEAR**



Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “51 OSEEL CAP\_Tracker.” CAP Closure rate reflects the percentage of total CAPs closed within one-year of noncompliance notification by KDE.

- Most CAPs are generated from desk audits with 82 CAPs issued in the past three school years (2022-2023 through 2024-2025).
- Indicator 13 Secondary Transition was the most common area of noncompliance requiring corrective action with 13 CAPs issued in 2022-2023, 23 CAPs in 2023-2024, and 19 CAPs in 2024-2025.
- Noncompliance identified because of the complaint process was the second highest area of noncompliance with ten CAPs issued in 2022-2023, 19 CAPs in 2023-2024 and five as of the time of this report in 2025.

Over an eight-year period from 2017-2018 through the current 2024-2025 school year, 11 school districts averaged at least one or more CAP per year.

- Daviess County Public Schools, Fulton County School District, Boone County Public Schools, and Jefferson County Public Schools each totaled over ten CAPs during this period with Jefferson County having the most CAPs at 17.
- One hundred seventeen LEAs had at least one CAP during the past three school years, 2022-2023 through 2024-2025.

Figure 135 provides a breakdown of CAPs and LEAs cited for noncompliance by year.

**FIGURE 135: CAPs ISSUED FOR NONCOMPLIANCE 2017-2025**

School Year	Number of CAPs Issued	Number of LEAs with at least one CAP	Number of LEAs with two or more CAPs
2017-2018	41	30	10
2018-2019	61	43	10
2019-2020	63	42	15
2020-2021	97	77	17
2021-2022	98	73	18
2022-2023	63	51	11
2023-2024	89	69	16
2024-2025	38	31	6

Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “51 OSEEL CAP\_Tracker.”

### Dispute Resolution

State general supervision systems must be designed to collect and analyze dispute resolution information, determine whether systemic noncompliance is occurring, issue findings of noncompliance and ensure correction. In determining whether noncompliance exists, the state must examine each due process hearing decision to determine if the decision identifies any procedural or substantive violations of the IDEA in the LEA as well as ensure each due process hearing decision is implemented and any violations corrected within the timeframe specified by the hearing officer. Where patterns are present in state complaint decisions and due process decisions, the state is responsible for determining whether systemic noncompliance is occurring and for issuing written findings of noncompliance to ensure correction. Information from a state’s dispute resolution system can also support the state education agency with the identification of statewide needs for guidance, training, or technical assistance.<sup>396</sup>

Kentucky uses a two-tiered due process system and provides information about mediation, formal written complaints, and due process hearing on the KDE Special Education web page. The webpage provides descriptions of mediation, formal written complaints, and due process hearings with associated forms for each process linked on the page as well as contact information for OSEEL, KDE’s Office of Legal Services, and contact information for educational advocacy and legal services organizations in Kentucky.

The agency provides a Quick Guide to Special Education Dispute Resolution Processes for students ages three to 21 in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Swahili. Some linked documents such as Formal Written Complaint form are labeled in English and Spanish, however, links to most documents in languages other than English are labeled only in English. Further, the text of the Dispute Resolution website that describes the use of the linked materials only written in English. It is therefore unclear to what degree a family member without English proficiency can reasonably access the information provided.

All U.S. states are required to report data related to dispute resolution, including the resolution of complaints and number of mediation sessions conducted annually, as part of the SPP/APR submission to OSEP. The

<sup>396</sup> “Guidance on state general supervision responsibilities under Parts B and C of IDEA.” U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. July 24, 2023. [https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance\\_on\\_State\\_General\\_Supervision\\_Responsibilities\\_under\\_Parts\\_B\\_and\\_C\\_of\\_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Guidance_on_State_General_Supervision_Responsibilities_under_Parts_B_and_C_of_IDEA-07-24-2023.pdf)

data collected for Indicator 15 Resolution Sessions and Indicator 16 Mediations is previously reported data in the IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey in the USED Facts Metadata and Process System (EMAPS).

Figure 136 below summarizes the number of resolution sessions and mediation requests for the SPP/APR year and corresponding EMAPS data year. Kentucky had the greatest number of resolutions (26) in 2020 and the smallest number of mediation requests (4) in 2022. The greatest number of mediations occurred in 2024 (15) while the lowest number of mediation sessions (5) were held in 2022.

**FIGURE 136: DISPUTE RESOLUTION & MEDIATION REQUESTS 2019 - 2024**

SPP/APR Report Year	Number of Resolution Sessions	Number of Mediation Requests	Data Source
2019	22	6	SY 2017-2018 EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey
2020	26	9	SY 2018-2019 EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey
2021	14	12	SY 2019-2020 EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey
2022	4	5	SY 2020-2021 EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey
2023	10	9	SY 2021-2022 EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey
2024	6	15	SY 2022-2023 EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution Survey

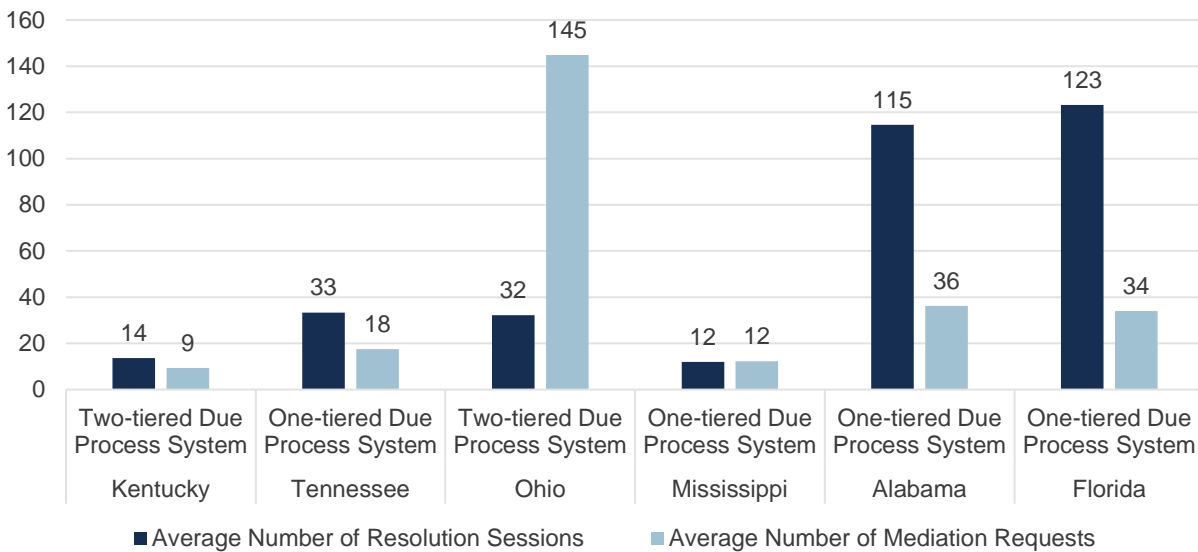
Source: Data retrieved from EMAPS IDEA Part B Dispute Resolution surveys.

Kentucky's dispute resolution numbers are relatively low when compared to other states. Comparative dispute resolution data between Kentucky and peer states for 2019-2024 is summarized in Figure 137.<sup>397</sup>

<sup>397</sup> "State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR) Letters." U.S. Department of Education, IDEA. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr-letters>



**FIGURE 137: 2019-2024 DISPUTE RESOLUTION COUNTS FOR KENTUCKY & COMPARISON STATES**



Source: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA’s “State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR).” <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/spp-apr-letters>

Additionally, as summarized in Figure 138 below, the State of Oklahoma has similar overall statewide student enrollment and percentage of students with IEPs served in public schools to Kentucky with similar dispute resolution outcomes. As of 2022, Oklahoma served 701,301 students of which about 17% were students with disabilities.<sup>398</sup> In the same year, Kentucky served 660,029 total students, about 17% of which were students with disabilities.<sup>399</sup>

<sup>398</sup> “Digest State Dashboard: Oklahoma.” National Center for Education Statistics. May 2024. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest-dashboard/state/oklahoma>

<sup>399</sup> “Digest State Dashboard: Kentucky.” National Center for Education Statistics. May 2024. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest-dashboard/state/kentucky>

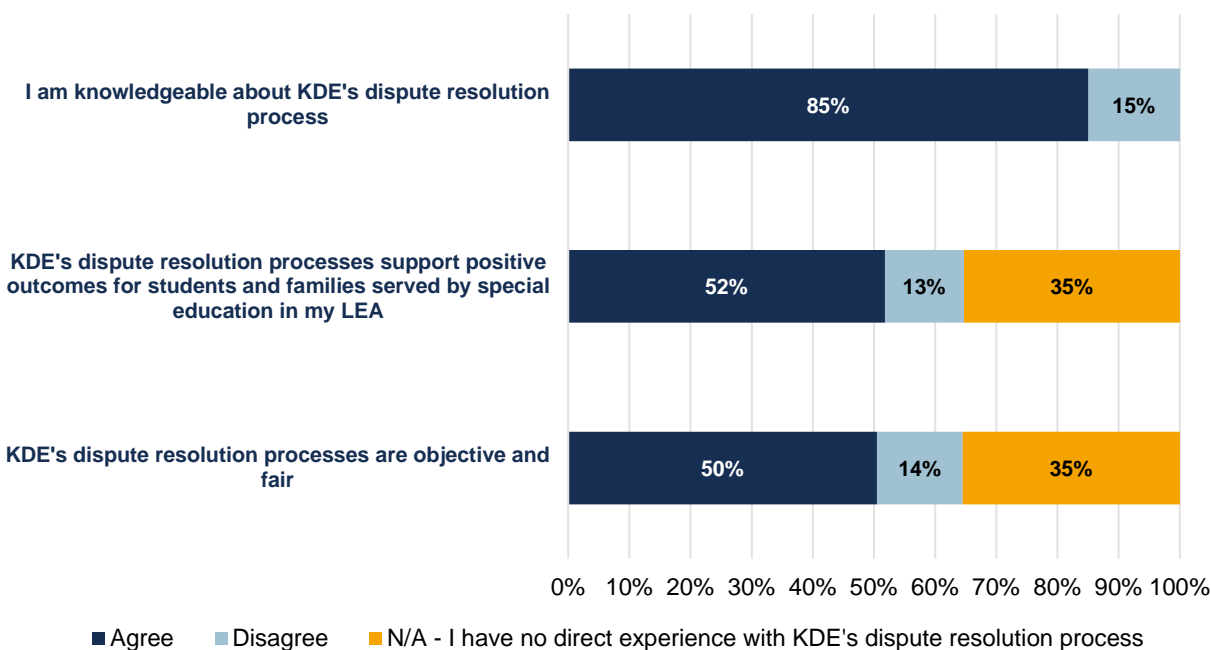
**FIGURE 138: DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMPARISON: KENTUCKY & OKLAHOMA**

	Kentucky	Oklahoma
<b>2022 Student Population</b>	660,029	701,301
<b>2022 Percentage of Students with Disabilities</b>	16.6%	17.2%
<b>Two-tiered due process system</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>2024 SPP/APR: Number of Resolution Sessions</b>	6	9
<b>2024 SPP/APR: Number of Mediation Requests</b>	15	12
<b>2023 SPP/APR: Number of Resolution Sessions</b>	10	6
<b>2023 SPP/APR: Number of Mediation Requests</b>	9	10
<b>2022 SPP/APR: Number of Resolution Sessions</b>	4	7
<b>2022 SPP/APR: Number of Mediation Requests</b>	5	12
<b>2021 SPP/APR: Number of Resolution Sessions</b>	14	8
<b>2021 SPP/APR: Number of Mediation Requests</b>	12	9
<b>2020 SPP/APR: Number of Resolution Sessions</b>	26	10
<b>2020 SPP/APR: Number of Mediation Requests</b>	9	13

Source: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA’s “State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR).”

LEA special education directors were surveyed about their perceptions of KDE’s dispute resolution processes. Questions addressed whether LEAs were knowledgeable of KDE’s process and the extent to which they believe the KDE dispute resolution process is fair, objective, and supports positive outcomes for students with disabilities and their families. Survey results about LEA special education director perceptions of dispute resolution in Kentucky are summarized in Figure 139.

FIGURE 139: LEA PERCEPTIONS OF KDE'S DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS



Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Most special education directors are knowledgeable about KDE's dispute resolution process. Of those who are knowledgeable, 77% agree that the processes are fair and objective and 80% feel KDE's dispute resolution processes support positive outcomes for students and families served by special education. Additionally, across focus groups conducted with a variety of KDE staff, when asked about the relatively lower number of special education complaints in Kentucky, the perception surfaced that LEAs are able to locally manage relationships with families (including concerns about student IEPs and programs that arise) and that they generally provide quality special education programs for students.

**Kentucky demonstrates lower numbers of state complaints and mediations in comparison to several other states; however, Mississippi and Oklahoma report similar levels of dispute resolution activity to Kentucky.**

Based on survey data collected from LEA special education directors, most LEAs report to be knowledgeable about the state's dispute resolution process and believe the process to be fair and objective. KDE makes its dispute resolution process available on its website with supporting resources and in multiple languages. Ultimately, the degree to which families feel the need to escalate concerns about their child's special education needs and program for intervention beyond the local level are influenced by the degree of support families experience within their child's school or local district. Where families are able to resolve concerns at the local level and/or through standard IEP meeting processes, there would not be a need for state intervention. Additionally, institutional trust and local culture are factors that influence the degree to which families voluntarily choose to access state dispute resolution systems and these factors also vary across dimensions of state and regional diversity.

**10.2 Observation:** The KDE special education dispute resolution webpage provides linked documents and materials only in English or Spanish, limiting the accessibility of families without English or Spanish proficiency.

The language of written materials on the KDE dispute resolution web site may limit the degree to which a family member without English proficiency can reasonably access the information. While KDE provides dispute resolution documents for families in languages other than English, the text of the KDE dispute resolution website is provided only in English. Quick guides to the dispute resolution process are provided

in Spanish, Arabic, and Swahili, however, the respective links to these documents are labeled in English. Some documents are provided in Spanish as well as English, however, in the absence of meaningful descriptive text in Spanish, it is not likely a parent or family member who is not English proficient could easily make use of the dispute resolution materials provided by KDE.

- 10.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should provide dispute resolution resource documents and their respective hyperlinks in both English and a variety of languages on the KDE website to provide access for stakeholders whose primary language is not English.

## ***Fiscal Management***

A state's general supervision systems include fiscal monitoring of IDEA Part B fiscal requirements including:

- LEA compliance with IDEA maintenance of effort provisions (34 C.F.R. §§ 300.203–300.205)
- LEA's expenditure of a proportionate share of IDEA funds to provide equitable services to children with disabilities placed in private schools by their parents consistent (34 C.F.R. § 300.133)

OSEEL monitors LEA usage of IDEA-B Section 611 formula grants for students ages three to 21 and IDEA-B Section 619 formula grants for preschool students ages three to five. An IDEA Fiscal Monitoring Manual was published in 2023 and is publically available on the KDE website. OSEEL IDEA Fiscal Monitoring focuses on indicators of compliance related to:

- Obligation and Liquidation
- Use of Funds
- Level of Effort
- Correction of Noncompliance

OSEEL uses Enterprise ERP/MUNIS (EERP), the state's fiscal management software, to support fiscal monitoring activities under the IDEA. This system assigns project numbers to identify all federal funds controlled by the LEA with separate accounts for Section 611 and Section 619 funds. LEAs are required to submit quarterly summary finance reports that detail their expenditures during that period. Additionally, OSEEL may initiate desk reviews or on-site reviews to conduct fiscal monitoring activities with LEAs. The determination for monitoring is based upon fiscal information from independent single audits, data from the LEA's Maintenance of Effort compliance forms, quarterly reports, budgets or other fiscal documents, and risk information determined via the OSEEL Risk Management Tool.

LEAs are required to have independent single audits of major programs each year. Major programs are determined based on the amount of funds in a particular program for the specific year being audited. The audits are conducted by auditors approved by the state and reports of the audits are submitted to various offices within KDE. Independent auditors test LEA policies, procedures, and practices against Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Guidance for Grants and Agreements and general fiscal principles across programs. If audit exceptions are discovered, OSEEL is notified by Office of Finance and Operations Federal Budget Branch and KDE has six months to resolve findings.

If a fiscal desk review is initiated based on an independent single audit or other information source, OSEEL conducts a review that includes:

- Virtual interviews of fiscal and special education staff regarding practices and procedures related to fiscal management
- MUNIS information
- Independent single audit data
- Quarterly reports
- Annual GMAP applications and award letters
- Federal Cash requests
- LEA Maintenance of Effort eligibility and compliance
- Model procurement standards and procurement process

- LEA fiscal policies and procedures
- Employee salary benefits schedule
- Time/effort documentation and personnel activity reports
- Physical inventories (MUNIS and LEA)
- Travel approval/reimbursement processes
- Other fiscal information available

Following the review, an exit conference with OSEEL, the LEA staff from initial interviews, and the LEA's superintendent occurs to inform the LEA of results, to provide documentation supporting any conclusions, and to offer the LEA an opportunity to comment or provide additional documentation prior to final compliance determinations.

IDEA fiscal monitoring conducted by OSEEL may result in no findings, noncompliance requiring a CAP, LEA repayment of funds, withholding of LEA funds pending correction of particular areas of noncompliance, or finding an LEA ineligible to receive IDEA funds if the identified noncompliance demonstrated the LEA's ineligibility for its subgrant or if the LEA did not correct identified noncompliance within the required timelines.

OSEEL piloted an IDEA fiscal monitoring process in 2019. An initial training on the roll-out of fiscal monitoring first occurred in the spring of 2021. Beginning in 2022, KDE started providing annual training about IDEA fiscal monitoring and published an IDEA fiscal monitoring manual in 2023. In school year 2022-2023, 12 LEAs were monitored for IDEA fiscal requirements, resulting in nine CAPs. In 2023-2024, nine LEAs were monitored for IDEA fiscal requirements and ten CAPs for fiscal noncompliance were issued. In 2024-2025, nine LEAs are scheduled for fiscal monitoring with two CAPs issued to date.

### *Special Education Trust Fund*

#### **10.3 Finding: KDE lacks procedures for managing funds withheld from noncompliant LEAs in the special education trust fund as required by KRS 157.224(5).**

KRS 157.224(5) established a special education trust fund to receive funds withheld from LEAs who fail to operate and implement special education programs in accordance with the standards of the Kentucky Board of Education outlined in KRS 157.224(2). KDE may withhold funds from a LEA as a consequence of noncompliance with the requirements necessary to provide students with a free appropriate public education under the IDEA. In circumstance when funds are withheld, the withheld funds must not lapse, must accrue interest and be returned to the LEA when compliance with the necessary requirements is demonstrated. KDE was unable to provide documented evidence of procedures or processes necessary to implement this requirement.

- 10.3.a Recommendation: KDE should develop implementation processes and procedures aligned to KRS 157.224(5) for the withholding of LEA funds due through a special education trust fund.** After processes and procedures are developed, OSEEL should implement such processes and procedures for any circumstance in which LEA funds are withheld due to the LEA's failure to meet the required special education program standards.

### **Significant Disproportionality**

States are required to collect and analyze data to determine if significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity exists in the identification, placement, or discipline of children with disabilities. Using a standardized methodology, states set thresholds to identify LEAs with significant disproportionality. When a LEA is identified, it must allocate 15% of its IDEA Part B funds to implement comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CCEIS) to address contributing factors. The state must then monitor the LEA to ensure compliance and report on findings and fund allocations annually to OSEP. Additionally, the state must review and may require revisions to the LEA's policies, procedures, and/or practices that contribute to significant disproportionality. If noncompliance is identified, it must be corrected within one year.

States are required to establish risk ratios for determining whether significant disproportionality exists in a LEA. A risk ratio is a calculation conducted by dividing the risk of an outcome for a specific group of students

in a racial or ethnic group in a LEA by the risk for students in all other racial or ethnic groups in the same LEA. A risk threshold is determined at the state level. A LEA who exceeds the risk threshold for any area reviewed is determined to demonstrate significant disproportionality.<sup>400</sup>

Kentucky has established a risk ratio of 3.00. To be identified for significant disproportionality, the risk ratio must exceed the 3.00 threshold for the same category and for the same race/ethnicity for three consecutive years. After a LEA is identified, that LEA may be excluded from identification if, over the three-year period, data collected shows reasonable progress reflected by a 0.05 decrease in the risk ratio for each of the last two years examined. If the LEA's race/ethnicity data being analyzed does not meet the minimum cell or n-size requirements for the state's risk ratio, significant disproportionality cannot be calculated, and an alternate risk ratio is applied. When using an alternate risk ratio, the LEA data for the race/ethnicity being examined is compared to state-level data for students who are not of that race/ethnicity.<sup>401</sup> Kentucky uses risk ratios for determining the presence of significant disproportionality comparable to other states in the region. Risk ratios in comparison states are as follows:

- **Florida** – 3.00 risk ratio in all areas
- **Ohio** – 2.50 risk ratio in all areas
- **Mississippi** – 2.00 risk ratio in all areas
- **Tennessee** – 3.00 risk ratio in Identification and Educational Environments and 2.0 risk ratio in Discipline
- **Alabama** – 3.00 risk ratio in Educational Environments, 4.0 risk ratio in Identification, and 5.0 risk ratio in Discipline

Nine LEAs were identified by OSEEL as experiencing significant disproportionality in 2024-2025.

- In seven of the nine LEAs, disability identification was the area of significant disproportionality:
- Two LEAs based on over-identification of white students with intellectual disabilities
- Two LEAs based on over-identification of Black or African American students with intellectual disabilities
- Two LEAs based on over-identification of white students with Specific Learning Disabilities
- One LEA based on over-identification of white students as students with Other Health Impairments and Emotional Disabilities
- Of the nine LEAs identified with significant disproportionality, six LEAs enroll total student populations under 4,000 students and three had total student enrollments of 12,000 or more.
- The remaining two LEAs were identified as meeting the criteria for significant disproportionality based on disciplinary removals of Black or African American students with disabilities.
- Both LEAs where student discipline was the identified area of significant disproportionality enroll over 40,000 total students.

OSEEL's Fiscal Monitoring Manual (2023) outlines LEA requirements for the use of coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) and CCEIS. LEAs who have not been identified with significant disproportionality under the state's risk ratio and thresholds may voluntarily set aside up to 15 percent of their IDEA-B funds annually to provide CEIS to students in kindergarten through grade 12 who are not presently identified as needing special education, but who do need additional academic and/or behavioral supports to be successful in the general education setting. Allowable use of these funds includes provision of professional development for teachers and staff to provide academic or behavioral interventions and

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<sup>400</sup> "Significant Disproportionality: Questions and Answers." U.S. Office of Special Education Programs. March 8, 2017. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/significant-disproportionality-qa-03-08-17.pdf>

<sup>401</sup> "Significant Disproportionality and Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS)/Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS)." Kentucky Department of Education. March 17, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Pages/CEIS.aspx>

provision of educational and behavioral evaluations, services, and supports.<sup>402</sup> OSEEL maintains a live form on its web site for LEAs to indicate a voluntary set aside of CEIS funds.

If a LEA demonstrates significant disproportionality under the state's risk ratio and 3.00 threshold, upon notification of the presence of significant disproportionality, the LEA is required to set aside 15 percent of its IDEA funds by August 1<sup>st</sup> of the year immediately following the notification. The LEA is required to identify and address the factors contributing to significant disproportionality such as access to scientifically based instruction or the LEA's policies, procedures, or practices. Funds may also be used to provide professional development and educational or behavioral services to students in kindergarten through grade 12 including students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities who need additional support to access the general education setting.<sup>403</sup> LEAs determined to be significantly disproportionate are required to complete the following activities:

- CCEIS Improvement Plan
- CCEIS Strategic Quarterly Plan
- KDE Policy, Practice, and Procedure Review Matrix
- KDE CCEIS Funding Matrix
- CCEIS Flagging in Infinite Campus
- If the LEA was significantly disproportionate in Identification, the LEA must complete either the IDC Success Gaps Rubric or WestEd Assessing Special Education Rubric
- If the LEA was significantly disproportionate in Discipline, the LEA must complete either Behavior Implementation Plan Evaluation or WestEd Assessing Special Education Rubric

OSEEL provides training and ongoing technical assistance to LEAs who are required to allocate 15 percent of IDEA-B funds to CCEIS activities. A core group consisting of a minimum of three LEA staff must be identified and engage in initial CCEIS training sessions and subsequent related sessions as well as technical assistance activities. LEA staff who participate as members of the core group must represent special education, instruction and/or behavior. Initial CCEIS trainings are held in August and differentiated for continuing LEAs and LEAs who are new the process. Mid-year check-ins on progress are held between OSEEL and participating LEAs in February and March with ongoing Professional Learning Communities focused on the LEAs area of significant disproportionality occurring between September and March. LEAs may also request additional support meetings with KDE throughout the year as needed. OSEEL staff maintain a log of each required CCEIS activity and required submission noted in the list above. Technical assistance and support are also provided to LEAs who opt to voluntarily set aside CEIS funds. LEAs who opt-in to engage in check-in calls with OSEEL, however, do not participate in the activities required of LEAs who are required to set aside funds (e.g., root cause analysis, improvement planning, or professional development).

#### **10.4 Observation: Large LEAs with more than 5,000 students enrolled may require differentiated support from the Department related to disproportionality in special education.**

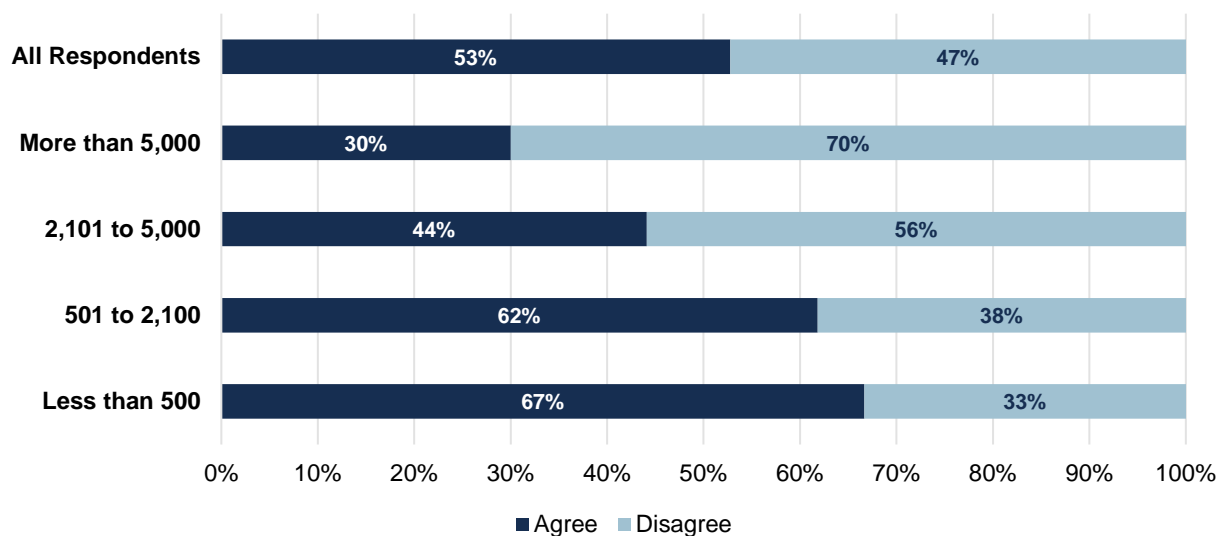
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<sup>402</sup> "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Fiscal Monitoring Manual." Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Learning. 2023.  
[https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Documents/OSEEL\\_IDEA\\_Fiscal\\_Monitoring\\_Manual\\_2023.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/MonitoringnResults/Documents/OSEEL_IDEA_Fiscal_Monitoring_Manual_2023.pdf)

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.



**FIGURE 140: KDE PROVIDES HIGH-QUALITY SUPPORT THAT AIDS MY LEA IN REDUCING DISPROPORTIONALITY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**



Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.

Roughly half of LEA special education directors surveyed indicated they did not agree that OSEEL provides high-quality support in reducing disproportionality in special education. LEAs with student enrollment of over 5,000 students expressed this sentiment most prevalently with only 30% of LEA special education directors from large LEAs indicating the state provides high-quality support in this area. LEAs with smaller student enrollments, however, expressed positive sentiment about the support they received from OSEEL to reduce disproportionality. LEAs who have student populations of less than 500 indicated a 67% satisfaction rate.

Although survey results reflect a notable distinction in perception of state supports for significant disproportionality between small and large LEAs, a review of technical assistance support logs provided by KDE indicate LEAs with fewer enrolled students and LEAs with large numbers of enrolled students have been provided with similar frequency and volume of state technical assistance related to significant disproportionality.

Survey response data in this area may reflect that there are challenges related to significant disproportionality not captured through the current state data review processes, a need for more differentiated support based on district size and need, some degree of each of these scenarios, or some other need altogether that is not currently addressed in the state’s systems.

**10.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should conduct targeted engagement efforts with stakeholders from LEAs with more than 5,000 enrolled students to understand the distinct needs of the district related to significant disproportionality in special education.

**10.4.b Recommendation:** KDE should use data from targeted engagements to identify and improve state support systems for LEAs addressing significant disproportionality in special education and implement necessary changes.

### **Implementation of Policies & Procedures, Technical Assistance, & Professional Development**

OSEEL publishes guidance and procedural support materials on its public facing website. These materials are located on the page titled “Guidance and Resources” and includes links to topic specific sub-pages that address topics such as IEP development, instructional resources, special education data systems, and assistive technology among others.

In total, OSEEL provides 358 unique links to guidance and reference materials. Materials include handbooks, guidance documents, procedural forms, checklists, recorded video training, and links to external websites. Most materials focus on compliance related topics while some address specially designed instruction or educational support strategies for students with disabilities. Figure 141 includes the number of published special education resources by topic area.

**FIGURE 141: OSEEL SPECIAL EDUCATION PUBLISHED GUIDANCE MATERIALS**

Special Education Guidance Documents & Resources	
Topic Area	Number of Resources
Evaluation and Eligibility	63
ARC and IEP	59
Instructional Resources	55
Kentucky Alternate Assessment Participation Waiver	45
Transition Resources	31
SSIP	27
Special Education Resources for Using Infinite Campus (IC)	23
English Learners with Disabilities	17
Participation Guidance	15
Standards and Instruction	12
Assistive Technology	8
Participation in State Assessments for Students with Disabilities	3

Source: Data retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education website.

Guidance documents and materials posted on the OSEEL web pages are reviewed on a rotating schedule throughout each year. These reviews focus on ensuring published guidance is free of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors and verification that embedded hyperlinks continue to function. OSEEL’s Guidance and Support Branch collects data on the most frequently accessed web pages in an internal monthly report that summarizes this information in addition to email and call log data regarding common technical assistance topics and stakeholder communication.

Resources with instructional support focus developed by KDE, however, generally lack the specificity needed to implement actionable strategies within a classroom. There seems to be little prioritization or guidance around the critical points, intended audience, or use cases for linked external resources across the OSEEL guidance pages. For example, the literacy and Mathematics toolkits provide general best practices and quality rubrics for delivery of instruction, such as the importance of communicating learning goals to the student. Effective communication of a learning goal to a student with a disability varies depending on a learner’s profile and disability-related needs. The guidance provided, however, is insufficient on its own to change instructional practice because while it describes optimal practices it does not clearly delineate the context or type of data that indicates when a specific practice is recommended and, in many cases, does not illustrate clearly how to implement the instructional practice.

**10.5 Finding: OSEEL’s state policy and guidance documentation on the KDE website is only provided in English and is not organized to optimize user experience or accessibility.**

- **The organizational structure of the guidance web pages may not be optimized for users who are unfamiliar with KDE resources.** For example, “Participation in State Assessments for Students with Disabilities” contains only three links and each link redirects the user to a different sub-page of the OSEEL Guidance and Resources page. The redirection to various sub-pages may cause a user undue confusion and frustration while searching for guidance or materials. This

experience may prevent the user from locating the information they are searching for due to the level of frustration.

- **Some web-based resources are not current and should be removed or updated.**
- **Updated and current resources are crucial for the elimination of user confusion and reliance on non-governing or irrelevant information.** However, despite a rotating review schedule, some resources were published over ten years ago and provide information that is redundant with more recently published materials, or while technically accurate, do not reflect modern practices.
- **The documents “Staff/Teacher IEP Information Brochure,” “Getting Ready for ARC Meetings: A Checklist for Students,” and “The IEP: A Student’s Guide” were each published in 2003 or 2004. The information for staff within these documents is addressed in OSEEL documents published in April 2025 including “The Special Education Process,” and “Guidance for IEP Development.”** The student-facing materials, while technically accurate and aligned to the IDEA, reference dated practices and technologies such as tape recorders and CDs. Other materials such as COVID-19 response documents may not be aligned to current school and district procedures and practices.
- **Resources for multilingual users are only labeled in English, limiting the ability of intended non-English proficient audiences to locate and use the resource.** While resources related to Child Find and special education procedural safeguards are provided in multiple languages, the documents are titled and labeled in English and it is unclear how a speaker/reader of another language, such as a parent or family member, would be able to locate the materials in their home language.

**10.5.a Recommendation:** KDE should review, update, organize, and condense website materials related to special education for all appropriate audiences, including resources in multiple languages, and ensure all policy guidance and resources are accessible and align with regulatory requirements, research, and best practices.

**10.6 Finding:** The processes for providing special education technical assistance to LEAs and other stakeholders, including parents of students with disabilities, are inefficient and require oversight that slow down KDE’s stakeholder response time.

OSEEL staff provide ongoing technical assistance to LEAs and their staff through email and phone support. Contact information is listed on OSEEL pages of the KDE website. OSEEL staff are assigned as leads for specific indicator and topic areas. Internal guidance and data gathered through focus groups with KDE staff indicate OSEEL staff are expected to respond to a request for support within 24 hours of a call, voice message, or email. In some cases, this response may indicate the need for a longer window of time to research and provide a more detailed response. Specific timelines for responding to a requestor in these instances are unclear. OSEEL staff, however, report they respond to each requestor for assistance as soon as possible.

Written guidance is provided to OSEEL staff to support the technical assistance process, which includes supervisory approvals as needed. Prior to dissemination of a written response to a requestor, all written technical assistance responses must adhere to the KDE Style Guide and be reviewed by a minimum of two additional consultants beyond the assigned author as well as the next-line supervisor. Requests for guidance on certain topics such as shortened school days, charter schools, and mechanical restraint require the branch manager to be notified before a response is provided.

All technical assistance provided is logged by OSEEL staff in a spreadsheet that documents the title of the request, method of provision (phone, email, etc.), topic, assigned OSEEL staff member, and dates assigned and closed. Written responses are cataloged within a Microsoft OneNote technical assistance bank. This bank is available to OSEEL staff to search when responding to future inquiries. Entries are archived after two years and removed after five years. The most frequently cited regulations in OSEEL technical assistance provided are:

- 707 KAR 1:320 – IEP
- 707 KAR 1:300 – Child Find, Evaluations, Reevaluations

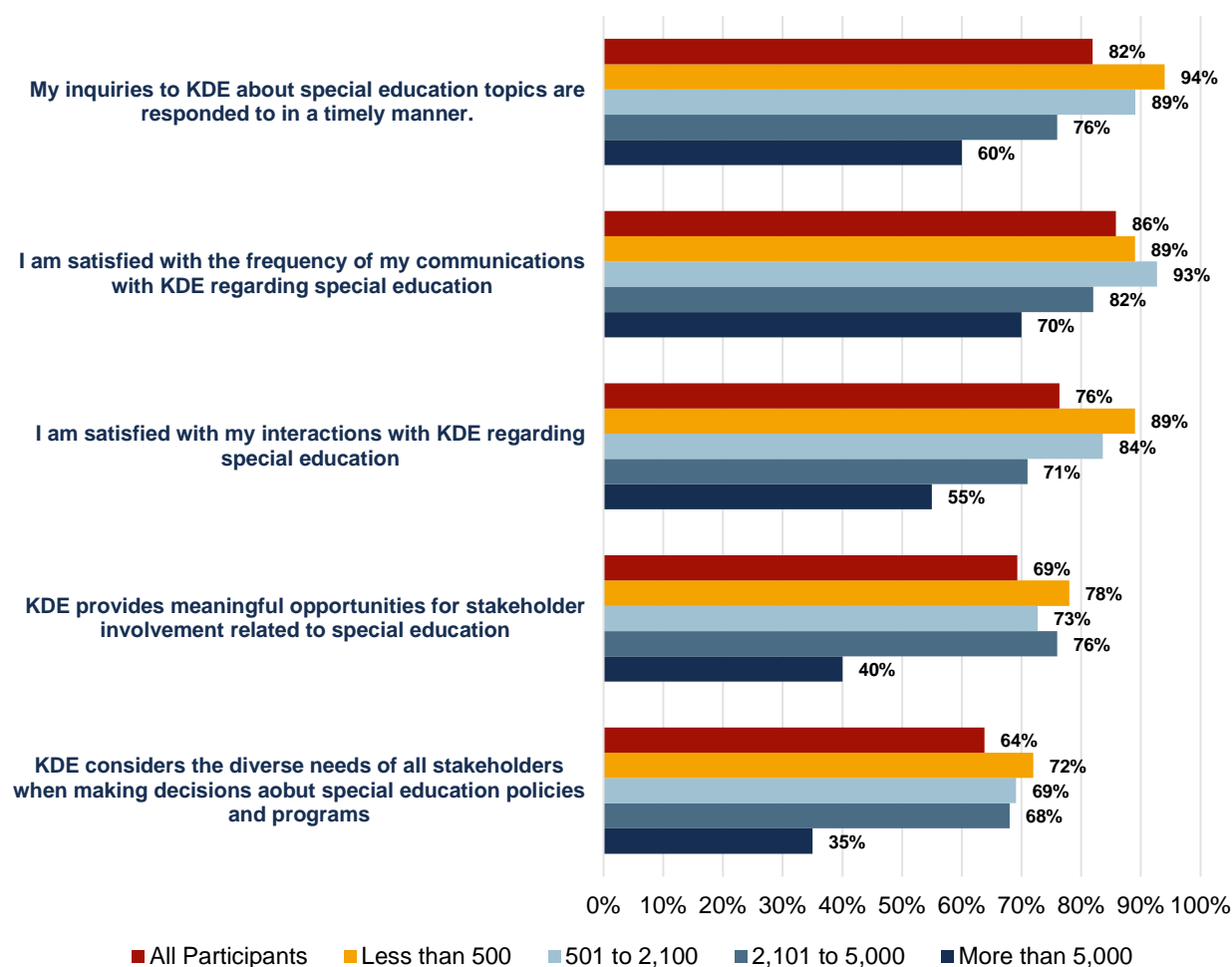
- 707 KAR 1:310, Section 1 (1) – Eligibility Regulation
- 707 KAR 1:320, Section 5(2) – IEP and ARC considerations

Technical assistance is provided to LEA staff as well as families/parents of students with disabilities served in Kentucky LEAs—with approximately 50 percent of inquiries to KDE coming from families and 50 percent of inquiries from LEA staff members. OSEEL staff provide approximately 40 pieces of written guidance to stakeholders per month. Between November 2023 and November 2024, OSEEL staff logged 1,396 technical assistance responses to stakeholders with 931 responses (approximately 68 percent) related to the requirements of IDEA.

Additionally, a weekly publication for directors of special education, “News You Can Use,” is provided on a SharePoint site for directors. The purpose is to provide information for directors so they can follow up if needed. All OSEEL divisions can provide submissions to “News You Can Use” by submitting materials to their leadership for approval. These submissions are then provided to the division’s communication lead to be inputted into an internal OneNote document for review by senior staff. Senior staff then formats the newsletter and provides the final copy to the Associate Commissioner for dissemination. There is also an OSEEL Quarterly Newsletter that includes updates for statewide stakeholders. Indicator or content/topic leads can submit materials for this newsletter through their Branch Manager during weekly meetings.

LEA special education directors were surveyed regarding their perceptions of interactions with KDE regarding special education. Survey items asked LEA special education directors to identify the degree to which they perceived KDE support to be timely and impactful. Results of survey responses are summarized in Figure 142.

FIGURE 142: SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTORS INTERACTIONS WITH KDE



Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.

Three quarters of special education directors are satisfied with their interactions with KDE regarding special education. Overall, 64% of survey respondents indicated they perceive KDE considers the diverse needs of all stakeholders when making decisions about special education policies and programs. LEA directors in LEAs with student enrollment under 500 students expressed the greatest level of positive satisfaction in this area. Directors in larger LEAs with student enrollment of over 5,000, however, expressed far lower agreement in this area, with only 35% of directors in large LEAs expressing they believe KDE considers the diverse needs of all stakeholders in its decision making.

**10.6.a Recommendation:** KDE should develop an improved system for tracking special-education-related communications and storing vetted or cataloged responses. Microsoft OneNote is not designed to be a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or information database. OSEEL should implement tools, such as a CRM, to streamline the documentation of communication with stakeholders and manage an easily searchable database of vetted/approved responses to common inquiry topics.

**10.6.b Recommendation:** KDE should revise the internal requirement for KDE to peer review special education guidance by multiple staff members by reducing the number of reviews needed before issuing stakeholder guidance when requested. When using previously disseminated guidance from a shared bank of information, staff should verify the existing guidance aligns to the requestor’s need, and if so, provide the guidance. Requirements for multiple rounds of peer and managerial review of previously vetted materials

are not needed. Peer review can be an effective method for quality assuring materials and information accuracy and should be used when developing extended guidance for statewide consumption such as technical assistance manuals, training materials, or state policy documents.

- **New inquiries for which existing guidance is unavailable are a reasonable circumstance for managerial review and approval.** In cases where inquiries do not align with existing KDE guidance or are complex in nature, a collaborative approach is best. In these cases, KDE staff should draft guidance, review that guidance with the appropriate managerial staff and provide a response to the requestor in a reasonable amount of time.
- **KDE staff should maintain frequent communication with LEA staff about open inquiries that require research and response beyond the expected 24-hour turnaround time until such time as the request for information has been completed and provided to the requestor.**

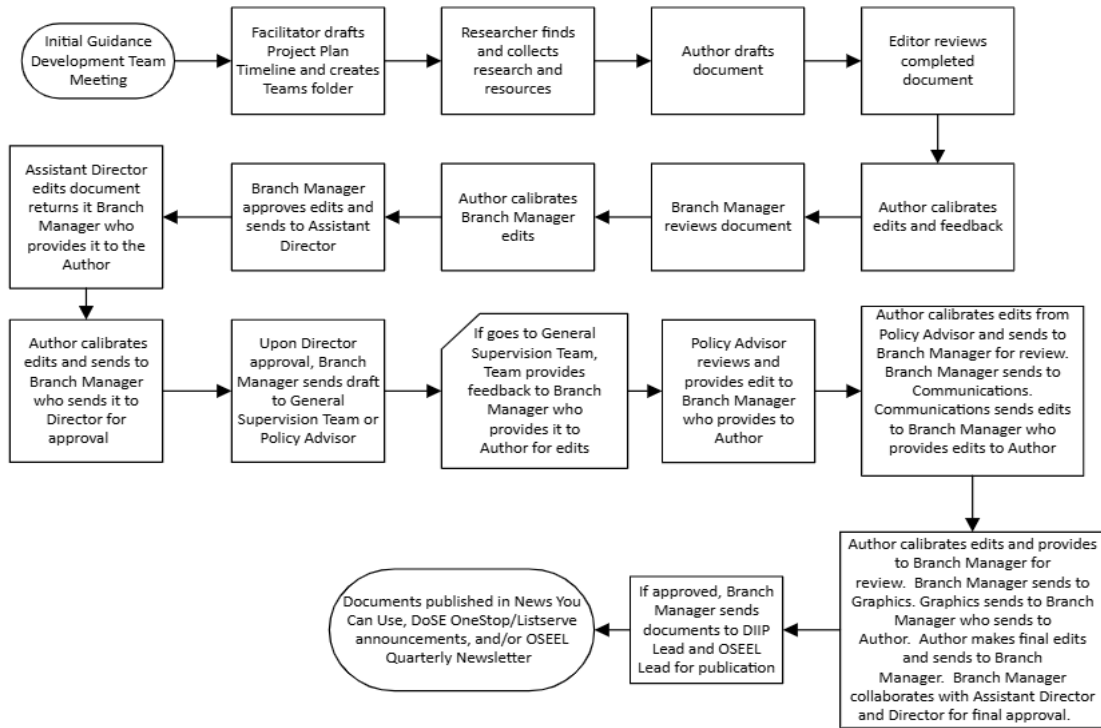
**10.6.c Recommendation: KDE should conduct targeted engagement efforts, such as focus groups or listening sessions with special education stakeholders, in LEAs with student enrollment populations larger than 5,000 to gather more information about large district support needs. Use data gathered through targeted engagements to identify continuous improvement areas related to state support systems for LEAs and implement any changes needed to provide such support.**

**10.7 Finding: KDE technical assistance and professional development on special education topics do not adequately meet the needs of state stakeholders.** KDE's internal process for developing and publishing new resource materials does not support timely provision of guidance to stakeholders and includes unnecessary procedures and internal controls.

General guidance is also disseminated using OSEEL quarterly newsletters and formal KDE communications channels such as Listservs. Dissemination of communications through these channels requires several layers of supervisory approval before distribution occurs.

Technical assistance to LEAs is used to determine the need for new statewide guidance documents or materials. If an OSEEL staff member identifies the need for a new resource, a fillable PDF is completed that documents the purpose of the guidance and proposal for creating the new guidance document that identifies the target audience, type of material, and communication plan. The proposal is reviewed by the branch manager, division director, and associate commissioner. If approved, an 18-step development and approval process is initiated beginning with the establishment of a project team and development of a timeline. The project facilitator creates a project plan, monitors the timeline, and communicates with the project team and branch manager throughout the duration of guidance development.

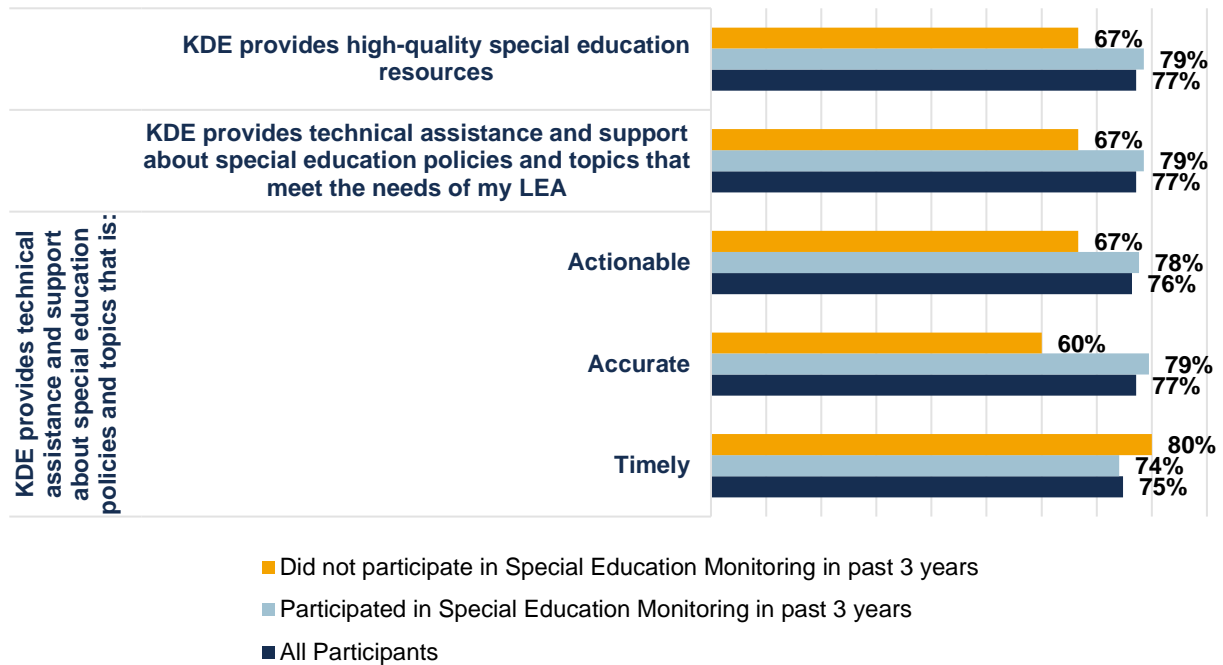
**FIGURE 143: OSEEL INTERNAL PROCESS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT**



Source: Kentucky Department of Education, "OSEEL GSB Procedure for Guidance Development."

LEA special education directors across Kentucky were surveyed to understand perceptions about the quality and usefulness of OSEEL special education guidance and resources. The results of the survey are displayed in Figure 144.

**FIGURE 144: KDE SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**



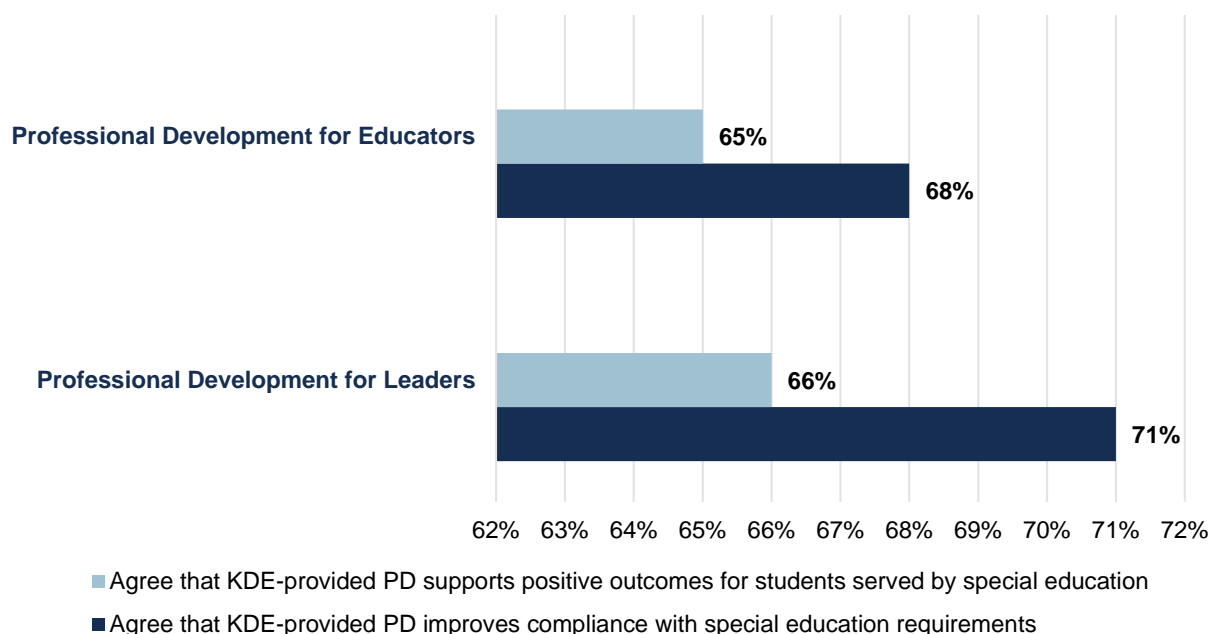
Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.



Overall, 77% of special education directors agree that KDE provides technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics that meet the need of their LEA, and the same number agree that they provide high-quality special education resources. They generally agree that the technical assistance they receive is actionable, timely, and/or accurate. Those that have not participated in special education monitoring recently were less likely to agree with the statements regarding KDE resources and technical assistance outside of the technical assistance they receive being timely.

Similarly, LEA special education directors were asked in the same survey about perceptions of KDE provided professional development related to special education topics. Figure 145 represents the responses of LEA special education directors.

**FIGURE 145: AGREEMENT ON KDE-PROVIDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS IN IMPROVING COMPLIANCE & SUPPORTING STUDENTS**



Source: Data retrieved from the Special Education Director Survey.

Of special education directors who have experience with KDE-provided professional development for leaders and educators, 65% to 70% believe that it improves compliance with special education requirements and/or that it supports positive outcomes for students served by special education. Either 11% (leaders) or 13% (educators) of special education directors did not have direct experience with KDE-provided professional development. Special education directors in LEAs that enroll fewer than 500 students indicated stronger levels of agreement that KDE provided professional development supports positive outcomes for students with disabilities and improves compliance with special education requirements. Directors in LEAs that enroll over 5,000 students expressed greater levels of disagreement regarding the impact of KDE special education professional development.

OSEEL continues to receive a high volume of inquiries from stakeholders—almost 70% of which are related to the requirements of the IDEA. Such a high percentage indicates current guidance is insufficient as a means of informing stakeholders about these requirements. Perceptions of KDE-provided professional learning by LEA special education directors indicates a need for improved quality training for educators related to both support for student outcomes as well as compliance and stronger focus on training topics to support student outcomes for leadership staff. Finally, special education directors in LEAs that enroll over 5,000 students expressed low levels of agreement regarding the quality of KDE-provided professional development related to student outcomes and compliance for both educators and leaders in comparison to directors at LEAs with smaller student enrollments.

- 10.7.a **Recommendation:** KDE should analyze trends and themes related to special education topics from the Department’s customer service communications to identify areas that are not clear in the available resource documents and training materials.
- Revise current guidance related to special education topics as needed.
- 10.7.b **Recommendation:** KDE should streamline OSEEL’s internal process for developing special education-related public-facing resources to deliver more timely guidance materials to stakeholders. Reduce the number of review and feedback loops by including key internal stakeholders, such as policy advisors and supervisors, in initial drafting of guidance and/or conduct simultaneous reviews by multiple reviewers and share compiled feedback to the author to minimize the time needed from concept to publication.
- 10.7.c **Recommendation:** KDE should identify LEA training needs to improve educational outcomes for special education students and provide professional learning opportunities to enhance LEAs' capacity to meet these students' academic needs.
- Conduct targeted engagement efforts, such as focus groups or listening sessions, with special education stakeholders in LEAs with student enrollment populations larger than 5,000 to gather more information about large district support needs.
  - Use data gathered through targeted engagements to identify continuous improvement areas related to state support systems for LEAs and implement any changes needed to provide such support.

### **State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children**

- 10.8 **Finding:** The State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC) does not fulfill its required obligations under the IDEA to advise KDE about the unmet needs of children with disabilities in Kentucky and in the development of statewide policies related to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

States are required to establish and maintain a special education advisory panel to provide policy guidance. Members of the state advisory panel are required by federal statute to be appointed by a state’s Governor or official authorized to make such appointments under state law.<sup>404</sup> In Kentucky, this requirement is fulfilled by the State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC). SAPEC has 21 members that include representatives of different agencies, individuals with disabilities, parents with children who have disabilities, and service providers and administrators. Members of SAPEC are appointed by the Governor and meet quarterly. Public facing documents describing SAPEC membership are unclear as many members have terms which appear to have expired.

According to information published on the OSEEL website SAPEC has five primary purposes:

- Advise KDE about unmet needs concerning the education of children with disabilities in Kentucky
- Review and comment on rules or regulations proposed by the Commonwealth related to the education of children with disabilities
- Advise KDE in the development of evaluations and data reporting to the U.S. Department of Education
- Advise KDE about developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports
- Advise KDE in the development and implementation of state policies related to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> “20 U.S. Code § 1412 - State eligibility” Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute.

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1412>; “34 CFR §§ 300.167-300.169 - State advisory panel.” Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/300.167>

<sup>405</sup> “State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 25, 2025.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/State-Advisory-Panel-on-Exceptional-Children-\(SAPEC\).aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/State-Advisory-Panel-on-Exceptional-Children-(SAPEC).aspx)

OSEEL maintains a website for SAPEC that includes publicly posted meeting agendas, meeting summaries, and video recordings of panel meetings. A review of recent meeting documentation indicates SAPEC has not had a quorum to proceed with scheduled meetings on:

- January 17, 2025
- October 17, 2024
- July 18, 2024

It appears SAPEC has not held a meeting with quorum in almost a full calendar year. The most recent meeting for which public records are available was held April 18, 2024. During that meeting a central challenge discussed was the number of vacant seats on SAPEC. It was noted in the meeting summary that the committee had 12 vacancies at that time.

A SAPEC meeting was scheduled for March 28, 2025, however, no meeting summary or video is available, and it is unclear whether the quorum requirements were met, or whether a meeting was held. A May 16, 2025, meeting date is also posted on the website.

A review of the committee membership roster currently posted on the OSEEL page reflects eight vacancies: four seats for parents of children with disabilities, one seat for a representative of a vocational/transition agency, one seat for a representative from an institution of higher education, one seat for a representative of McKinney-Vento programs, and one seat for a representative of other state agencies. A roster of current committee members is published on the OSEEL webpage for SAPEC. A review of the committee's membership reflects nine seats that indicate a term expiration of June 2024 and five seats with a term expiration of June 2023. It is unclear whether the members whose terms expired in past years continue to serve on the SAPEC based upon the publicly available documents.

The stated purpose of SAPEC, in alignment with federal regulation 34 C.F.R. § 300.169, is to advise KDE regarding unmet needs and statewide policies impacting students with disabilities. A review of past meeting summaries indicates the SAPEC is provided with legislative updates, updates about OSEEL topics such as differentiated monitoring and dispute resolution, as well as public comment. Summaries posted for most SAPEC meetings reflect no feedback on agenda items and no follow-up identified as needed. Given the lack of historic advisory feedback noted, lack of recent meetings, and unclear committee membership, SAPEC is not fulfilling its advisory responsibilities under the IDEA.

- 10.8.a Recommendation: KDE should revise the purpose, structures, and coordination of SAPEC to align with the advisory's regulatory requirements according to 34 C.F.R. § 300.169. SAPEC should advise KDE on the impact of state policies and areas where the needs of students with disabilities are unmet.**
- 10.8.b Recommendation: KDE should implement a transparent tracking mechanism that demonstrates when SAPEC makes policy recommendations to the Department, how such recommendations were reviewed by the Department and by whom, decisions regarding the implementation of such recommendations, and the Department's progress in moving forward SAPEC's recommendations.** When presenting items to SAPEC for feedback and advisory input, KDE staff who are presenting should prepare and include specific questions for discussion and feedback.
- 10.8.c Recommendation: KDE should develop an outreach, recruitment, and training plan to ensure SAPEC vacancies are filled, members are trained to understand roles and responsibilities, and active membership is posted on the Department's website for the public to access.** OSEEL should provide guidance and training to ensure SAPEC members are clear on their roles and responsibilities, including advisory capacities.

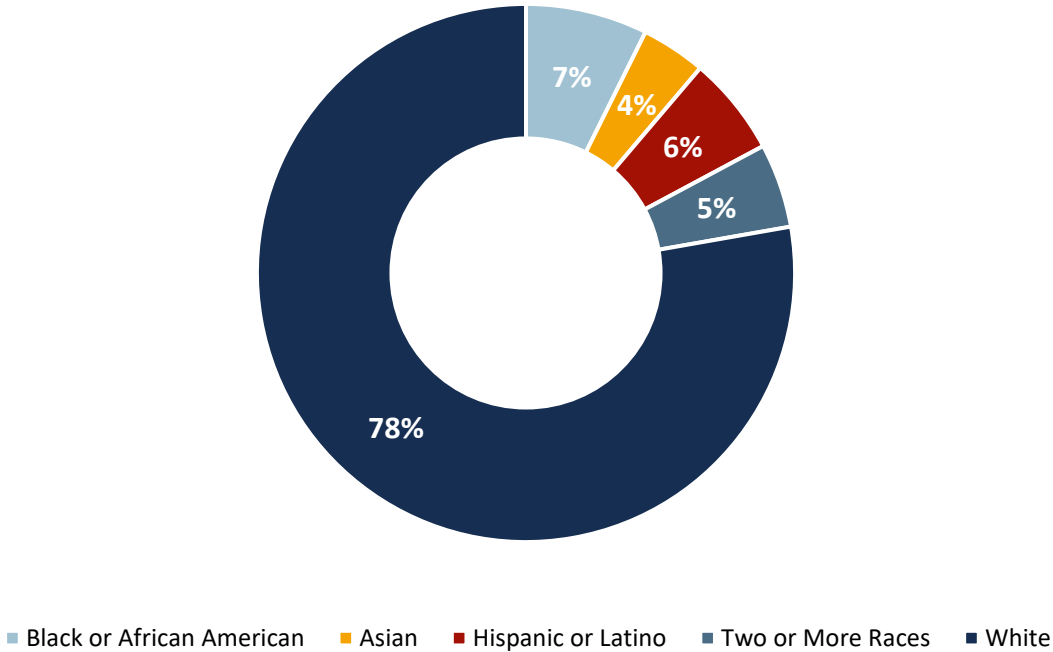
### Gifted & Talented

704 KAR 2:285 establishes the regulatory requirement for Kentucky LEAs to establish and provide programs for students who are identified as gifted and talented, including requirements for policies and procedures, appropriate student identification and eligibility determination, provision of services, program evaluation, curriculum, personnel, budget/funding, and procedural safeguards related to gifted and talented programming. KRS 157.200(1)(n) defines a “gifted and talented student” as “a pupil identified as possessing demonstrated or potential ability to perform at an exceptionally high level in general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, creative or divergent thinking, psychosocial or leadership skills, or in the visual or performing arts.”

### Gifted & Talented Students in Kentucky

Kentucky public schools enroll approximately 88,700 students who are identified as gifted and talented, that is, about 14 percent of total state student enrollment. A review of publicly available data published by KDE indicates the percentage of gifted and talented students as a percentage of overall enrollment between 2021-2022 and 2023-2024 has been relatively stable. White students make up 78% of students identified as gifted and talented while Black or African American students represent seven percent of all gifted and talented students. Hispanic or Latino students represent 6%, Asian students represent 4%, and students who are of two or more races represent 5%.<sup>406</sup> Nationally, about 6.6% of public-school students are identified as gifted and talented. Kentucky presents one of the highest percentages of gifted and talented enrollment in the country.<sup>407</sup>

FIGURE 146: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF GIFTED & TALENTED STUDENTS



Source: Retrieved from the Kentucky School Report Card.

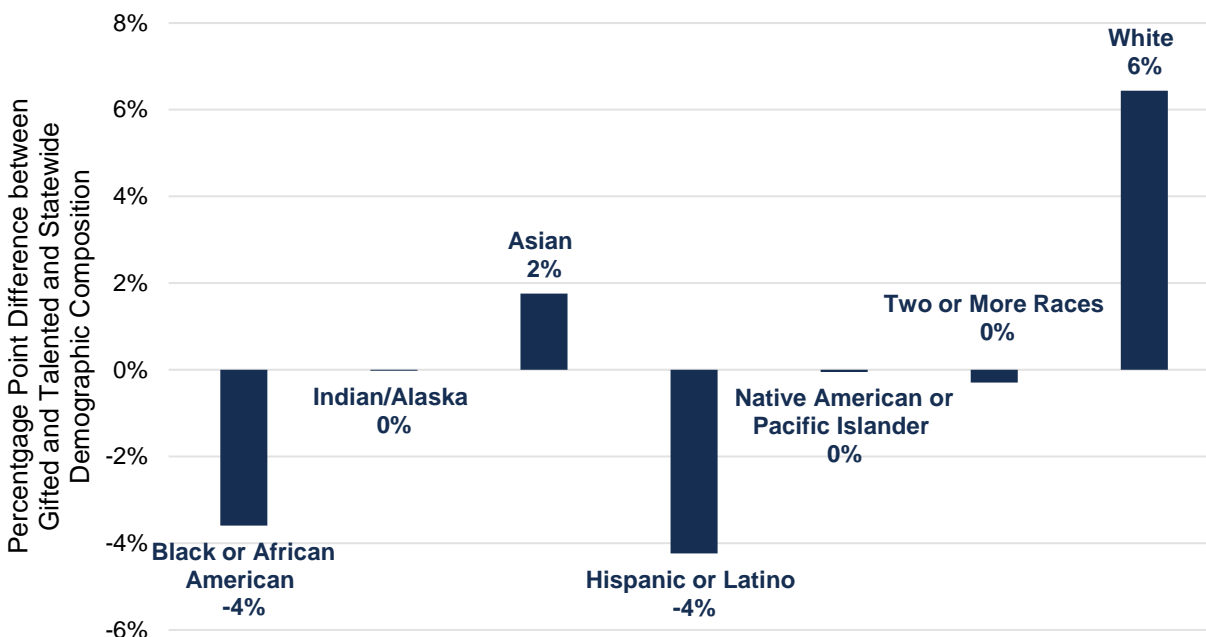
<sup>406</sup> “Report Card Dashboards: Kentucky.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2024.

<https://reportcard.kyschools.us/kysrc?organization=20232024:999:999000>

<sup>407</sup> “Percentage of public school students enrolled in gifted and talented programs.” National Center for Education Statistics. 2024. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23\\_204.90.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_204.90.asp)

A comparison of gifted and talent students to overall statewide student demographics reveal disproportionalities. White and Asian students are over-represented in gifted and talented programming by 6% and 2% respectively with consideration to the overall student population. Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino students are under-represented in gifted and talented programs by 4%, while gifted and talented identifications for other sub-populations are in-line with statewide student enrollment for each respective group.

**FIGURE 147: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF GIFTED & TALENTED & STATEWIDE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**



Source: Retrieved from the Kentucky School Report Card.

### *Gifted & Talented Monitoring & Support*

**10.9 Finding:** The processes for LEA submission and KDE verification of gifted and talented summative evaluation data are insufficient to assess the quality of LEA programming or the effective implementation of program requirements.

LEA gifted and talented programs are monitored annually by OSEEL. This process previously occurred within KDE’s Consolidated Monitoring process. However, over the past year, gifted and talented monitoring has occurred as a standalone process. KDE employs one full-time state gifted and talented coordinator and split-funds one managerial position between gifted and talented and special education to support this program area. The gifted and talented coordinator’s responsibilities are monitoring LEAs, providing technical assistance and training to LEAs and other stakeholders, and facilitating the State Advisory Council.

Gifted and Talented support at the state level vary considerably across states.

- In Mississippi, gifted and talented supports are housed in the Office of Intervention within Elementary Education and Reading. The state allocates a team of four staff that includes an Intervention Services and Gifted Director who supervises three academic specialist staff. This team is responsible for conducting gifted education program monitoring and supporting LEAs with gifted education programming.<sup>408</sup>

<sup>408</sup> “Mississippi Department of Education.” Mississippi Department of Education. <https://mdek12.org/>

- Alabama houses state support for gifted and talented under the umbrella of special education and requires all LEAs to submit an annual review of their gifted education programming plan for state approval. The state education agency conducts a gifted and talented compliance and continuous improvement review for each LEA every five years. Two education specialist staff are dedicated to supporting gifted and talented programming in Alabama. In addition to monitoring activities, state gifted and talented staff provide technical assistance to LEAs and other stakeholders in response to a technical assistance request form published on the state education agency website.<sup>409</sup>

By the first of March each year, KDE’s gifted and talented coordinator reviews the Gifted Education Year-End Report and completes the Gifted Education Risk Tool for every LEA in the state. By the first of June annually, each LEA is required to complete and submit a Summative Evaluation for its gifted and talented program.

This process is completed through a Google Form in which the LEA gifted and talented coordinator self-assesses the district’s compliance with KAR 3:285 requirements by answering 26 questions. One of the requirements of KAR 3:285 is the annual submission of the summative assessment itself. Most questions are answered either “yes” or “no.” This structure is effective if the item assessed is an essential compliance requirement.

However, several aspects of gifted and talented programming such as differentiated instruction, programmatic continuous improvement, or gifted identification processes do not lend themselves as easily to “yes/no” compliance responses. For these types of program requirements, a more comprehensive rating process is needed to determine the degree and quality of implementation. In addition, some items such as whether the LEA uses forms in the statewide Student Information System, Infinite Campus, or school accountability ratings, should be available to KDE through other means. It is unclear to what degree a LEA’s responses are verified or validated to determine whether self-assessed compliance is an accurate reflection of the LEA’s practice.

The state gifted and talented coordinator reviews the results of LEA self-assessments and risk assessments. LEAs who self-identify non-compliance and/or LEAs with high-risk scores are identified for follow-up technical assistance with the state coordinator. A Gifted Education Monitoring Report is issued to the LEA upon the completion of technical assistance. The Gifted Education Risk Tool includes factors such as screening and selection procedures, including procedures for screening and selecting students who are members of historically underrepresented subpopulations in gifted education, parental notification of student progress, student services, qualifications of the LEA gifted and talented coordinator, and professional development among other factors. In 2024, 11 LEAs were identified with high-risk scores requiring follow-up.

**10.9.a Recommendation:** KDE should ensure gifted and talented monitoring includes disproportionate representation. While the gifted and talented risk assessment considers whether a LEA’s percentage of students receiving GT services is less than five percent or more than five percent of the overall state average, this metric does not reveal whether a LEA is over- or under-identifying sub-populations of students in-line with district and state enrollment respective to those groups.

**10.9.b Recommendation:** KDE should limit the number of items in a LEA’s gifted and talented self-assessment to only those elements that are not already available to KDE staff through existing data systems including School Accountability, Infinite Campus, and the Student Information System. Where data is available to KDE through existing data systems or collection methods, those data should be extracted and reviewed through those systems.

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<sup>409</sup> “Gifted Education.” Alabama State Department of Education. <https://www.alabamaachieves.org/gifted-education/>



10.9.c **Recommendation:** KDE should establish an integrated gifted and talented summative assessment method through the statewide Student Information System or other online data management platform that allows for pre-filled data fields, extended response mechanisms (such as dropdowns, rubrics, or rating scales), and upload capabilities for documentation.

10.9.d **Recommendation:** KDE should implement a data validation procedure to verify LEA gifted and talented self-reported data, including randomized sampling of assessment items and review of supporting artifacts, or sampling of LEAs reporting full compliance for follow-up verification.

### ***State Advisory Council for Gifted & Talented***

The gifted and talented coordinator leads Kentucky's State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education (SACGTE). The SACTGE, established in KRS 158.648, exists to make recommendations to the commissioner of education, the Kentucky Board of Education, and the Education Professional Standards Board regarding administrative regulations and education policy related to gifted and talented students.

The council consists of 19 voting members appointed by the Governor and three non-voting members. Representation of the committee includes four teachers, four parents, two representatives from higher education, one superintendent, two principals, three LEA gifted and talented coordinators, one local board of education member, one representative of the visual and performing arts, one member from the private business sector, the state consultant for gifted and talented education, and one representative from the Council for Postsecondary Education.<sup>410</sup> There were two vacancies on the SACGTE as of the February 2025 council meeting. Meeting agendas, meeting summaries, and video recordings of SACGTE meetings are posted on the KDE Gifted and Talented web page. A current list of SACGTE members is also publicly available on the KDE website. Discussion summaries and recommendations are documented in the meeting summary for each council meeting.

### **10.10 Finding: There is no public mechanism to track the outcomes of recommendations from the State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education (SACGTE).**

Recommendations are taken back to OSEEL's state gifted and talented coordinator. Council recommendations are reviewed and considered by OSEEL leadership beginning with the Branch Manager and Division Director. KDE leadership determines the degree to which the SACGTE recommendations are subsequently implemented. There does not, however, appear to be a mechanism by which the SACGTE's recommendations are tracked, where and when follow-up occurs, or the outcomes of such recommendations.

At the conclusion of the April 25, 2024 SACGTE meeting, for which a summary is publicly posted, the committee recommended KDE develop an end-of-year report that addresses how each district gathers recommendations about potentially gifted and talented students, how the district identifies students for gifted and talented, how the district utilizes gifted and talented resources, and what questions districts include in surveys to parents. At the same meeting, the committee also recommended that KDE establish a task force to study the allocation of equitable funding for all school districts, review the language of current regulation regarding gifted and talented funding allocations, incentivize teachers to obtain gifted and talented endorsements in response to teacher shortages, evaluate and develop guidelines for appropriate caseload sizes, and require gifted and talented training for general education teachers. Based on publicly available information about the SACGTE's recommendations, the extent to which these recommendations have been implemented is unclear.

10.10.a **Recommendation:** KDE should implement a transparent tracking mechanism that demonstrates when SACGTE makes policy recommendations to the Department, how such recommendations were reviewed by the Department and by whom, decisions

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<sup>410</sup> "The State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education." Kentucky Department of Education. March 19, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Gifted-Advisory-Council.aspx>



regarding the implementation of such recommendations, and the Department's progress in moving forward the SACGTE's policy recommendations.

**10.11 Finding:** The current use of gifted and talented staffing at 1.5 FTEs is insufficient to serve the identified gifted and talented student population in Kentucky and inadequate for fulfilling the required responsibilities with high quality.

KDE maintains 1.5 FTEs to support statewide gifted and talented strategy, ongoing monitoring, and programmatic support. The Gifted and Talented Coordinator provides external training to LEA gifted and talented staff, ongoing technical assistance through phone calls and emails to stakeholders, gifted and talented data review, monitoring, and follow-up targeted technical assistance to LEAs, as well as coordination and facilitation of the SACGTE. The Guidance and Support Branch Manager is split funded as a 0.5 FTE using gifted and talented funds and 0.5 FTE using IDEA-B funds. The Guidance and Support Branch Manager's duties related to gifted and talented include review of monitoring reports between January and May and quarterly attendance at the SACGTE meetings.

Using data provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics for the 2020-2021 school year and comparison staffing structures for gifted and talented state supports, notable differences exist. Students identified as gifted and talented represented about 13 percent of Kentucky's student enrollment whereas students identified as gifted and talented represented about 6.4 percent and 5.6 percent of overall enrollment in Mississippi and Alabama respectively for the same year. Mississippi employs a staff of four full-time employees to support gifted and talented program monitoring, training, and support while Alabama employs two full time staff for this purpose. Data for Oklahoma during the same time indicates a comparable overall statewide public-school enrollment with about 14 percent of Oklahoma students identified as gifted and talented. Oklahoma employs one full time staff member to support gifted and talented programming in the state.

**10.11.a Recommendation:** KDE should cross-train the Department's staff that guide and train LEAs, such as OTL, on effective instruction principles for gifted and talented learners to support educator training needs.

**10.11.b Recommendation:** KDE should reassign the responsibilities of managing the SACGTE from the Gifted and Talented Coordinator to the Guidance and Support Branch Manager.

# KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND & KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

In addition to overseeing the 171 school districts across the Commonwealth, KDE oversees two state schools: the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD). KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning's (OSEEL) Division of State Schools specifically oversees these two schools. The Director of the Division of State Schools typically works on-site one day each week at both KSB and KSD. The primary directive of the Division of State Schools is to provide informational, technical, and regulatory support to both KSB and KSD.

## THE KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

On February 5, 1842, the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) was chartered with an appropriation of \$10,000, becoming the third state-supported school for the blind established in the United States. KSB is located in Louisville, Kentucky. Since 1960, KDE has had the statutory duty via KRS 167.015 to manage and control KSB.

KSB's mission is "to provide comprehensive educational services to all Kentucky students who are blind and visually impaired." In addition, the school seeks to operate in accordance with the following beliefs:

We believe students who are blind and visually impaired...

- can become college and career ready through world class instruction and services
- have unique needs that must be met
- have a right to knowledge, tools, and relationships necessary to build successful lives
- deserve to be taught in a safe and caring environment by competent professionals
- are meaningful contributors to society

## THE KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) was established by the Kentucky General Assembly on April 10, 1823. It was the first deaf school to be established west of the Allegheny Mountains and the first to receive public funding. The fourth-oldest school for the deaf in the United States, KSD is located in Danville, Kentucky.

At the time of its establishment, KSD was governed by the Centre College Board of Trustees. This arrangement continued until 1870, when the Kentucky General Assembly established a dedicated Board of Commissioners to oversee the school. The Board of Commissioners governed KSD until 1960. In 1960, following a legislative overhaul by the Kentucky General Assembly, the responsibility of KSD was transferred to KDE via the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), which, to this day, manages and controls KSD as mandated by KRS 167.015.

KSD consists of six major departments: Food Service, Health Center, Technology, Transportation, Student Life, and the Library Media Center. Each department is designed and intended to support KSD in fulfilling its Mission Statement, which commits KSD "to equipping Deaf and Hard of Hearing students with linguistic, academic, social, and transition skills to reach their full potential." KSD also aims to operate by its established values:

1. We place students as our first priority in everything that we do.
2. We create safe and equitable environments to foster student development.
3. We respect and promote diversity.
4. We provide experiences across settings to promote social and academic language development in [American Sign Language] and English.
5. We expect all staff and students to demonstrate a strong work ethic.
6. We inspire an appreciation and respect for the history of the Kentucky School for the Deaf and Deaf culture.

7. We build productive relationships with families, districts and stakeholders for the benefits of students.
8. We foster the growth of our students into leaders and lifelong learners.

## **KDE AND KBE'S INVOLVEMENT IN & MONITORING OF THE STATE SCHOOLS**

Pursuant to KRS 167.015, KBE must manage and control KSB and KSD and perform specific functions to carry out those duties. For example, KBE must maintain the state schools' buildings and grounds. This can include KBE requiring reports and information regarding the condition of the state schools from the superintendent. Additionally, KRS 167.150 allows KBE, following recommendations from the Commissioner of Education, to prescribe admission policies, curriculum, and rules for the government and discipline of those attending KSB and KSD. Moreover, KBE may fix and regulate tuition fees and admission terms for pupils from other states. There is no admission charge for those attending KSB and KSD who reside in the state of Kentucky.

To assist KBE in fulfilling its duties, KDE's OSEEL provides support to both KSB and KSD. Within OSEEL, the Director of the Division of State Schools is the direct link between KDE and the two state schools. The Director of the Division of State Schools meets with KSB and KSD employees on a monthly basis to learn what is needed to support job performance and to provide any necessary approvals. The Division of State Schools Director and the Director of Special Education also conduct weekly on-site visits to both campuses to ensure, among other things, that both schools comply with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). KDE's Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) also meets monthly with the state schools' respective fiscal managers to review budgets and other fiscal matters.

Furthermore, while KSB and KSD each have a principal who oversees the day-to-day operations and supervision of employees and facilities, the Commissioner of Education serves as the Superintendent of both state schools. Although there is a process to appoint a superintendent at KSD under KRS 167.017, there is no such process for KSB. The Commissioner directly reports to KBE on the performance and operations of KSB and KSD.

### **Advisory Boards**

KSB and KSD do not have school boards like the other 171 school districts across the Commonwealth. Instead, as established in KRS 167.035 and KRS 167.037, they have Advisory Boards. The KSB and KSD Advisory Boards are not decision-making boards but act in an advisory capacity to assist the Superintendent of both schools by making recommendations concerning the activities of their respective schools.

KRS 167.035 establishes the KSB Advisory Board, consisting of five members appointed by KBE following a recommendation by the chief state school officer. Members serve for four years and until their successor is appointed. The KSB Advisory Board has no membership requirements.

The KSD Advisory Board, established by KRS 167.037, consists of nine members appointed by KBE following a recommendation by the chief state school officer, as well as the Kentucky Association of the Deaf Inc., the Parent-Teacher-Cottage Parent Association, the Kentucky School for the Deaf Alumni Association Inc., and the Kentucky Association of School Administrators. Additionally, KRS 167.037 requires that members be statewide and include two parents of deaf students, one professional in the education of the deaf, one former student of KSD, one member of the Kentucky Association for the Deaf, two representatives of school districts, and two members at large. The majority of the board is to be deaf or hard of hearing.

Members of both KSB and KSD Advisory Boards are to serve without compensation; however, KRS 167.035 and KRS 167.037 allow KSB and KSD Advisory Board members, respectively, to receive reimbursement for "necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties."

## Advisory Board Surveys

The APA conducted a survey of the members of the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards. The survey focused on the roles of the Advisory Board members and their involvement with each respective school, the Charitable Foundation (outlined later), KDE, and KBE. All KSB and KSD Advisory Board members were asked the same questions, and the APA received responses from all current Advisory Board members—four KSB Advisory Board members and eight KSD Advisory Board members.

KSB and KSD Advisory Board members generally believe that their role is just as their board name implies—to advise and provide recommendations. Figure 148 summarizes the survey questions regarding specific topics of involvement and the responses of each school's Advisory Board members.

**FIGURE 148: KSB AND KSD ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES**

Survey Question	KSB Advisory Board Member Responses	KSD Advisory Board Member Responses
Are you involved with your school's hiring practices and salary determinations?	All four members responded no.	One of eight members responded yes.
Are you involved in performance evaluations of your school's administrators, teachers, or staff?	All four members responded no.	One of the eight members responded yes, for administrators, teachers, and staff.
To what degree are you involved in the submission and resolution of complaints from teachers and staff?	One member responded seldom, while the other three members responded never.	One member responded almost always, while the other seven members responded never.
Are you involved in allocating funds for your school?	All four members responded no.	One of the eight members responded yes.

Source: APA, based on KSB and KSD Advisory Board member survey results.

Members from both the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards suggested improvements that could be made to both advisory boards from their perspective and the perspectives of the communities they serve.

More importantly, members provided detailed suggestions to improve the performance of KSB and KSD. Members also relayed, in detail, what various actors charged with ensuring optimal performance at KSB and KSD, such as KBE and KDE, can do to help the schools, staff, students, parents, and those who could become part of either the KSB or KSD community.

## STATE SCHOOLS STUDENT POPULATIONS

All students currently enrolled at KSB and KSD reside in Kentucky. Currently, KSB has 64 students, while KSD has 77. Both schools have an attendance rate of 90% or higher for the 2024-2025 school year. Figure 149 outlines the schools' student population numbers from the 2022-2023 school year to the present.

**FIGURE 149: KSB AND KSD STUDENT POPULATION NUMBERS**

Population Group	School Year	Attendance Percentage	Student Count
KSB	2022-2023	88.71%	70
	2023-2024	88.63%	71
	2024-2025	90.60%	64
KSD	2022-2023	91.69%	77
	2023-2024	92.29%	86
	2024-2025	91.94%	77

Source: APA, based on data provided by KSB and KSD.

Further, while every student enrolled at KSB and KSD has a visual impairment and/or hearing disability to some degree, there are students with multiple disabilities—including but not limited to Autism; Deaf-Blindness; Emotional/Behavioral Disability; Functional Mental Disability; Hearing Impairment; Mild Mental Disability; Other Health Impairment; Orthopedic Impairment; Specific Learning Disability; Traumatic Brain Injury; and Visual Impairment, including Blindness. As shown in Figure 150 below, several KSB and KSD students have up to five disabilities.

**FIGURE 150: KSB AND KSD STUDENTS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES**

Student Population Group	School Year	Students with Two Disabilities	Students with Three Disabilities	Students with Four Disabilities	Students with Five Disabilities
<b>KSB</b> Students with Multiple Disabilities	2020-2021	24	24	9	0
	2021-2022	24	24	8	1
	2022-2023	30	30	11	2
	2023-2024	31	31	11	3
	2024-2025	22	22	8	3
<b>KSD</b> Students with Multiple Disabilities	2020-2021	20	20	8	1
	2021-2022	20	20	8	1
	2022-2023	18	18	8	1
	2023-2024	19	19	9	1
	2024-2025	16	16	8	1

Source: APA, based on data provided by KSB and KSD.

Given each student's unique learning abilities and limitations, every student at KSB and KSD has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which outlines each student's special education needs and how the school will meet such needs. As a result, KSB and KSD teachers are responsible for simultaneously implementing individualized programs for every student in any given course.

## TEACHERS & STAFF

KDE's personnel cap is set by the Office of the State Budget Director, and KSB is subject to a personnel cap of 96. As of October 1, 2024, KSB employs 79 employees, 41 of whom are teachers. While teachers are not required to be able to read Braille due to the availability of assistive devices, all teachers at KSB are required to hold both a Special Education (SE) certification at the time of hiring and a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) certification within four years of being hired. The average salary for a KSB teacher is \$68,868, and 65% of teachers have worked at KSB for five years or more, as shown in Appendix C: Survey Results.

Similar to KSB, KSD is subject to a personnel cap of 127, as KDE's personnel cap is set by the Office of the State Budget Director. For the exam period, KSD employed 84 employees, 30 of whom were teachers. While proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL) is not mandated, it is preferred. Teachers are expected to attain a Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) rating of Advanced for elementary school teachers and Intermediate for high school and middle school teachers within four years of employment to be considered for tenure. Additionally, teachers at KSD must hold a valid Kentucky Teaching Certification in elementary, middle, or high school, with the certificate being in the specific area and grade level of assignment for middle and high school teachers. The average salary for a teacher at KSD is \$68,868, and 67.8% of teachers have worked at KSD for five years or more, as shown in Appendix C: Survey Results.

Most of the remaining 38 non-teaching staff members at KSB and the remaining 54 non-teaching staff members at KSD are not required to possess the above or other specialized certifications as part of their employment requirements. Figure 151 outlines the staff positions at KSB and KSD, along with the number of individuals in each position.

**FIGURE 151: KSB AND KSD STAFF POSITIONS**

<b>Position-Job Title</b>	<b>KSB Number of Staff in Position</b>	<b>KSD Number of Staff in Position</b>
Administrator V, School Counselor	---	1
Administrative Specialist	1	---
Administrative Specialist III	---	1
Administrative Specialist Senior	1	---
Cook I	1	1
Cook II	---	1
Facility Maintenance Worker I	4	1
Food Service Operation Manager I	1	2
Houseparent I	---	9
Houseparent II	4	1
Instructional Assistant	9	7
Interpreter I	---	1
Interpreter II	---	4
Interpreter Supervisor	---	1
Licensed Practical Nurse	---	3
Maintenance Worker I	---	2
Maintenance Worker II	---	1
Maintenance Supervisor	1	---
Mechanical Maintenance & Operations Tech I	1	---
Network Engineer IT	---	1
Nurse/Administrator	1	1
Office Support Assistant II	---	1
Operations Supervisor	1	1
Program Coordinator	1	1
Registered Nurse	2	---
Safety Administrator	1	1
Social Worker II	1	1
Student Development Assistant	4	1
Student Development Associate	---	7
Student Development Specialist	---	2
Student Development Supervisor	2	---
Systems Technician Specialist IT	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>54</b>

Source: APA, based on information provided by KSB and KSD.

### **Teacher Surveys**

The APA conducted a survey of the teachers at KSB and KSD. The survey focused on the teachers' experiences, challenges, and perspectives. All teachers were asked the same questions, and the APA received responses from 20 KSB teachers and 28 KSD teachers.

The KSB teacher survey responses highlighted several key concerns, including, but not limited to, staffing levels and retention. Many teachers felt that current staffing levels were insufficient to meet the diverse needs of visually impaired students. Some noted that high student-to-teacher ratios made it difficult to provide individualized instruction. There were concerns regarding overburdened support staff, including para-educators. More trained para-educators were requested to assist in the classrooms, particularly for



students with multiple disabilities. All the KSB teacher survey responses can be found in Appendix C: Survey Results.

Additionally, the need for competitive salaries and better incentives to attract and retain qualified special education teachers was noted. The responses to the KSD teacher survey also highlighted significant concerns regarding staffing shortages and retention at KSD. Like KSB, the majority of KSD teachers felt that staffing levels were insufficient to meet the diverse needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Teacher shortages were noted as a major challenge, especially in specialized subjects and support services, as well as para-educator shortages. All the KSD teacher survey responses can be found in Appendix C: Survey Results.

## Staff Surveys

The APA also conducted a survey of the staff at KSB and KSD. The survey focused on the staff's experiences, challenges, and perspectives. All staff were asked the same questions, and the APA received responses from 31 KSB staff members and 40 KSD staff members.

The KSB and KSD staff survey responses emphasized many staff members' pride in their work and the mission of each school. At the same time, staffing shortages were a major concern, with a strong call for additional staff in the dorms, food services, and housekeeping, but most importantly para-educators to assist in classrooms. Issues regarding burnout, low salaries, and limited advancement opportunities were also noted. All the KSB and KSD Staff Survey Responses can be found in Appendix C: Survey Results.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The respective budgets for KSB and KSD are established through the Commonwealth's biennial budget process. KSB and KSD receive funding each year from the General Fund and Restricted Funds, with the majority of funding deriving from the General Fund. The total enacted budget for state schools in FY 2024 was \$20,603,800. Budgeted expenditures, as reflected in the Budget of the Commonwealth for 2022-2024 and 2024-2026, are summarized in Figure 152.

FIGURE 152: STATE SCHOOLS ANNUAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEARS 2021-2024

Expenditure by Class	Actual FY 2021	Actual FY 2022	Actual FY 2023	Revised FY 2024
Personnel Costs	\$17,478,632	\$17,893,008	\$17,913,239	\$18,882,000
Operating Expenses	\$1,020,859	\$1,589,702	\$2,776,966	\$1,721,800
Grants Loans Benefits	(\$1,282)	(\$24,482)	(\$35,584)	---
Capital Outlay	---	---	\$137,173	---
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$18,498,209</b>	<b>\$19,458,228</b>	<b>\$20,791,794</b>	<b>\$20,603,800</b>
Expenditures by Fund Source	Actual FY 2021	Actual FY 2022	Actual FY 2023	Revised FY 2024
General Fund	\$18,433,700	\$19,170,800	\$20,149,800	\$20,103,800
Restricted Fund	\$64,509	\$287,428	\$641,994	\$500,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$18,498,209</b>	<b>\$19,458,228</b>	<b>\$20,791,794</b>	<b>\$20,603,800</b>

Source: APA, based on the Budget of the Commonwealth for 2022-2024 and 2024-2026.

Figure 153 breaks down the above expenditures by each state school. For example, KSB's expenditures for FY 2024 totaled \$8,677,600, while KSD's totaled \$11,926,200.



**FIGURE 153: KSB AND KSD ANNUAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEARS 2021-2024**

Expenditure by Unit	Actual FY 2021	Actual FY 2022	Actual FY 2023	Revised FY 2024
School for the Blind	\$7,863,658	\$8,198,259	\$8,918,227	\$8,677,600
School for the Deaf	\$10,634,551	\$11,259,969	\$11,873,567	\$11,926,200
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$18,498,209</b>	<b>\$19,458,228</b>	<b>\$20,791,794</b>	<b>\$20,603,800</b>

Source: APA, based on the Budget of the Commonwealth for 2022-2024 and 2024-2026.

Additionally, KSB and KSD receive federal funding under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-B), which may be used to pay the excess costs of providing special education and related services to children with disabilities. KSD also received Perkins funding totaling \$140,595 during the examination period for Career and Technical Education (CTE). As shown in Figure 154 below, KSB received IDEA-B funding totaling \$170,346 between FY 2021 and 2024, while KSD received \$425,840.

**FIGURE 154: KSB AND KSD IDEA-B FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEARS 2021-2024**

Fiscal Year	KSB IDEA-B Funding	KSD IDEA-B Funding
FY 2021	\$42,572	\$107,027
FY 2022	\$42,438	\$105,648
FY 2023	\$42,668	\$105,765
FY 2024	\$42,688	\$107,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$170,346</b>	<b>\$425,840</b>

Source: APA, based on data provided by KDE, KSB, and KSD.

While KSB and KSD receive IDEA-B funding each year, they also received federal grants related to COVID-19 between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2024, including the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER), the American Rescue Plan (ARP), and the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER).

KSB and KSD both received funds from ESSER I and ESSER II. KSB used ESSER I funds to purchase assistive/adaptive technology for students and staff to conduct non-traditional instruction (NTI) during the COVID closure. In addition, KSB used the funds to purchase individualized technology on a student-by-student basis according to student IEPs, cleaning equipment, supplies, and travel for the Outreach staff. KSB used ESSER II funds in the same way ESSER I funds were used, with the addition of using the funds for a portion of staff payroll, campus-wide cleaning/sanitizing contracts, facility maintenance, security projects to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and personal protective equipment for the return to in-person instruction. KSD used ESSER I and ESSER II funds for cleaning equipment and supplies, technology equipment, travel for some staff, and security expenses.

ARP funds were used by KSB for payroll and for student equipment and devices to address learning loss from COVID closures. The money also: (1) funded payroll and expenses for the KSB Summer Program for three-years; (2) provided furniture and equipment for the afterschool program in the dorms, recreation center, and gym; and (3) funded facility improvements to mitigate the spread of COVID in both the exterior and interior. KSD used ARP funds for education technology, instruction, transition-related support, campus-wide facility upgrades, facility sanitation, and maintenance. Additionally, KSB utilized GEER funds for NTI software and travel expenses to distribute NTI materials to some students. KSB also used GEER funds for software and travel expenses.

As summarized in Figure 155, KSB received federal funds related to COVID-19 totaling \$8,832,070 between FY 2021 and FY 2024, while KSD received \$10,252,400.

**FIGURE 155: KSB AND KSD COVID-19 FEDERAL FUNDS**

Federal Grants Related to COVID-19	KSB Amounts	KSD Amounts
ESSER I	\$924,900	\$1,380,000
ESSER II	\$4,801,920	\$3,526,400
ARP	\$3,084,250	\$5,325,000
GEER 1	\$21,000	\$21,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,832,070</b>	<b>\$10,252,400</b>

Source: APA, based on data provided by KDE, KSB, and KSD.

### Charitable Foundations

Founded in 1984, the Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation (KSBCF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that works “to make a difference in the education, independence, and quality of life for students and individuals who are blind and visually impaired in Kentucky.” While entirely separate from KSB, KSBCF supports KSB through an annual grant and by occasionally funding capital projects.

Grant requests are preapproved annually in April by the KSBCF Executive Director, the grant committee, and the board of directors. Grant funds are allocated to three categories: instructional, outreach, and technology. Teachers and staff are made aware of the allocated budget for each area and have the academic year to spend an amount equal to the grant funds. Once a purchase that falls within the grant fund’s scope is made, the KSB Administrative Assistant seeks reimbursement from the KSBCF Executive Director.

For KSBCF to approve a reimbursement request, funds must still be available, and the purchase must support the foundation’s mission and be supported by a receipt of the purchase. Some examples of requests include educational subscriptions, art supplies for classrooms, field trips for all school levels, and physical education equipment. Reimbursement requests are continuously reviewed and approved until no funds remain for the area to which the request pertains.

As shown in Figure 156 below, KSBCF provided \$1,057,456 to KSB from the 2020-2021 to the 2023-2024 school year.

**FIGURE 156: KSBCF FUNDS PROVIDED TO KSB**

School Year	Amount
2020-2021	\$249,766
2021-2022	\$248,200
2022-2023	\$265,403
2023-2024	\$294,087
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,057,456</b>

Source: APA, based on data provided by KSB.

The Kentucky School for the Deaf Charitable Foundation (KSDCF) was established in 1985 and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that works “to enhance the educational opportunities of students enrolled at the Kentucky School for the Deaf and regional deaf programs affiliated with KSD.” KSDCF supports KSD through awards, small grants, and scholarships. Additionally, KSDCF provides KSD with needed materials, such as art materials for student-development plays, events, and projects, and pays for the cultural and educational needs of students that are not covered by the state budget.

KSDCF’s annual budget is developed by the KSDCF Finance Committee in coordination with KSD’s administration and submitted for approval to the full board of directors every June. The budget typically consists of broad categories for which funds will be set aside, including but not limited to dormitories, athletics/recreational programs, school activities, scholarships, and high school graduations. In addition, teachers can submit funding requests for purchases that fall outside the categorized budget. KSDCF works to fulfill these requests within budget constraints.

In recent years, KSDCF has provided KSD students with new bedding for the dormitories, industry-leading fan installation in the gymnasium, classroom materials, and other classroom and extracurricular expenditures. KSDCF has also supported program activities, such as student life, athletics, instruction, and the annual Family Learning Vacation Program, and raised a significant portion of the funds needed to repair the campus pool. As shown below in Figure 157, KSDCF provided KSD with \$15,110 from the 2020-2021 to the 2023-2024 school year.

**FIGURE 157: KSDCF FUNDS PROVIDED TO KSD**

School Year	Amount
2020-2021	\$2,075
2021-2022	\$1,035
2022-2023	\$7,016
2023-2024	\$4,670
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,110</b>

Source: APA, based on data provided by KSD.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

KRS 167.015(2) requires KSB and KSD to serve as the Statewide Educational Resource Center on Blindness and Deafness, respectively. This requires the schools to provide technical assistance and resource services to local school districts, parents, and other agencies or organizations that serve children and youth who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf and hard of hearing. Services are dependent on the availability of funding and may include, but are not limited to, assessments; consultations on curriculum; language and communication; orientation and mobility; classroom devices, including telecommunication devices for the deaf and hard of hearing and Braille for the blind and visually impaired; assistive technology; professional development; and program development and implementation.

During the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, approximately 30% of districts served by KSB did not have a teacher of the visually impaired (TVI), or the teacher was still enrolled in a TVI personnel preparation training program. This percentage grew to approximately 47% for the 2023-2024 school year. As shown in Figure 158, both KSB and KSD Outreach have served well over the majority of districts in the Commonwealth over the past four years.

**FIGURE 158: KSB AND KSD OUTREACH DISTRICTS SERVED**

School Year	Number of Districts Served by KSB	Number of Districts Served by KSD
2020-2021	---*	139
2021-2022	100	138
2022-2023	100	152
2023-2024	144	152

\*Data was unavailable for KSB for the 2020-2021 school year. Source: APA, based on information provided by KSB and KSD.

### Kentucky School for the Blind Outreach

The KSB Outreach Department consists of the Kentucky Instructional Materials and Resource Center (KIMRC), statewide regionally based outreach consultants providing services to local school districts, students, and families, and a Short-Term/Course program at KSB. The KSB Outreach Department reduces barriers to learning associated with vision loss. It enables students with visual impairments to access the general curriculum, the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, and the Expanded Core Curriculum. KSB's Outreach Department has Outreach Consultants who partner with Kentucky's Special Education Cooperatives to help facilitate resources for local school districts and visually impaired students across the state.

In addition to other programs, KSB Outreach offers clinical low-vision evaluations to Kentucky students with visual impairments. The clinical low vision evaluation aims to determine whether an individual with low

vision can benefit from optical and non-optical devices and adaptive techniques to enhance visual functioning. KSB’s Short Course Program, a nationally recognized model program, also provides students who are blind and visually impaired with the opportunity to receive direct and intensive instruction tailored to their vision needs. The program allows students to remain enrolled in their home district while participating in the program on the KSB campus for up to 12 weeks in a school year. Figure 159 below summarizes the number of students enrolled and served by KSB in the Short Course program and Low Vision Clinic from the 2020-2021 to 2024-2025 school years.

**FIGURE 159: KSB SHORT COURSE PROGRAM AND LOW VISION CLINIC PARTICIPATION**

School year	KSB Short Course Program Students Participating	KSB Low Vision Clinic Students Participating
2020-2021	25	43
2021-2022	27	47
2022-2023	15	53
2023-2024	22	56

Source: APA, based on information provided by KSB.

### **Kentucky School for the Deaf Outreach**

KSD Outreach supports Kentucky students ages three to 21 at KSD and across the state who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Like KSB, KSD Outreach has Educational Consultants across Kentucky who provide technical assistance to families and districts of students with hearing loss. Technical assistance is available for evaluations, educational programming, classroom adaptations, interpreting, communication, hearing technology supports, and meaningful inclusionary practices. Services are provided through KDE at no cost to districts.

KSD also offers services and provides resources directly to families. Opportunities for family support each year have included the Family Learning Vacation weekend event, online sign language classes, parent information sessions at regional student events, and resources available to parents through the lending library. The number of family supports provided by KSD from the 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 school years is outlined below in Figure 160.

**FIGURE 160: KSD FAMILY SUPPORTS**

School Year	Number of Family Supports
2021-2022	438
2022-2023	505
2023-2024	367

Source: APA, based on data provided by KSD.

#### **11.1 Finding: KBE and KDE lack involvement with KSB and KSD.**

A consistent theme arose from the team’s work throughout this examination: KBE and KDE do not pay sufficient attention to the needs of KSB and KSD.

*The current organizational structure is causing KSB and KSD to slip through the cracks.*

As previously discussed, KBE is responsible for managing KSB and KSD, pursuant to KRS 167.015. KBE is the only school board that the state schools have. And because KSD has not formally appointed a superintendent, as mandated by KRS 167.017, and KSB has no such equivalent formal process, the Commissioner is the individual ultimately responsible for serving in the superintendent role for the state schools.

However, neither KBE nor the Commissioner execute those roles in a manner similar to how the roles would normally work at a district level, especially regarding two-way communication and effort. The direct link between KDE and the two state schools is the Director of the Division of State Schools within KDE’s OSEEL. The Associate Commissioner of OSEEL described KDE as the central office for the state schools, providing

direct support to each; however, some challenges come with that. The findings outlined below, along with the thoughts expressed by those surveyed within KSB and KSD, indicate that KBE and KDE are not putting as much effort into managing KSB and KSD as they should.

*Attentiveness to the thoughts of all KSB and KSD employees and personnel would help shed light on what KBE and KDE need to do.*

One mechanism that KBE and KDE can use to understand the needs of KSB and KSD better is what the team did here—circulating detailed surveys to KSB and KSD administrators and personnel on a consistent basis, allowing for the free expression of thoughts, concerns, and solutions to identified problems. As evidenced by the responses the team received, KBE and KDE can learn a great deal about what should be done to better serve the KSB and KSD communities by directly engaging with those communities on a more regular basis and at a more granular level.

For example, survey responses found that over 37% of KSB teachers and staff are unaware of the support KBE provides to the school, and that more than 44% of KSD teachers and staff are dissatisfied with the support KBE provides to the school. Other responses indicated a belief that KBE has no interaction with KSD aside from graduation. Those surveyed also expressed concerns that KBE often causes delays in fulfilling needs because they are not only serving KSB and KSD but also serving the Commonwealth as a whole.

KSB and KSD teachers and staff were also asked about the quality of communication between each school and KDE and KBE. Of all respondents, 19% indicated that the quality of communication with KDE is very low, and only 3% responded that it is very high. Similarly, 23% of all responses indicated that the quality of communication with KBE is very low, and only 3% responded that it is very high.

Beyond surveys, interviews conducted by the team also revealed a sentiment that KBE is concerned only with “highlight reels” rather than the substantive needs of KSB and KSD. Indeed, KBE board minutes reviewed by the team revealed little to no substantive KSB and KSD matters acted upon by KBE during the examination period. As for KDE, the institution seems to lack knowledge of the formal process for appointing a KSD superintendent via KRS 167.017, and the fact that the law does not even provide for the appointment of a KSB superintendent (something that KDE should remedy with the General Assembly).

*KSB and KSD need KBE to operate more like a true school board for them specifically.*

Unlike the KSD Advisory Board, which requires that the majority of the board be deaf or hard of hearing, the KSB Advisory Board has no membership requirements whatsoever, let alone requirements that at least some members reflect the community the board serves. Additionally, the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards are not decision-making boards, differentiating them from the 171 school districts in the Commonwealth. Instead, as discussed above, KBE is considered the school board for the state schools.

A more traditional school board dedicated to KSB and KSD would allow KBE and KDE to formulate more concrete strategic plans to address issues within the state schools. For example, KSB and KSD have serious staffing needs that, to this point, KDE has failed to address, as KDE’s Division of Educator Recruitment and Development within the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness has not been involved with recruitment at either KSB or KSD. That being said, in the course of this examination, the team was told by employees in the Division of Educator Recruitment and Development that there are plans to visit the state schools with the Office of Teaching and Learning to assess recruitment needs.

Additionally, survey responses revealed a desire for more leadership, teachers, and staff who are deaf at KSD. While teacher recruitment and retention are national issues, KDE must take steps to address this issue where possible. For example, teacher candidates (or others) may not seek KSD out as an employer due to a lack of knowledge about the school or the requirements to work in a facility with deaf or hard of hearing children. KDE could attempt to address this knowledge gap by increasing outreach to teachers and those pursuing an education profession. Outreach efforts should convey to the public the importance of KSD to the Commonwealth, the benefits of working at such an institution, and the support necessary to obtain employment. The same goes for KSB.

The more involved KBE and KDE are with the state schools, the more the KSB and KSD communities can receive the support and acknowledgement they deserve. Additional steps KDE can take to address the issue of teacher recruitment and retention are discussed in the Staffing & Support of the Education Professional Standards Board section.

*KSB and KSD need to be able to act more autonomously.*

If KBE and KDE were to pay more attention to the needs of KSB and KSD, they would recognize that there are also instances in which they should relinquish some control and allow KSB and KSD to act more autonomously. The more involved KDE and KBE are with the state schools, the more informed they will be in determining when to take a step back and refrain from hindering the operations of KSB and KSD.

For example, as described in Finding 10.2, KDE is clogging up KSB's and KSD's procurement processes with its slow responsiveness. This is a serious detriment to KSB and KSD, as it prevents the state schools from obtaining equipment, materials, and other needed resources more immediately to address the needs of the KSB and KSD communities—most importantly, the students.

More autonomy could also allow KSB and KSD to take the lead on addressing staffing issues. The 171 school district boards across the Commonwealth are responsible for setting the salaries of the non-teacher positions, or 18A classified employees (staff positions), in school districts. However, at the state schools, that is not the case—it is the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet that sets the salaries for those staff positions. While the teachers at the state schools are paid based on the Jefferson County Public Schools pay scale, there are no comparable positions in state government for the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet to base the staff position salaries. This results in extreme underpayment for these positions at the state schools (and therefore makes the positions less ideal for job seekers). Ideally, if KSB and KSD had more autonomy, the schools could mitigate this issue by evaluating the work performed for the positions at issue and working with the Personnel Cabinet to set compensation that is actually commensurate with the employees' job duties, qualifications, time, and effort.

Finally, it is possible that a more autonomous KSB and KSD could more effectively address funding shortfalls. At the moment, KSB's and KSD's budget requests—totaling less than \$25 million—are wrapped within the totality of KDE's budget request, which includes a plethora of funding requests totaling somewhere between \$6.5 and \$7.5 billion each year. If KSB and KSD could work more directly with the General Assembly, they could explain their funding needs at a more granular level instead of getting lost in the shuffle of the totality of KDE's budget request. For example, as the Financial Information for the state schools highlights, KSB and KSD relied on pandemic-related funding to make necessary purchases. Since this funding will no longer exist in post-pandemic Kentucky, KSB, and KSD should be provided an opportunity to have a more state school-specific discussion with members of the General Assembly to both foster a greater understanding of the schools' unique environments and communities as well as to address crucial funding needs.

- 11.1.a **Recommendation:** KDE should collect survey data (anonymously, if necessary, to encourage better quantitative and qualitative responses) regarding detailed concerns, thoughts, and proposed solutions for identified problems on a regular basis from KSB and KSD administrators, personnel, parents, and students.
- 11.1.b **Recommendation:** KDE should establish more consistent interaction with KSB and KSD to better understand the needs of the state schools and the communities they serve. This additional interaction should involve not only the administration of KSB and KSD but also include teachers, staff, and students, as well as a greater presence on each campus.
- 11.1.c **Recommendation:** KDE should establish more consistent interaction with the KSB and KSD advisory boards to assist them in meeting the needs of KSB and KSD, as well as the communities they serve. This should include attending KSB and KSD advisory board meetings and ensuring each advisory board has the required number of members to have a quorum for meetings.



- 11.1.d **Recommendation:** KDE should ensure the KSB Advisory Board is comprised of at least some individuals who are blind or visually impaired, reflecting the community the board serves, and seek a statutory change that provides for such representation.
- 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.
- 11.1.f **Recommendation:** KDE should consider the following options related to administrative oversight and operations:
- Formally appoint a KSD superintendent pursuant to KRS 167.017.
  - Administratively appoint a KSB superintendent while seeking a statutory addition to provide for a formal appointment process for a KSB superintendent.
  - Administratively appoint one superintendent to oversee both KSB and KSD while seeking a statutory change to KRS 167.017 to provide for a formal appointment process for a KSB superintendent
  - Analyze whether KSB and KSD should be established as independent school districts and turn their advisory boards into decision-making school boards.
- 11.1.g **Recommendation:** KDE should work with the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet to review the job specifications and pay scales for 18A classified employee positions.

**11.2 Finding:** Improvements can be made to the procurement process for state schools.

KSB and KSD use the Commonwealth's Accounting System, eMARS, in the procurement process. All purchases at KSB and KSD also follow the KDE Procurement Guide, which includes guidance for the procurement processes related to technology (IT), furniture, printing, ProCards, Master Agreement (MA), and not on MA. See the KDE Procurement Guide applicable to KSB and KSD in Appendix E: KDE Procurement Guide.

KSB and KSD have blanket purchases for recurring expenses. These may include utilities, lunchroom food, maintenance contracts, security, office supplies, and general classroom supplies. At the start of each fiscal year, the Director of the Division of State Schools and the principals of both state schools will review and approve each school's fiscal manager's blanket Department Purchase Requisitions (DPRs) for specific expenses, with the amounts directly agreeing to each school's budget. When invoices are received, the fiscal manager at each school will pay the invoices using the blanket DPRs for approval in eMARS using Payment Request Commodity (PRC) or General Accounting Expenditure (GAX) documents.

Additionally, KSB and KSD incur stand-alone expenses, such as information technology and maintenance fund purchases, specific equipment or supplies, and any non-recurring expenses. The process begins with a teacher or staff member submitting a request by email or paper using an Excel version of the KDE DPR form to the KSB or KSD principal and copying the respective school's fiscal manager. After the school's principal approves, the fiscal manager at the school submits a stand-alone DPR to KDE for purchase approvals. Once approval is received, the school's fiscal manager will issue a Purchase/Delivery Order (PO/DO) to the teacher or staff member to place the order. After receipt of the item(s) is verified and in proper condition, the school's fiscal manager will pay the invoice using a PRC/GAX in eMARS or ProCard. KSB and KSD also use ProCards, which follow the same policy as regular expenses in that DPRs are required for ProCard holders to make purchases, and no credit card fees are allowed.

## PROCUREMENT TESTING

The following issues were noted during the testing of 40 KSB and 40 KSD expenditures:

- KSB paid \$26 in sales tax despite having tax-exempt status.
- KSD incurred and paid \$191 in late fees and \$832 in past-due payments. The purpose of one KSD expenditure, totaling \$1,017, was unclear to the current KSD Fiscal Manager, as the expenditure occurred under the prior fiscal manager; however, it was not believed



to be fraudulent. It is still unclear whether the expenditure was beneficial to the public and not personal in nature.

No invoice or receipt, but only the DPR was provided for one KSD expenditure totaling \$2,500.

Additionally, as noted earlier, KSB and KSD expenditures must undergo approval at both the school level and the KDE level for DPRs. As shown in Figure 161, the days between KSB's submission of DPRs and the review by the Division of Budgets and Financial Management (DBFM) ranged from one day to 34 days.

FIGURE 161: KSB TIMELINE FOR DPR REVIEW BY KDE

Date Submitted for Review	Date of Division Director Review	Days Between Submission & Division Director Review	Date of Associate Commissioner Review	Days Between Division Director & Associate Commissioner Review	Date of Budget Review	Days Between Associate Commissioner & Budget Review	Date of Technical Review	Days Between Budget & Technical Review	Date of DBFM Review	Days Between Budget & DBFM Review	Total Days Between Submission & DBFM Review
8/19/19	8/19/19	0	8/26/19	7	8/26/19	0	NA	NA	9/3/19	8	15
3/21/20	3/22/20	1	3/24/20	2	3/25/20	1	NA	NA	3/25/20	0	4
7/7/20	7/7/20	0	7/13/20	6	7/13/20	0	NA	NA	7/14/20	1	7
7/13/20	7/14/20	1	7/17/20	3	7/20/20	3	NA	NA	7/22/20	2	9
7/13/20	7/14/20	1	7/17/20	3	7/20/20	3	NA	NA	7/22/20	2	9
7/20/20	7/21/20	1	7/21/20	0	7/21/20	0	NA	NA	7/22/20	1	2
7/23/20	7/23/20	0	7/25/20	2	7/27/20	2	NA	NA	7/27/20	0	4
9/18/20	9/18/20	0	9/22/20	4	9/24/20	2	NA	NA	9/24/20	0	6
4/15/21	4/19/21	4	4/19/21	0	4/19/21	0	NA	NA	4/20/21	1	5
5/4/21	5/4/21	0	5/4/21	0	5/5/21	1	NA	NA	5/5/21	0	1
7/7/21	7/13/21	6	7/15/21	2	7/15/21	0	NA	NA	7/15/21	0	8
7/7/21	7/8/21	1	7/11/21	3	7/12/21	1	NA	NA	7/12/21	0	5
7/14/21	7/14/21	0	7/15/21	1	7/15/21	0	NA	NA	7/15/21	0	1
7/5/22	7/8/22	3	7/8/22	0	7/8/22	0	NA	NA	7/8/22	0	3
2/22/23	2/24/23	2	2/26/23	2	2/27/23	1	NA	NA	2/27/23	0	5
2/22/23	2/24/23	2	2/26/23	2	2/27/23	1	NA	NA	2/27/23	0	5
5/3/23	5/4/23	1	5/5/23	1	5/5/23	0	NA	NA	5/5/23	0	2
5/23/23	5/26/23	3	5/30/23	4	5/30/23	0	5/31/23	1	5/31/23	1	8
7/10/23	7/10/23	0	7/12/23	2	7/12/23	0	NA	NA	7/12/23	0	2
7/10/23	7/13/23	3	7/17/23	4	7/17/23	0	NA	NA	7/18/23	1	8
7/14/23	7/14/23	0	7/17/23	3	7/17/23	0	NA	NA	7/17/23	0	3
7/14/23	7/14/23	0	7/17/23	3	7/17/23	0	NA	NA	7/17/23	0	3
7/17/24	7/17/24	0	7/17/23	0	7/17/23	0	7/18/23	1	7/18/23	1	1
1/8/24	1/10/24	2	1/18/24	8	1/18/24	0	1/19/24	1	1/19/24	0	11
2/20/24	3/19/24	28	3/24/24	5	3/25/24	1	NA	NA	3/25/24	0	34
3/28/24	4/4/24	7	4/8/24	4	4/11/24	3	NA	NA	4/12/24	1	15
4/23/24	5/1/24	8	5/6/24	5	5/7/24	1	NA	NA	5/7/24	0	14

Source: APA, based on documentation provided by KSB and eMARS.

The days between KSD’s submission of DPRs and the review by DBFM ranged from the same day to 30 days, as shown in Figure 162.

FIGURE 162: KSD TIMELINE FOR DPR REVIEW BY KDE

Date Submitted for Review	Date of Division Director Review	Days Between Submission & Division Director Review	Date of Assoc. Commissioner Review	Days Between Division Director & Assoc. Commissioner Review	Date of Budget Review	Days Between Assoc. Commissioner & Budget Review	Date of Tech. Review	Days Between Budget & Technical Review	Date of DBFM Review	Days Between Tech. Review & DBFM Review	Total Days Between Submission & DBFM Review
7/2/19	7/2/19	0	7/11/19	9	7/11/19	0	N/A	N/A	7/11/19	N/A	9
9/21/20	9/22/20	1	9/22/20	0	9/24/20	2	N/A	N/A	9/24/20	N/A	3
9/23/20	9/23/20	0	9/28/20	5	9/29/20	1	N/A	N/A	9/29/20	N/A	6
11/23/20	11/23/20	0	11/30/20	7	11/30/20	0	N/A	N/A	12/3/20	N/A	10
11/23/20	11/23/20	0	11/30/20	7	11/30/20	0	N/A	N/A	12/3/20	N/A	10
4/19/21	4/19/21	0	4/19/21	0	4/19/21	0	N/A	N/A	4/20/21	N/A	1
8/17/21	8/18/21	1	8/20/21	2	8/23/21	3	N/A	N/A	8/23/21	N/A	6
9/6/22	9/6/22	0	9/6/22	0	9/6/22	0	N/A	N/A	9/6/22	N/A	0
7/20/23	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	N/A	N/A	7/20/23	N/A	0
7/20/23	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	N/A	N/A	7/20/23	N/A	0
7/20/23	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	N/A	N/A	7/20/23	N/A	0
7/20/23	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	N/A	N/A	7/20/23	N/A	0
7/20/23	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	7/20/23	0	N/A	N/A	7/20/23	N/A	0
11/14/23	11/14/23	0	11/21/23	7	11/22/23	1	N/A	N/A	11/30/23	0	16
11/20/23	11/27/23	7	11/29/23	2	11/29/23	0	12/1/23	2	12/20/23	0	30
12/18/23	12/19/23	1	1/3/24	15	1/3/24	0	1/3/24	0	1/8/24	0	21
3/13/24	3/18/24	5	3/18/24	0	3/19/24	1	N/A	N/A	3/19/24	N/A	6

Source: APA, based on documentation provided by KSD and eMARS.

In interviews, several employees at KSB and KSD expressed concerns regarding the long wait times for approvals in the procurement process. Additionally, teachers and staff at both schools were asked in a survey whether they were satisfied, on average, with the amount of time it takes to request and receive items/services. While 10% of teachers and 9.7% of staff at KSB reported being unsatisfied with the time it takes to request and receive items/services, as shown in Figure 163, 82.1% of teachers and 60% of staff at KSD are not satisfied.

**FIGURE 163: KSB & KSD EMPLOYEES UNSATISFIED WITH THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

Responses	Percentage Unsatisfied
KSB Teacher Responses	10.0%
KSB Staff Responses	9.7%
KSD Teacher Responses	82.1%
KSD Staff Responses	60.0%

Source: APA, based on survey responses from teachers and staff from KSB and KSD.

KSD survey responses run in stark contrast to the opinion of the school's fiscal manager, who finds the procurement process to be efficient with a quick turnaround time.

- 11.2.a **Recommendation:** KDE should foster greater communication related to procurement with KSB and KSD, ensuring that any necessary immediacy for approval is clearly communicated to the appropriate personnel at KDE.
- 11.2.b **Recommendation:** KDE should conduct an internal analysis of its approval process to identify any factors that may negatively impact procurement timing. Any unnecessary obstacles should be removed.
- 11.2.c **Recommendation:** The schools' fiscal managers should hold an annual information session at the beginning of each academic year to ensure a clear understanding of the procurement process among staff. A KDE representative should attend these sessions to speak to KDE's role in the process. Clarity and transparency during this session is key to fostering trust and communication regarding any future issues.

### 11.3 **Finding:** Teachers utilize personal funds to purchase essential classroom items.

Based on a survey sent to teachers at each state school, teachers at both KSB and KSD overwhelmingly reported that they utilized personal funds and resources to purchase and/or obtain essential items for their classrooms. Of the respondents, 85% of KSB teachers and 100% of KSD teachers reported the use of personal funds on essential classroom items.

To determine the magnitude of the expenses made by KSB and KSD teachers, they were asked to select a range that encompassed the amount of personal resources spent per year. Figure 164 presents the survey responses of teachers, some of whom are spending hundreds of dollars per year on essential classroom items.

**FIGURE 164: KSB & KSD TEACHERS' PERSONAL RESOURCES EXPENDED**

Amount	Number of KSB Teacher Responses	KSB Teacher Response Percentage	Number of KSD Teacher Responses	KSD Teacher Response Percentage
\$0	3	15%	0	0.0%
\$0 - 100	7	35%	8	28.6%
\$100 - 250	4	20%	12	42.9%
\$250 or more	6	30%	8	28.6%

Source: APA, based on survey responses from KSB and KSD teachers.

Teachers using personal funds to purchase essential classroom items may be doing so because they lack a classroom budget. While survey results indicated some teachers at KSB and KSD were afforded a

classroom budget, most teachers at both institutions reported having no classroom budget at all, as shown in Figure 165.

**FIGURE 165: KSB & KSD TEACHERS BUDGET SURVEY RESPONSES**

Responses	Number of KSB Teacher Responses	Number of KSD Teacher Responses
Yes	6	4
No	10	17
I Don't Know	1	0
Other Responses	3	7

Source: APA, based on survey responses from KSB and KSD teachers.

Some KSB teachers also noted that they receive a budget through the KSB Charitable Foundation. In contrast, KSD teachers indicated that the availability of a budget varies from year to year, and they are told they will have a budget, but it is never confirmed or provided. See KSB and KSD teacher survey responses in Appendix C: Survey Results.

While teachers should always have the prerogative to use their personal resources for the education and enrichment of their students, no teacher should feel obligated to use their own resources due to a lack of funding or an inefficient procurement process. The same sentiment applies to non-teaching staff at both schools, who, as shown in Figure 166, also reported in their respective surveys to utilizing personal funds to obtain essential items.

**FIGURE 166: KSB & KSD STAFF'S PERSONAL RESOURCES EXPENDED**

Amount	Number of KSB Staff Responses	KSB Staff Response Percentage	Number of KSD Staff Responses	KSD Staff Response Percentage
\$0	11	35.5%	15	37.5%
\$0 - 100	17	54.8%	13	32.5%
\$100 - 250	2	6.5%	5	12.5%
\$250 or more	1	3.2%	7	17.5%

Source: APA, based on survey responses from KSB and KSD staff.

**11.3.a Recommendation:** With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should review their respective process for budgeting to determine whether additional funding is available to assist teachers and staff with the purchase of essential items. Methods of assistance could include designated classroom stipends and/or a reimbursement process (separate from the processes associated with the schools' charitable foundations).

**11.3.b Recommendation:** With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should make efforts to inform their employees of their respective schools' budgets on an annual basis via informational sessions, regardless of whether either of the above suggestions is possible. Employee awareness of the fiscal budget (and its constraints) should promote transparency and informed purchasing, as well as help alleviate any misconception that money is being withheld for arbitrary or unexplained reasons.

#### **11.4 Finding:** KSB and KSD have an informal complaint process.

The complaint process at both KSB and KSD is informal. A formal complaint process is essential in schools, as it fosters a safe and respectful environment where concerns are heard, addressed fairly, and utilized as opportunities for growth and improvement.

According to KSB, the grievance process begins with Human Resources, with the investigator varying, to a certain subjective degree, based on the subject of the grievance. For example, if the grievance concerns the principal, the Director of State Schools would conduct the investigation; if it concerns a teacher, the

principal conducts the investigation. The consequences may include, to a certain subjective degree, the issuance of a verbal reprimand or the filing of a complaint with Education Professional Standards Board. However, if a parent has a complaint, the parent is directed to contact the principal, who is supposed to investigate the issue. Complaints investigated by the principal can involve issues such as student behavior, student discipline, or facility concerns. Complaints of a more stringent nature—for example, that their child's IEP is not being met—require the parent to contact KDE.

At KSD, it was reported that the principal sends a Weekly Newsletter, which is open to anyone to respond to with any concerns. The principal was unaware of a process for student complaints but indicated the students had an opportunity to address issues via the student body council. It was noted the counseling office handles complaints concerning sexual harassment and discrimination.

Neither school's process is entirely comprehensive, formal, or in alignment with those established in other school districts.

- 11.4.a **Recommendation:** With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should formulate and formalize a written complaint process similar to those established in other school districts. The process should provide detailed information and guidance on the types of complaints that can be handled by the respective schools and specify which types of complaints should be submitted to KDE.
- 11.4.b **Recommendation:** Take steps to ensure all staff, teachers, students, and guardians are aware of the applicable complaint process to encourage accountability and to promote transparency and trust. Awareness can be raised by holding informational sessions, email blasts, or announcements in newsletters.
- 11.4.c **Recommendation:** Maintain and update the complaint process as necessary.

## PRESCHOOL

Early Childhood is defined as educational programming serving students ages three through age five, including five-year-old children attending kindergarten. Kentucky's publicly funded preschool education programs are available for all four-year-old children considered "at-risk." KRS 157.3175(3) stipulates that at-risk children are those who are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program. Publicly funded preschool programs are also available to all three and four-year-old children with developmental delays and disabilities, regardless of income; and other four-year-old children as placements are available and based on a school district's decision. The preschool program is designed to be developmentally appropriate for young children. "Developmentally appropriate" means that the program focuses on the child's physical, intellectual, social and emotional development, including interpersonal, and socialization skills.<sup>411</sup> As of December 1, 2024, Kentucky served 7,899 at-risk general education preschool children and 10,938 preschool children who qualified for special education.<sup>412</sup>

Other types of Early Childhood programs available to children in Kentucky include federally funded Head Start programs, licensed child-care centers, private preschool programs, and certified family childcare providers. KDE is not the designated state regulatory agency overseeing the implementation of these early learning programs.<sup>413</sup>

## OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION & EARLY LEARNING

The School Readiness Branch within the Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool is responsible for monitoring and providing programmatic support to preschool programs for at-risk and children with disabilities. The Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool is a division of OSEEL. More information about the organizational structure and other areas supported by OSEEL is in the Exceptional Children Figure 167 outlines the organizational structure of the OSEEL Early Learning Unit.

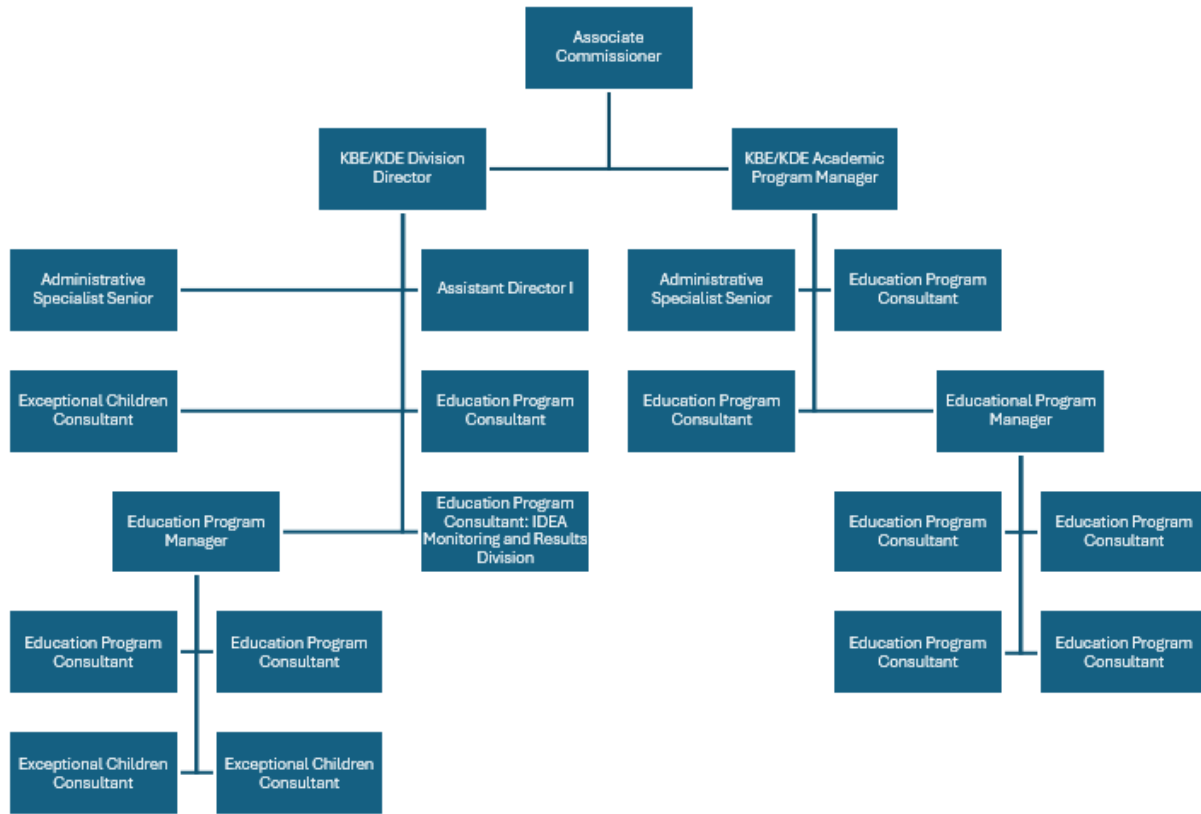
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<sup>411</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 157.3175." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024. <https://law.justia.com/codes/kentucky/chapter-157/section-157-3175/>

<sup>412</sup> "Early learning." Kentucky Department of Education. <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/earlylearning/Pages/default.aspx>



FIGURE 167: OSEEL EARLY LEARNING UNIT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “15-Org chart incl reporting lines & staff counts; 24 -Staffing Levels-FTE & Vacancies by Dept.”

### Preschool Administrative Regulations

704 KAR 3:410 outlines the regulations specifically applicable to the state preschool program and are enforced by the Early Learning Unit of OSEEL at KDE. The current regulations were last updated December 15, 2021, and must be reviewed and updated no later than November 16, 2025. During focus groups conducted with KDE OSEEL staff, it was shared that the current preschool regulations have not been substantively updated since they went into effect in 1990. A review of the regulation’s history publicly published on the Kentucky General Assembly webpage indicated the preschool regulations at 704 KAR 3:410 were first implemented in 1990 and revised in 1991, 1999, and 2018. The current regulations expire November 2025. KDE has identified the need to update the regulations to meet this timeframe and at the time of this report is reviewing proposed technical amendments to ensure these updates are completed.

KDE is required to ensure publicly funded preschool programs are rated using a quality-based system per KRS 199.8943. Administrative regulations at 704 KAR 3:015 require all publicly funded preschool programs in the state to participate in the Kentucky All STARS rating system and describe the quality level requirements. Regulations related to the All STARS rating system at 704 KAR 3:015 went into effect in 2018 and also expire in November 2025.

**12.1 Finding: Subpart 4 of § 4 of 704 KAR 3:410 allows secular, but not religious, private programs to receive state funding, which violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.**

As dictated by KRS 156.160, KBE is required to promulgate administrative regulations establishing standards which school districts shall meet in student, program, service, and operational performance. While this obligation covers a wide range of matters, most important to this finding is 704 KAR 3:410—that

is, the administrative regulation that governs the preschool education program for four (4) year old children. This regulation, as required by KRS 157.3175, provides in part:

Section 4. Interagency Agreements.

...

(4) State preschool funds may be used in a private program if a signed contract or cooperative agreement is on file in the district which documents that:

- (a) The program is separately incorporated from a religious institution;
- (b) The program maintains a nonsectarian board of directors;
- (c) All proceeds and debts are the property of that corporation;
- (d) The program pays reasonable rent; and
- (e) The program's curriculum is not religious in nature.

704 KAR 3:410 § 4(4)(a)-(e).

Put simply, the regulation allows for state funds to be utilized in support of private preschool programs so long as those programs are not religious. Consequently then, some private preschool programs are disqualified from receiving state funding under this regulation solely because they are religious programs.

The withholding of funding to programs solely based on such programs' religious nature, however, is an unconstitutional violation of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled as much over the past couple of years. Indeed, nothing is clearer than the Court's pronouncement:

The State pays tuition for certain students at private schools—so long as the schools are not religious. That is discrimination against religion. As the U.S. Supreme Court has held, a “State need not subsidize private education. But once a State decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely because they are religious.” *Carson v. Makin*, 596 U.S. 767, 781, 785 (2022) (quoting *Espinoza v. Mont. Dep't of Revenue*, 591 U.S. 464, 487 [2020]).

As currently written, 704 KAR 3:410 § 4 directly contravenes the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and therefore discriminates against preschool programs that may be eligible for state funding if the religious disqualifier was not applied. This is an issue which KBE must immediately rectify.

- 12.1.a Recommendation: KDE should strike and/or amend Subpart 4 of § 4 of 704 KAR 3:410 because it allows secular, but not religious, private programs to receive state funding, which violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.** In addition, KBE should consult legal counsel to review and determine the lawfulness and relevance of all administrative regulations within KBE's statutory authority.

### ***Federal Monitoring and Preschool Determinations***

Head Start preschool programs are federally funded early learning programs for children ages three through five whose families are at, or below, the federal poverty line. The federal government funds Head Start programs through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services using a federal to local model in which local organizations apply to become a Head Start grant recipient. School districts can be Head Start recipients, as well as other organizations such as nonprofit groups, for-profit groups, faith-based

organizations, or tribal councils. Head Start programs currently operate in all U.S. states as well as many U.S. territories and tribal nations through over 1,600 local agencies.<sup>414</sup>

The KDE OSEEL Early Learning Unit provides a Head Start Memorandum of Understanding for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Head Start Grantee Programs to ensure Head Start funds are fully utilized and that programs and services provided for preschool age children are not duplicated. Full utilization is defined as ensuring federal Head Start funds are used to serve as many eligible children as possible and that federal funds are not used to replace other state or local funding sources in accordance with KRS 157.3175, 45 C.F.R. § 1302.53, and 45 C.F.R. § 1302.63. Full Utilization, as defined by the KDE Head Start Memorandum of Understanding, is determined based on whether the program meets or exceeds the target number of children established in the LEA/Head Start local agreement. Each LEA's preschool coordinator is responsible to complete an annual certification of Head Start Full Utilization by September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year and submit the certification to KDE through a SharePoint site. Each LEA has a secure folder within the SharePoint site to upload their annual certification. The Head Start Full Utilization form must certify the program meets the agreed upon target number of children or provides an explanation if the number has not been met. This certification is required to be signed by a representative of the LEA and the Head Start program director. KDE publishes the certification form on the OSEEL Early Learning website.

Programs may receive federal funding through Part B, Section 619 of IDEA. Funds allocated under IDEA-B Section 619 are intended to be utilized to support the provision of special education and related services for students aged three to five. KDE is responsible for ensuring IDEA-B 619 funds are properly utilized and that LEAs comply with regulations governing their use. LEAs must demonstrate that IDEA Part B, Section 619 funds are used to enhance services for preschool children with disabilities and are not to be used as a replacement to existing state funding sources.

KDE utilizes the Grant Management Application and Planning (GMAP) system to review and approve annual preschool program applications. These applications must address the state preschool requirements outlined in KRS 157.3175, federal IDEA requirements, and LEA/Head Start utilization agreements. The information collected through the LEA's application in GMAP is used by KDE to issue annual preschool determinations. LEAs are designated as either "Meets Requirements" or "Does Not Meet Requirements." LEAs who do not meet requirements after submitting their preschool program application in GMAP engage with KDE in further program monitoring to verify the reported data aligns with actual service delivery and financial utilization.

Districts that fail to meet the data accuracy or compliance requirements of the Kentucky Administrative Regulations for public preschool, IDEA preschool requirements, and Head Start utilization are categorized into one of three levels of intervention:

- **Needs Assistance:** First-year designation when an LEA does not meet one or more components of KRS 157.3175. If the LEA remains in this category for two consecutive years, it advances to Needs Intervention.
- **Needs Intervention:** Applied to LEAs that fail to meet program requirements for two consecutive years. Continued failure may result in an on-site monitoring visit.
- **Needs Substantial Intervention:** Applied to LEAs that have failed to meet compliance standards for three consecutive years or have been identified through an on-site monitoring visit as persistently non-compliant.

KDE OSEEL may take enforcement actions such as requiring corrective action plans (CAP), conducting desk audits, performing on-site monitoring visits, or withholding funding until compliance is demonstrated. The following enforcement actions correspond with each performance determination:

- **Needs Assistance:** KDE OSEEL may conduct a desk review of the LEA's policies and procedures related to the applicable regulations or require the LEA to complete a self-study.

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<sup>414</sup> "About the Office of Head Start." U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. April 23, 2025. <https://headstart.gov/about-us/article/about-office-head-start>

- **Needs Intervention:** The LEA must complete the activities required under “Needs Assistance” and KDE either conducts an on-site monitoring visit or provides the LEA with an action plan if the problems identified can be corrected within one year.
- **Needs Substantial Intervention:** All actions required for “Needs Assistance” and “Needs Intervention” are required and KDE either withholds funding to the LEA until the problems are resolved or refers the LEA for enforcement action through OSEEL DIMR for noncompliance with IDEA-B Section 619.

Preschool determination data provided by KDE reveals all LEAs met requirements in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

KDE’s monitoring framework reviews whether LEAs are compliant in their use of IDEA-B 619 funds. LEAs that fail to meet compliance requirements after multiple years may face escalating interventions. Enforcement actions may include withholding a portion (or all) of a LEA’s preschool grant funding until corrective actions are completed.

### **Preschool Monitoring**

Preschool programs in Kentucky are monitored through multiple mechanisms. All Kentucky early learning programs, including publicly funded preschools, participate in the All STARS rating system. However, in accordance with state statutes, All STARS ratings are not used for the purposes of compliance monitoring. KDE monitors preschool programs through the agency’s consolidated monitoring process to ensure alignment with the requirements of the state administrative regulations. Federal special education program requirements are monitored through Risk-Focused Monitoring in alignment with State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators associated with preschool.

### **Kentucky All Stars**

704 KAR 3:015 requires all preschool programs to participate in the Kentucky All STARS Rating System managed by the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. The All STARS program is the state’s five-star rating and improvement system for all early care and public preschool education programs. Preschool programs include all Head Start programs, public preschool programs, and licensed childcare programs in the state.<sup>415</sup> Programs that obtain an All STARS quality level of three, four, or five are considered “high-quality early care and education programs.” Based on the 2023 Early Childhood Profile, 2.7 is the average All STARS rating obtained by Kentucky preschool programs--2,502 programs were rated and 50.2% were determined “not high quality” and 49.8% were determined to be “high quality.”

The Kentucky All STARS standards focus on family and community engagement, classroom and instructional quality, staff qualifications, professional development, and leadership practices. To obtain a level three or higher, the program must complete an evaluation using an environmental rating scale. As of fall 2024, KDE requires state-funded preschool programs to use the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) as the required environmental assessment used in the All STARS process.<sup>416</sup>

The TPOT is an observation tool used to evaluate the degree to which preschools implement the Pyramid Model, a three-tiered Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) social/emotional competency model specifically designed for preschool settings. TPOT observations provide evidence about teacher effectiveness in implementing evidence-based practices in their classrooms based on this model. KDE’s Early Learning Unit contracts with the Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC) to provide TPOT reliability training to certify each observer. To obtain the certification, the observer must attend a two-day training and complete an inter-rater reliability assessment by scoring a pre-recorded video lesson following completion of the two-day training. It is required that participants obtain a score of 80% or higher on this inter-rater

<sup>415</sup> “Kentucky All STARS.” Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

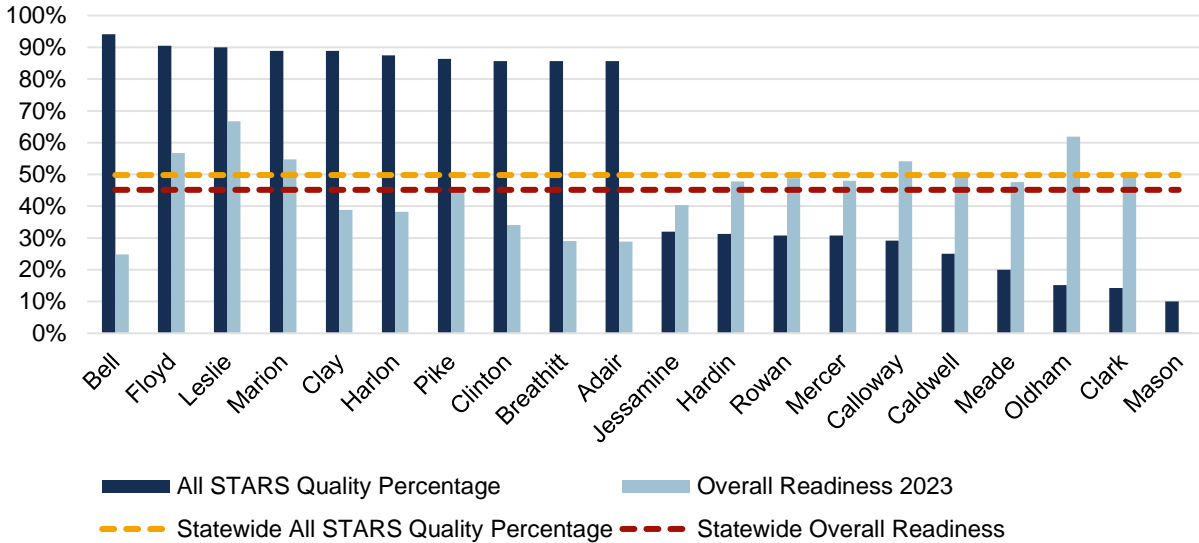
<https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dcc/Pages/kyallstars.aspx>

<sup>416</sup> “Questions and answers related to Kentucky state-funded preschool All STARS process.” Kentucky Department of Education. 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/earlylearning/Documents/QuestionsandAnswersRelatedtoKentuckyStateFundedPreschoolAllSTARSPProcess.pdf>

reliability assessment to become TPOT certified. Certifications are valid for three years after successful completion of the TPOT training and assessment. The Early Learning Unit tracks TPOT reliable observers using an Excel spreadsheet, updates this database following each training, and shares information about certified TPOT observers with each Regional Training Center.

**FIGURE 168: COMPARISON OF THE TOP & BOTTOM TEN COUNTIES IN ALL STARS QUALITY PERCENTAGE**



Source: Data retrieved from KY Stats Early Childhood Profile.

Figure 168 illustrates a comparison of the top ten and bottom ten counties in the All STARS system and overall kindergarten readiness. All STARS quality data from the top ten highest quality preschool programs indicated little correlation with overall kindergarten readiness. Comparable levels of overall student readiness were evident in a review of the ten lowest quality preschool programs in the All STARS system.

**Consolidated Monitoring**

Preschool is included as part of KDE’s Consolidated Monitoring Process. In addition to preschool, the Consolidated Monitoring Process also includes federal Title programs, Alternative Education Programs, and Gifted and Talented. Managed by the KDE Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, monitoring activities are conducted by KDE teams between January and May each year. LEAs are selected for monitoring based on the use of a risk assessment tool. Points are assigned for each category on the risk assessment including general factors such as the program award size, length of time since the last monitoring visit, local audit results, and experience of the LEA superintendent and financial officer. The risk assessment contains three items related specifically to preschool programs:

- Any Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) preschool teachers listed as preschool associate, emergency or probationary certified, substitute, vacancy or other
- Head Start Full Utilization agreement has been developed and agreed upon
- No allotted time between double sessions

When a LEA is selected for monitoring within the Consolidated Monitoring Process, all program areas are reviewed, including those not rated as high-risk. Thirty LEAs have been monitored through the Consolidated Monitoring Process over the past two school years. Kentucky Preschool Program Consolidated Monitoring requires the district preschool program to provide evidence around program structure and personnel, environment, curriculum and assessment, and families and communities. A checklist is used to review the student cumulative folder for items required by 704 KAR 3:410. A review of preschool consolidated monitoring documentation for 2022 through 2024 revealed that ten LEA preschool programs were monitored in school years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Ten LEAs are scheduled for preschool monitoring in school year 2024-2025 with four visits pending completion at the time of this report. Across this timeframe,

as illustrated in Figure 169, KDE issued 13 citations of noncompliance with one or more regulations outlined in 704 KAR 3:015 that required the LEA to complete a CAP.

**FIGURE 169: PRESCHOOL NONCOMPLIANCE 2022 THROUGH 2024**

Noncompliance Area	Count
Developmentally appropriate instruction experience and instruction	4
Maximum group size and required student to staff ratios	4
Adequate break time provided for staff	2
Staff/Teacher Certification	1
Developmentally appropriate equipment and materials	1
Required documentation missing from educational records	1

Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, "Preschool Consolidated Monitoring Information."

The most frequently occurring noncompliance challenges requiring a CAP were the provision of developmentally appropriate instruction and adherence to maximum group size and required staff ratios. At the time of this report, two CAPs based on noncompliance identified within the 2024-2025 monitoring year were in progress. All other identified noncompliance was corrected within one year of identification based on records provided by KDE.

**12.2 Finding: Monitoring procedures for the identification and citation of noncompliance in preschool programs are inconsistently applied and lack needed specificity in alignment to statutory and regulatory requirements.**

A review of preschool monitoring data provided by KDE including consolidated monitoring reports issued to LEAs lack specificity when citing noncompliance in accordance with regulatory and/or statutory requirements. For example, in conducting a comparative analysis of notifications of noncompliance for two different LEAs who were cited for the same area of regulatory noncompliance, one report listed multiple instances in which the noncompliant practice was documented during the monitoring review while the other included only general statements about the practice. During focus groups with KDE staff, inter-rater reliability and training related to interpretation and application of state regulations were discussed. KDE staff reported receiving an initial overview training of state preschool regulations upon hire with the agency, but that, in most cases, additional training had not been provided for one or more years on this topic. Focus group participants shared there is not an inter-rater reliability process for ensuring consistent application of the state regulations when conducting monitoring activities. Further, staff reported that, at times, site visit observations for the purpose of evaluating regulatory compliance are conducted by a single staff member.

**12.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should provide ongoing training to agency staff responsible for implementing and interpreting regulatory requirements for preschool programs. Training should be provided at least annually.

**12.2.b Recommendation:** KDE should develop and implement a process for inter-rater reliability within the preschool monitoring process. Staff should be equipped to evaluate and identify compliant and noncompliant practices with accuracy and consistency across staff utilizing KDE monitoring protocols.



**12.2.c Recommendation:** KDE should assign a minimum of two staff to conduct site visits for the purpose of evaluating regulatory compliance to conduct validation and verification of noncompliant preschool program practices.

Additional detail and analyses regarding the Consolidated Monitoring Process are in the Monitoring & Consolidated Monitoring chapter.

Preschool is also reviewed as part of OSEEL's monitoring of LEA special education programs within the Risk-Focused Monitoring (RFM) process. RFM includes desk reviews, on-site monitoring activities, and Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) when necessary.

Monitoring activities are driven by LEA's level of risk which is informed by the LEA's annual determination and score on a Risk Assessment Rubric. Annual LEA determinations and Risk Assessment Rubric scores are combined to identify the LEAs who will engage in RFM. Once identified, OSEEL staff analyze each LEA's local data to determine monitoring focus areas. Global factors considered are the percentage of students who receive special education and related services, the timely and accurate submission of IDEA data, the experience level of the LEA special education director, and identification of significant disproportionality. Factors with RFM specific to preschool include the LEA's performance on SPP indicators related to preschool students with disabilities—specifically, SPP Indicator 6A related to educational settings for preschool students and SPP Indicator 7 related to positive outcomes achieved by IDEA eligible preschool students. Timely and accurate data submission of the annual LEA self-assessment for SPP Indicator 12, along with Indicator 11 and 13, are included in the RFM risk assessment. SPP Indicator 12 is also used to inform LEA annual special education determinations. Special education monitoring activities conducted by DIMR are used to verify compliance with SPP Indicator 12. In 2023-2024, 15 LEAs were identified for Risk Focused Monitoring (RFM). Of the 15 LEAs identified for RFM, three LEAs had a monitoring focus that included Least Restrictive Environment for Preschool and two of the three received a CAP in this area as an outcome of monitoring. Further information about special education monitoring and support activities is in the Exceptional Children chapter. Additional details about preschool related SPP indicators are provided below.

### **Preschool Outcomes**

The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) is a process for collecting and analyzing data to meet federal requirements for preschool outcome assessments of children with disabilities, however, it is also used to evaluate the progress and performance of preschool children without disabilities. Implemented statewide in Fall 2022, the COS process evaluates the impact of preschool programs on children's development and informs program improvement efforts. The federal government's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires annual reporting on preschool performance measures through the State Performance Plan (SPP). Specifically, SPP Indicator 7 focuses on the outcomes of preschool students with disabilities with a focus on three areas aligned to the COS:

- Positive social skills
- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, including language and communication, early Math, and early Literacy concepts
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs such as self-care, motor skills, and language skills

LEAs report this data to KDE OSEEL who is responsible for reporting statewide data in aggregate to OSEP.

The COS is completed by a team who knows the child and evaluates their functioning relative to age-level milestones. At minimum, three team members are required and input from the child's parent/caregiver is mandatory. However, the team responsible for completing the COS is not an Admission and Release (ARC) committee. COS ratings are assigned to all preschool students, those with and without IEPs, enrolled in LEA state-funded programs, as well as students participating in Head Start or blended preschool programs. Ultimately, each LEA is responsible for determining who is responsible for collecting data and completing child ratings using COS. Team members may include a preschool teacher, special education teacher, family member, speech-language pathologist or other related service provider, or a childcare provider.



COS ratings are assigned at three key points:

- Initial rating: Completed at the time of enrollment in the preschool program
- Interim rating: Conducted during the winter assessment window for students after the fall window with a new IEP start data after the fall window
- Final exit rating: Conducted at the time the child exits the preschool program

The COS focuses on collecting data related to the three areas established in SPP Indicator 7 regarding the child's social skills, acquisition of knowledge and skills (such as communication and early academic skills) and the child's use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs (such as self-care and motor skills). The COS team assigns ratings on a seven-point scale to reflect the child's functioning in relation to age-appropriate expectations.<sup>417</sup> Figure 170 below outlines Kentucky's SPP 7 preschool outcomes results for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017 through FFY 2022.

**FIGURE 170: SPP INDICATOR 7 PRESCHOOL OUTCOMES RESULTS**

SPP 7 Preschool Outcome Domain	FFY 2017 Result	FFY 2018 Result	FFY 2019 Result	FFY 2020 Result	FFY 2021 Result	FFY 2022 Result
<b>A1. Social Emotional</b> - Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in Outcome A, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program.	49%	42%	40%	30%	73%	54%
<b>A2. Social Emotional</b> -The percentage of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in Outcome A by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program.	45%	45%	45%	37%	27%	54%
<b>B1. Knowledge and Skills</b> - Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in Outcome B, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program.	68%	66%	68%	57%	73%	71%
<b>B2. Knowledge and Skills</b> - The percentage of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in Outcome B by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program.	45%	48%	48%	40%	29%	55%
<b>C1. Behaviors to Meet Needs</b> - Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in Outcome C, the percentage who substantially increased their rate of	55%	53%	53%	43%	77%	71%

<sup>417</sup> "Child outcomes summary guidance." Kentucky Department of Education. 2023. <https://www.education.ky.gov/specialed/earlylearning/Documents/Child%20Outcomes%20Summary%20Guidance.pdf>

growth by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program						
<b>C2. Behaviors to Meet Needs</b> - The percentage of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in Outcome C by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program.	43%	43%	43%	35%	26%	62%

Source: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA's "State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR)."

The auditing team conducted a review of SPP 7 preschool outcomes targets and data for five comparison states. Figure 171 outlines Kentucky's SPP 7 FFY 2022 targets for Kentucky in comparison to targets established by Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee for the same federal data reporting window.

**FIGURE 171: PEER STATE COMPARISON OF SPP 7 OUTCOMES TARGETS**

FFY 2022 Targets						
	Kentucky	Alabama	Florida	Mississippi	Ohio	Tennessee
<b>A1. Social Emotional</b>	38%	93%	76%	62%	83%	92%
<b>A2. Social Emotional</b>	38%	76%	70%	87%	51%	59%
<b>B1. Knowledge and Skills</b>	59%	92%	61%	69%	82%	90%
<b>B2. Knowledge and Skills</b>	41%	57%	53%	79%	49%	57%
<b>C1. Behaviors to Meet Needs</b>	44%	92%	65%	47%	84%	93%
<b>C2. Behaviors to Meet Needs</b>	37%	75%	73%	77%	60%	69%

Source: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA's "State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR)."

Preschool outcomes data as reported through SPP Indicator 7 overall demonstrate Kentucky preschool students are meeting the established state targets in each sub-indicator area over the course of the most recent three reporting years. Guidance provided by OSEP to state departments of education requires states to develop annual performance targets that are both rigorous and attainable. Figure 172 below illustrates Kentucky's target, actual performance, and calculated gap between the target and actual performance for each area of SPP Indicator 7 for FFY 2022.

FIGURE 172: KENTUCKY SPP 7 TARGET &amp; PERFORMANCE GAPS

SPP 7 Area	KY Target	KY Performance	Gap
A1. Social Emotional	38%	54%	16%
A2. Social Emotional	38%	54%	16%
B1. Knowledge and Skills	59%	71%	12%
B2. Knowledge and Skills	41%	55%	14%
C1. Behaviors to Meet Needs	44%	71%	27%
C2. Behaviors to Meet Needs	37%	62%	26%

Source: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA's "State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR)."

**12.3 Observation:** While Kentucky preschool students outperform the established state outcomes targets in State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator 7, the state targets are set lower than all comparison states across areas of SPP Indicator 7.

Kentucky's SPP Indicator 7 targets range from 36.57% to 59.48% for FFY 2022 while targets in comparison state targets for the same time were set higher. Gaps between Kentucky's established target and actual performance ranged from 11.5 percentage points up to 27.3 percentage points across the SPP Indicator 7 areas for this time. While OSEP provides guidance to states instructing them to set rigorous yet attainable annual targets, Kentucky's targets appear attainable but lack sufficient rigor to create an accountability structure that promotes positive student outcomes.

**12.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should review the history of student performance against state targets in each SPP Indicator 7 reported area as well as available kindergarten readiness data to evaluate the degree to which future state targets in this area meet criteria for being both rigorous and attainable.

Kindergarten readiness is reported as part of the Kentucky Early Childhood Profile based on data collected by schools using the Brigance K Screen III across the domains of language and communication, physical well-being, self-help, social-emotional, and cognitive/general knowledge. A review of statewide aggregate kindergarten readiness data between 2018 and 2023 revealed overall kindergarten readiness levels below 50% for each year with performance declining in the most recent three years:

- 2023: 38%
- 2022: 36%
- 2021: 40%
- 2020: 41%

Across each year, preschool students perform highest on social-emotional and language/communication measures and lowest on cognitive/general knowledge measures. Further information about kindergarten readiness across measured domains is illustrated in Figure 173.

FIGURE 173: KINDERGARTEN READINESS

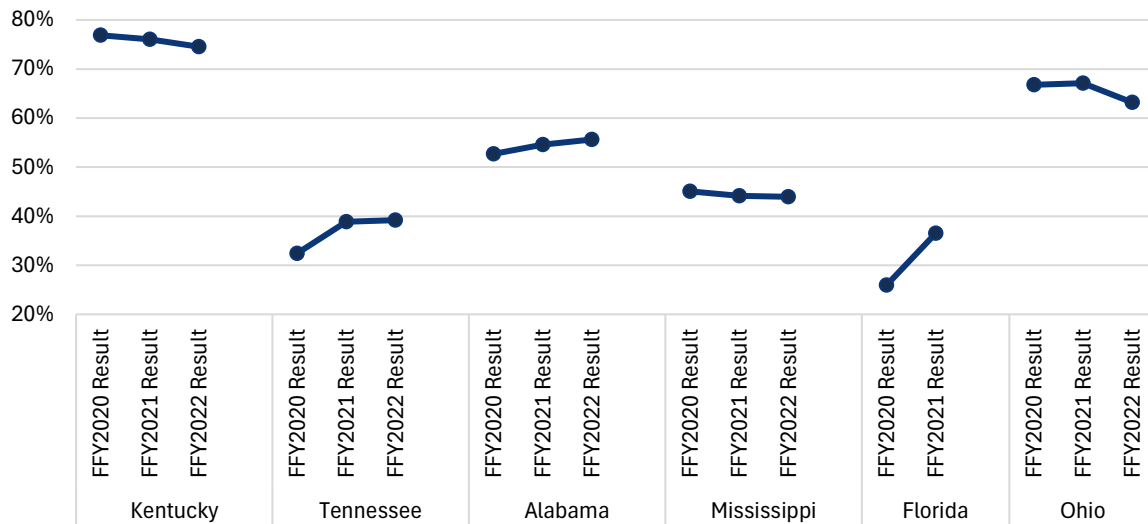
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cognitive/General Knowledge	36%	36%	30%	32%
Language and Communication	73%	74%	69%	69%

	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Physical Wellbeing</b>	48%	50%	43%	44%
<b>Self-Help</b>	51%	54%	48%	48%
<b>Social/Emotional</b>	75%	74%	72%	73%

Source: Retrieved from the Kentucky Center for Statistics: <https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/ECP>

SPP Indicator 6 addresses the LRE and placement for preschool students with disabilities. As with school-age children, the IDEA places a priority on educating preschool children with disabilities in settings alongside non-disabled preschool students (i.e., the regular preschool setting) to the extent appropriate. Figure 174 identifies Kentucky’s placement of preschoolers with disabilities in regular early childhood settings in comparison to five other states for FFY2020 through FFY2022.

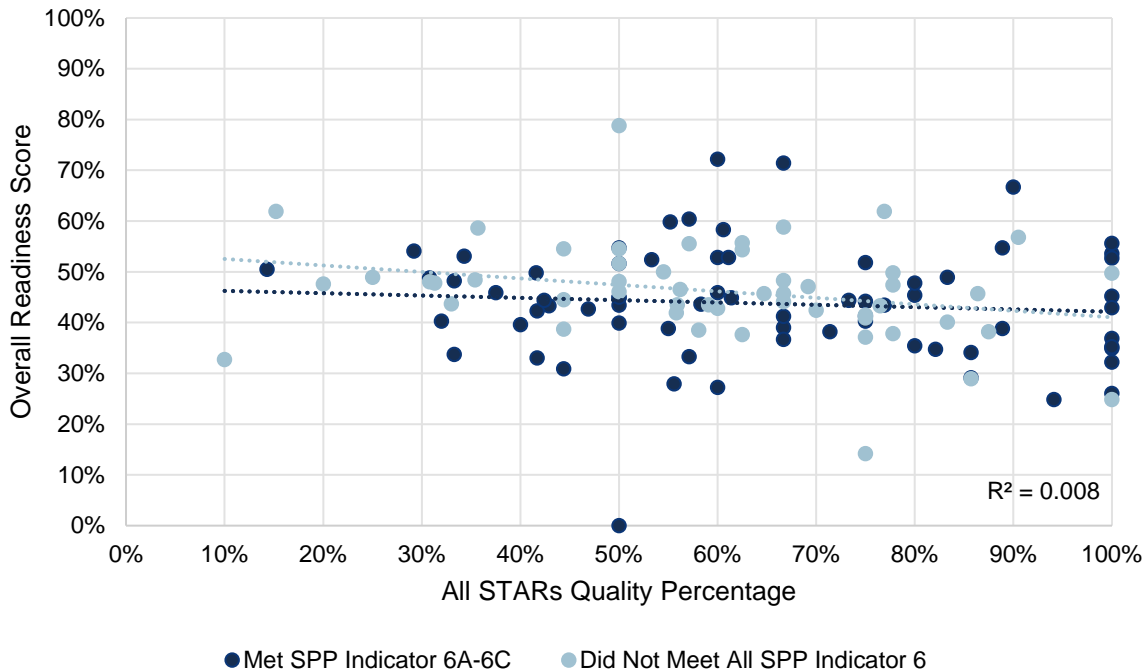
**FIGURE 174: PERCENTAGE OF PRESCHOOLERS WITH DISABILITIES IN REGULAR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**



Source: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, IDEA’s “State Performance Plans (SPP) Letters and Annual Performance Report (APR).”

Each state sets specific state-level targets for SPP Indicator 6 using their state’s data as a baseline and through engagement with special education stakeholders across the state. Kentucky LEAs have consistently placed preschool students with disabilities in regular preschool environments at higher rates, between 70% and 80% of preschool students, than peer states across each year where data was reviewed. Apart from Ohio, each other state reviewed places preschoolers with disabilities in regular education environments at rates below 60%.

FIGURE 175: KY COUNTIES ALL STARS QUALITY PERCENTAGE VS. OVERALL KINDERGARTEN READINESS



Source: Data retrieved from KY Stats Early Childhood Profile.

The auditing team analyzed the extent to which the percentage of preschools which were designated as being 'quality' by the All STARS program within a county correlated with the percentage of students that were determined to be kindergarten ready in that county and state targets for preschool LRE in SPP indicator 6. As shown in Figure 175, there was little correlation between the measures, suggesting a disconnect between the All STARS 'quality' designation, preschool setting/LRE, and key impact drivers of student performance and readiness.

SPP Indicator 12 addresses students who are transitioning from IDEA services under Part C of the federal act to Part B of the federal act. This transition requires an eligible student to have an IEP in place for services under IDEA Part-B by the child's third birthday. Each state sets targets for SPP 6 and SPP 7. However, states are expected to obtain 100% timely transitions for preschool students with disabilities to be federally compliant with SPP Indicator 12. Between FY2017 and FY2022, Kentucky did not achieve the federally required 100% target. For FY2017 and FY2018, the state achieved a 99% compliance level, dropping slightly in FY 2019 and FY2020 to 91% and 87% compliance respectively. This is likely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions to school and LEA operations at that time. In recent years, FY2021 and FY2022, compliance levels have returned to 99% for both years.

#### 12.4 **Finding:** KDE preschool monitoring and data systems in their current state are not optimized to promote strong preschool outcomes and kindergarten readiness.

KDE processes, procedures, and data indicate a strong focus on inclusion of preschoolers with disabilities in regular early childhood settings as well as ensuring eligible students have an IEP under IDEA Part B in place by their third birthday. While Kentucky has met established state SPP targets for preschool outcomes, review of kindergarten readiness data suggests these focus areas are not enough to achieve strong outcomes for early learners—even for children in programs with quality All STARS ratings. There is a clear need for an enhanced focus on promoting positive outcomes for preschool students, including at-risk students as well as students with disabilities. KDE should refine supports such as guidance, training, and aligned accountability mechanisms within the preschool monitoring systems to promote stronger outcomes for preschoolers with disabilities. There should be a focus on improving pre-academic skills and general

knowledge where preschool students have consistently demonstrated lowest levels of kindergarten readiness over time.

- 12.4.a **Recommendation:** KDE should incorporate metrics associated with preschool outcomes and kindergarten readiness within the annual preschool determinations process to emphasize the need for programs to not only meet compliance standards but also implement high-quality programs and practices that promote student outcomes in all domain areas.
- 12.4.b **Recommendation:** KDE should refine preschool monitoring processes to verify LEAs with high rates of inclusionary practices for preschool students with disabilities are implementing strong practices aligned to student outcomes.
- 12.4.c **Recommendation:** KDE should enhance support efforts to emphasize student growth in pre-academic skills. It is commendable that KDE has emphasized social emotional readiness as evidenced by kindergarten readiness data. Similar efforts should be implemented to ensure students have solid foundations for academic success.

## CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

This section discusses KDE's Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) along with aspects of Kentucky's secondary school career and technical education (CTE) programs. CTE is part of Kentucky's multi-agency approach to workforce development and attracting businesses to the Commonwealth. KDE supports districts and ATCs and interfaces with employers, workforce development agencies, and postsecondary education providers on behalf of Kentucky students.

### OFFICE OF CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

#### Overview

The KDE Office of Career and Technical Education provides support to all Kentucky districts operating career and technical education programs, oversees 50 Area Technology Centers (ATCs) of the Kentucky Tech system, operates Kentucky's Future Farmers of America (FFA) Leadership Center, and administers federal Perkins grant funds.

As of January 2025, OCTE had 561 staff, including 500 school-based ATC staff. OCTE's structure is described below.

The **Office of Career and Technical Education** has six staff including office leadership and direct support. The office operates two divisions:

- The **Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness** provides direct technical assistance to ATCs and CTE programs in local districts. Within the Division, there are 35 staff across two branches.
  - The **Career Programs and Pathways Branch** provides pathway consulting services to districts and ATCs. This branch has 16 staff, 13 of which are Program Consultants. These Consultants provide support to teachers in comprehensive high schools and ATCs, including lesson planning, assessment and accountability support, and coordination between individual programs and OCTE.
  - The **Student Leadership Development Branch** has 19 staff and operates the FFA Leadership Center.
- The **Division of Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement** has 20 staff (excluding school-based ATC staff) spread across three branches.
  - The **Data and Investment Branch** includes seven staff who support the Perkins federal program, the CTE-related portion of the state accountability system, data reporting, and monitoring.
  - The **Kentucky Tech Schools Branch** has three Area Consultants that provide technical assistance and support to the network of ATCs across the state.
  - The **Kentucky Tech Administrative Branch** has ten staff and provides fiscal and purchasing support across the Office, including both the ATCs and FFA Leadership Training Center. This branch includes one staff member each focused on apprenticeships and work-based learning (WBL).

OCTE was moved from the Education and Labor Cabinet to the Kentucky Department of Education in 2013 (KRS 156.802). Most KDE employees are on the 18A salary schedule—the general state agency employee schedule authorized under KRS Chapter 18A. However, OCTE staff, including most ATC and FFA staff, are on the 156 salary schedule authorized under KRS Chapter 156. OCTE staff and CTE instructors at ATCs are paid based on the 156 salary schedule rather than the 18A schedule or 161 schedule, on which other KDE employees are paid.

#### Funding

KDE oversees the administration of both federal Perkins funding and state-provided CTE supplemental funding. The state received \$22,025,635 in Perkins funding in state FY 2025, including \$18,721,790 which



was passed through directly to Kentucky secondary (\$11,607,510) and postsecondary institutions (\$7,114,280).<sup>418</sup>

Of Kentucky's annual federal Perkins funding allocation, five percent is retained at the state level, ten percent is for targeted grants, and the remaining 85% goes to districts, ATCs, adult education, and postsecondary institutions. These funds are restricted to specific purposes as outlined in KDE's quick reference guide for Perkins funds.<sup>419</sup> KDE monitors recipients for allowability of expenditures and provides technical assistance and support regarding the effective and allowable use of Perkins funds.

The state also provides supplemental funding to support CTE programming (as described in KRS 157.069). This funding was amended for the 2024-2025 school year by House Bill 499, converting what used to be referred to as "LAVEC Funding" to (1) include local CTE programs regardless of the number of CTE programs they had as well as state-run ATCs, and (2) introduce an element of performance-based funding. Funding is determined based on both the total student enrollment in qualifying pathway courses (60%) as well as the number of twelfth grade students who meet the following criteria:

- Earned a concentrator designation by earning at least two credits in one CTE pathway;
- Completed at least 300 hours of an approved CTE cooperative education, internship, or apprenticeship course;
- Earned dual credit in a CTE course;
- Demonstrated technical skill attainment through either earning an industry certification or a CTE End-of-Program assessment certificate.

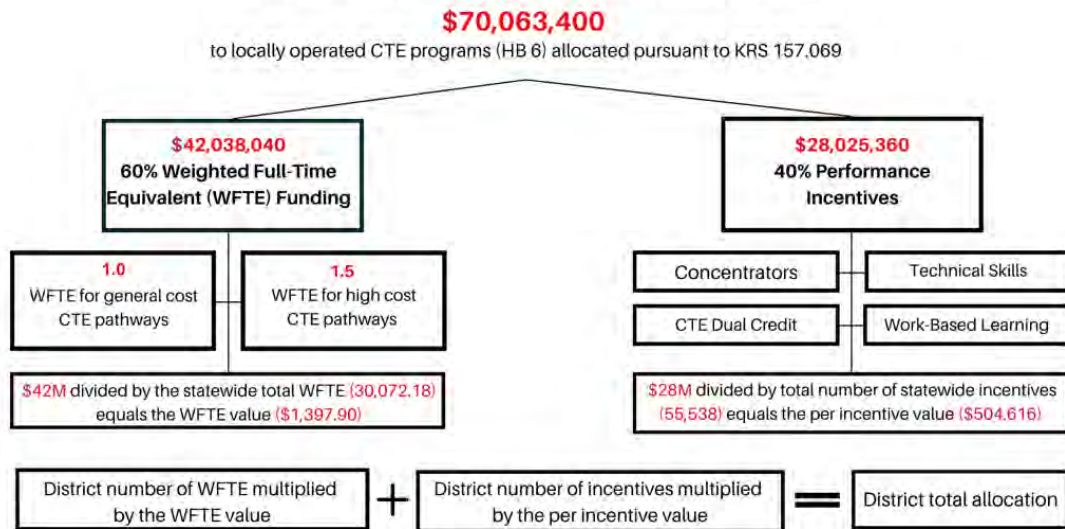
Students may be credited for meeting all four indicators; however, students may not count for multiple instances of the same credit (for example, earning dual credit across two courses). Student enrollment is determined by the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled in CTE programs in grades nine through 12. A weight of 1.5 is applied to the enrollment of the state's 42 high-cost pathways, as determined by KDE. The per-student funds are determined by dividing 60% of the state's appropriated supplemental funds by the total number of weighted FTEs enrolled in CTE programming. The per-incentive-based portion of the funding is similarly determined, as 40% of the appropriated supplemental funds are divided by the total number of incentives earned by grade 12 CTE students.

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<sup>418</sup> "Perkins V Kentucky State Plan." Kentucky Department of Education. April 9, 2024.  
[https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/perkins/Documents/KY\\_Perkins\\_V\\_State\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/perkins/Documents/KY_Perkins_V_State_Plan.pdf)

<sup>419</sup> "Allowable and non-allowable purchases: Perkins basic funds quick reference." Kentucky Department of Education. April 2025.  
[https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/perkins/Documents/Perkins\\_Basic\\_Funds\\_Quick\\_Reference.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/perkins/Documents/Perkins_Basic_Funds_Quick_Reference.pdf)

**FIGURE 176: FY25 SUPPLEMENTAL CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) FUNDING**  
PURSUANT TO KRS 157.069 AND 2024 HOUSE BILL 6



## Career & Technical Student Organizations

Career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) are student groups intended to provide co-curricular activities, competitions, and other events to enhance student experiences and opportunities in their CTE pathways. CTOSs also give students the chance to develop leadership skills through leading projects and teams and by holding offices in governance of their CTOSs at the local, regional, state, and national level. They are an integral component of Kentucky CTE programs due in part to a requirement of the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act grant to have CTOSs as an indicator of high-quality CTE programs.<sup>421</sup>

Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) reported in a white paper released in 2012 that more than 46,000 Kentucky students were members of CTOSs—over one-third of high school students in CTE courses at the time. These CTOSs included:

- DECA (marketing) – over 2,450 members
- Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) – over 6,480 members
- FFA (agriculture) – over 14,100 members
- Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) – over 8,600 members
- Future Educators Association (FEA, now called Educators Rising) – over 2,000 members
- Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) – over 3,800 members
- SkillsUSA (communications, construction, manufacturing, transportation) – over 6,100 members
- Technology Students Association (TSA) – over 2,500 members<sup>422</sup>

KDE has one staff member dedicated to CTOSs support, covering eight CTOSs and chapters at over 250 high schools and ATCs (although not all schools and ATCs have all eight CTOSs). This staff member serves as a state resource for the CTOSs and is responsible for guiding and advising all the CTOSs advisors across the state. The KDE Program Consultants help the CTOSs, but their duties are mainly supporting the instructional programs across Kentucky. Staff in both the schools and KDE report the challenge of having successful state CTOSs organizations, state conferences, and competitions with largely volunteer staffing.

CTOSs costs are sometimes a burden on programs, and travel to competitions is unaffordable for some families. Funding student travel to conferences and competitions can be problematic, particularly with hotels, airfare, and registration fees. State CTE supplemental funding can be used to pay for student travel to state or national events. According to KDE and ATC staff, they may not be used for membership fees or chapter dues.

### 13.1 **Finding:** KDE guidance on the use of state funds for CTOSs membership may be overly restrictive and unsupported by statute.

We did not find evidence in statute or regulation supporting this restriction on the use of state funds. Regulation 705 KAR 4:231, in Section 8, states that “[a]ll students shall be provided an opportunity to participate in leadership development activities.” Restricting use of state funds from CTOSs membership fees or chapter dues essentially makes this section an unfunded mandate.

The KDE document CTOSs State Advisor Handbook contains the header “General Policies for State CTOSs Staff Persons.” This document does not appear to be rooted in or aligned with state statute or regulations and should be considered guidance or recommendations rather than “policies” unless it can be shown that the document was adopted through a Commonwealth state policy establishment process. Notwithstanding, the document has a State/Federal Funding section which states “[s]tudent organizations may also utilize

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<sup>421</sup> “Career and Technical Student Organizations.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 2, 2024.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/stuorg/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>422</sup> Stone, M.R. “Real return on investment.” Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education. 2012. <https://kyacte.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2024/06/KACTE-Real-Return-on-Investment.pdf>

state funds with the approval of the appropriate administrators.”<sup>423</sup> This implies that it could be possible for state funds to be used for dues and registrations yet is ambiguous as to whom the “appropriate administrators” are.

- 13.1.a Recommendation:** KDE should explore whether restrictions on the use of state funds for memberships or chapter dues have a basis in statute, regulation, or Finance and Administration Cabinet policy. If not, allow these uses. Redesignate KDE CTSO support documents as nonregulatory guidance if they are recommended practices not backed up by statute or regulation. Review and update documents as needed. Maximum flexibility should be granted at the local level to meet the state and federal mandate to have student leadership opportunities in CTE. Guidance should be clear on whether it is required or recommended best practice.

Another KDE CTSO document contains good examples of showing a link to statute where appropriate. The CTSO Operational Guidelines for Student Chapters document correctly identifies itself as guidelines within the document rather than policy. There are places where Kentucky Revised Statutes and Kentucky Administrative Regulations citations back up the guidance. However, there are also sections in the document that state someone “shall” take an action or someone “has a right” to take an action without citing a related statutory authority. This document also has an outdated statutory citation in its introduction, where KRS 151B.025 Section 9 is cited but this statute has been renumbered as KRS 156.802 and Section 9 was dropped or moved elsewhere.<sup>424</sup>

- 13.1.b Recommendation:** KDE should create a way to fully or partially offset travel costs to national events for state Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) officers and state-level competition winners representing the Commonwealth at national-level competitions.

Achievement and leadership at the national level should be a point of pride for the Commonwealth and evidence that Kentucky’s CTE programs are effective and impactful. Centralized state efforts to help fund national CTSO student and advisor travel could be in the form of state appropriations or, if allowable, corporate sponsorship. ATCs report that local fundraising is getting more challenging due to the general economic conditions.

### *FFA Leadership Training Center*

The FFA Leadership Training Center, known colloquially as the FFA Camp, was established in Hardinsburg in 1937 on the site of a former Civilian Conservation Corps site. Numerous states held summer camps for students in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the New Farmers of America (NFA), which merged with the FFA in 1965. Many of these camps used facilities owned by the Forest Service, National Park Service, state parks, and Boy Scouts. Kentucky’s FFA Camp was one of several cited in a 1940 list of FFA-owned camps which also included Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee.<sup>425</sup> As of 2019, twenty-four states ran FFA summer camps. Georgia and Virginia FFA organizations host joint camps with another CTSO, the Future Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), formerly known as Future Homemakers of America (FHA).<sup>426</sup> Kentucky FFA Leadership Training Center also hosted FCCLA (FHA) camps.

Currently, over 2,000 FFA students camp at the 120-acre Kentucky FFA Leadership Training Center per year. Some facilities at the FFA Camp operate year-round, including a 350-seat auditorium, a dining facility,

<sup>423</sup> “General policies for state CTSO staff persons.” Kentucky Department of Education.

[https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/stuorg/Documents/CTSO\\_State-Advisor\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/stuorg/Documents/CTSO_State-Advisor_Handbook.pdf)

<sup>424</sup> “Kentucky career and technical student organizations operational guidelines handbook: Local chapter addition.”

November 2018. [https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/stuorg/Documents/CTSO\\_Operational\\_Guidelines-Local.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/stuorg/Documents/CTSO_Operational_Guidelines-Local.pdf)

<sup>425</sup> Connors, J.J., Falk, J.M., & Epps, R.B. “Recounting the legacy: The history and use of FFA camps for leadership and recreation.” *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 51(1), 32-42. March 28, 2010.

<https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2010.01032>

<sup>426</sup> gmoore@ncsu.edu. “The history of FFA camps.” May 28, 2021.

<https://footnote.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2021/05/26/the-history-of-ffa-camps-05-28-2021/>

four meeting rooms, and twelve sleeping rooms. Several other seasonal facilities include a pool, athletic fields, a ropes course, eight additional meeting rooms, and twenty cottages.<sup>427</sup> Originally funded by members of the Kentucky Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association, the camp's facilities and staffing are now funded by the Commonwealth through KDE and is overseen by OCTE. The FFA Camp is governed by 705 KAR 4:081, FFA Leadership Training Center. This regulation stipulates that other vocational education youth organizations may use the camp.

**13.2 Observation: Statutes cited in 705 KAR 4:081 do not explicitly mention the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Leadership Training Center or FFA Camp by name, nor do they mention anything that can be reasonably construed to reference the FFA Camp.**

The team checked the Kentucky Transparency property search to ensure the FFA Camp was listed as state property, and it is.<sup>428</sup> There should be legislation on file, even in a budget bill, assuming Commonwealth ownership and responsibility for the Kentucky FFA Leadership Training Center or FFA Camp. There should also be explicit statutory assignment of a responsible agency as exists for the Kentucky School for the Deaf, the Kentucky School for the Blind, and the Area Technology Centers.

Statutes cited in 705 KAR 4:081 include:

- KRS 151B.025 (“Relates To”) – statute renumbered as KRS 156.802
- KRS 156.029 (“Relates To” and “Statutory Authority”)
- KRS 156.070 (“Statutory Authority”)

The regulation was established in 1994 under 20 Ky.R. 3390. The regulation register states:

NECESSITY AND FUNCTION: KRS 151B.025 retains with the State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education the authority to prescribe program standards for area vocational education centers. This administrative regulation establishes procedures for operating and maintaining the Kentucky Future Farmers of America Leadership Training Center.

The regulation also noted in the section regarding the anticipated effect on state and local revenues that the “FFA Leadership Training Center is primarily operated with agency receipt funds that are collected from participating vocational student organizations and other educational groups.”<sup>429</sup>

Our examination of the Area Technology Centers does not lead us to believe that the FFA Camp should be considered an Area Technology Center; therefore, statutory authority as cited is tenuous.

**13.2.a Recommendation: KDE should examine the statutory authority behind the FFA Leadership Training Center, and if necessary, initiate legislative action to properly establish the Commonwealth’s fiscal and operational responsibility for the Center.**

Given the Commonwealth’s recurring investment in staffing and facility support and the support for the FFA Camp expressed by interviewees, the FFA Camp is clearly a valued resource for CTE in Kentucky. The risk to the Commonwealth without clear enabling legislation is that someone could dispute the Commonwealth’s level of support or even authority to operate the camp. The team acknowledges that the research on Kentucky statutes and regulations was limited to the resources available via the public Kentucky General Assembly website.

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<sup>427</sup> “Kentucky FFA Leadership Training Center.” Kentucky AAF Association. <https://kyffa.org/leadership-training-center>

<sup>428</sup> “Property Search.” Commonwealth of Kentucky, Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet. 2025. [https://transparency.ky.gov/search/Pages/property\\_search.aspx#/property](https://transparency.ky.gov/search/Pages/property_search.aspx#/property)

<sup>429</sup> “Administrative Register of Kentucky.” Commonwealth of Kentucky, Legislative Research Commission. June 1, 1991. [https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/registers/20KyR\\_1993-94/12\\_Jun.pdf](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/registers/20KyR_1993-94/12_Jun.pdf)



## CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY

### Strategic Planning

#### 13.3 **Observation:** KDE’s 2024-2029 Strategic Plan does not specifically mention CTE or postsecondary and career readiness.

A review of KDE’s Strategic Plan yielded no direct mention of or connection between CTE, ATCs, postsecondary, credential attainment, dual-credit, graduate and career outcomes. However, the plan references both the Portrait of a Learner (PoL) and United We Learn (UWL) as it relates to the goal of reimagining assessment and accountability.<sup>430</sup> The PoL outlines competencies related to the essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for students to be strong communicators, collaborators, critical thinkers, and adaptable learners to be successful in college, career, and civic life.<sup>431</sup> Although the PoL or UWL do not specify CTE or the ATCs as related concepts, there are opportunities for alignment anchored in UWL’s “vibrant learning.”<sup>432</sup> Furthermore, a review of the KDE CTE webpage and subordinate pages did not reveal any specific state strategy or connection between CTE, PoL, and UWL frameworks.<sup>433</sup>

KDE’s Strategic Plan does not identify college and career readiness as a statewide priority. This contrasts from comparison states, where every state except Ohio (which is currently modifying its strategic plan) has identified college and career readiness as a priority as well as several metrics for measuring related progress (Figure 177).

**FIGURE 177: COMPARISON STATES’ INCORPORATION OF COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS INTO STRATEGIC PLAN**

State	College and Career Readiness in the Strategic Plan
<b>Kentucky</b>	Does not mention college and career readiness in the strategic plan.
<b>Alabama</b>	Identified college, career, and workforce ready as a goal for 2025, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand opportunities to give students multiple ways to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and qualities for success after high school</li> <li>Identify the knowledge, habits, and qualities (i.e. essential skills) necessary for success after high school and support every high school to incorporate these across various curricula</li> <li>Reduce the gap between College and Career Readiness (CCR) Rate and the Graduation Rate</li> <li>Provide tools to local school systems for all K-12 students to have opportunities to explore various college and career options</li> </ul>
<b>Florida</b>	One of the four goals identified in Florida’s strategic plan is “Skilled Workforce and Economic Development,” including increasing the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Postsecondary employment rate</li> <li>Initial wages</li> <li>Participation and performance in meaningful accelerated pathways</li> <li>Access in computer science</li> </ul>
<b>Mississippi</b>	Identified college and career readiness as one of the goals in their strategic plan, including the following outcomes:

<sup>430</sup> “Strategic Plan 2024-2029.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 2025. [Draft PDF]

<sup>431</sup> “Kentucky portrait of a learner: Frequently asked questions.” Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/innov/Documents/Portrait%20of%20a%20Learner%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>

<sup>432</sup> “United We Learn.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 13, 2025.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/UnitedWeLearn/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>433</sup> “Career and Technical Education.” Kentucky Department of Education. November 16, 2023.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/Pages/default.aspx>

State	College and Career Readiness in the Strategic Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the percentage of students graduating from high school ready for college or career in each subgroup</li> <li>• Increase the percentage of students ready for college as measured by ACT benchmarks in each content area (grade 11)</li> <li>• Increase the percentage of students participating in and passing dual credit in each subgroup</li> <li>• Increase the percentage of students participating in and passing Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) exams in each subgroup</li> <li>• Increase the number of students career ready</li> </ul>
<b>Ohio</b>	Currently revising their strategic plan.
<b>Tennessee</b>	<p>Identified goal of “ensur[ing] policies and systems are in place to provide opportunities for every student to be prepared for success after high school,” including the following benchmarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every student graduates having achieved one or more of the Ready Graduate Indicators</li> <li>• 100% of students complete a High School and Beyond Plan, or a Transition Plan for students with IEPs, by the time they finish 11<sup>th</sup> grade</li> </ul>

Source: Retrieved from State Department of Education websites.

- 13.3.a Recommendation:** Identify statewide college and career readiness goals and integrate with KDE’s Strategic Plan. Align key concepts between CTE, UWL, and PoL to create a coherent statewide vision.

## Pathways

KDE approves CTE pathways and provides technical assistance to schools in proposing new or modified pathways. Kentucky’s CTE programming provides high school students with the opportunity to gain workforce skills and industry certifications across a variety of fields, including Agriculture, Business, Computer Science, Construction, Education, Engineering, Family and Consumer Sciences, Health Sciences, JROTC, Law and Public Safety, Manufacturing, Media Arts, and Transportation. Some middle schools have CTE exploratory courses in these areas as well.

During the 2023-2024 school year, there were 143,415 students participating in at least one CTE course across the state, representing approximately 69% of all Kentucky high school students.<sup>434</sup> This total included 39,889 graduating seniors, of which 43% earned completer status by both completing the requisite coursework in their pathway and either earning an industry certification or passing a KDE-administered end-of-program assessment.

In the 2024-2025 school year, Kentucky K-12 CTE had 146 state-approved pathways in 13 program areas. The complete list of pathways is in the Appendix D: Kentucky Career & Technical education Pathways, 2024-2025. KDE determines the requisite courses necessary to complete a pathway. CTE pathway courses are offered through both local comprehensive high schools and state-operated ATCs. Students may enroll in as many pathways as their schedule allows and to which they have access to through either their local school or an ATC. While there is some overlap in the pathways offered by ATCs and their feeder schools (as discussed in the Area Technology Centers section), ATCs generally offer students the opportunity to pursue pathways that would otherwise be prohibitively costly or resource-intensive for local district schools to offer, such as Welding Technology, Automotive Education, and Electrical Technology.

<sup>434</sup> “Report Card Dashboards: Kentucky.” Kentucky Department of Education. <https://reportcard.kyschools.us/kysrc?organization=20232024:999:999000>



Figure 178 depicts a comparison of the ten most common pathways offered at the comprehensive high schools and the ATCs during the 2023-2024 school year.

**FIGURE 178: MOST FREQUENTLY OFFERED PATHWAYS AT COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS & ATCs (2023-2024)**

COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS		ATCs	
Pathway	Number of Local Schools that Offer Pathway	Pathway	Number of ATCs that Offer Pathway
Administrative Support	166	Pre-Nursing	50
Animal Science Systems	159	Allied Health	47
Plant Science Systems	158	Welder Entry Level	45
Early Childhood Education	151	Automotive Maintenance & Light Repair Technician	42
Consumer & Family Services	150	Residential Carpenter Assistant	38
Teaching & Learning	145	Pharmacy Technician	36
Culinary & Food Services	141	Phlebotomy Technician	26
Management Entrepreneurship	136	Industrial Electrician Assistant	26
Marketing	131	Welding TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship	25
Computer Programming	130	Commercial Carpentry TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship	25

Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, "Pathways-HS-ATC-4\_Years."

KDE assists districts seeking to create new CTE pathways. Local pathway applications are reviewed by OCTE leaders considering factors such as local industry demand, proposed courses of which the pathway will be comprised, and proposed end-of-program assessment methodology. Successful local pathways with statewide potential are added to the state catalog. This makes them easier to implement by other schools or ATCs.

The OCTE monitors CTE programs at KDE using a risk-based process to determine which comprehensive high schools, ATCs, and postsecondary institutions should be selected for review. All schools are on a five-year review cycle which includes Perkins and state supplemental funding sources. Some of the major areas explored during the reviews are program enrollment and opportunity gaps between students with disabilities and those without, and opportunity gaps between other demographic groups as required by Perkins. One area of emphasis for KDE has been monitoring concentrator and completer data for students with disabilities. KDE also monitors for allowability of expenditures and initiates corrective action in the case of adverse fiscal findings. Outcomes data is a factor in the SEEK funding formula, but KDE does not specifically monitor districts for outcomes even though they do provide technical assistance to districts and ATCs as needed.

Once a student passes the requisite courses, they can pursue either an industry certification in their chosen field and/or take a state-developed End-of-Program (EOP) assessment, as applicable. KDE describes the EOP assessment as being "based upon clear and concise standards identified by employers across the state" to ensure that CTE students "have acquired the skills necessary for successful transition from high

school to postsecondary studies or the workforce.”<sup>435</sup> There is articulated college credit associated with passing EOP assessments.

### Outcomes and Accountability

CTE programming is an important facet of the State’s accountability system as students are required to demonstrate either academic or career readiness by the time they are ready to graduate. There are five ways in which a student can demonstrate career readiness (Figure 179).

FIGURE 179: STATE ACCOUNTABILITY CAREER READINESS INDICATORS

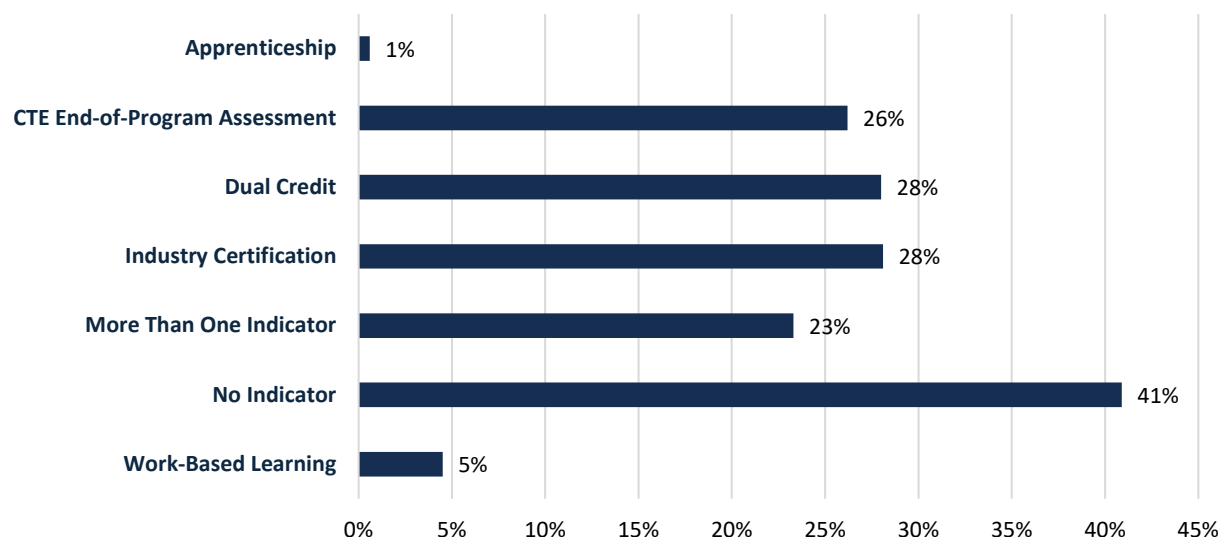
Indicator	Description
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	Kentucky offers the Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) program for students to gain on-the-job learning hours and/or prepare for application to a Registered Apprenticeship training program after graduation.
<b>End-of-Program (EOP) Assessment</b>	State-developed assessments that pertain to pathways without associated industry certifications. Students who pass these assessments earn college credit at state institutions.
<b>CTE Dual Credit</b>	Applies to students who earn a grade of “C” or higher in a KDE-designated CTE aligned course.
<b>Industry Certifications</b>	Applies to students who earn the industry certifications relevant to their career path. Industry certifications are based on the information provided by local workforce investment boards and are presented to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) and the Business and Education Alignment Taskforce (BEAT) for approval. Students who earn industry certifications for high demand programs as determined by KWIB earn 25% more credit for their school under the state accountability system.
<b>Work-based Learning</b>	Successful completion of at least 300 hours of a KBE-approved cooperative or internship.

Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education: <https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/Pages/CTE-St-Acc.aspx>.

The state considers Postsecondary Readiness as one of its accountability indicators for high school students. This indicator is calculated by the percentage of students qualifying as postsecondary ready divided by the total number of grade twelve students. Students who earn an industry certification in a high-demand pathway as determined by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) earn 1.25 points for their school in the state accountability system. Postsecondary readiness accounts for 20% of high schools’ accountability ratings, which are posted each year on the Kentucky School Report Card. Figure 180 shows the percentage of CTE students earning each one of these indicators.

<sup>435</sup> “Accountability and Postsecondary Readiness in CTE.” Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education. February 28, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/Pages/CTE-St-Acc.aspx>

FIGURE 180: PERCENTAGE OF CTE STUDENTS BY INDICATOR



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, School Report Card: <https://reportcard.kyschools.us/kysrc?organization=20232024:999:999000>.

In the 2023-2024 school year, 59% of all students enrolled in a CTE course achieved at least one career-readiness indicator. Many of these indicators rely on coordination and collaboration between KDE and other state entities. The next section highlights some of these relationships as they pertain to Kentucky's suite of CTE programming.

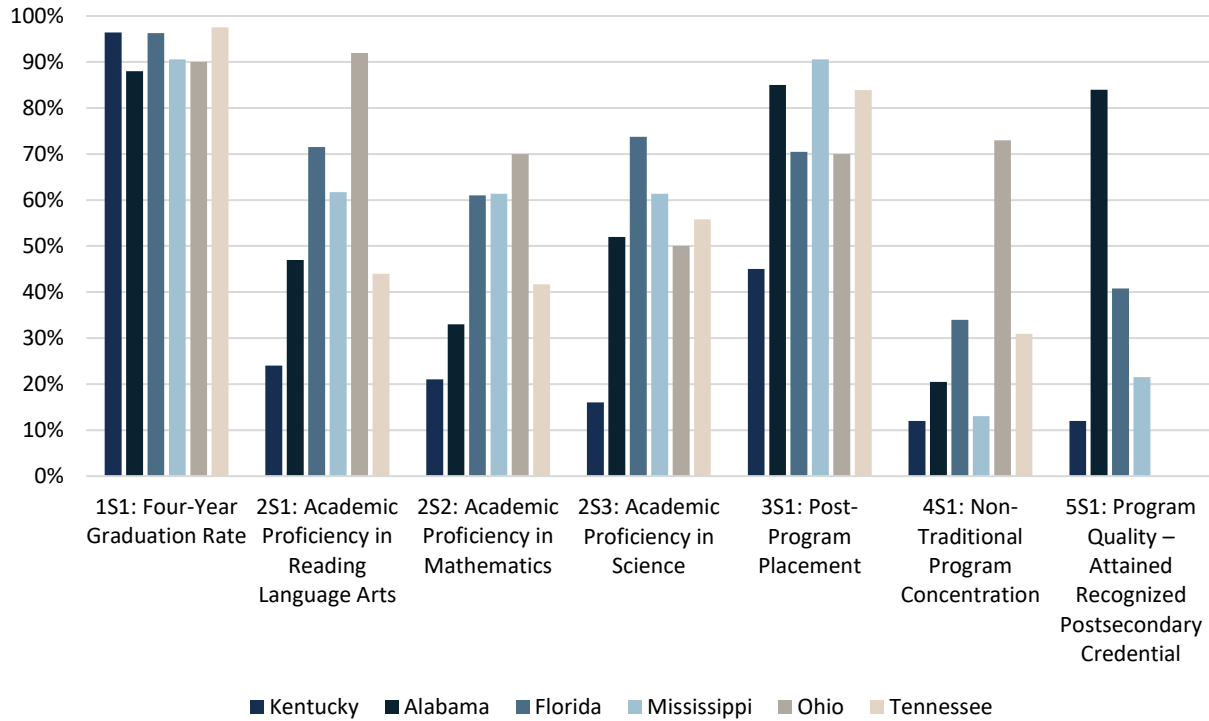
KDE also reports data related to CTE programming to the federal government as part of the Perkins program. Under Perkins, states must submit annual plans that include their own goals for both the six secondary school and three postsecondary indicators. While states determine their own goals for each indicator, the indicators themselves are the same across all states and territories, allowing for inter-state comparisons of both CTE student outcomes and the ambitiousness of a state's goals. Figure 181 illustrates Kentucky's performance compared to their goals, while Figure 182 and Figure 183 depict how Kentucky's Perkins goals and outcomes compare to other states for the 2022-2023 school year.

FIGURE 181: KENTUCKY PERKINS INDICATOR GOALS AND OUTCOMES (2022-2023)

Indicator	State-determined Goal	Actual Outcome
<b>1S1: Four-Year Graduation Rate</b>	96%	98%
<b>2S1: Academic Proficiency in Reading Language Arts</b>	24%	46%
<b>2S2: Academic Proficiency in Mathematics</b>	21%	32%
<b>2S3: Academic Proficiency in Science</b>	16%	24%
<b>3S1: Post-Program Placement</b>	45%	87%
<b>4S1: Non-Traditional Program Concentration</b>	12%	23%
<b>5S1: Program Quality – Attained Recognized Postsecondary Credential</b>	12%	63%

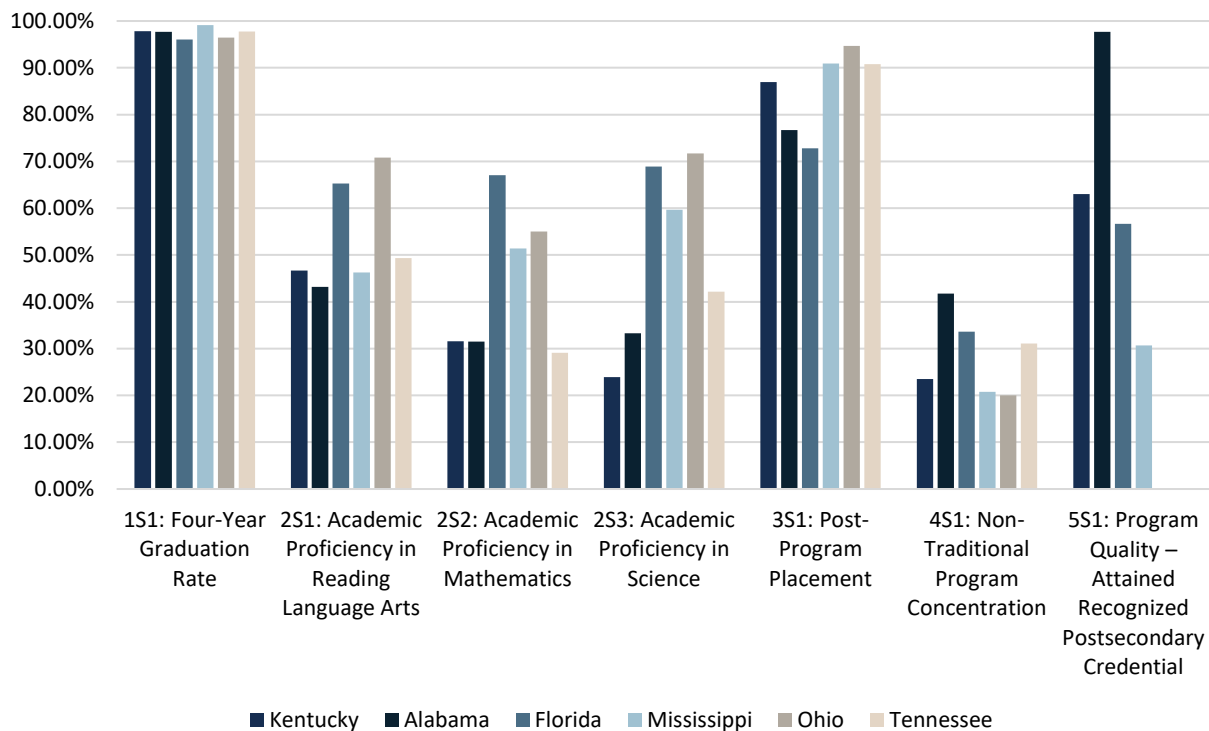
Source: Data retrieved from the Perkins Collaborative Resource Network, Perkins V Performance Data.

FIGURE 182: STATE-DETERMINED PERKINS INDICATOR GOALS BY STATE (2022-2023)



Source: Data retrieved from the Perkins Collaborative Resource Network, Perkins V Performance Data. \*Ohio and Tennessee did not have values for 5S1.

FIGURE 183: PERKINS INDICATOR OUTCOMES BY STATE (2022-2023)



Source: Data retrieved from the Perkins Collaborative Resource Network, Perkins V Performance Data. \*Ohio and Tennessee did not have values for 5S1.

**13.4 Observation: Kentucky's Perkins goals are generally less ambitious than those of comparison states.**

KDE writes the Perkins grant and sets goals under the authority of the Kentucky State Board of Education. As illustrated in Figure 182 and Figure 183, while Kentucky met all of its goals for the 2022-2023 school year (Figure 183), it also set some of the less ambitious goals among peer states (Figure 182). This was particularly true for indicators 2S1-2S3, which relate to academic proficiency in Reading Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, as well as for indicator 5S1, which relates to the percentage of students earning postsecondary credentials. Kentucky's Perkins outcomes far exceed their stated goals, suggesting that the state could be more ambitious in setting goals for CTE programming, particularly related to academic proficiency.

**13.4.a Recommendation: KDE should review Kentucky and comparison state data and explore setting more ambitious Perkins goals as applicable to Kentucky's CTE strategy.**

### ***Promoting CTE Programs & Resources***

**13.5 Finding: KDE's communications and resources around CTE are designed for educators as a primary audience and not the general public, suggesting an opportunity for additional material to support the public (including workforce industries) in understanding available statewide CTE pathways at school and ATC sites.**

KDE's website includes a landing page for CTE pathways and resources for early postsecondary programs. However, KDE's communications and resources are designed for educators as a primary audience and not the general public. This suggests an opportunity for additional material to support the public, including workforce industries, in understanding available statewide CTE pathways at school and ATC sites.

CTE programs rely on learning experiences through industry or workplace visits, co-ops, apprenticeships, and hands-on project-based learning to optimize student outcomes. During interviews and surveys, ATC teachers and leaders expressed a need for increased awareness of what programs are available to students and how these programs benefit the local workforce. More specifically, several ATC teachers expressed that high school counselors from feeder schools are not always aware of dual-credit and CTE programming options.

Interview participants also shared that some work sites are hesitant to have high school students working there. Where existing co-ops do not exist with local industries, ATC teachers often try to mitigate this gap through their own outreach to initiate partnerships. However, it can prove difficult for teachers to provide these experiences on their own without programmatic support.

ATC teachers also noted earlier promotion of CTE opportunities among elementary and middle school students would benefit student enrollment long term. Examples of these opportunities include CTE program promotion, career fairs, facility tours, and increasing middle school exploratory opportunities. However, the latter option reduces funding from local high school CTE programs as it is based on the state funding formula.

**13.5.a Recommendation: KDE should launch public information resources and campaigns to increase awareness and promote CTE programs statewide among non-educator audiences.**

**13.5.b Recommendation: KDE should build strategic connections between secondary school counselors, CTE program directors, ATCs, and workforce industries to increase co-op and apprenticeship opportunities statewide.**

The development of a standardized, comprehensive, online CTE information site can support families statewide by having access to a list of CTE pathways at schools and ATCs with associated dual credit and apprenticeship options. The goal of the external marketing campaign is to increase acceptance of co-op students and other experiential learning modes in real workplaces. This includes employer outreach to understand any local resistance to engage with student co-ops and support the removal of perceived or

identified barriers. External promotion of CTE could increase the public's perception as a viable alternative to two- and four-year college attendance. And such resources can support K-12 school counselors with helping students and families navigate CTE options complemented by site visits, transition planning across schools, and open house conversations.

The partnership between KDE, KYSTATS, and other state entities enables the state to track and measure students' postsecondary outcomes. In interviews and focus group discussions, OCTE staff reported they found KYSTATS to be a valuable partner in publicizing state career and technical education opportunities.

## COLLABORATION WITH OTHER STATE ENTITIES

### Overview

OCTE collaborates with other state agencies and organizations to provide career opportunities to Kentucky students. For example, OCTE runs the Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) program in collaboration with the Education and Labor Cabinet. TRACK provides students with a route directly from K-12 career pathways into Registered Apprenticeship. A Registered Apprenticeship is a program where apprentices receive paid work experience, a mentor, classroom instruction, and a credential. Students complete part of their apprenticeship with paid on-the-job training and coursework while in high school and can continue their apprenticeship after high school. OCTE reports the following: over 80% of TRACK students transition to their current employer after graduation to complete the apprenticeships, TRACK apprentices earn on average over 45% more than Kentucky's median wage, and 90% of apprenticeship completers are still in the trade six years after graduation.<sup>436</sup>

- 13.6 Observation:** For some Kentucky statewide workforce advisory and resource groups and boards, connection with KDE is high level and infrequent. Examples of these groups include Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), Business and Education Alignment Taskforce (BEAT), and State Workforce Advisory Technical Team (SWATT) among others.

Several state groups and agencies work together as partners in workforce development, helping to set state and local strategy and to align resources and operations to meet the education and workforce goals for Kentucky. These groups advise and support OCTE in various ways. Below is a list of these organizations and their functions.

**Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB):** The KWIB is an advisory Board to the Governor on workforce training and development. KWIB is responsible for setting Kentucky's vision for workforce development and creating a plan to meet the needs of industry. The Commissioner of KDE serves on the Board. KWIB has several subcommittees and ten local workforce boards. KWIB has identified the following five in-demand sectors for the Commonwealth:

- Healthcare
- Manufacturing and Logistics
- Construction
- Education
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (PS&TS)

KWIB's website has links to KDE CTE resources, including pathway information, an overview of federal Perkins grant funding, and the Kentucky multi-agency process (Figure 184) for approving the state industry certification list for alignment with K-12 CTE pathways.<sup>437</sup>

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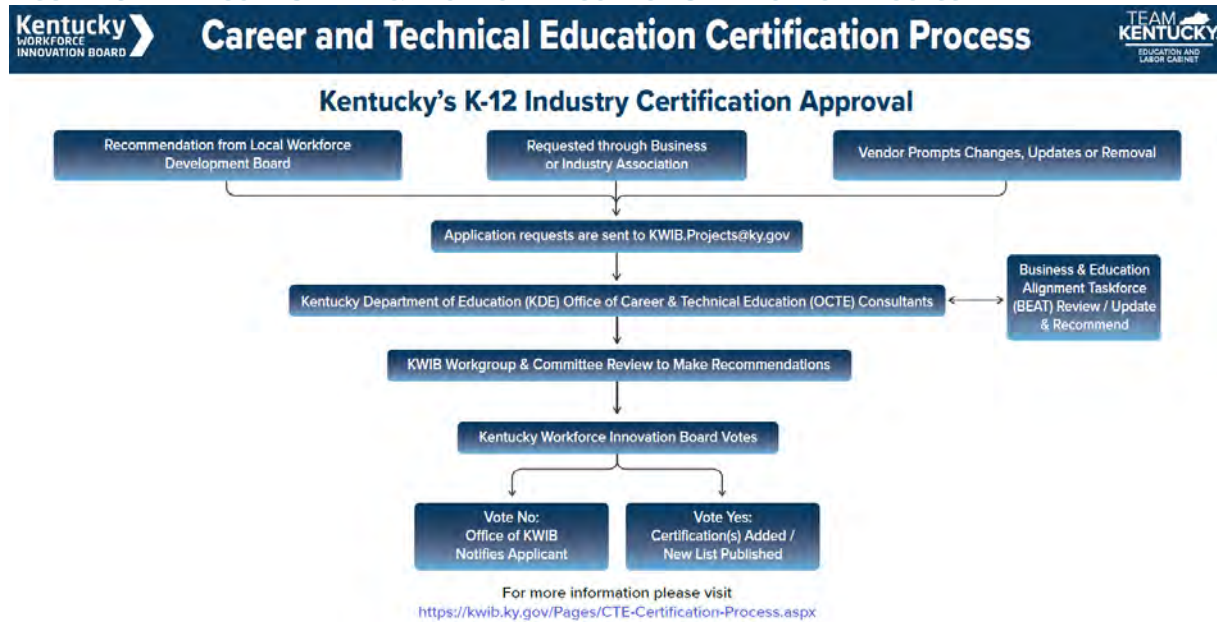
<sup>436</sup> "TRACK Results." Kentucky Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/TRACKBrochure.pdf>

<sup>437</sup> "Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board." Commonwealth of Kentucky, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board. <https://kwib.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>



FIGURE 184: KENTUCKY CAREER &amp; TECHNICAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION PROCESS



Process occurs annually, with additions/changes considered by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) on a quarterly basis (workgroup to meet 6-8 weeks prior to quarterly KWIB meetings, when necessary).

Source: Retrieved from <https://kwib.ky.gov/career-technical-education-resources/Pages/Career-&-Technical-Education-Certification-Processes.aspx>.

**Business and Education Alignment Taskforce (BEAT):** BEAT members are subject matter experts, business and industry leaders, and educators (K-12 and postsecondary) in CTE work sectors. Each CTE program area has its own BEAT team. The BEAT teams meet twice a year. KDE program consultants work with the BEAT teams to guide the work that goes into programs of study and shape curriculum based on industry needs, trends, and standards.

**State Workforce Advisory Technical Team (SWATT):** The State Workforce Advisory Technical Team “is a group of statewide organizations committed to improved measurement, coordination, and delivery of workforce development solutions and services to Kentucky’s employers.”<sup>438</sup> In response to Kentucky’s recent talent gap, SWATT is currently piloting a data-driven strategy to provide more effective workforce solutions in manufacturing and healthcare. The Associate Commissioner who oversees the Office of Career and Technical Education at KDE is one of the founding members of SWATT.<sup>439</sup>

**Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC):** The Education and Labor Cabinet promotes lifelong learning (beginning in grades K-12) and workforce development to prepare Kentucky citizens to make a positive contribution to the workforce. The ELC also provides unemployment, illness, and disability services.<sup>440</sup> The ELC is currently piloting the “Everybody Counts” initiative in five school districts, which provides high school seniors with a college and career coach to help them navigate applying for jobs or postsecondary education.<sup>441</sup> The Secretary of Education and Labor is an ex-officio member of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE).<sup>442</sup> Career coaches were funded through the ELC by state general funds up until the last

<sup>438</sup> “What is the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team?” Kentucky General Assembly. August 29, 2024. [https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/313/30842/EDWI%2008-29-2024%20SWATT\\_One\\_Pager.pdf](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/313/30842/EDWI%2008-29-2024%20SWATT_One_Pager.pdf)

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> “Cabinet Overview.” Commonwealth of Kentucky, Education and Labor Cabinet. 2025. <https://elc.ky.gov/About-Us/Pages/Cabinet-Overview.aspx>

<sup>441</sup> “Everybody Counts.” Commonwealth of Kentucky, Education and Labor Cabinet. 2025. <https://everybodycounts.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>

<sup>442</sup> “Kentucky Board of Education Members.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 12, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/KBE/memb/Pages/default.aspx>



biennial budget. Although career coaches were discontinued, the state did fund \$20M for regional workforce boards for youth employment services.

**Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE):** The Council on Postsecondary Education supervises Kentucky’s public higher education (including both state universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System). More specifically, “the Council facilitates a positive return on investment of public funds supporting higher education by monitoring academic quality, affordability and student success through policy and accountability measures.”<sup>443</sup> Members of the CPE are appointed by the Governor.<sup>444</sup> The chair of the CPE is an ex-officio member of the KBE.<sup>445</sup>

**Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC):** The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC) facilitates partnerships between postsecondary institutions, policy makers, and industry representatives with the goal of improving equity in higher education, early career readiness, and degree completion.<sup>446</sup>

**Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee:** The Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee provides recommendations to OCTE based on industry and business insights. The CTE Advisory Committee is mandated by KRS 156.806, and members of the CTE Advisory Committee are appointed by the Commissioner.<sup>447</sup>

- 13.6.a **Recommendation:** KDE should examine how information on high-level priorities gets to schools and ATCs to ensure priorities are reflected in programming and outcomes.
- 13.6.b **Recommendation:** KDE should assess how establishing statewide college and career readiness goals, or integrating CTE into the Department’s Strategic Plan, can support the dissemination of information.

## Dual Credit

Dual credit is another opportunity open to Kentucky CTE students. Partnership between the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and KDE enables students to make significant progress toward an associate degree while in high school. This is available in 25 existing pre-articulated career pathway programs as well as additional pathways that can be created through program design agreements between KCTCS and local districts.<sup>448</sup> In the 2023-2024 school year, 49,134 students were enrolled in dual credit courses (both CTE and non-CTE), with 88% of these students successfully earning college credit.<sup>449</sup> In the 2022-2023 school year (the most recent year with national data), Kentucky ranked

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<sup>443</sup> “About the Council: Who We Are.” Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. 2022. [https://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/who\\_we\\_are.html](https://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/who_we_are.html)

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> “Kentucky Board of Education Members.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 12, 2025. <https://www.education.ky.gov/KBE/memb/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>446</sup> “Kentucky Student Success Collaborative.” Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. 2022. <https://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/kyssc.html>

<sup>447</sup> “Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee.” Kentucky Department of Education. February 12, 2025. [https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Career-and-Technical-Education-\(CTE\)-Advisory-Committee.aspx](https://www.education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/Career-and-Technical-Education-(CTE)-Advisory-Committee.aspx)

<sup>448</sup> “Career and Technical Education Dual Credit Alignment Models.” Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education. August 1, 2023. [https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/ctepa/Documents/DC\\_PathAlign-KCTCS.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/ctepa/Documents/DC_PathAlign-KCTCS.pdf)

<sup>449</sup> Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky School Report Card [N.d]. KYRC24\_EDOP\_Dual\_Credit\_Participation\_and\_Performance. Retrieved from [https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24\\_EDOP\\_Dual\\_Credit\\_Participation\\_and\\_Performance.csv](https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24_EDOP_Dual_Credit_Participation_and_Performance.csv)

fifth in the nation in terms of the number of high school students pursuing credit as a percentage of the state's total undergraduate enrollment.<sup>450</sup>

Figure 185 depicts the enrollment and percentage of students earning credit for the 11 pre-articulated CTE pathways. KDE and KCTCS officials meet monthly to discuss and coordinate dual credit courses, teacher credentialing, and alignment of programming from ninth grade through postsecondary. OCTE works with dual credit in CTE pathway programs; OTL works with dual credit programs in non-CTE areas.

**FIGURE 185: CTE DUAL-CREDIT ENROLLMENT & SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION**

Program	Enrollment	% of Students with Qualifying Score
Agricultural Education	2,233	87%
Business Education	7,129	84%
Elementary Education	<10	
Engineering & Technology Program Area	1,519	85%
Family & Consumer Sciences	1,165	79%
Health Related Activities	111	86%
Health Science	11,475	81%
Industrial Education	12,499	76%
Information Technology	2,619	82%
Marketing Education	1,270	90%
Multiple Pathway Career & Technical Education	2,349	76%

Source: Data retrieved from the Kentucky Department of Education, School Report Card. KYRC24\_EDOP\_Dual\_Credit\_Courses\_Offered.

Kentucky secondary school students can earn hundreds of various industry-recognized certifications through CTE programs, many of which are in high demand areas as designated by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB).<sup>451</sup> In the 2023-2024 school year, 13,548 CTE students (9.4% of CTE students) earned industry certifications.<sup>452</sup>

## Data Collection

### 13.7 Finding: Statewide CTE participation and outcomes data are not easily accessible or transparently available to the public.

KDE collects CTE information from districts, state-run schools, post-secondary institutions, and ATCs via their Technical Education Database System (TEDS). The data collected through TEDS includes demographics, course attributes, completion information, Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) participation, certifications, assessments, and advanced postsecondary achievements.

KDE also works with KYSTATS, a research organization that maintains the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System (KLDS). The KLDS allows for the integration of data from KDE, the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Education Professional Standards Board, the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, and the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet to analyze and assess the state's education and career outcomes. KYSTATS uses KLDS data to publish interactive reports on the

<sup>450</sup> "How Many Students are Taking Dual Credit Enrollment Courses in High School? New National, State, and College-level Data." Teacher's College, Columbia University, Community College Research Center. August 26, 2024. Retrieved from <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/how-many-students-are-taking-dual-enrollment-courses-in-high-school-new-national-state-and-college-level-data.html>

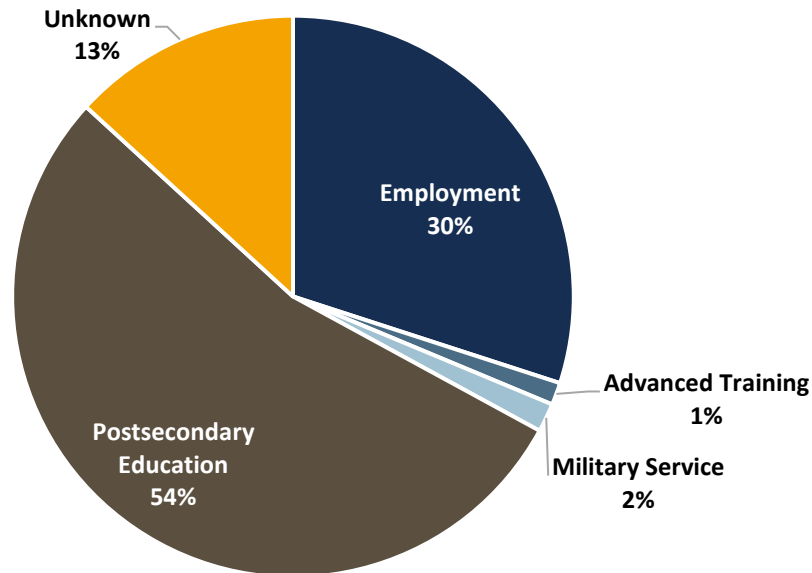
<sup>451</sup> "24-25 Valid Industry Certification List." Kentucky Department of Education. [https://www.education.ky.gov/layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/24-25\\_Valid\\_Industry\\_Certification\\_List.xlsx](https://www.education.ky.gov/layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/24-25_Valid_Industry_Certification_List.xlsx)

<sup>452</sup> "KYRC24 CTE Career Readiness Indicators." Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky School Report Card. [https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24\\_CTE\\_Career\\_Readiness\\_Indicators.csv](https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24_CTE_Career_Readiness_Indicators.csv)

Commonwealth’s labor market, including reports specifically focused on CTE. For example, one recent report, “Kentucky Career & Technical Employer Connector,” allows employers to find schools where students are enrolled in industry pathway programs or are eligible for co-ops in the areas of employer need. This report provides addresses and phone numbers for schools that have potential student candidates for employment, co-ops, or apprenticeships, aligned with the employer’s needs.

The partnership between KDE, KYSTATS, and other state entities enables the state to track and measure students’ postsecondary outcomes, such as those highlighted in Figure 186. In interviews and focus group discussions, OCTE staff reported they found KYSTATS to be a valuable partner in publicizing the state career and technical education opportunities.

FIGURE 186: CTE CONCENTRATOR OUTCOMES 2022-2023



Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “3S1\_Post\_Program\_Placement\_ATC\_2223.”

The team requested an overall summary of CTE program statistics or annual report and none were provided. Aside from reports publicly available through KYSTATS and the State Report Card maintained by KDE, the team only found the federal Perkins grant plan.<sup>453</sup> However, this plan is not written in a format that leads the public to a better understanding of Kentucky’s investment in CTE and its impact on statewide outcomes.

- 13.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should create and publish online a CTE annual report with the agency’s statewide CTE goals, outcomes and participation data, and performance-based metrics.

<sup>453</sup> “Perkins V Kentucky state plan: Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act.” Kentucky Department of Education. February 19, 2024.  
[https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/perkins/Documents/KY\\_Perkins\\_V\\_State\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/perkins/Documents/KY_Perkins_V_State_Plan.pdf)

## AREA TECHNOLOGY CENTERS

This section discusses the Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) system of Area Technology Centers (ATCs) and their attributes, services, and challenges. The ATCs, collectively, make up the Kentucky Tech System of Area Technology Centers (Kentucky Tech). Kentucky Tech is part of a greater portfolio of career and technical education programming provided by KDE and the school districts throughout the Commonwealth.

### THE KENTUCKY TECH SYSTEM

#### Overview

Kentucky’s 50 Area Technology Centers are public secondary schools operated by the Commonwealth under the KDE Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE). ATCs serve students in 115 of Kentucky’s 171 county and independent school districts, as well as several private schools (Figure 187 and Figure 188).

Each provides programming across five to ten Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways. The pathways in the ATCs are in trades or skills that would generally not be possible in a single comprehensive high school or district due to low incidence per school, cost, or the need for additional support outside of the state’s Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) education funding formula for comprehensive high school programs or federal Perkins grants. Districts also offer CTE courses in their comprehensive high schools but typically do not duplicate programs offered in the ATCs.<sup>454</sup>

Kentucky Tech was established in the 1960s as part of a national wave of high school and community college vocational education efforts. Each ATC offers four-course CTE clusters in several pathways subject to approval by OCTE. These courses are geared toward high school juniors and seniors, but ATCs sometimes accept freshmen and sophomores upon agreement between the home district and the ATC. Students are enrolled in their home district and typically attend their home high school according to their individual schedules and availability. Attendance options include single periods, period blocks, half days, or full days.

FIGURE 187: MAP OF KENTUCKY STATE-RUN AREA TECHNOLOGY CENTERS



Source: Map provided by Kentucky Department of Education.

The following table, Figure 188, shows Kentucky’s ATCs along with feeder districts and pathway enrollment. Due to the way the data was reported, there may be students double counted if they participated in multiple

<sup>454</sup> “Kentucky Tech System of Area Technology Centers.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 18, 2024. <https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/kytech/Pages/default.aspx>

pathways. Some districts that do not have ATCs or do not feed into one may operate their own Local Area Vocational Education Center, including several that were formally ATCs.

**FIGURE 188: ATCs AND FEEDER DISTRICTS**

ATC	Feeder Districts	Pathway Enrollment <sup>455</sup>
<b>Barren Co. ATC</b>	Barren Co. HS, Caverna HS, Glasgow HS, Hart Co. HS, Metcalfe Co. HS	920
<b>Belfry Co. ATC</b>	Belfry HS, Phelps HS, Pike Central HS	568
<b>Bell Co. ATC</b>	Bell Co. HS, Harlan Co. HS, Harlan HS, Middlesboro HS, Middlesboro MS, Pineville Independent School, Southeast KY CTC - Harlan Campus, Tri-State Christian Academy	441
<b>Boone Co. ATC</b>	ACCEL Academy, Alternative Center, Beechwood HS, Boone Co. HS, Campbell Co. HS, Conner HS, Cooper High School, Covington Catholic HS, Dixie Heights HS, Holy Cross HS - Covington Ind, Lloyd HS, Ryle HS, Saint Henry HS, Simon Kenton HS, Walton Verona HS, Williamstown Jr HS	292
<b>Breathitt Co. ATC</b>	Breathitt Co. HS, Jackson City School, Jackson HS, Oakdale Christian HS, Riverside Christian Training HS	401
<b>Breckinridge Co. ATC</b>	Breckinridge Co. HS, Breckinridge County MS, Cloverport Independent School, F Fraize HS, Hancock Co. HS, Kentucky Virtual Academy, Pleasant View Christian School	594
<b>Bullitt Co. ATC</b>	Bullitt Central HS, Bullitt Co. Day Treatment, Bullitt East HS, North Bullitt HS, Riverview High Alt, Spencer Co. HS	785
<b>Butler Co. ATC</b>	Butler Co. HS, Butler Co. MS	500
<b>Caldwell Co. ATC</b>	Caldwell Co. HS, Crittenden Co. HS, Dawson Springs HS, Lyon Co. HS, Trigg Co. HS	596
<b>Campbell Co. ATC</b>	Bellevue HS, Bishop Brossart HS, Campbell Co. Day Treatment, Campbell Co. HS, Community Christian Academy, Dayton HS, Highlands HS, Newport Central Catholic HS, Newport HS, Pendleton Co. HS, Silver Grove HS	417
<b>Carroll Co. ATC</b>	Carroll Co. HS, Gallatin Co. HS, Henry Co. HS, iLEAD Academy, Owen Co. HS, Trimble Co. HS, Trimble Co. Jr Sr High School	312
<b>Casey Co. ATC</b>	Casey Co. HS	703
<b>Clark Co. ATC</b>	Estill Co. HS, George Rogers Clark HS	620
<b>Clay Co. ATC</b>	Clay Co. HS	312
<b>Corbin ATC</b>	Corbin Education Center, Corbin HS, Corbin MS, Rockhold's Opportunity Center, Whitley Co. HS, Williamsburg Ind HS	755
<b>Estill Co. ATC</b>	Estill Co. HS, Powell Co. HS	478
<b>Floyd Co. ATC</b>	Allen Central HS, Betsy Layne HS, Floyd Central High School, Opportunities Unlimited, Phelps HS, Prestonsburg HS, South Floyd HS, The David School, Wesley Christian Academy	259

<sup>455</sup> Please note that enrollment figures collected by KDE reflect the number of pathway participants at each ATC, not the number of individual students. Some students may be double counted.

ATC	Feeder Districts	Pathway Enrollment <sup>455</sup>
<b>Four Rivers Career Academy</b>	Fulton Co. HS, Fulton HS, Hickman Co. HS	201
<b>Garrard Co. ATC</b>	Boyle Co. HS, Danville HS, Garrard Co. HS, Kentucky School for the Deaf HS, Lincoln Co. HS	403
<b>Greenup Co. ATC</b>	Greenup Co. HS	518
<b>Harrison Co. ATC</b>	Bourbon Co. HS, Bourbon Co. MS, George Rogers Clark HS, Green Co. HS, Harrison Co. HS, Harrison Co. MS, Madison Central HS, Madison Southern HS, Mayfield HS, Nicholas Co. HS, Paris HS, Pendleton Co. HS, Williamstown Jr HS	796
<b>Jackson ATC</b>	Jackson Co. HS	402
<b>Knott Co. ATC</b>	Cordia HS, Knott Central HS	386
<b>Lake Cumberland Regional College and Workforce Center</b>	Adair Co. HS, Russell Co. HS, Russell Co. MS	1033
<b>Lee Co. ATC</b>	Lee Co. HS, Lee Co. Middle HS, Owsley Co. HS, Wolfe Co. HS	445
<b>Leslie Co. ATC</b>	Leslie Co. HS	396
<b>Letcher Co. ATC</b>	Jenkins Middle HS, Letcher Co. Central HS	684
<b>Lincoln Co. ATC</b>	Boyle Co. HS, Danville HS, Fort Logan HS, Garrard Co. HS, Kentucky School for the Deaf HS, Lincoln Co. HS	319
<b>Logan County Career and Technical Center</b>	Logan Co. HS, Russellville HS, Todd Co. Central HS	824
<b>Marion Co. ATC</b>	Marion Co. HS, Marion County Knight Academy, Washington Co. HS	1150
<b>Martin Co. ATC</b>	Martin Co. MS, Martin County High School	364
<b>Mason Co. ATC</b>	Augusta HS, Bracken Co. HS, Deming HS, Lewis Co. HS, Mason Co. HS, Robertson Co. HS, Saint Patrick HS, Tollesboro Christian School	233
<b>Mayfield Graves Co. ATC</b>	Carlisle Co. HS, Graves Co. HS, Mayfield HS, Northside Baptist Christian HS	718
<b>Meade County College and Career Center</b>	Meade Co. HS	505
<b>Millard ATC</b>	East Ridge HS, Pikeville HS, Shelby Valley HS	447
<b>Monroe Co. ATC</b>	Metcalfe Co. HS, Monroe Co. HS, Monroe Co. MS	878
<b>Montgomery Co. ATC</b>	Bath Co. HS, Menifee Co. HS, Montgomery Co. HS	330
<b>Morgan Co. ATC</b>	Elliott Co. HS, Menifee Co. HS, Morgan Co. HS, Rowan Co. HS	553



ATC	Feeder Districts	Pathway Enrollment <sup>455</sup>
<b>Murray Calloway Co. ATC</b>	Calloway Co. HS, Murray HS	563
<b>Ohio Co. ATC</b>	Butler Co. HS, Longview Christian Academy, Oakridge Christian Academy, Ohio Co. HS	690
<b>Paducah ATC</b>	Community Christian Academy, Graves Co. HS, Livingston Central HS, McCracken Co. HS, Open Door Christian Academy, Paducah-Tilghman HS, Saint Mary HS	797
<b>Pulaski Co. ATC</b>	Northern MS, Pulaski Central School, Pulaski Co. Day Treatment, Pulaski Co. HS, Somerset Christian School, Somerset HS, Southern MS - Somerset, Southwestern Pulaski HS	289
<b>Rockcastle Co. ATC</b>	Rockcastle Co. HS	430
<b>Russell ATC</b>	Fairview HS, Paul G. Blazer HS, Raceland-Worthington HS, Rose Hill Christian HS, Russell HS	479
<b>Shelby Co. ATC</b>	Cropper Alternative School, Eminence HS, Henry Co. HS, Martha Layne Collins High School, Shelby Co. HS, Spencer Co. HS	459
<b>Southern Kentucky Early CCA</b>	Clinton Co. HS, Cumberland Co. HS	432
<b>Trailblazer Academy</b>	Anderson Co. HS, Burgin HS, Burgin Independent School, Frankfort HS, Kentucky School for the Deaf HS, Mercer Co. HS	501
<b>Warren Co. ATC</b>	Bowling Green HS, Edmonson Co. HS, Greenwood HS, Lighthouse HS, South Warren High School, Warren Central HS, Warren East HS	172
<b>Wayne Co. ATC</b>	Wayne Co. HS	751
<b>Webster Co. ATC</b>	Webster Co. Alt School, Webster Co. HS, Webster Co. MS	400

Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, "#42 ATC Feeder Schools."

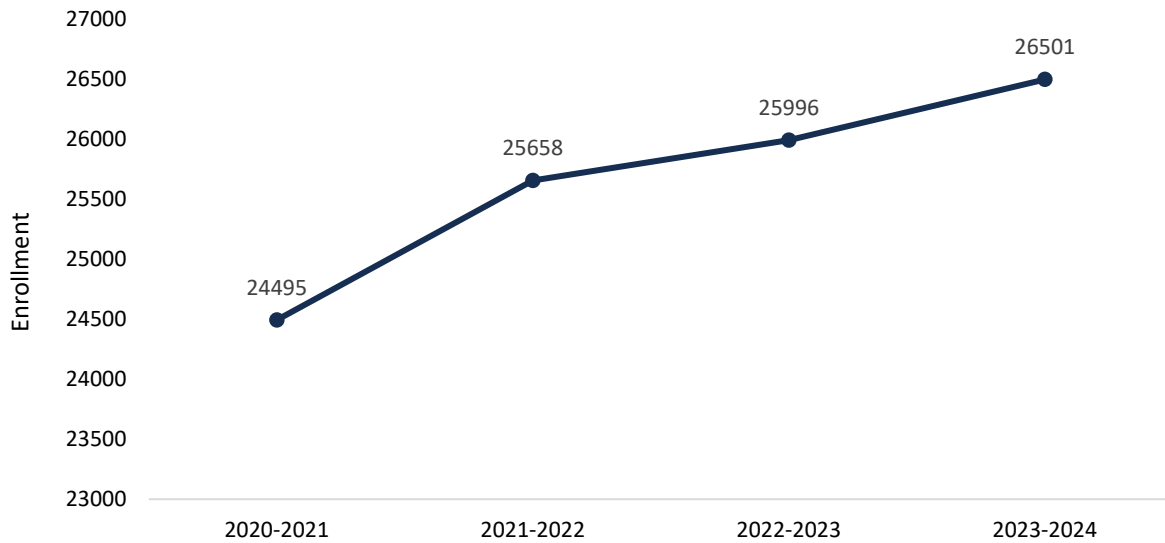
## Enrollment and Demographics

In the 2023-2024 school year, ATCs served 20,833 students—ten percent of the statewide high school population—or an average of 394 students per ATC. As a comparison, this would make the network of ATCs equivalent to the fifth largest district in the state.<sup>456</sup> As illustrated in Figure 189, the number of pathway participants (as opposed to unique students) across all ATCs has increased by roughly 2,000 participants (8%) since the 2020-2021 school year.

<sup>456</sup> "School Report Card Dashboard – Student Enrollment." Kentucky Department of Education. <https://reportcard.kyschools.us/data-download?pid=c340f7d5-efbd-5fb8-cab8-3a128835f84c>



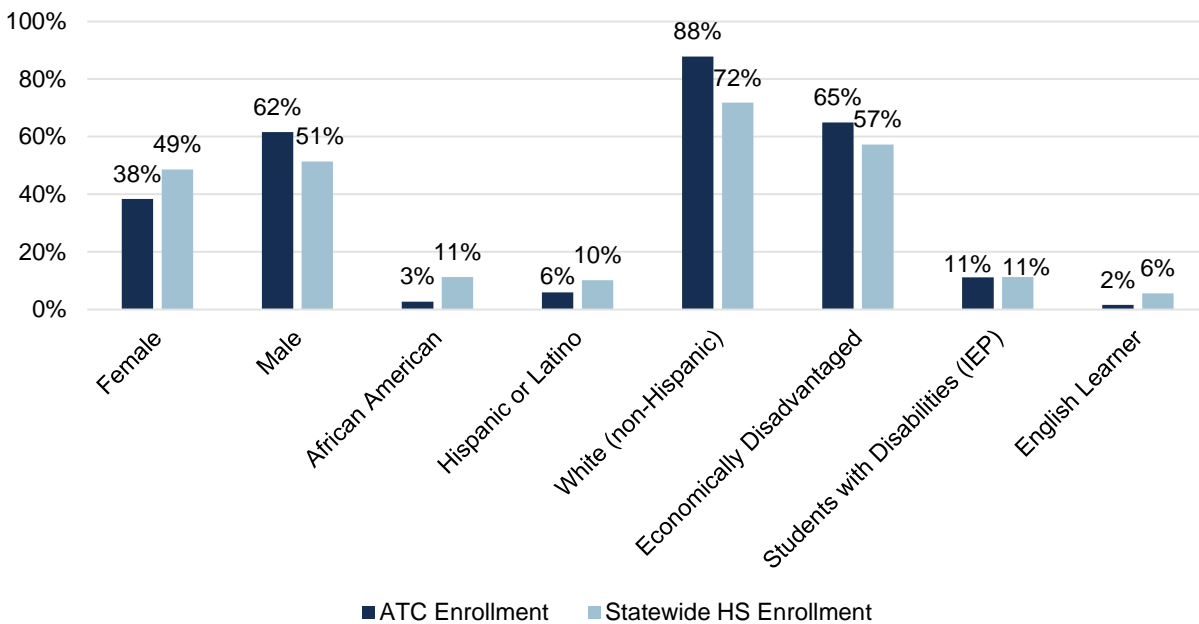
**FIGURE 189: ATC PATHWAY ENROLLMENT 2020-2024**



Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, “42-ATC Students and by Program.” Please note that ATC enrollment reflects the number of enrollment slots across every ATC, meaning some students may be double counted.

Compared to the comprehensive high school population, ATCs serve a student base that is more White, economically disadvantaged, and male (Figure 190). ATCs serve the same proportion of students with disabilities as comprehensive high schools. ATCs also serve a smaller proportion of English Learners (ELs) than comprehensive high schools.

**FIGURE 190: ATC 2023-2024 ENROLLMENT BY DEMOGRAPHICS COMPARED TO STATEWIDE HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**



Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “ATC\_Demographic\_Data\_3\_Years.”

## **ATC Operations and Staffing**

Physically, ATCs can be in a comprehensive high school building, connected to one, on a campus with one, or a standalone facility not on a high school campus. Where transportation is required and the students do not drive, the home district is responsible for student transportation. Student registration, transcripts, grade reporting, and diplomas are the responsibility of the home district. ATCs do not have traditional school cafeterias, nor do they serve school meals. The ATC calendar and school closures are based on the calendar of the district physically hosting the ATC (referred to hereafter as the “host district”). This can be problematic when a feeder district and the host district have different holiday breaks, in-service days, exam days, weather days, or nontraditional instruction days.

Counseling, nurse/health services, IEPs, Section 504 plans, special education and related services, etc. are the responsibility of the home district as well. For these, there is coordination between the home district, the ATC, and sometimes the host district to provide services and supports. The host district provides technology services and support, facility maintenance, and sometimes other services (i.e., School Resource Officer support, additional instructional staff, equipment) based on informal agreements. ATCs receive network access and technology support services from their host districts, but host districts do not receive funding for these additional services. The state (via KDE) provides facilities funds to the host district (20% SEEK funds) for the support of the ATCs. In conversations with ATC principals, they noted that because these funds are controlled by the host district, they do not always have say as to how these funds are spent, with some questioning whether they are spent on the ATC’s facility at all.

As far as finance, human resources, and ultimate administrative responsibility, ATCs fall under OCTE. Budgets are provided by KDE through the state agency KBUD and eMARS financial systems. Staff salaries, benefits, and other employment costs are funded and processed by KDE via the KHRIS state agency payroll system. In some cases where host districts wish to supplement an ATC principal’s pay, KDE transfers funds to the host district via a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the state cost, then the district pays the ATC principal the full amount of salary through the district pay system. ATC staff are hired and evaluated by KDE.

Area Technology Centers are typically staffed with seven CTE teachers, one office specialist, one custodian, and one principal. In practice, ATCs have between five and ten teachers depending on programming and availability of teachers for approved pathways. Sometimes comprehensive high schools augment ATCs with district staff. ATC staff are paid on the state pay scale (156 pay scale for teachers and principals, 18A pay scale for custodians and specialists) rather than the host district scale, unless there is a MOA. The Commonwealth provides an operating budget to each ATC through KDE as well as an allocation of Perkins federal funds. According to procedure 08.5 of the OCTE Online Manual for Kentucky Tech’s policies and procedures, ATCs are required to maintain a 12.5:1 student to teacher ratio to sustain a program.<sup>457</sup>

ATC leaders are supported by three Area Supervisors who supervise 16 to 17 ATC principals each. The ATC teachers are also supported by KDE Technology Specialists who are responsible for supporting instruction in specific pathways statewide, regardless of whether the pathway is taught in an ATC or a comprehensive high school.

Students in the ATCs participate in career-technical student organizations (CTSOs) and various skills competitions at regional, state, and national levels. CTE programs are required to involve students in CTSOs and to have advisory groups of local employers and tradespersons.

## **ATC Visits**

Over the course of three days, the auditing team visited six ATCs. These ATCs were selected based on geographic location throughout the state, county per capita income relative to the statewide average,

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<sup>457</sup> “Office of Career and Technical Education online manual.” Kentucky School Boards Association. 2025. <https://policy.ksba.org/Search.aspx?distid=176>

enrollment, and programs offered, such that the auditing team could see a representative sample of centers (see Figure 191). Site visits included:

- Campus tour of facilities
- Classroom visits
- Informal conversations with staff
- Individual meetings with the ATC principal

Consideration was given to the first impression of the grounds and exterior, efficiency and staffing of the front office, condition and impression of the interior, physical security, condition and functionality of classroom technology, condition and impression of major equipment, and the learning environment of classrooms.

As the team toured the campus, they prioritized informal conversations with various teachers. Questions centered around the level of support they receive, access to professional learning, and their own ideas around enhancing CTE and the ATC system.

The team members also had an in-depth meeting with each principal during the site visits to gather their input on the respective strengths and challenges of the ATC system and particularly KDE's role therein.

**FIGURE 191: ATCs VISITED BY THE AUDITING TEAM**

ATC	Host County Relative Per Capita Income (Compared with KY Counties)	Region	Standalone Or Attached?	Enrollment	Programs
<b>Bullitt Co.</b>	High	West	Same campus as Bullitt HS and Bullitt Alt Center	584	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Aviation</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance</li> <li>• Masonry</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>
<b>Campbell Co.</b>	High	Central	Standalone	333	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Auto Body Repair</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Health Sciences</li> <li>• Masonry</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>
<b>Clark Co.</b>	High	Central	Attached to George Rogers Clark HS	471	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auto Body Repair</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>
<b>Corbin Co.</b>	Low	Southeast	Standalone	479	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Manufacturing</li> <li>• Automotive</li> </ul>

ATC	Host County Relative Per Capita Income (Compared with KY Counties)	Region	Standalone Or Attached?	Enrollment	Programs
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Medical Technician/First Responder</li> <li>• Engineering &amp; Aerospace</li> <li>• Environmental Control System Technician</li> <li>• Law Enforcement &amp; Criminal Justice</li> <li>• Pre-Nursing</li> <li>• Residential Carpenter</li> <li>• Assistant Welding</li> </ul>
Lee Co.	Low	East	Standalone	222	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Construction Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Office Technology</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>
Marion Co.	Moderate	West	Same Campus as Marion HS	690	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>

Source: Relative per capita income retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Kentucky\\_locations\\_by\\_per\\_capita\\_income](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Kentucky_locations_by_per_capita_income)

During the site visits, the team rated each area of assessment on a five-point scale (one indicating an immediate need for repair or update and five being exceptional), summarized in Figure 192 below. Although these ratings are based on six sites and two raters per site, they are supplied here as an indication of general relative assessment by the team based on the sites visited. Overall, the team was impressed with the condition of facilities and equipment despite the age of most of the facilities, which were functional but in need of modernization.

FIGURE 192: ATC SITE VISIT RATINGS

Criteria	Average Rating (1 to 5)
Condition of Grounds	4.5
Condition of Facility	4.3
Condition of Interior	4.0
Security	5.0
Condition and Function of Classroom Technology	4.2

## Limitations on ATCs as State Agency Components

### 14.1 **Finding:** Administering ATCs as state agency entities, rather than schools, reduces their potential efficiency and effectiveness.

ATC procurement, banking, accounting, inventory, and compensation are performed according to state agency rules and, in many instances, conflict with how a school should efficiently and effectively operate as part of a vibrant local community.

**Procurement:** The most frequent challenge reported by ATC and OCTE staff was that of being subject to state procurement procedures, most specifically the Master Agreement. This is a collection of statewide mandatory use contracts. As a component of a state agency, ATCs are required to purchase from the restrictive Master Agreement unlike school districts, which may use the more permissive Model Procurement Code.

Mandatory use by ATCs of the state Master Agreement is problematic for several reasons.

- **Cost.** Sometimes goods and services are available locally at a lower total cost. Local companies sometimes offer schools a discount or materials at cost, especially if associated with a trade or pathway offered at the ATC. Cost impacts ATCs greatly as their budgets are limited.
  - **Example.** The Master Agreement compressed gas contract includes a demurrage (tank rental) charge. Some ATCs own tanks and some CTE programs only infrequently use certain gases, making tank rental disadvantageous.
- **Time.** The traditional KDE procurement process, with its multiple levels of approval, takes a lot longer than the local school district process. KDE's processes and systems are designed to purchase for a state agency, not a school. Also, some of the Master Agreement vendors are not local to the ATC, resulting in delivery delays.
  - **Example.** The Master Agreement contract for small hardware is a national company that does have a quick turnaround on online orders. However, these orders must come through the receiving process and can sometimes take an extra day or two. ATCs sometimes need flexibility to locally procure goods and services to maintain instructional momentum.
- **Quality.** Many of the Master Agreement contracts are meant to optimize costs through low pricing on commodity type products. However, this does not guarantee the quality of materials needed for the trades.
  - **Example.** Lumber is on the Master Agreement via a national home improvement chain. Carpentry and construction teachers report that finding standard lumber that is straight enough for their needs is an ongoing challenge through this vendor and requires them to go to the store to personally select materials rather than rely on delivery.
- **Relationships.** CTE programs require advisory groups. CTE advisory committee members in the local community are often business owners or potential employers eager to support the ATC. It frustrates these partners when they volunteer to help programs but cannot sell to the schools, even at a discount or price match.
  - **Example.** Auto parts and repair supplies are on the Master Agreement through a national vendor. The owner of a local garage and auto supply store in a rural area is a graduate of the program, is on the Auto Repair advisory committee, and volunteers at the ATC by regularly supplementing instruction for the students. The ATC cannot purchase from the business, even at a price match which would defuse concerns of conflict of interest. Local relationships and business prosperity are essential for public schools.
- **Instructional program.** Part of learning some trades is navigating the parts and equipment supply process to ensure the right cost, quality, and lead time. Experiencing ordering from a local or regional supply house, fabricator, etc. is essential for students to be career ready.
  - **Example.** An ATC with a carpentry program has a major wood mill nearby. Graduates from the program would be very likely to interact with this particular mill and its staff upon

entering the trade. Learning about the mill's capabilities is essential for the students. Additionally, the mill owner is an advisory committee member and major employer.

**Technology procurement:** ATCs operate on the information technology (IT) networks of their host districts and receive their direct tech support from the host districts. ATCs are required to adhere to KDE procurement practices, including IT approvals. ATCs report the IT approval process adds additional administrative overhead and time. Requiring KDE IT procurement approval that is technical and non-curricular in nature is redundant, because interoperability and cybersecurity concerns are the responsibility of the host district IT shop. School districts are far more experienced in supporting school IT needs than the state department.

**Banking:** CTE programs are required to have CTSOs, which are student clubs or organizations related to career pathways. CTSO chapters conduct fundraisers and other activities, and they receive local donations to support their functions. KDE restricts ATC access to banking accounts, rendering them unable to properly support their CTSOs. School districts have their own bank accounts, subject to strong state regulation through the "Redbook" to support CTSOs and receive and use cash donations to support their CTE programs in the comprehensive high schools. The Redbook, officially titled Accounting Procedures for Kentucky School Activity Funds, operationalizes 702 KAR 3:130.<sup>458</sup>

Typical schools operate with internal or activity fund accounts to facilitate student clubs and activities, fundraisers, field trips, etc. Restricting this capability puts ATC students at a disadvantage compared to other Kentucky schools and increases the risk that school staff might create shadow accounts or operate an unauthorized cash box.

**Accounting:** ATCs receive allocations of state and federal funds. They are not tracked and reported via MUNIS as in school districts, but in eMARS like state agencies. Department purchase requests (DPRs) go from the ATC to KDE, where they are approved by OCTE, then sent on to KDE finance staff. After all approvals, the ATC is notified of the approval. The ATC places the order and enters invoices in eMARS. Each ATC has one purchasing card, but it is of limited use due to procurement restrictions.

**Inventory:** Area Technology Centers are subject to the state agency inventory rules. Inventory is managed remotely by KDE with local support from the administrative specialists at each ATC. Some ATC staff report that annual inventory reporting happens at the end of the school/fiscal year, which is a challenging time in schools to be pulled away from academic-related recordkeeping and reporting for a purely administrative task.

**Use of state vehicles:** Notable, but not rising to the level of a finding or recommendation on its own, ATCs sometimes have difficulty in reserving state vehicles as needed due to having to go through KDE to reserve them. If ATCs cannot secure one from the host district, ATC staff sometimes use personal vehicles. Vehicles are needed to pick up supplies, equipment, and donations. Vehicles are also needed to transport students to CTSO events, competitions, and local industry site visits.

**14.1.a Recommendation: KDE should assess whether allowing ATCs to operate under the procedures of the host districts would bring procedural and fiscal efficiencies to school operations.**

While additional methods to accomplish this goal are discussed below, the most recommended option is for KDE to consider transferring ATC operations, including facilities, equipment and other physical assets, staff, and all associated funding (not just the 75% provided for by KRS 157.069) to local district control. ***This is the recommended option because it would solve many of the problems highlighted by the following recommendations and observations, including some in the Salary, Funding, and Resource Differences section.*** Consequently, KDE should perform an analysis to determine whether local district control of ATCs is a viable option. Areas to be evaluated should include fiscal, student outcomes,

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<sup>458</sup> "Accounting procedures for Kentucky school activity funds." Kentucky Department of Education. August 2, 2022. <https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/FinRept/Pages/Accounting-Procedures-for-School-Activity-Funds.aspx>

school climate and culture, and operational efficiency dimensions. Operational efficiency should be examined both at the local district level and the KDE level for impact.

When discussing cases where transfer of ATCs to local district control were explored in the past, ATCs and districts reported that KDE would not provide 100% of the funding support currently provided to the ATC by the state, leading many districts to reject the idea. This is codified in KRS 157.069, in which the state declares that 25% of the funds received by the ATCs are administrative in nature and should not be transferred to host districts taking over ATCs. This 25% figure appears to be arbitrary; administrative responsibilities do not go away, and districts assume costs, such as insurance costs, borne by the state for ATCs. Districts should get full funding for taking over an ATC. There are some cases of districts taking over ATCs locally throughout the state; however, it has only occurred four times (Green County, Nelson County, Knox County, and Madison County).<sup>459</sup>

Other ways in which KDE can implement this recommendation without completely transferring ATC operations to local districts include:

- Statutory or regulatory changes or waivers
- Full or partial program MOAs for staff and/or operating funds

Changes in law or regulations could enable ATCs to operate using district procedures and workflow rather than that of KDE. Program MOAs could be authorized to provide funding and enable the use of district processes. Precedent for this exists in several cases involving principal funding and compensation. Additional observations in this area are below including but not limited to procurement and banking—two of the more restrictive areas of state agency operating procedures impacting the centers. It is also recommended to remove the KDE IT procurement approval workflow in favor of an approval by the host district IT department.

### **Salary, Funding, & Resource Differences**

#### **14.2 Finding: Area Technology Centers' program funding differs from comprehensive high school CTE programs.**

This leads to inefficiency in the administration and funding of CTE programs at the state level due to managing different funding criteria and formulas. It also can impact the effectiveness and viability of ATC programs and the centers themselves.

ATCs receive general funds from the state as well as federal Perkins funds to operate their programs. The state also pays for the salary and benefits of all ATC staff (with the exception of those who have a MOA with their host district). Figure 193 depicts the average ATC budget as well as the average per-pupil allocation of funds.

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<sup>459</sup> "State Supplemental Funding for Career & Technical Education." Kentucky Department of Education. August 21, 2024.

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fapps.legislature.ky.gov%2FCommitteeDocuments%2F11%2F30727%2FAugust%252021%252C%25202024%2520KDE%2520-%2520CTE.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>



FIGURE 193: AVERAGE ATC BUDGET 2023-2024

Source	Average Amount Allocated to ATC	Average Per Pupil Allocation
Total Salaries	\$807,054	\$2,048
Operating	\$60,195	\$153
General Fund Operating	\$77,100	\$196
Industry Certifications	\$700	\$1.77
Perkins	\$31,886	\$81
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$976,935</b>	<b>\$2,480</b>

Source: Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, “#42 ATC Budgets including Perkins and I.C. Funds.”

Including federal Perkins funding, ATCs receive approximately \$2,480 per pupil. Given that ATCs, unlike comprehensive schools, are not responsible for much of the cost of supporting students, including meals, transportation, and student services, this funding is meant to exclusively fund the cost of ATCs programmatic expenses. ATCs receive SEEK funds based on their total enrollment, pro-rated for the time that students are at the school (typically three hours per day).

Funding for CTE programs changed for the 2024-2025 school year with the passage of House Bill 499 (HB 499), which changed the funding formula for schools offering CTE programs, including both comprehensive schools and ATCs. The new funding formula, “State Supplemental CTE Funds,” provides funding to schools based on both student enrollment (60%) and performance (40%). This change increased CTE funding per student at the comprehensive high schools while not providing similar increases for students in ATCs. Through State Supplemental CTE Funds, local CTE programs received \$2,329.84 per weighted FTE (the pro-rated count of enrolled students based on their hours in school). While this is approximately \$150 less per student than ATCs received, it is important to note that local CTE programs receive additional funding from both local and state funding sources, while ATCs only receive funding from the state. According to an analysis conducted by KDE, ATCs received \$307.41 per weighted FTE (the number of students prorated by the hours they spend in school) in operating funds, approximately \$2,022 less per FTE.

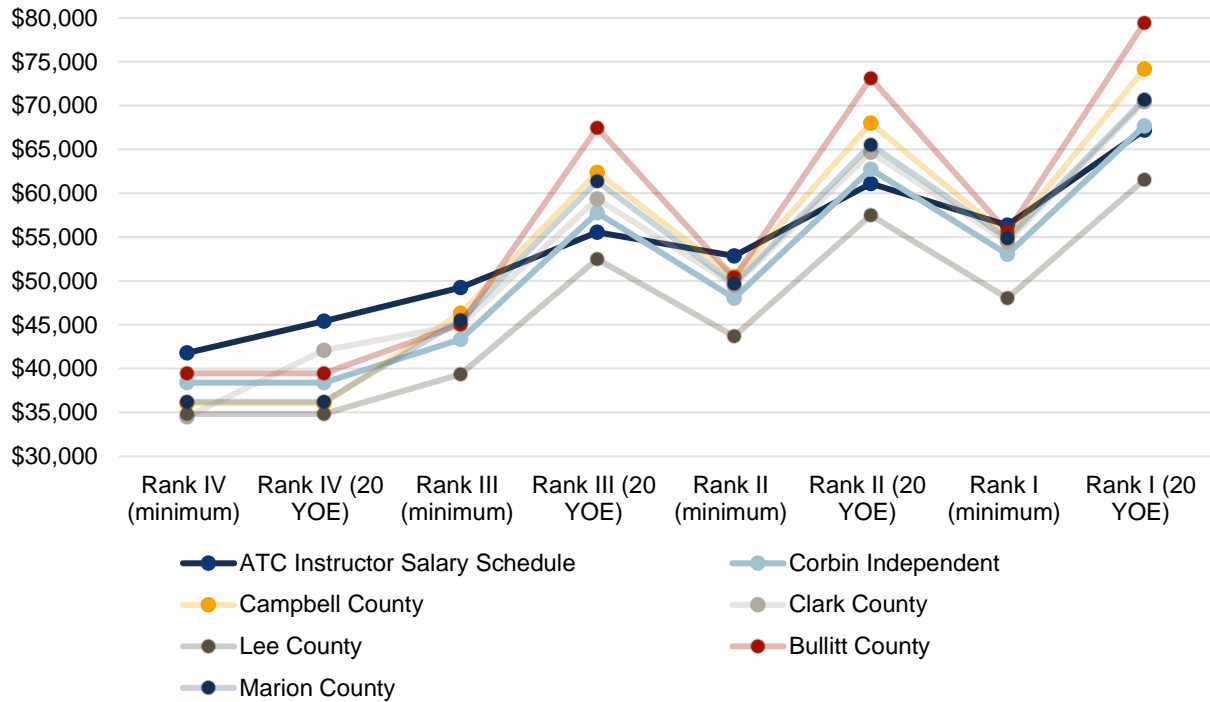
**14.2.a Recommendation:** KDE should explore finding ways of funding CTE programs in comprehensive high schools and ATCs equally.

Operating funds provided for CTE programs at ATCs should be on par with funding provided to comprehensive high school CTE programs. The statutory mechanism for CTE programs in the ATCs and districts should be linked together to maintain parity once achieved.

**14.3 Finding:** ATC staff have less earning potential when compared to teachers at comprehensive schools.

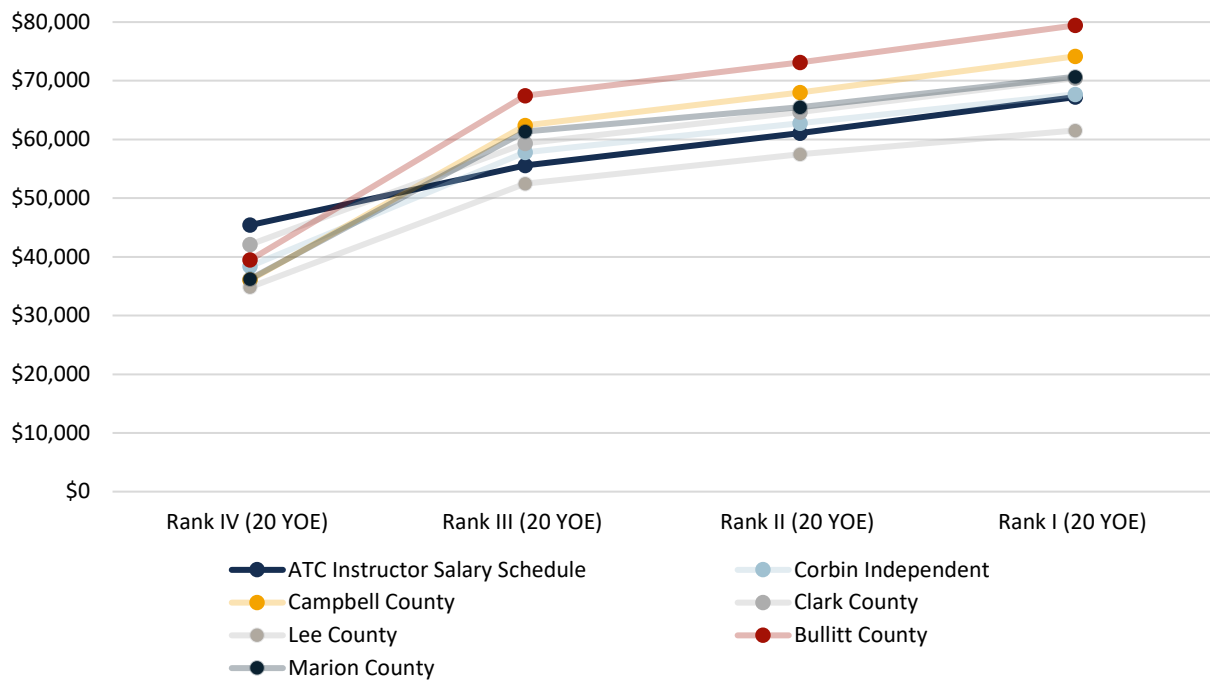
ATC staff, including both instructors and principals, are on the 156-state salary schedule. Unlike many teachers in county and independent districts, the minimum education required of ATC instructors is an associate’s degree. ATC instructors may teach for one year while they work towards their associate’s degree. Another difference between the state salary schedule and those of many local districts is that 156 staff only receive raises for every 5 years of experience, while most districts provide annual raises. Figure 194 and Figure 195 depict salary schedules for ATC instructors compared to those of the six host districts visited by the auditing team. While early career ATC instructors are sometimes paid more than their peers at local districts, teachers with 20 years of experience usually (but not always) make over \$10,000 more per year at a local district. Also, ATC teachers do not receive extra responsibility stipends for advising CTSOs and competitions as is customary in the comprehensive high schools.

FIGURE 194: ATC AND DISTRICT TEACHER BASE SALARIES (0 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE)



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, "School and District Personnel Information" and Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education "Minimum Salary Schedule For Certified Staff."

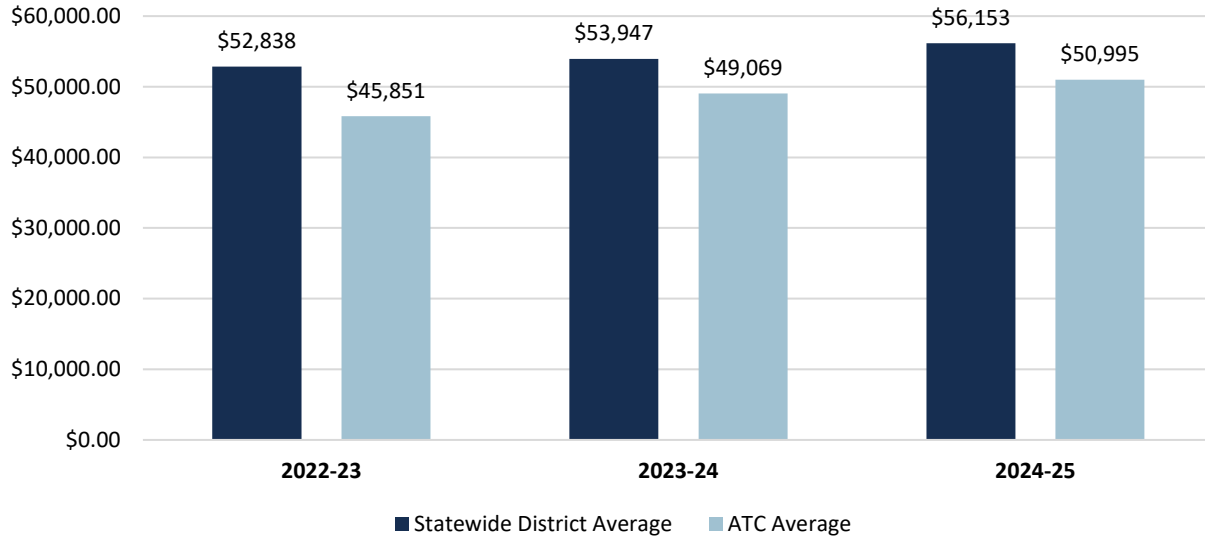
FIGURE 195: ATC AND DISTRICT TEACHER BASE SALARIES (20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE)



Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, "School and District Personnel Information" and Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education "Minimum Salary Schedule For Certified Staff."

The state counts years of experience only as those in which an employee paid into the Kentucky Teacher Retirement System. Given that many ATC instructors came to education from the trades, they do not receive credit for their years of professional experience. Combined with their diminished earning potential over time, this resulted in ATC instructors earning over \$5,000 less than teachers at local districts in 2023-2024 (Figure 196).

**FIGURE 196: DISTRICT VS. ATC AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY**



*Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, District Funding & Reporting Branch “Professional Staff Data,” and provided by Kentucky Department of Education, “Staff Salaries by Program.”*

Additionally, this analysis does not account for the extra responsibility stipends that district teachers can earn. It is customary in school districts to provide stipends to teachers to compensate them for additional duties and responsibilities, such as athletics, clubs, events, and other extracurricular experiences for students. CTE teachers in the comprehensive high schools typically receive stipends for advising CTSOs and competition teams. ATC teachers provide all these services but as staff of KDE, there is no way for them to receive stipends.

ATC principals shared similar concerns regarding their pay compared to those of comprehensive high school principals. ATC principals noted that some of their peers have been able to increase their salary by reaching an MOA with the host district to pay over and above the state provided principal salary, to more accurately reflect the salaries of comprehensive school leadership. Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education suggests that 13 of the 51 ATC principals (25%) are paid through a MOA with their host district. Principals at ATCs, in many cases, are paid less than assistant principals in the host districts. ATC principals’ duties are commensurate with those of an assistant principal at a comprehensive high school, with perhaps the added responsibility of running a center but less responsibility in other areas such as fewer evaluations and not being required to cover athletic events. Given that the salary schedule for ATC principals is indexed based on the salary they would earn as an ATC instructor, their earning potential is limited compared to school leaders at comprehensive schools.

Figure 197 illustrates that while the index for ATC principals is comparable to that of local district assistant principals, the relatively lower base salary of instructors leads to ATC principals having diminished potential for salary growth.

FIGURE 197: ATC PRINCIPAL SALARIES COMPARED TO LOCAL DISTRICT ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS<sup>460</sup>

District	Index or Stipend for Assistant Principal	Projected salary for Staff at Rank I with 20 Years of Experience
ATCs	1.20	\$80,664
Bullitt County	\$8,892	\$88,328
Campbell County	1.45	\$107,536
Clark County	1.19	\$83,821
Lee County	\$4,500	\$66,043
Marion County	1.13	\$79,881

Source: Data provided by KDE and retrieved from district websites. Comparison districts include the host districts of the ATCs visited by the auditing team. Corbin Independent School District was excluded due to lack of available data.

**14.3.a Recommendation:** KDE should work with the state to ensure salary parity for ATC teachers, leaders, and staff with equivalent roles in host districts.

In cases where the state salary scale is less than the host district, the state should fund the difference to put staff on par with the schools they serve. For each ATC principal, it would be appropriate to ensure that salary is on par with an assistant principal in the host district's comprehensive high school(s) as the duties are similar to those of a comprehensive high school assistant principal.

**14.4 Finding:** ATCs do not have dedicated staff for special education, Section 504 plans, ELs, or counseling needs.

Some of these services are required by law, and although the home district is responsible for these, ATCs generally rely on partnerships with the host district for these services. ATC principals and staff reported the need for additional resources in these areas. Host districts do not receive funding for supporting ATC students except through regular funding formulas where the host district and home district are the same. ATC principals identified additional student services staffing as one of the strongest needs for several reasons:

- Increasing numbers of ELs across the state
- Need for CTE teachers to consult with a special education teacher to address teaching strategies and interpret IEPs; similar consultation is needed for 504s
- Need for counselors to help students with work-based learning placements, dual credit opportunities, and post-graduation strategies
- Principals are the only staff member in the ATCs who can "float" – another adult would be helpful for when the principal is absent or must go to a meeting or training

Principals said that the need is so great that one person with the ability to cover one or more of these functions, not necessarily all, would improve the lives of the students and staff greatly. If a position is added, the ATC principal should have the flexibility to design the position around the areas of greatest need for each individual center.

<sup>460</sup> "18 2024-25 OCTE 156 Salary Schedule." Kentucky Department of Education; "2024-2025 Annual Pay Scales." Bullitt County Public Schools. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eTytoT2-5kOefxxqu7Yk-IBviib5Fw2F>;

"2024-2025 Salary Schedule FINAL 2-26-25." Campbell County School District. <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1740588856/campbellk12kyus/iyxmikuuvo1x5ehvxzz/2024-2025SalaryScheduleFINAL2-26-2025.pdf>;

"2024-25 Pay Schedules and Extra Services updated 12-10-2024." Clark County School District. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/12rTQK1jqNjvGdtbFgfF7pDYEaf639of\\_/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12rTQK1jqNjvGdtbFgfF7pDYEaf639of_/view);

"2024-2025 Salary Schedules Certified Subs Extended Days Stipends." Lee County School District. [https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/986/Lee\\_County/4763489/2024-2025\\_CERTIFIED\\_Salary\\_Schedules\\_Subs\\_Extended\\_Days\\_Stipends.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/986/Lee_County/4763489/2024-2025_CERTIFIED_Salary_Schedules_Subs_Extended_Days_Stipends.pdf);

"Marion County Public Schools 2024-2025 Salary Schedule." Marion County Public Schools. [https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/1571/mcps/4310152/2024-25\\_Salary\\_Schedule\\_revised.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1571/mcps/4310152/2024-25_Salary_Schedule_revised.pdf)

- 14.4.a **Recommendation:** KDE should work with the state to identify additional funding for additional ATC staff dedicated to student services such as special education, Section 504 plan support, EL services, and counseling.

14.5 **Observation:** ATCs do not consistently offer summer programming.

Some teachers in the ATCs expressed interest in providing summer programming. Occasionally, some ATCs have been able to offer summer programming depending on funding availability, but not within the last couple of years due to insufficient funding. In recent years, pandemic relief funding was used to provide summer programming for ATC students.

- 14.5.a **Recommendation:** ATCs should provide summer programming that includes extended learning opportunities for current CTE students and exploratory learning about CTE pathways for prospective students.

### **Staff Recruitment and Vacancies**

14.6 **Finding:** ATCs struggle to find and retain teacher candidates because their career pathway requirements closely resemble those of traditional teaching roles.

**Industry professionals as teachers:** The requirement for CTE instructors to hold an associate's degree can discourage or price professionals out of the applicant pool. At times, small discrepancies in qualifications serve to exclude otherwise qualified applicants. There is a CTE teacher shortage in some pathways such as engineering, manufacturing technology and electrical, leading to closure of programs. Degree requirements for entry to teaching and for promotion often do not make sense for CTE teachers in many pathways.

- 14.6.a **Recommendation:** KDE should streamline entry and compensation processes to attract more industry professionals to teach in ATCs and CTE programs.

CTE teachers usually have a different pathway into teaching than those in other content areas. KDE should provide credit for industry experience for education and training in the teacher pay scales. This credit needs to be meaningful, not nominal, to compete with industry for capable professionals with the desire and potential for teaching excellence in the CTE pathways. Processes should involve waivers as well since industry training and experience comes in so many forms and some individual circumstances should be adjudicated individually.

Kentucky is one of a few states, along with Indiana, that allows local boards the option to adjust teacher pay for related qualifications outside of K-12 teaching. California, Louisiana, and North Carolina also have programs to compensate teachers for non-teaching experience. Several other states (Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Texas, and West Virginia) allow some salary credit for specific industry experience in the CTE areas being taught.<sup>461</sup>

### **Dual Credit Opportunities**

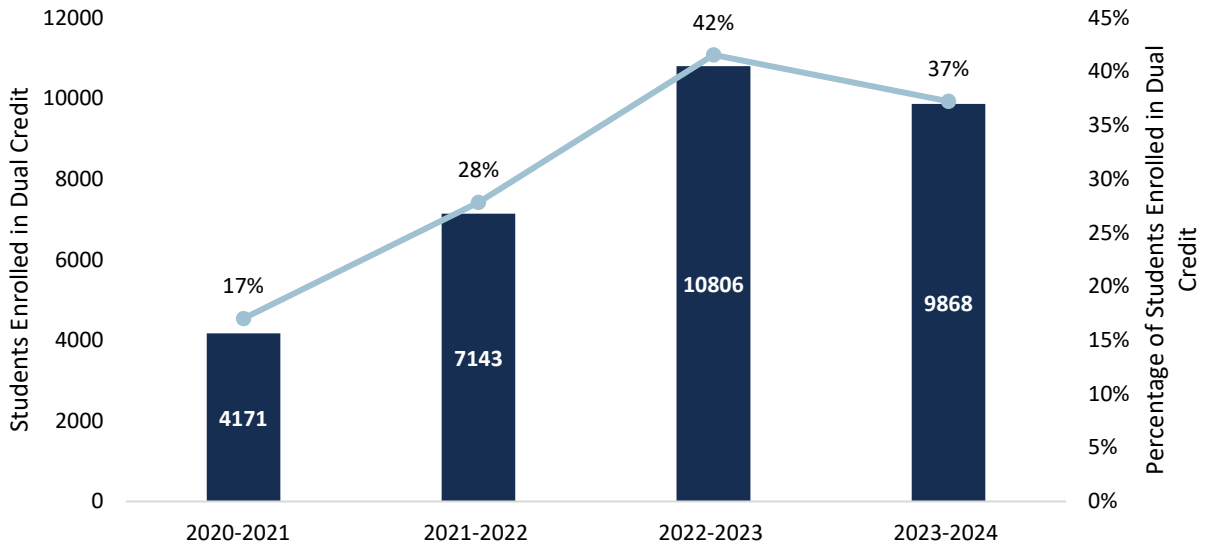
14.7 **Finding:** Dual credit opportunities for students vary across the state's ATCs.

Many of the ATCs have dual-credit or other arrangements with local community colleges, enabling students to make substantial progress toward degrees or other credentials while in high school. Every ATC has at least one student that has earned dual credit in the past four years, with some ATCs supporting nearly all of their students in earning dual credit. The number of ATC students earning dual credit steadily increased from 2020 to 2022, before decreasing slightly in 2024 (Figure 198).

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<sup>461</sup> "State of the states 2022: Teacher compensation strategies." National Council on Teacher Quality. September 2022. <https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NCTQ-State-of-the-States-2022-Teacher-Compensation-Strategies.pdf>

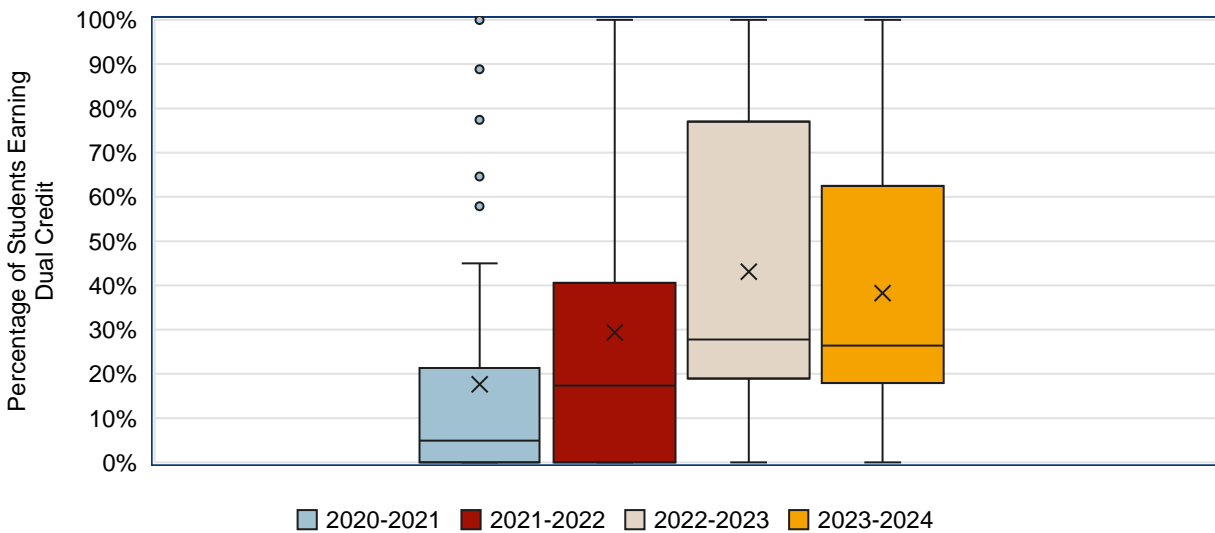
FIGURE 198: ATC STUDENT DUAL CREDIT ENROLLMENT



Source: Data provided by KDE, “#44-Enroll-Completer” and “ATC Dual Credit Enrollment.”

The number of students earning dual credit at ATCs varies across the state, with stakeholders perceiving that ATCs that are closer in proximity to state colleges and universities offer more opportunities for students to earn dual credit. Indeed, some ATCs offer students more opportunities for dual credit. However, 14 of the 50 ATCs saw less than 20% of students enrolled in dual credit in 2023-2024 (Figure 199).

FIGURE 199: DISTRIBUTION OF ATCs BY PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS EARNING DUAL CREDIT



Source: Data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education, “#44-Enroll-Completer” and “ATC Dual Credit Enrollment.”

**14.7.a Recommendation:** KDE should expand dual credit opportunities for students across all ATCs.

Although 40% of ATC students in dual credit statewide is an impressive figure, the fact that 28% of the ATCs are posting dual credit enrollment rates at less than half of the state average shows that there is work to be done and potential disparities to address.

## Data Collection and Reporting

### 14.8 **Finding:** Given the way ATC student outcomes data is collected and reported, students and families are unable to view ATC accountability indicators on the SRC.

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), every state is required to maintain a School Report Card that allows for students and families to view each LEA's performance. The inability to view this data for ATCs leaves students and families without crucial information to inform their academic and career plan.

In addition to the data required by ESSA (including graduation rates, discipline rates, absenteeism, and teacher qualifications), KDE publishes data on each LEA's state accountability measures, which are also used to calculate overall performance ratings at both the district and school level. The State Report Card is an important tool to inform students' academic plans, with the U.S. Department of Education describing the State Report Card as "increas[ing] transparency to empower parents with information to help them make the best choices for their children".<sup>462</sup>

While much of the data required to be displayed for each LEA is not applicable to ATCs given that they do not provide instruction for students' core subjects, there is no data related to ATC students' career readiness (see Figure 200 for a list of Kentucky's career readiness indicators).

FIGURE 200: STATE ACCOUNTABILITY CAREER READINESS INDICATORS

Indicator	Description
Apprenticeship	Kentucky offers the Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) program for students to gain on-the-job learning hours and/or prepare for application to a Registered Apprenticeship training program after graduation.
End-of-Program (EOP) Assessment	State-developed assessments that pertain to pathways without associated industry certifications. Students that pass these assessments earn college credit at state institutions.
CTE Dual Credit	Applies to students who earn a grade of "C" or higher in a KDE designated CTE aligned course.
Industry Certifications	Applies to students who earn the industry certification relevant to their career path. Industry certifications are based on the information provided by local workforce investment boards and are presented to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) and the Business and Education Alignment Committee for approval. Students who earn industry certifications for high demand programs as determined by KWIB earn 25% more credit for the state accountability system.
Work-based Learning	Successful completion of at least 300 hours of a KBE-approved cooperative or internship.

Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education: <https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/Pages/CTE-St-Acc.aspx>.

Instead, career readiness indicators earned at ATCs are reflected in the data for students' home district, making it difficult for families to determine what career opportunities exist at either their local district or their

<sup>462</sup> U.S. Department of Education [n.d.] *What is the Every Student Succeeds Act?*. Retrieved from What is the Every Student Succeeds Act? | U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-preschool-grade-12-education/esea/what-is-the-every-student-succeeds-act>.



ATC. Publishing this data for ATCs would allow families to make informed decisions about their students' academic and career plans.

**14.8.a Recommendation: KDE should publish data on ATC students' career readiness opportunities on the SRC.**

### **Facilities Condition**

**14.9 Finding: ATC facilities, often over 50 years old, need substantial maintenance and upgrades. Many ATC principals are unaware of how host districts use ATC facilities funds.**

The auditing team conducted reviews of the condition of each of the ATCs they visited, including the condition of the grounds and facilities, security of the school, and technology of the shops. The ATCs visited by the auditing team varied in terms of when they were built and their proximity to their host district's comprehensive high school. While some of the older ATCs had dated facilities and were in need of updates to the facility and capital improvements (particularly for ATCs with standalone campuses), all the ATCs visited by the auditing team were well-maintained and clean.

Some of the challenges faced by ATCs regarding facilities include having to retrofit classroom and shop spaces to accommodate program changes. ATC principals reported that the demand for their programs often exceeded their capacity, and that they would need to expand their facility to accommodate additional students. Given that some ATCs had seen changes in the programs offered to students, not all of the shops were large enough to house the necessary equipment. Several of the ATCs visited by the auditing team did not have separate classrooms and shops, limiting the number of students that these sites could admit into each program. The auditing team did not have waitlist data due to the way participation is tracked and because scheduling is the responsibility of the sending district. Nonetheless, ATC principals mentioned welding, auto, and public safety as highly subscribed pathways where all interested students may not get in.

SEEK funds, referred to as "20% SEEK," are distributed to the host district to provide for the upkeep of the building and for capital improvement expenses. In conversations with the auditing team, stakeholders noted that there is little accountability for how these funds are spent, and several ATC leaders noted that there is not always coordination between ATC and host district leaders in how these funds are spent. These 20% SEEK funds totaled over \$3.5 million in 2023-2024, an average of \$71,707 per ATC.<sup>463</sup>

ATC principals were mixed as far as awareness of how districts utilized the 20% SEEK funding intended to support their facilities. One principal reported that the host district consulted with the ATC each year on use of funds with complete transparency on use. This should be the practice of all host districts. Other principals reported not being told where the funding was going; it was just managed and handled fully at the host district.

**14.9.a Recommendation: KDE should ensure that 20% SEEK funds for ATC facilities are used for the benefit of the ATCs.**

### **Pathway Opportunities**

**14.10 Observation: ATCs and feeder schools offer duplicate pathways.**

The auditing team analyzed the pathways offered at both local district schools and ATCs to determine whether there was an overlap between ATCs and their feeder districts. Of the 2,315 pathway programs offered by feeder schools, 254 (approximately 11%) are also offered by the ATC that serves that school. This is particularly true of high demand pathways, such as those in the Health Science and Computer Science pathways (Figure 201).

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<sup>463</sup> Data provided by Kentucky Department of Education, "#42 ATC Feeder District Maintenance Funds."

FIGURE 201: PATHWAYS WITH THE MOST INSTANCES OF OVERLAP BETWEEN ATCs AND FEEDER SCHOOLS

Pathway	Number of Feeder Schools Offering Pathway	Number of ATCs Offering the Same Pathway as Feeder School	Percentage of Feeder Districts and ATCs offering the Same Pathway
Administrative Support	76	19	20%
Allied Health	32	30	94%
Computer Programming	72	17	24%
Management Entrepreneurship	69	22	32%
Pre-nursing	25	25	100%

Source: Data provided by KDE, "Pathways-HS-ATC-4\_Years" and "# 42 ATC Feeder Schools."

With many ATCs reporting that they do not have sufficient capacity to meet student demand, it is likely that local districts are supplementing ATCs' capacity to offer high-demand programs for students. While it is ultimately beneficial to both students and the state for more students to have the opportunity to pursue high demand career opportunities, the overlap in pathways offered by ATCs and feeder schools may create diseconomies of scale in terms of the staff and resources necessary to provide these programs. Where possible, both districts and ATCs may benefit from expanding pathway capacity at ATCs to reduce the need for local districts to offer duplicate pathways to students.

- 14.10.a **Recommendation:** KDE should expand the programmatic capacity at locally run vocational programs and ATCs to minimize overlap in pathways offered by ATCs and feeder schools.

### Laws & Regulations

As entities of KDE, ATCs are subject to numerous Kentucky state laws and regulations. There are additional laws and regulations that apply directly to OCTE and ATCs referenced in Appendix B: Relevant Laws & Regulations Reviewed.

- 14.11 **Finding:** As state-operated schools under KDE, ATCs must follow over thirty regulations and several laws, creating administrative complexities for KDE.

If the ATCs were part of the districts, some of this administrative complexity could be reduced for KDE, allowing the department to focus more on core mission and goals.

- 14.11.a **Recommendation:** KDE should assess whether efficiencies in state administrative oversight could be gained by allowing ATCs to operate under the procedures of their home districts.

## STAFFING & SUPPORT OF THE EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD

In House Bill 825 (HB 825), the General Assembly asked the team to examine the issue of “[s]taffing and support of the Education Professional Standards Board” (EPSB). In essence, this was a request to determine whether EPSB has the people and resources to do its job. From everything that the team came across in the course of this examination, EPSB has worked within their available staffing and resources, with the help of KDE, to meet their needs.

More importantly, though, in the course of examining the specific issue the General Assembly asked the team to address, the team examined the plethora of statutory and regulatory responsibilities required of EPSB. These responsibilities, many of which are outlined in KRS Chapter 161, can have a tremendous impact on education in Kentucky. This is particularly true as it relates to teacher recruitment and retention in Kentucky, a major issue in our Commonwealth at the moment. So the team exercised its discretion in expanding the scope of this examination to include the topic areas discussed below.

### *Background*

EPSB was established as a public agency on July 13, 1990. Since then, EPSB has undergone multiple reorganization changes through executive orders. At bottom, though, EPSB's current mission statement reads as follows:

The Education Professional Standards Board, in full collaboration and cooperation with its education partners, promotes high levels of student achievement by establishing and enforcing rigorous professional standards for preparation, certification, and responsible and ethical behavior of all professional educators in Kentucky.

Specifically, EPSB is tasked with overseeing and executing various functions. These include, but are not limited to, developing and implementing the standards and requirements necessary to obtain and maintain teaching certificates in Kentucky; establishing standards for, reviewing, and assessing educator preparation programs at colleges, universities, and school districts; issuing, renewing, revoking, suspending, or refusing to issue or renew any certificates; establishing procedures to follow in response to allegations regarding sexual misconduct by an employee certified by EPSB; developing a certification system that offers multiple pathways to certification and supports flexible staffing in local schools, without compromising established standards of teacher competency; and establishing a professional code of ethics. Additionally, EPSB is responsible for submitting reports to the Governor and the Legislative Research Commission, as well as notifying the public of the status of teaching in Kentucky.

### EPSB MEMBERS

EPSB is composed of 17 members. The Secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet and the President of the Council on Postsecondary Education are ex officio voting members, while the Governor appoints the remaining 15 members. Among the 15 appointees, nine members must be teachers representing elementary, middle or junior high, secondary, special education, and secondary vocational classrooms. Two members must be school administrators, with one being a school principal. One member must represent the local boards of education. Three members are from postsecondary institutions, with two required to be deans of colleges of education at public universities and one being the chief academic officer of an independent not-for-profit college or university. The appointed members serve three-year terms. The Commissioner of Education is required to serve as the board's executive secretary or may designate staff to fulfill the duties of that position.

### TEACHING CERTIFICATES

In accordance with KRS 161.028(1), EPSB is authorized to establish the standards for obtaining and maintaining a teacher certificate in Kentucky. Additionally, EPSB is authorized, via KRS 161.028(1)(f), to issue and renew any teaching certificate. The certifications to be issued for teaching positions in Kentucky

are established in 16 KAR 2:010. As shown in Figure 202, there are six types of certifications available in Kentucky.

**FIGURE 202: TEACHING CERTIFICATIONS IN KENTUCKY**

Type of Certification	Inclusions
Provisional Certification	Conditional Certificate; Provisional Internship Certificate (one year certificate); Temporary Provisional Certificate; Probationary Provisional Certificate; Proficiency Provisional Certificate; Occupation-based Career and Technical Education Provisional Certificate; One Year Provisional Alternative Certificate; Adjunct Certificate; Emergency Certificate; Temporary Certificate for Instructional Leadership (in-state and out-of-state); Temporary Certificate; and Provisional Certificate for "Other School Professionals"
Professional Certificate	Initial Certificate (four (4) year certificate); Initial Certificate (five (5) year certificate); Renewal Certificate (five (5) year certificate); Occupation-based Career and Technical Education Professional Certificate; and Professional Certificate for "Other School Professionals"
Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Certificate	
Additional Certification	Certificate Extension; Certificate Endorsement
Substitute Teaching Certification	Certified Substitute Certificate; Emergency Substitute Certificate
All Other Existing Certificates	

Source: APA, based on 16 KAR 2:010.

The KDE website also provides a list of the certificates approved by EPSB, as listed in Figure 203.

**FIGURE 203: EPSB APPROVED CERTIFICATES**

Approved Certificates	Types
Basing Teaching Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (Birth to Primary)</li> <li>• Elementary School (Primary through Grade 5)</li> <li>• Middle School (Grades 5 through 9)</li> <li>• Secondary School (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• Middle/Secondary School (Grades 5 through 12)</li> <li>• Elementary/Middle/Secondary School (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Exceptional Children (Primary through Grade 12 &amp; for collaborating with teachers to design &amp; deliver programs)</li> </ul>
Restricted Base Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• Sociology (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• Journalism (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• Speech/Media Communication (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• Theatre (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Dance (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Computer Information Systems (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• English as a Second Language (Primary through Grade 12)</li> </ul>
Other Instructional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultant</li> <li>• Endorsement for Environmental Education (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Endorsement for School Safety (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Endorsement for Mathematics Specialist (Primary through Grade 5)</li> <li>• Learning and Behavior Disorders (Grades 8-12)</li> </ul>

Approved Certificates	Types
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Guidance Counselor; School Nurse; School Psychologist; School Social Worker</li> <li>• Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps</li> <li>• Principal (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Supervisor of Instruction (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Director of Pupil Personnel</li> <li>• Director of Special Education</li> <li>• Superintendent</li> </ul>
Endorsements to Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer Science (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• English as a Second Language (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Gifted Education (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Driver Education (Grades 8 through 12)</li> <li>• Literacy Specialist/Reading (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Instructional Computer Technology (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Teacher Leader (All Grades)</li> <li>• School Safety (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Environmental Education (Primary through Grade 12)</li> <li>• Elementary Mathematics Specialist (Primary through Grade 5)</li> <li>• American Sign Language (Primary through Grade 12)</li> </ul>

Source: APA, based on information obtained from the GoTeachKY website.

### Alternative Pathways to Certification

For individuals who demonstrate exceptional work and educational experience, KRS 161.048 provides nine alternative pathway options for pursuing teacher certification. The nine alternative pathway options, along with the eligibility requirements for each, are as follows:

- **Option 1 – Exceptional Work Experience:** An individual with exceptional work experience may receive a one-year provisional certificate upon approval by EPSB based on the following conditions:
  - The application contains documentation of all education and work experience;
  - The candidate has documented exceptional work experience in the area for which the certificate is being sought; and
  - The candidate has a minimum of a bachelor's degree with a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75 (or a GPA of 3.0 on the last 30 credit hours), and either an academic major in the certification area or a passing score on the Praxis content assessment.
- **Option 2 – Local District Training Program:** A local school district or group of school districts may request approval for a training program. To take part in a state-approved local school district alternative training program, the candidate must possess:
  - The candidate has a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree;
  - The candidate has a GPA of at least 2.75 (or a GPA of 3.0 on the last 30 credit hours); and
  - The candidate has a passing score on the Praxis content assessment, and to be eligible to take the assessment, the candidate must have 30 credit hours in the academic content area or five years of experience in the academic content area as approved by EPSB.
- **Option 3 – College Faculty:** A candidate who possesses the following qualifications may receive a one-year provisional certificate for teaching at any level:
  - A master's degree or doctoral degree in the academic content area in which the certification is sought; and
  - A minimum of five years of full-time teaching experience, or its equivalent, in the academic content area for which certification is sought in a regionally or nationally accredited institution of higher education.
- **Option 4 – Adjunct Instructor (P-12):** The Adjunct Instructor certification does not lead to professional certification in Kentucky. The one-year, renewable certificate allows those who have expertise in areas such as art, music, foreign language, drama, science, computer science, and

other specialty areas, and who hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree with a major or minor in an academic content area, and who meet other qualifications (KRS 161.046 and 16 KAR 9:040), to teach part-time.

- **Option 5 – Armed Forces Veteran:** EPSB may state eligibility, valid for five years for teaching at the elementary, secondary, and secondary career technical levels, to a veteran of the Armed Forces who was honorably discharged from active duty or to a member of the Armed Services currently serving six or more years of honorable service, including Reserves, National Guard, or active duty. The candidate must possess the following:
  - The candidate has a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree;
  - The candidate has a GPA of at least 2.75 (or a GPA of 3.0 on the last 30 credit hours); and
  - The candidate has an academic major in the certification area or a passing score on the Praxis content assessment.
- **Option 6 – University-Based Alternative Route:** This pathway enrolls students in a post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program while they are concurrently employed as a teacher in a school district. The candidate must possess the following:
  - The candidate has a bachelor's degree with a GPA of at least 2.75 (or a GPA of 3.0 on the last 30 credit hours);
  - The candidate meets the university admission requirements; and
  - The candidate obtains an offer of employment from a Kentucky school district.
- **Option 7 – Institute Alternative Route:** Candidates complete training through an approved institute that addresses multiple research-based teaching strategies and practices in this option. The candidate must possess the following:
  - The candidate has a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree; and
  - The candidate has a GPA of at least 2.75 (or a GPA of 3.0 on the last 30 credit hours).
- **Option 8 – Teach for America:** A national nonprofit organization that recruits, trains, and supports outstanding recent college graduates for career placement in participating school districts in the Appalachian Region of Kentucky. The candidates must possess:
  - The candidate has a bachelor's degree;
  - The candidate has completed the summer training institute and ongoing professional development by Teach for America, including instruction in goal-oriented, standards-based instruction, diagnosing and assessing students, lesson planning and instructional delivery, classroom management, maximizing learning for diverse students, and teaching methodologies; and
  - The candidate has a passing score on the Praxis content assessment.
- **Option 9 – Expedited Route:** This route to certification results in a bachelor's degree and initial certification within three school years, requiring a college or university to partner with a district or group of districts to develop a program that includes a paraprofessional/residency component and utilizes experienced teachers to provide coaching and mentoring. Although the route requires a candidate to be employed in a classified position while completing coursework, it does not allow the candidate to serve as a teacher while enrolled in the route. To serve as a teacher, an individual must possess a teaching certificate. The Option 9 route only provides for initial certification once the candidate has completed the bachelor's degree and passed the certification assessments.

The proficiency evaluation and the Highly Qualified routes offer additional opportunities to pursue a teaching certificate, in addition to the nine options. When a candidate demonstrates proficiency that meets or exceeds the usual curriculum requirements, an Educator Preparation Provider at a college or university can evaluate and accept competency for educator certification purposes as outlined in 16 KAR 5:030. Additionally, 16 KAR 2:010 provides increased flexibility for fully certified teachers in Kentucky to obtain a new certification area without additional coursework.

In November 2023, the Office of Educational Accountability (OEA) released a report on employee staffing shortages in Kentucky public schools. The report discussed the above alternative pathways and provided data on the number of alternative certificates between school years (SY) 2020 and 2023. This data is reflected in Figure 204 and shows the most common type of alternative certificate during this time period

was Option 6—that is, the University-based alternative route. It should be noted that data was not available for 2021 and 2022.

**FIGURE 204: ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION ROUTES FOR SY 2020-2023**

Certification Route	2020-2023 Numbers	2020-2023 Percentages
Option 1	387	3.3%
Option 2	8	0.1%
Option 3	664	5.7%
Option 4	276	2.4%
Option 5	999	8.5%
Option 6	9,199	78.7%
Option 7	18	0.2%
Option 8	142	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,693</b>	

*\*Option 9 was not in effect at the time of the OEA report. Source: Office of Educational Accountability, Kentucky Public School Employee Staffing Shortages (November 2023).*

## SUSPENSIONS AND REVOCATIONS

EPSB is required by KRS 161.028 to develop a professional code of ethics for certified school personnel in Kentucky. The Professional Code of Ethics for Kentucky Certified Personnel (“the code”) is codified in 16 KAR 1:020 and establishes that a violation of the code may result in suspension or revocation of Kentucky teacher or administrator certification.

Due to the passage of House Bill 300, the complaint process was not tested. However, testing was conducted on a selection of both suspended and revoked educator certificates to confirm proper documentation of suspension and revocation decision-making.

From July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2024, 186 suspensions and 403 revocations of educator certificates occurred. It should be noted the total for suspensions does not include any suspensions prior to mid-2021, as the tracking system changed.

Suspensions and revocations can occur through an Agreed or Recommended Order. An Agreed Order is a settlement resolution between all parties that EPSB must approve and the EPSB Chair must sign. A Recommended Order is issued based on a decision of a hearing officer after following the KRS 13B administrative process; however, it is not final until EPSB issues a Final Order and the EPSB Chair signs it.

Of the 186 suspended educator certificates, 35 were tested with no exceptions being noted. Additionally, testing of 50 of the 403 revoked educator certificates found that all Agreed or Recommended Orders were entered within the specified timeframes within the revocation start dates.

## HOUSE BILL 300

House Bill 300 (HB 300) amended KRS 161.120, which codified EPSB’s responsibilities related to disciplinary actions on certificates, the complaint review process, a superintendent’s reporting requirements, hearings, and appeals. The Governor signed the bill on April 18, 2024, and the amendments took effect on July 15, 2024.

While HB 300 took effect outside of the examination period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2024, it made significant changes to EPSB’s complaint process.

Specifically, a subsection was added that outlines the process and implements timelines for EPSB to respond to and resolve complaints received. HB 300 also added EPSB’s requirement to confirm receipt with any superintendent who submits a report within a specified timeframe, as well as if there is sufficient evidence and any action taken. Among other additions, HB 300 added ESPB options to secure a hearing



officer, including employing, contracting with another agency, contracting with private attorneys through personal service contracts, or securing from the Attorney General's Office.

## TEACHER RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, & EVALUATION

### *Recruitment & Retention*

Teachers have the largest in-school impact on student achievement.<sup>464</sup> As a result, it is no surprise that teacher recruitment and retention are critical factors in the success of any school district or educational institution. Teacher recruitment is the process of attracting, selecting, and hiring qualified individuals to become educators in schools. Teacher retention refers to the proportion of teachers in one year that are still teaching in the same school the following year.<sup>465</sup>

Nearly every state in the U.S. is currently suffering from teacher shortages.<sup>466</sup> Gallup's 2018 Survey of K-12 school district superintendents established that 83% of superintendents surveyed struggled to find and retain qualified teachers.<sup>467</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has seemingly only exacerbated this issue, as a 2023 report released by RAND Education and Labor establishes teacher turnover has increased 4% above pre-pandemic levels. This "increase corresponds to roughly an extra 114,000 teachers leaving their position nationally compared to the previous school year."<sup>468</sup>

Kentucky is no exception to the rule. According to a 2023 report by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), in school year 2023, 10.9% of teachers statewide did not return to teaching in Kentucky; 16.7% did not return to teaching in their districts; and 20% did not return to teaching in their schools. These figures were the highest over a ten-year observation period.<sup>469</sup> Further, 93% of surveyed superintendents and 75.5% of surveyed principals reported a lack of qualified candidates in general and specific subjects as the greatest barrier to teacher recruitment.<sup>470</sup> Analysis of Kentucky Educator Placement Service data revealed a 260% increase in the number of open teacher positions at Kentucky schools between 2019 and 2023.<sup>471</sup>

As noted by Hanover Research in its Tackle the Top Drivers of Teacher Attrition, high teacher attrition rates lead to several consequences:

- **Sunk Costs:** Districts lose their investments in teachers who turn over.
- **Increased Expenses:** Districts must invest in recruiting, advertising, interviewing, hiring, and training new teachers.
- **Lost Curriculum Knowledge:** Departing teachers take their knowledge and skills with them that might have greatly informed the subject's curriculum.
- **Overburdened Teachers:** Teachers who remain must assist inexperienced colleagues and new hires.

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<sup>464</sup> Nyhus, Jill, Culbertson, Jason. "Teacher Recruitment & Retention: Attract and Keep Your Most Effective Educators." Traction for School Improvement. 2020. <https://eed.communities.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/Teacher%20Recruitment%20%26%20Retention.pdf>

<sup>465</sup> "Teacher Recruitment and Retention: 6 Best Practices." ParentSquare Blog. August 30, 2023. <https://www.parentsquare.com/blog/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-6-best-practices/>

<sup>466</sup> Nyhus, Jill, Culbertson, Jason. "Teacher Recruitment & Retention: Attract and Keep Your Most Effective Educators." Traction for School Improvement. 2020. <https://eed.communities.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/Teacher%20Recruitment%20%26%20Retention.pdf>

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Diliberti, Melissa Kay, Schwartz, Heather. "Educator Turnover Has Markedly Increased, but Districts Have Taken Actions to Boost Teacher Ranks." RAND. February 16, 2023. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR956-14.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR956-14.html)

<sup>469</sup> "Kentucky Public School Employee Staffing Shortages." Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, Office of Education Accountability. November 1, 2023. <https://legislature.ky.gov/LRC/Publications/Research%20Reports/RR486.pdf>

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

- **Diminished Sense of Community:** High teacher turnover can weaken the school community and students' feeling of stability in their environment.<sup>472</sup>

To mitigate the above consequences, it is important for states, including Kentucky, to understand why teachers are abandoning their positions or the field.

### 15.1 **Finding:** School districts in Kentucky are not consistently providing responses to KDE's Teacher Exit Survey, resulting in less than desirable statewide engagement.

To address the chronic issue of teacher retention and recruitment, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted KRS 160.382 in 2023, which requires: (1) districts' local boards of education to ensure every school district employee who voluntarily leaves the district to complete an exit survey; and (2) KDE to develop a system for school districts to report exit survey information without providing personally identifiable information for use in evaluating factors impacting teacher retainment. The exit survey is to include, but not be limited to, the position vacated, the employee's years of service in the position and in the district, if the employee is taking a similar position in another district, and the reason or reasons provided for leaving the district.<sup>473</sup>

In accordance with KRS 160.382, KDE created a reporting system for districts to provide any data collected via exit surveys. In addition, and despite not being required to do so, KDE went a step further and created an exit survey districts could use in lieu of creating their own surveys.<sup>474</sup> The KDE Teacher Exit Survey was launched in July 2023 and was designed to:<sup>475</sup>

- Understand the reasons why teachers in Kentucky leave their districts or the profession
- Collect data that shows a pattern in teacher mobility or teachers leaving the profession
- Understand what geographical parts of the state are impacted the most by teachers leaving<sup>476</sup>

While KDE is applauded for assisting districts with the creation of its survey, collected data shows districts are not engaging with the proffered survey to the desired extent. As shown in Figure 205, only 94 out of 171 districts have provided responses to KDE's survey and the majority of the 94 have not utilized the survey more than ten times since the data was pulled for the purposes of this examination (on or about March 12, 2025). Four additional districts provided responses between March and June 2025.

**FIGURE 205: DISTRICT RESPONSES RECEIVED BY KDE**

Number of Responses	Districts
Ten or Less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allen County (3)</li> <li>• Ashland independent (2)</li> <li>• Ballard County (1)</li> <li>• Bardstown Independent (9)</li> <li>• Barren County (6)</li> <li>• Bath County (5)</li> <li>• Bellevue Independent (9)</li> <li>• Berea Independent (3)</li> <li>• Boyd County (5)</li> <li>• Boyle County (1)</li> <li>• Bracken County (6)</li> <li>• Breathitt County (5)</li> <li>• Henry County (2)</li> <li>• Hickman County (6)</li> <li>• Jackson County (2)</li> <li>• Knott County (1)</li> <li>• Larue County (3)</li> <li>• Leslie County (3)</li> <li>• Lincoln County (4)</li> <li>• Ludlow Independent (3)</li> <li>• Madison County (2)</li> <li>• Mayfield Independent (1)</li> <li>• McCreary County (6)</li> <li>• Meade County (1)</li> </ul>

<sup>472</sup> "Tackle the Top Drivers of Teacher Attrition." Hanover Research. July 22, 2019.

<https://www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/k-12-education/tackle-the-top-drivers-of-teacher-attrition/>

<sup>473</sup> "KRS 160.382." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54109>

<sup>474</sup> Edwards, Justin. "Data Requested." March 11, 2025. [Email].

<sup>475</sup> Edwards, Justin. "Data Requested" March 14, 2025. [Email].

<sup>476</sup> "Exit Survey." Kentucky Department of Education. <https://goteachky.com/resources/grow-your-own/educator-retention/exit-survey/>

Number of Responses	Districts	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breckinridge County (1)</li> <li>• Butler County (5)</li> <li>• Caldwell County (3)</li> <li>• Campbellsville independent (7)</li> <li>• Carroll County (5)</li> <li>• Casey County (8)</li> <li>• Clark County (5)</li> <li>• Crittenden County (4)</li> <li>• Daviess County (5)</li> <li>• Edmonson County (8)</li> <li>• Elizabethtown Independent (3)</li> <li>• Erlanger Independent (3)</li> <li>• Fairview Independent (1)</li> <li>• Floyd County (1)</li> <li>• Frankfort Independent (10)</li> <li>• Fulton Independent (4)</li> <li>• Glasgow Independent (8)</li> <li>• Green County (10)</li> <li>• Hancock County (1)</li> <li>• Hardin County (3)</li> <li>• Harlan County (6)</li> <li>• Henderson County (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marshall County (10)</li> <li>• Menifee County (1)</li> <li>• Mercer County (5)</li> <li>• Monroe County (1)</li> <li>• Morgan County (2)</li> <li>• Muhlenberg County (7)</li> <li>• Murray Independent (1)</li> <li>• Nicholas County (1)</li> <li>• Ohio County (1)</li> <li>• Owen County (3)</li> <li>• Owensboro Independent (8)</li> <li>• Paris Independent (4)</li> <li>• Pendleton County (4)</li> <li>• Powell County (3)</li> <li>• Simpson County (3)</li> <li>• Trigg County (1)</li> <li>• Union County (1)</li> <li>• Walton-Verona Independent (1)</li> <li>• Washington County (4)</li> <li>• Wayne County (3)</li> <li>• Wolfe County (1)</li> <li>• Woodford County (6)</li> </ul>
<b>11 or More</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anderson County (14)</li> <li>• Boone County (68)</li> <li>• Bowling Green Independent (43)</li> <li>• Bullitt County (59)</li> <li>• Campbell County (27)</li> <li>• Caverna Independent (11)</li> <li>• Covington Independent (17)</li> <li>• Eminence Independent (12)</li> <li>• Fayette County (188)</li> <li>• Fleming County (11)</li> <li>• Franklin County (15)</li> <li>• Graves County (25)</li> <li>• Grayson County (16)</li> <li>• Graves County (25)</li> <li>• Grayson County (16)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hart County (22)</li> <li>• Hopkins County (21)</li> <li>• Jefferson County (50)</li> <li>• Jessamine County (20)</li> <li>• Kenton County (32)</li> <li>• Knox County (11)</li> <li>• Logan County (15)</li> <li>• Marion County (18)</li> <li>• McLean County (13)</li> <li>• Newport Independent (12)</li> <li>• Oldham County (28)</li> <li>• Shelby County (13)</li> <li>• Spencer County (11)</li> <li>• Warren County (50)</li> </ul>

Source: APA, based on data provided by KDE

To be clear, there is a possibility that one or more of the 94 participating districts have only engaged with KDE's exit survey so few times because, in reality, they have not had employees voluntarily leave their positions more than the reported figures indicate. Whether or not that is true, however, is not a question KDE can answer with its current systems. KDE does not have a mechanism to track the exact number of district employees leaving their positions (voluntarily or otherwise) at any given time and therefore lacks the ability to know or estimate the exact amount of data (i.e., survey responses) it should receive from each district upon collection.<sup>477</sup> Nonetheless, it is safe to assume, based on staff interviews and the research

<sup>477</sup> Edwards, Justin. "Data Requested." March 14, 2025. [Email].

and statistics outlined above, that employees are likely leaving districts at a higher rate than is being reported to KDE via its exit survey.

The districts' lack of engagement with KDE's survey would not necessarily raise concern alone if the districts were still reporting data via their own exit surveys to KDE. However, with the same caveat here as just mentioned, that is not the case. Not a single district utilizing its own exit survey (or, at least, not using KDE's survey) has provided KDE with any data pertaining to this effort.<sup>478</sup> As a result, while KDE has been able to evaluate the minimal data provided as required by KRS 160.382(2)(a) (see Appendix B: Relevant Laws & Regulations Reviewed), its evaluation has been severely limited by the districts' reported failure to adhere to their statutory obligation.<sup>479</sup>

It is understood that districts have a lot of responsibilities prioritized above KRS 160.382's mandate. However, the law was enacted to address the chronic issue of teacher recruitment and retention in Kentucky—an issue which directly impacts school districts and student success. Without qualified teachers, students suffer. Thus, it is crucial districts prioritize their reporting obligations under the statute and work with KDE to address the recruiting and retention issues plaguing the education profession. As noted by the data KDE has been able to collect thus far, these issues include but are not limited to:

- Lack of work-life balance
- Issues with school culture
- Lack of appreciation
- Issues with leadership styles
- Poor compensation<sup>480</sup>

**15.1.a Recommendations: KDE and schools districts should collaborate to the extent necessary to ensure the requirements of KRS 160.382 are met. KDE should seek to increase awareness of the importance of the data required by the statute and create an opportunity for KDE and districts to meet to discuss the best collection and reporting methods.**

Further, while not statutorily required, for the sake of uniformity and ease, all school districts should utilize KDE's Teacher Exit Survey as the means to collect the required data. If certain districts wish to seek information not already included on KDE's survey, KDE should work with such districts (within reason) to ensure its survey captures the desired information.

Finally, if collaboration efforts between KDE and the districts do not create the desired results, KDE should work with the General Assembly to develop the best strategy to incentivize districts to comply with their statutory obligation under KRS 160.382.

**15.2 Observation: The Teacher Pipeline Dashboard is not maintained with current teacher recruitment tracking data.**

In the 2023 Kentucky Teacher Equity Report, the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KY Stats) tracked the 44,027 high school graduates from the 2015 academic year to determine how many graduates enrolled in college, declared an education major, obtained a teacher certification, and were employed by public schools.<sup>481</sup> As established in Figure 206, only 3,247 students declared an education major and, out of that number, only 2.6% obtained a teacher certification.

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<sup>478</sup> Edwards, Justin. "Data Requested." March 11, 2025. [Email].

<sup>479</sup> "Kentucky Educational Careers Attrition Survey." Kentucky Department of Education.

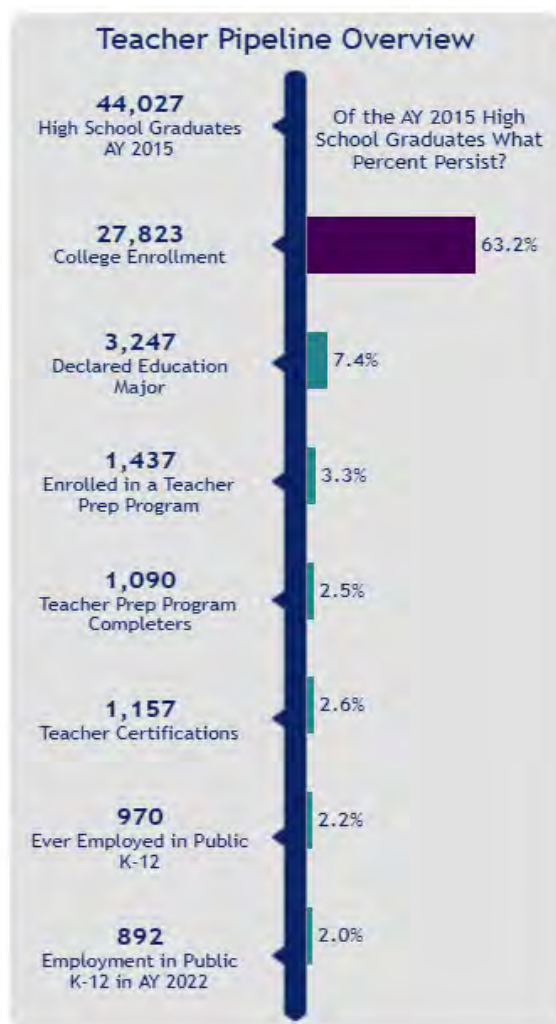
[https://script.google.com/macros/s/AKfycbw3uUbjwKEHOVRfNcRtefAhTuR8HC3796bcA4pSUwxE\\_oAMFdrhL25NcaLXL\\_Z2rqeA/exec](https://script.google.com/macros/s/AKfycbw3uUbjwKEHOVRfNcRtefAhTuR8HC3796bcA4pSUwxE_oAMFdrhL25NcaLXL_Z2rqeA/exec)

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> "Kentucky Teacher Equity Report." KYStats. 2015.

<https://reports.ky.gov/t/KCEWS/views/TeacherEquity2023/TeacherPipeline?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>

FIGURE 206: TEACHER PIPELINE OVERVIEW: ACADEMIC YEAR (AY) 2015 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



Source: 2023 Kentucky Teacher Equity Report

In discussions with KDE staff, it became clear updated data like the above would help KDE take a more informed, data-backed approach for developing strategies to combat the issue of teacher recruitment and retention in Kentucky. The pipeline provides concrete completion rates and could possibly assist KDE in estimating where college students lose interest in teaching as a career. For example, the above data indicates a 0.8% drop between those who enroll in a Teacher Prep Program and those who actually complete it. With this data, KDE (possibly in conjunction with the relevant higher education institutions) could develop specific methods to target students during this educational phase and provide needed resources to support students from start to completion.

KDE staff expressed a desire for more current tracking data and even expressed a willingness to work with KY Stats to achieve this goal. It was reported KDE and KY Stats would work well together given both parties could benefit from a mutual exchange of data and information.

- 15.2.a Recommendation:** KDE, to the extent possible, should enter discussions with KYSTATS to determine whether teacher recruitment tracking data can be continued, updated, and maintained. To the degree that it can, KDE should collaborate with KY Stats to the extent necessary to achieve desired results.

**15.3 Observation:** KDE's efforts to address statewide teacher recruitment and retention are focused primarily on the launch and maintenance of the GoTeachKY campaign website which limits the ability to measure the success of implementation.

To address the ongoing crisis of teacher recruitment and retention, KDE via its Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness (OELE) launched the GoTeachKY Campaign (the campaign) in April 2025.<sup>482</sup> The objective of the campaign is to strategically strengthen teacher recruitment efforts, reduce the attrition risk, and elevate the perception of the teaching profession through targeted outreach.<sup>483</sup> Specifically, the campaign's goals include:

- **Increase Awareness:** Highlight the benefits and impact of the teaching profession through a comprehensive marketing strategy
- **Recruit High Quality Candidates:** Target potential educators, including high school and college students, career changers, and paraeducators
- **Enhance Retention Efforts:** Foster a sense of value and belonging among current educators through various recognition marketing strategies
- **Elevate the Profession:** Change perceptions of teaching by showcasing success stories and the impact of Kentucky educators<sup>484</sup>

The targeted audience includes the communities in which teachers reside and any persons who may be potential educator candidates, including high school and college students, career changers, paraeducators, and sponsors.<sup>485</sup>

In addition to launching an updated GoTeachKY website in April 2025, the campaign also uses various marketing strategies to generate awareness:

- Social media marketing via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube
- Streaming Advertisements (April 2025-July 2025)
- Billboards (April 2025-June 2025)
- GoTeachKY Ambassadors
- Posters, fliers, pamphlets
- Regional visits to districts, schools, communities, and chambers of commerce (May 2025-October 2025)

As shown in Figure 207, and as formulated by OELE, the campaign has a budget of almost \$140,000 and a current balance of \$51,269.94.

**FIGURE 207: GoTEACHKY CAMPAIGN BUDGET**

Items	Total	Current Balance
Spectrum Ads	\$ 32,000	\$0
Regional Outreach for Staff	\$ 22,200	\$22,200
Administrative Cost for Mailings etc. (Design, print and mailing postcards)	\$ 3,000	\$3,000
Positive Promotional Items for Distribution	\$ 28,500	\$4,905
Billboards	\$ 30,000	\$0
Social media	\$ 3,995.94	\$1,245.94

<sup>482</sup> Young, Myles. "KDE Kicks Off Teacher Recruitment and Retention Campaign to Inspire and Support Kentucky Educators." Kentucky Teacher. April 14, 2025. <https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/news/2025/04/kde-kicks-off-teacher-recruitment-and-retention-campaign-to-inspire-and-support-kentucky-educators/>

<sup>483</sup> "GoTeachKY Teacher Recruitment and Retention Campaign." Kentucky Department of Education. [PDF].

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Meredith Brewer. "Data Requested." March 14, 2025. [Email].

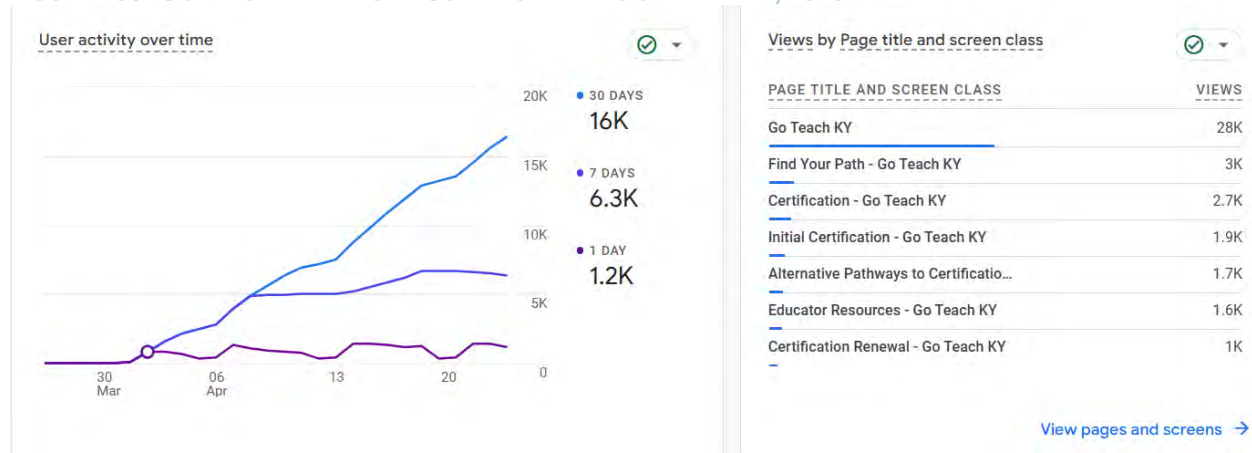


Items	Total	Current Balance
Ambassador Program	\$ 17,919	\$17,919
Miscellaneous/Contingency Fund	\$ 2,000	\$2,000
<b>Total Budget Requested</b>	<b>\$ 139,614.94</b>	<b>\$51,269.94</b>

Source: GoTeachKY Educator Recruitment and Retention Campaign

These efforts to raise awareness of and grow the teaching profession in Kentucky are commendable and certainly have potential to be a great starting point for future similar endeavors. However, for the campaign to be as impactful as hoped, KDE needs to establish a clear metric of success. Currently, the success of the campaign mostly hinges on interactions with the updated GoTeachKY website, as shown in Figure 208.

FIGURE 208: GoTeachKY WEBSITE USER ACTIVITY AS OF APRIL 24, 2025



Source: Data provided by KDE.

While website traffic can be an indicator of achievement, additional data and feedback would assist in determining whether the campaign reached its intended goals and objectives. For example, KDE could register interested individuals on a Listserv to provide helpful information and assistance to those who wish to enter the teaching profession. Actual registration numbers on a Listserv would seem to be a better indicator of the effectiveness of outreach efforts than simply views on a website.

In addition to the campaign, KDE should consider other methods for creating a smoother and more fulfilling pathway for educators (both current and aspiring). During on-site focus groups, KDE staff made several suggestions on how the Department could creatively address practical hinderances exacerbating teacher recruitment and retention in Kentucky. These suggestions included:

- **Statewide Application System:** a centralized online platform to streamline the application process, making it easier for candidates to apply for open positions at more than one school district at a time
- **Statewide Teacher Registry:** an electronic system that maintains a record of educators, their qualifications, their eligibility to teach, and current employment status, making it easier for KDE and school districts to track the fluctuations in the educational hiring pool
- **Increased Teacher Apprenticeships:** create more opportunities for aspiring educators to gain practical classroom experience and training while working in school districts
- **Updated “Sales Pitch” for the teaching profession:** curate a concise and persuasive presentation that explains and touts the benefits of a career in education while also addressing the topics today’s generation are most concerned about (e.g., work-life balance and compensation)

15.3.a **Recommendations:** KDE should continue its efforts to address the issue of teacher retention and recruitment in Kentucky via the campaign and other methods. Every effort



must have a solid metric of success so KDE can concretely design, implement, and track the impact of its efforts across the Commonwealth.

## Evaluation

Teacher evaluation systems play an important role in a career educator’s professional growth and development. These tools set guidelines to observe teacher practice and generate feedback that aim to increase effective practices. Toward this end, districts in Kentucky are required by KRS 156.557 and 704 KAR 3:370 to create local Certified Evaluation Plans (CEP). Local Evaluation “50/50” Committees comprised of equal numbers of teachers and administrators develop “the procedures and forms for evaluating certified school personnel below the level of superintendent.”<sup>486</sup> The CEP should be designed to promote professional growth and measure the effectiveness of in-service teachers.<sup>487</sup>

The CEP is approved locally by the district’s Board of Education and is not required to be submitted to KDE for review. KDE staff reported that they play a minimal role in local teacher evaluation system oversight and implementation at the state level. However, staff are available upon district request to support local system development and to prepare districts to seek the local Board of Education approval of the CEP.

KRS 156.557 requires formative and summative teacher evaluation data to be calculated and stored locally, and KDE cannot require districts to include evaluation data in the state accountability system. However, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) Equity Plan reporting requires KDE as the state education agency to collect the statewide number of *Ineffective* summative evaluation ratings. KDE staff confirmed they work with districts to obtain these total numbers for federal reporting each year.

### Kentucky Framework for Teaching

#### 15.4 Finding: The Kentucky Framework for Teaching (KyFfT) has not been updated since publication in 2014. The core evaluation criteria for evaluating teacher practice does not reflect the most current teaching and learning initiatives or national evaluation resources.

KDE first adopted the Kentucky Framework for Teaching (KyFfT) as the statewide teacher evaluation rubric in 2014. Districts are required to use the KyFfT to clarify how teachers are to be evaluated through the local CEP across four domains: *Planning & Preparation*, *Classroom Environment*, *Instruction*, and *Professional Responsibilities*. The KyFfT was adapted from Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (2011) and aligned core components to the Council of Chief State School Officers’ (CCSSO) Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Core Teaching Standards (2011), KDE’s *Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning (CHETL)*, Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) and the Kentucky Teaching Standards (KTS).<sup>488</sup>

The KyFfT is designed to support the evaluator in generating actionable feedback, as well as formative and summative performance scores. It is comprised of twenty-two (22) components across the four domains. Every component has its own rubric, each of which identifies additional elements which can be observed using the indicators for each of four performance levels: *Ineffective*, *Developing*, *Accomplished*, and *Exemplary*.<sup>489</sup> Evaluators of teacher practice can also refer to each rubric’s *Critical Attributes* and *Possible*

<sup>486</sup> “Growth and Evaluation.” Kentucky Department of Education. May 1, 2025.

<https://goteachky.com/resources/professional-growth/growth-and-evaluation/>

<sup>487</sup> “Teachers and Other Professionals.” Kentucky Department of Education. April 3, 2025.

<https://goteachky.com/resources/professional-growth/growth-and-evaluation/teachers-and-other-professionals/>

<sup>488</sup> “Kentucky Framework for Teaching.” Kentucky Department of Education. March 26, 2025.

<https://goteachky.com/resources/professional-growth/growth-and-evaluation/teachers-and-other-professionals/kentucky-framework-for-teaching/>

<sup>489</sup> “Framework for Teaching.” Kentucky Department of Education. November 2017.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kD0\\_QB2MEUu5hZBuOvf3vVxbaJR4tx-Z/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kD0_QB2MEUu5hZBuOvf3vVxbaJR4tx-Z/view)

*Examples* to evaluate which performance indicator best represents the preponderance of evidence collected during the observation.

Since the publication of the KyFfT, The Danielson Group published an updated Framework for Teaching in 2022. And, KDE has updated several of the KAS and resources related to the selection and use of High-quality instructional resources (HQIRs). There are opportunities for KDE to integrate evidence-based teacher-actions related to the use of HQIRs as part of a coherent overall strategy for teacher growth, development, and retention.

- 15.4.a Recommendation:** KDE should revise the KyFfT to align with updated regulations, initiatives, and resources. Convening stakeholders to understand whether new or updated technical assistance would better support districts' local use of the KyFfT.

## INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

Pursuant to KRS 156.070, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) must oversee and manage common schools and all associated programs. This includes interscholastic athletics. To carry out the specific task of managing interscholastic athletics in common schools, KBE can appoint an organization or agency to do so on its behalf.

KBE has done so by designating the Kentucky High School Athletics Association (KHSAA) as KBE's agent to oversee middle and high school interscholastic athletics. This delegation of authority is memorialized in 702 KAR 7:065 § 2, which also outlines KHSAA's financial planning and review processes. KHSAA's bylaws, procedures, and rules—all of which must be approved by KBE—are incorporated by reference in that regulation, as well. KRS 156.070(2) ensures that any administrative hearing conducted by KHSAA must comply with KRS Chapter 13B.

### KHSAA

In 1917, a group of male educators founded KHSAA to organize rules for player eligibility and athletic conduct for high school. KHSAA began with 18 members but quickly grew to hundreds of schools with the rise of high school sports in the early 1900s. In 1978, KBE delegated the authority of the management of interscholastic athletic programs of secondary schools to KHSAA, where the responsibility remains to this day.

A volunteer-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, KHSAA is composed of 290 member schools, including both public and non-public institutions. KHSAA is responsible for organizing and awarding state championships, funding insurance coverage for its student-athletes, providing coaching education and sports safety programs for coaches, and distributing training material for officials.

### *KHSAA's Relationship with KDE and KBE*

As the entity responsible for interscholastic athletics in Kentucky, KHSAA strives to lead from the front and solve issues before they become problematic for KDE, according to KHSAA officials. KHSAA and KDE have active communication channels via a KHSAA liaison within KDE's Office of Education Technology. According to the KHSAA liaison, his primary role is to attend the KHSAA's bimonthly Board of Control meetings and report updates to the KDE Commissioner. The liaison ensures that both KHSAA and KDE stay informed and have what they need from each other. KBE is also required to review and approve any changes to KHSAA's bylaws or constitution. Additionally, KHSAA must provide yearly reports to KBE regarding Title IX.

Despite KHSAA being an independent organization designated to manage the interscholastic athletics of Kentucky schools, final responsibility and authority resides with KBE and KDE. According to the KHSAA liaison, the relationship between KHSAA, KDE, and KBE is structured to allow KHSAA to function autonomously while still adhering to the educational and legal framework set forth by state statute.

### *KHSAA Board of Controls*

The KHSAA Board of Controls (BoC) serves as the governing body of KHSAA. It is responsible for many things, including, but not limited to, setting the rules and regulations for high school athletics, approving salaries, adopting the budget, and reviewing proposed changes to the KHSAA constitution and bylaws. The BoC consists of 18 members, including at least three who shall be African American and at least three who shall be female. Of the 18 members, eight must be sectional members, six must be designated members, and four must be appointed by KBE. Figure 209 provides the representation requirements of the 18 BoC members.

FIGURE 209: BoC MEMBER REPRESENTATION

Types of BoC Members	Representation Requirement
<b>Sectional</b>	
8	Elected by a vote of the principals or designated representatives of member schools within each section. A section is defined as the combination of two contiguous regions as established by the KHSAA basketball alignment.
<b>Designated</b>	
1	An African American elected by the principals or designated representatives of members schools from regions 1 through 8.
1	An African American elected by the principals or designated representatives of members schools from regions 9 through 16.
1	A female elected by the principals or designated representatives of members schools from regions 1 through 8.
1	A female elected by the principals or designated representatives of members schools from regions 9 through 16.
1	A person elected by the principals or designated representatives of member schools from regions 1 through 8 who comes from a non-public (not classification A1 or D1) member school.
1	A person elected by the principals or designated representatives of member schools from regions 9 through 16 who comes from a non-public (not classification A1 or D1) member school.
<b>Appointed</b>	
4	At large members appointed by KBE, recommended by the KDE Commissioner, shall not be employed by any member school or its central administration or the administration of KDE, with at least one appointee being African American and one being female.

Source: APA, based on the KHSAA Constitution.

According to the KHSAA liaison, members appointed by KBE hold no allegiance to KDE once appointed and act on their own decisions. Members serve four-year terms for no more than two consecutive terms. The BoC must hold a minimum of six regular meetings annually and maintain general supervision of KHSAA's affairs, deciding all questions and performing all duties not included in the Constitution.

### **KHSAA Funding**

KHSAA does not receive state funding or funds directly from KDE. Instead, KHSAA officials say they rely on school membership fees, event ticket sales, and sponsorships to fund its operations. So, while KHSAA itself does not directly receive state funds, it is sustained by the participation of member schools, which are largely public schools that are funded by state and local tax dollars.

The largest source of revenue for KHSAA is its tournaments. The Boys and Girls Basketball Tournaments, Football Playoffs, and other tournaments typically account for over half of KHSAA's total revenue. Figure 210 summarizes KHSAA's revenue for FY 2020 to 2022.

FIGURE 210: KHSAA REVENUE FOR FISCAL YEARS 2020-2022\*

Revenue Sources	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Membership Dues	\$781,030	\$772,975	\$772,790
All Other Contributions, Gifts, Grants, & Similar Amounts	\$1,339,738	\$927,381	\$1,668,175
Advertising & Public	\$6,674	\$38,442	\$39,263
Boy's State Basketball Tournament	\$34,330	\$1,298,100	\$1,383,345
Football Playoffs	\$492,780	\$482,523	\$565,052
Girl's Basketball Tournament	\$133,004	\$502,636	\$401,951
Other Tournaments	\$404,645	\$1,267,361	\$1,160,593
All Other Program Service Revenue	---	\$26,068	\$11,320
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,192,201</b>	<b>\$5,315,486</b>	<b>\$6,002,489</b>

\*KHSAA's IRS Form 990 was unavailable for FY 2023 and 2024. Source: APA, based on KHSAA's IRS Form 990 for FY 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Due to COVID-19, many events during 2020 were canceled, including KHSAA's top revenue-producing event—the KHSAA Boys' Sweet 16 Basketball Tournament (high school basketball state championship). The cancellation resulted in a significant financial loss for KHSAA. To ensure the success and continuation of KHSAA after COVID-19, KHSAA received one-time funding from KDE, which provided KHSAA with \$1.2 million of its federally allocated ESSER funds. KDE and KHSAA entered a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) effective December 8, 2023, through September 30, 2024, to provide financial support to KHSAA due to COVID cancellations in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

The contract stipulated the funds were to be used to “ensure [KHSAA's] ability to function as the administrative agent for athletics in the Commonwealth.” More specifically, the funds were to provide catastrophic student accident insurance, execute facility repairs and upgrades to reduce health hazards, assist member schools with managing KHSAA and Title IX education programs, fully fund participant recognition programs, ensure the optimal participation experience for students, and ensure the continuation of student leadership skills. The contract also required KHSAA to submit detailed invoices consistent with the approved budget to KDE to receive quarterly reimbursements.

Figure 211 below summarizes the MOA budget between KHSAA and KDE.

FIGURE 211: BUDGET FOR MOA BETWEEN KDE AND KHSAA

Budget Category	Amount
Preparedness & Response Efforts	\$800,000
Developing/Implementing Procedures & Systems for Preparedness & Response Efforts	\$260,000
School Facilities Repair & Improvements	\$30,000
Developing Strategies & Implementing Public Health Protocols	\$102,000
Miscellaneous & Indirect Costs	\$8,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>

Source: APA, based on KDE's MOA with KHSAA.

## TITLE IX

KHSAA is required to complete certain duties to maintain its interscholastic high school athletics designation. 702 KAR 7:065 § 3. This includes conducting recurrent field audits of the member schools regarding each school's compliance with 20 U.S.C. § 1681 (Title IX) and submitting annual summary reports to KBE highlighting any potential deficiencies conforming to compliance with the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Title IX is a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits sex-based discrimination in any education program or activity that receives federal funding, including athletic programs. KHSAA plays an important role in ensuring compliance with Title IX in its member schools.

To be compliant with Title IX, a school must pass one of three tests: (1) the school's athletic participation must be substantially proportionate to enrollment; (2) the school's personnel must display an effort of program expansion responsive to developing interests and abilities of the underrepresented gender; and (3) the school's personnel must fully and effectively serve the interests and abilities of the underrepresented gender. After confirming that equal opportunities are offered, the next step is to review the 12 key components of the athletics program to assess whether all athletes receive comparable benefits. The 12 major areas include:

1. Equipment and Supplies (i.e. uniforms, shoes, bats, balls, replacement schedules, etc.);
2. Scheduling of Games and Practice Times (i.e. prime date basketball playing opportunities for girls, comparable prime practice times and length, equivalent number of contests for comparable sports, etc.);
3. Travel and Per Diem Allowances (i.e. comparable modes of transportation, meal monies, room accommodations, etc.);
4. Coaching (i.e. comparably skilled and experienced coaches, comparable coaching salaries, comparable coaching staff size, etc.);
5. Locker Rooms, Practice and Competitive Facilities (i.e. comparable size locker rooms and amenities, lockers, practice facilities, etc.);
6. Medical and Training Facilities and Services (i.e. comparable number of trainers, medical doctors [home and away], equal access to training facilities and weight rooms, etc.);
7. Publicity (i.e. schedule cards, game programs, media guides, cheerleading quality, pep bands, mascots, trophy cases, recognition banners, dance teams [home and away], etc.);
8. Support Services (i.e. support for coaches' administrative needs, booster clubs, etc.);
9. Tutoring;
10. Athletic Scholarships(\*);
11. Housing and Dining Facilities and Services(\*); and
12. Recruitment and Student-Athletes(\*);

(\* NOTE: Items do not normally apply at the high school level.

Each member school/school district is required to form a Gender Equity Review Committee (GERC) to evaluate the totality of the athletics program and handle issues at the local level. KHSAA requires member schools to submit an Annual Report on or before April 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. When a member school has serious Title IX compliance issues, the local school GERC must be given the initial opportunity to correct the inequities and establish a timeline for corrective actions.

Additionally, public schools in Kentucky are required to maintain a permanent Title IX File, and each year, as part of that file, all public school districts must submit an annual Title IX report to KHSAA for review. KHSAA officials stated they also conduct 40-45 planned on-site reviews annually for items related to Title IX. KHSAA submits a compiled report of those visits to KBE on an annual basis.

In the case that KDE or KHSAA receives a complaint related to the failure to provide equal opportunity in athletics at the school district level, the complaint will be referred to the local district by the KDE Title IX Compliance Officer of KHSAA. However, KHSAA may directly report any situation discovered through its education and reporting process to OCR.

## SENATE BILL 120

During its 2025 Regular Session, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 120 (SB 120), which the Governor signed on March 24, 2025. SB 120 amends KRS 156.070 with respect to child dependency, neglect, and abuse occurring in interscholastic athletics. Specifically, SB 120 requires any interscholastic athletics participation consent form to include child dependency, neglect, and abuse information, as well as requiring training for interscholastic athletics administrators and coaches regarding mandatory reporting duties.

### 16.1 **Finding:** KHSAA has no system for tracking Title IX and related complaints.

KHSAA does not currently maintain a tracking system or database of district complaints related to Title IX compliance or other athletic issues across the Commonwealth. Without a system in place to consistently document, review, and investigate complaints received by KHSAA or the districts and referrals made to other entities, such as OCR for Title IX, it is difficult to determine if proper procedure is followed and all complaints are addressed.

This lack of documentation related to such an important federal law presents a risk to transparency. It also weakens KHSAA's ability to ensure that school districts are appropriately handling issues with Title IX. The absence of a tracking system for Title IX complaints may result in missed problems, opportunities, and observations across time related to gender equity within member schools. It may also diminish KHSAA's effectiveness in overseeing Title IX.

#### 16.1.a **Recommendation:** KHSAA should develop a tracking system or database for complaints received. The system or database should, at a minimum, document the following:

- The complainant's contact information or whether the complaint was reported anonymously;
- The subject of the complaint;
- Description of the complaint;
- Whether the complaint was referred and, if so, to whom;
- Any actions taken as a result of the complaint; and
- Whether the complaint is considered addressed/closed.

#### 16.1.b **Recommendation:** KHSAA should include the complaint information gathered in the tracking system or database in the KHSAA Staff Annual Report, as presented to KBE.

#### 16.1.c **Recommendation:** KHSAA should ensure that all Title IX complaints are investigated, resolved, or properly referred.

### 16.2 **Observation:** KHSAA no longer provides annual reports to KBE.

KHSAA previously provided KBE with an annual report at the start of each school year to recap the actions taken by KHSAA in the previous school year. But this practice was abandoned during the 2019-2020 school year due to COVID-19 and did not resume once operations returned to normal.

KHSAA is open to resuming issuing this report. It served as a summary of KHSAA's compliance with the various requirements of 702 KAR 7:065, although providing the report itself to KBE annually was not a requirement. This report served as a communication tool for KHSAA and KBE, adding another level of oversight and accountability.

#### 16.2.a **Recommendation:** KHSAA should resume providing an annual report to KBE to document actions taken to comply with 702 KAR 7:065.

#### 16.2.b **Recommendation:** KHSAA should expand the report to include additional key information not required by regulation, such as accomplishments, important updates, complaints, referrals, etc.



**16.3 Observation: Continued lack of statewide requirements puts students in danger.**

No central clearinghouse or database exists at the state level to track all coaches investigated or charged due to inappropriate behavior with a minor in Kentucky's middle and high schools, nor has recent legislation required state-wide tracking. While the abuse of minors by certified teachers is tracked by the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness (OELE) through its credentialing system, such abuse by classified staff and volunteers who coach sports does not fall under OELE's jurisdiction. According to KDE and KHSAA officials, these personnel matters are handled at the school district level.

A December 2024 series of articles in The Courier Journal attempted to determine the scope of the problem by reviewing news reports, school personnel records, lawsuits, settlements, and police investigations. The newspaper found at least 80 cases of alleged child sexual misconduct by Kentucky middle and high school coaches during the past 15 years. Missing from these numbers are the individual counts related to the charges brought forth in these cases, the number of instances in which personnel actions were taken quietly and off the record at the district or school level, and the number of instances that go unreported each school year.

Legislation to address numerous aspects of abuse by all classified staff and volunteers has been proposed during previous sessions; however, little had been passed related to this subject until the passage of Senate Bills 120 and 181 in the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The enactment of Senate Bill 120 will ensure school coaches receive training on the duties and procedures for reporting child abuse. In addition, language will be added to sports participation forms telling parents and students about the right to report abuse and how to make such a report. Senate Bill 181 calls on school districts to implement traceable communication systems as the sole means of communication between staff, volunteers, and students. Parents would have access to review all communication sent to their student in this manner. The bill also allows schools to provide students with age-appropriate training to combat child sexual abuse.

House Bill 36, which did not pass out of the General Assembly during the 2025 Regular Session, would have prohibited districts from entering into nondisclosure agreements relating to sexual misconduct involving a student and would have required applicants to agree to a reference check and disclose being the subject of any allegations or investigations in the previous 12 months, among other requirements.

While these bills each aimed to prevent the likelihood of student abuse, the bills that were passed did not address the need for a statewide method for tracking the occurrence and the repetition of this type of inappropriate behavior after it has occurred. The ability to track such occurrences would allow for the recognition of repeat offenders and those who aid and abet such actions, which would be yet another method for preventing the likelihood of further abuse.

**16.3.a Recommendation: KHSAA should collaborate with the General Assembly on additional legislation in the 2026 Regular Session to prevent and/or mitigate abuse of minors by all coaches, regardless of their employment status.**

**16.3.b Recommendation: KHSAA should consider methods to centrally track investigations and charges of abuse of minors by all district employees (certified and classified) and volunteers in school systems across the Commonwealth, and how to make such information accessible to parties who need access, while maintaining transparency for students and privacy for district employees.**

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS & SERVICES

The control and management of community education programs and services is explicitly placed under the purview of Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) pursuant to KRS 156.070. KRS 160.156 further requires KBE to develop a State Plan for Community Education and KDE to administer the community education grant program. A State Council for Community Education has been established to advise the Commissioner of Education and KDE on issues relating to community education programs and to make recommendations for the funding of local programs. Day-to-day management of the program and services is handled by KDE's Office of Continuous Improvement and Support's (OCIS) Division of School and Program Improvement. OCIS is also responsible for administering federal and state grant programs related to community education.

### FEDERAL PROGRAMS

According to the KDE website, the ***Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center Program*** (Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]) recognizes that "improved student achievement occurs when communities implement programs and strategies scientifically proven to be effective." Awards are made to state education agencies, like KDE, which in turn offer subgrants for which local education agencies (LEAs) and nonprofit organizations can apply. Each eligible entity that receives an award through this program may use the funds for a variety of before- or after-school activities.

The ***McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*** (Title IX, Part A of ESSA) was reauthorized in December 2015. For the past 30 years, this federal legislation has supported homeless youth by promoting educational success for students who are experiencing homelessness. KDE's website acknowledges that funding from the McKinney-Vento program may be used for various purposes; however, requirements regarding the homeless student population apply to all districts, regardless of whether the district receives funding.

As mentioned in the Fiscal Overview section, KDE, based on grant award requirements, develops a contract and a scoring rubric for those LEAs that apply for the available funding. Applications are judged against the scoring rubric, and applicants must meet a minimum cutoff score to be deemed eligible. Funding is proportionally allocated to districts that meet the grant requirements. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, KDE reimbursed \$25,209,362 in 21<sup>st</sup> Century and \$1,871,397 in McKinney-Vento grant expenses to subrecipients.

Each year, the APA audits certain federal programs administered by KDE, and the audit results and any subsequent findings are reported in the Statewide Single Audit of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (SSWAK) Volume II. The Compliance Supplement guides federal program audits released each year by the federal Office of Management and Budget and the related federal regulations. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant was included in the SSWAK Volume II for FY 2024. As acknowledged in the Chapter: Fiscal Overview, the team chose the McKinney-Vento grant program among the three federal programs selected for similar analysis as part of this examination. No findings were noted.

### STATE PROGRAM

KDE administers a grant program, known as the Community Education Program (CEP), to provide money to local school districts to employ one full-time community education director "to plan and manage programs and services for community education that are targeted to the greatest educational needs in the community and encourage cooperations among all local school districts in a county." KRS 160.155(3) defines a community education program as:

[A] program in which a public building, including a public elementary or secondary school, is used as a community center operated by a local education agency in cooperation with other groups in the community, community organizations, and local governmental agencies to provide educational, recreational, cultural, health care, and other related community services in accordance with the needs, interests, and concerns of the community.

According to OCIS, there are five main goals of the Community Education Programs. Those goals include:

- Facilitate the increased use of school facilities by individuals and community groups;
- Enhance lifelong learning opportunities for community members;
- Create meaningful opportunities for parents and community members to volunteer their time and expertise in support of school and community needs;
- Implement strategies to demonstrate active support for a local school district's preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade core academic and career readiness activities; and
- Confirm collaboration strategies with partners as an important part of the educational mission of the local school district and community.

The CEP grant was established through KRS 160.156, which stipulates that districts applying for funding must provide a 25% cash match to receive funding. KRS 160.157 then outlines the criteria for community school programs, noting the funding requirements that each grantee must meet. Additionally, the statute states that two districts can combine for state funding if they choose to designate one district for funding, the maintaining of records, and the filing of reports. The grantee must submit an annual report to KDE providing an evaluation of the program and relevant financial statements. Failure to do so will result in a loss of state funding.

**17.1 Finding: Improvements in the administration of Community Education Program Grant are needed.**

Despite the state-funded Community Education Program (CEP) grant being awarded annually to school districts for over 15 years, the full application process has not been administered by KDE since the initial Request for Application (RFA) was issued in FY 2007. Documentation supporting the initial applications has since been destroyed, per the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives' (KDLA) record retention schedule, and while additional documentation must be submitted by districts annually, the team noted several issues to be addressed by OCIS staff.

As part of the initial RFA, districts applied for the funding, as outlined by KRS 160.156, by providing a state plan for community education, employing a full-time community education director, and meeting a match requirement. Per KDE personnel, the initial applications submitted were reviewed by the KDE procurement office to verify grant requirements were met. However, the team was unable to review the initial RFA and applications submitted by districts to confirm such action, as KDE archived and later destroyed the records per its interpretation of the KDLA record retention schedule. This grant was awarded based on the original applications, which are no longer available for review.

After the initial RFA, districts were required to submit an annual progress and continuation report with a financial statement (MUNIS report) to KDE to secure additional funding in each of the fiscal years after 2007. Per the branch manager of the Community Engagement and Support Branch, the progress and continuation reports are reviewed by a program consultant to ensure the report questions have been answered. Failure to submit this information would result in the loss of state funding.

The team selected 60 districts, 15 in each fiscal year of the exam period, to review for compliance. KDE provided an Excel spreadsheet pulled from a survey service that collected answers for the data required for the evaluation portion of the Continuation and Annual report. However, only seven MUNIS reports were provided from the 60 districts selected. KDE did not, however, terminate any grants for non-compliance during the exam period.

The team then compared the award notifications to expenditure reports for all four fiscal years. After a difference was noted in one fiscal year, KDE informed the team that the expenditure report was incorrect and provided a MUNIS report for the district in question, which agreed to their award notification. All that being said, KDE staff failed to reconcile the submitted expenditure reports to MUNIS when received to ensure accuracy.

The team attempted to obtain documentation for all districts tested to show how KDE determined the statutory 25% (\$5,000) match requirement was met. But the branch manager of the Community Engagement and Support Branch relayed that, although the KRS requires them to collect the data, there is no guarantee that the match is reflected in the MUNIS report. Using only the provided MUNIS reports as

sources, the team was unable to determine if the match requirement was met for 56 of the 60 selected districts.

The branch manager also stated that the KRS does not require the match, which was in the initial RFA that has since been archived and destroyed. However, this match requirement is also mentioned in KRS 160.156 and the Memorandum of Agreement that is established for each district under the deliverables section. In addition, it was noted in April 2025 that KDE provided guidance to CEP grant recipients that “MUNIS reports that show only the grant award of \$20,000 and do not include the \$5,000 cash match will result in an incomplete application and will result in loss of funding.”

- 17.1.a **Recommendation:** KDE should consult with the Attorney General’s Office for its opinion on the retention of documents for state funding where a Request for Application (RFA) covers multiple years. KDE should also collaborate with the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA) to amend the applicable retention schedule to the extent necessary to ensure program documentation is not prematurely destroyed.
- 17.1.b **Recommendation:** KDE should review the community education grant program requirements and ensure all supporting documentation for the requirements is met.
- 17.1.c **Recommendation:** KDE should review procedures for the community education grant program to ensure they are adequate to ensure the program is efficient and effective. This includes verifying that documentation is reconciled and confirmed for accuracy.
- 17.1.d **Recommendation:** KDE should provide sufficient oversight to ensure districts are adhering to their community education grant program plans and making progress in the right direction with the funding provided.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: TERMINOLOGY

- **ACFR:** Annual Comprehensive Financial Report
- **AI:** Artificial Intelligence
- **ALN:** Federal Program Assistance Listing Number
- **APA:** Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts
- **APR:** Annual Performance Report
- **ARC:** Admissions and Release Committee
- **ARP:** American Rescue Plan
- **ARPA:** American Rescue Plan Act
- **ASCA:** American School Counselor Association
- **ASL:** American Sign Language
- **ATC:** Area Technology Center
- **AWARE:** Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education
- **BEAT:** Business and Education Alignment Taskforce
- **BoC:** KHSAA Board of Controls
- **BRAC:** Base Realignment and Closure
- **CAP:** Corrective Action Plan
- **CCAP:** Child Care Assistance Program
- **CCEIS:** Comprehensive coordinated early intervening services
- **CCSSO:** Council of Chief State School Officers
- **CDL:** Commercial driver's license
- **CDSI:** Comprehensive District Improvement Plan
- **CEC:** Commonwealth Education Continuum
- **CEIS:** Coordinated early intervening services
- **CEP:** Certified Evaluation Plans
- **CEP:** Community Education Program
- **CEP:** Community Eligibility Provision
- **CHETL:** Kentucky's Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning
- **CHFS:** Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- **COS:** Child Outcomes Summary
- **CPE:** Council on Postsecondary Education
- **CSI:** Comprehensive Support and Improvement
- **CSPI:** Comprehensive School Improvement Plan
- **CTE:** Career and Technical Education
- **CTSO:** Career-technical student organization
- **DAC:** District Assessment Coordinator
- **DBFM:** Division of Budgets and Financial Management
- **DCL:** "Dear Colleague" Letter
- **DEIB:** Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- **DEPC:** Division of Educator Preparedness and Certification
- **DERD:** Division of Educator Recruitment and Development
- **DFB:** District Facilities Branch
- **DIF:** Disability Innovation Fund
- **DIMR:** Division of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Monitoring and Results
- **DJJ:** Department of Juvenile Justice
- **DMTE:** Differentiated Monitoring and Tiered Engagement
- **DoSE:** Director of Special Education
- **DPR:** Department Purchase Requests/Requestions
- **DSPI:** Division of School and Program Improvement

- **DSS:** Division of Student Success
- **DSTS:** Division of School Technology Services
- **ECS:** Education Commission of the States
- **EERP:** Enterprise ERP (MUNIS) financial software system used by the school districts
- **EL:** English Learner
- **ELC:** Education and Labor Cabinet
- **EMAPS:** ED Facts Metadata and Process System
- **eMARS:** Electronic Management Administrative and Reporting System (Commonwealth's accounting system)
- **EMP:** Emergency Management Plan
- **EOP:** End-of-Program
- **EPP:** Educator Preparation Provider
- **EPSB:** Education Professional Standards Board
- **ERP:** Enterprise resource planning
- **ESA:** Education Service Agency
- **ESEA:** Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- **ESS:** Extended school services
- **ESSA:** Every Student Succeeds Act
- **ESSER:** Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief
- **FACFAC:** Facilities Planning and Construction system
- **FAPE:** Free appropriate public education
- **FAQ:** Frequently asked questions
- **FFA:** Future Farmers of America
- **FFVP:** Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- **FNS:** Food and Nutrition Services
- **FTE:** Fulltime Employee
- **FY:** Fiscal year
- **GAX:** General Accounting Expenditure
- **GEER:** Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund
- **GERC:** Gender Equity Review Committee
- **GMAP:** Grant Management Application and Planning
- **GPA:** Grade point average
- **GRREC:** Green River Regional Educational Cooperative
- **HB 300:** House Bill 300
- **HB 825:** House Bill 825
- **HHS:** The United States Department of Health and Human Services
- **HQIR:** High-quality instructional resource
- **HRA:** Human Resource Administrator
- **HS:** High School
- **IADA:** Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority
- **IC:** Infinite Campus
- **IDEA:** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- **IDEA-B:** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B
- **IECE:** Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education
- **IEP:** Individual Education Program
- **ILP:** Individual Learning Plans
- **InTASC:** Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
- **ISF:** Interconnected Systems Framework
- **IT:** Information Technology
- **JROTC:** Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps
- **K SCREEN:** Common Kindergarten Entry Screener

- **KAET:** Kentucky Academy for Equity in Teaching
- **KAR:** Kentucky Administrative Regulation
- **KAS:** Kentucky Academic Standards
- **KASA:** Kentucky Association of School Administrators
- **KBE:** Kentucky Board of Education
- **KBUD:** Kentucky Budgeting System
- **KCTCS:** Kentucky Community & Technical College Education System
- **KDE:** Kentucky Department of Education
- **KDLA:** Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives
- **KECS:** Kentucky Educator Credentialing System
- **KECSAC:** Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children
- **Kentucky Tech:** Kentucky Tech System of Area Technology Centers
- **KERA:** Kentucky Education Reform Act
- **KETS:** Kentucky Education Technology System
- **KFICS:** Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System
- **KHRA:** Kentucky Human Resource Application
- **KHRIS:** Kentucky Human Resources Information System
- **KHSAA:** Kentucky High School Athletic Association
- **KIMRC:** Kentucky Instructional Materials and Resource Center
- **KMPC:** Kentucky Model Procurement Code
- **KPI:** Key performance indicator
- **KRS:** Kentucky Revised Statutes
- **KSA:** Kentucky Summative Assessments
- **KSB:** Kentucky School for the Blind
- **KSBCF:** Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation
- **KSD:** Kentucky School for the Deaf
- **KSDCF:** Kentucky School for the Deaf Charitable Foundation
- **KTS:** Kentucky Teaching Standards
- **KUWL:** Kentucky United We Learn
- **KWIB:** Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
- **KyFFT:** Kentucky Framework for Teaching
- **KyMTSS:** Kentucky's Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- **KYSPRA:** Kentucky School Public Relations Association
- **KYSSC:** Kentucky Student Success Collaborative
- **KYSTATS:** Kentucky Center for Statistics
- **LAVEC:** Local Area Vocational Education Center
- **LEA:** Local Education Agency
- **LEP:** Limited English Proficiency
- **LETRS:** Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling
- **LRE:** Least restrictive environment
- **MA:** Master Agreement
- **MCF:** Model Curriculum Framework
- **MOA:** Memorandum of Agreement
- **MOE:** Maintenance of Effort
- **MS:** Middle School
- **MTSS:** Multi-tiered system of supports
- **NA:** Needs Assistance
- **NAEP:** National Assessment of Educational Progress
- **NASBE:** National Association of State Boards of Education
- **NCES:** National Center for Education Statistics
- **NI:** Needs Intervention



- **NSI:** Needs Substantial Intervention
- **NSLP:** National School Lunch Program
- **NTI:** Non-traditional instruction
- **OAA:** Office of Assessment and Accountability
- **OCIS:** Office of Continuous Improvement and Support
- **OCR:** Office for Civil Rights
- **OCTE:** Office of Career and Technical Education
- **OEA:** Office of Educational Accountability
- **OELE:** Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness
- **OET:** Office of Education Technology
- **OFO:** Office of Finance and Operations
- **OMB:** Office of Management and Budget
- **OSEEL:** Office of Special Education and Early Learning
- **OSEP:** Office of Special Education Programs
- **OTL:** Office of Teaching and Learning
- **OVEC:** Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative
- **PBIS:** Positive behavior intervention and supports
- **PCG:** Public Consulting Group LLC
- **PLBB:** Professional learning bulletin board
- **PO/DO:** Purchase/Delivery Order
- **PoL:** Portrait of a Learner
- **PRC:** Payment Request Commodity
- **PS&TS** Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- **PY:** Prior year
- **RDA:** Results-Driven Accountability
- **REAP:** Rural Education Achievement Program
- **RFA:** Request for Application
- **RFM:** Risk Focused Monitoring
- **SAAC:** Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council
- **SAAR:** Superintendent's Annual Attendance Report
- **SACTGE:** Kentucky's State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education
- **SAE:** State Administrative Expense Fund
- **SB 120:** Senate bill 120
- **SB:** Senate bill
- **SBDM:** School-based decision making
- **SBP:** School Breakfast Program
- **SCAC:** School Counselor Advisory Council
- **SCM:** Statewide Consolidated Monitoring
- **SEA:** State Education Agency
- **SEEK:** Support Education Excellence in Kentucky
- **SEFA:** Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards
- **SEL:** Social-emotional learning
- **SIF:** School Improvement Fund
- **SLPI:** Sign Language Proficiency Interview
- **SMP:** Special Milk Program
- **SNAP:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- **SPP:** State Performance Plan
- **SRC:** Kentucky School Report Card
- **SSIP:** State Systemic Improvement Plan
- **SSWAK:** Statewide Single Audit of the Commonwealth of Kentucky
- **SWATT:** State Workforce Advisory Technical Team

- **SY:** School year
- **TANF:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- **TFI:** Tiered fidelity inventory
- **TSI:** Target Support and Improvement
- **TVI:** Teacher of the Visually Impaired
- **UDL:** Universal Design for Learning
- **USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture
- **USED:** United States Department of Education
- **WBL:** Work-Based Learning

## APPENDIX B: RELEVANT LAWS & REGULATIONS REVIEWED

### *State Board Oversight of the Commissioner of Education*

Several Kentucky state statutes guide the work of KBE.

- KRS 156.029 Defines KBE membership composition and function
- KRS 156.031 Defines service timelines and vacancy process
- KRS 156.035 Authorizes KBE to expend public funds
- KRS 156.040 Outlines required minimum qualifications of KBE members
- KRS 156.148 Specifies KBE's role in the appointment or reappointment of the Commissioner of Education
- KRS 156.060 Defines quorum, meeting cadence and notice, meeting location and member compensation
- KRS 156.070 Names KBE's management responsibilities of the common schools and all programs operated in these schools, including interscholastic athletics, the Kentucky School for the Deaf, the Kentucky School for the Blind, and community education programs and services.

Numerous other state statutes define the Board's role in the oversight of various educational reporting functions and the administration of other related duties.

### *Academic Standards & Model Curriculum Framework*

#### *Model Curriculum Framework*

- **KRS 156.445:** "No textbook or program shall be used in any public school in Kentucky as a basal title unless it has been recommended and listed on the state multiple list by the State Textbook Commission or unless a school and district has met the notification requirements under subsection two of this section."
- **KRS 158.6451:** Calls for a **Model Curriculum Framework** to be provided "direction to local districts and schools as they develop their curriculum."<sup>490</sup>

#### *Academic Standards*

- **KRS 156.488:** Instructs KDE to communicate "minimum core content standards for postsecondary education introductory courses and career readiness standards." It also instructs KDE to "develop enhanced courses in English, Reading, and Mathematics to be offered to students in grade six, grade nine, and grade ten, grade 11, and grade 12 who are academically behind to help them meet the college and career readiness standards."<sup>491</sup>
- **KRS 158.6453:** Requires KDE, beginning in fiscal year 2017-2018 and every six years after, to "implement a process for reviewing Kentucky's academic standards and the alignment of corresponding assessments for possible revision or replacement to ensure alignment with

<sup>490</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 158.6451." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3552>

<sup>491</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 156.488." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=40072>

transition readiness standards necessary for global competitiveness, state career and technical education standards, and KRS 158.196.”<sup>492</sup>

- **KRS 158.1411:** KDE is required to "develop **financial literacy guidelines** that provide direction to local schools in developing and implementing the financial literacy standards.”<sup>493</sup>

### *Multitiered System of Supports*

- **Senate Bill 9:** Replaces references to “response to intervention” with “multi-tiered system of supports.”<sup>494</sup>
- **KRS 158.305:** Relates to the implementation of a multitiered system of supports for kindergarten through grade three. It also relates to the implementation of a universal screener and a Reading Improvement Plan.<sup>495</sup> **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.840:** Identified Reading and Mathematics proficiency as gateway skills necessary for all Kentucky Students to achieve academic goals established in KRS 158.6451. This statute addresses when interventions are necessary to ensure students are proficient.<sup>496</sup> **Reporting Required.**
- **704 KAR 3:095:** Mandates each school district implement a comprehensive multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for K-12. Each district must submit evidence demonstrating district-wide implementation of a comprehensive MTSS by October 1 of each year.<sup>497</sup> **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.8402:** Relates to establishing a multitiered system of supports that includes evidence-based Mathematics instruction, intervention, and instructional strategies. Requires department to submit implementation status of the multitiered system of supports. It also relates to technical assistance and training for local districts, requirements for superintendent of public charter school board of directors, Mathematics diagnostic assessment, and improvement plan and accelerated interventions.<sup>498</sup> **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.791:** Relates to legislative findings and intent regarding Reading and Mathematics. Requires that every elementary, middle, and high school provide a multitiered system of supports. It also relates to KDE providing technical assistance and the Educational Professional Standards Board reviewing and revising teacher certification and licensure requirements as necessary.<sup>499</sup>

### *Reading and Numeracy*

- **KRS 158.305:** The Kentucky Board of Education is charged with defining a “**multitiered system of supports for district-wide use of a system for students in kindergarten through grade three**, that includes a tiered continuum of interventions...the Department of Education shall provide technical assistance and training.” It also requires districts to “**adopt a common comprehensive**

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<sup>492</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.6453.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55562>

<sup>493</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.1411.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=47722>

<sup>494</sup> “Senate Bill 9.” Kentucky Open Government Coalition. January 10, 2022. <https://kyopengov.org/bills/2022-regular-session/senate-bill-9>

<sup>495</sup> “KRS 158.305.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54245>

<sup>496</sup> “KRS 158.840.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55615>

<sup>497</sup> “704 KAR 3:905.” Kentucky General Assembly. March 7, 2025.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/704/003/095/>

<sup>498</sup> “KRS 158.8402.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55617>

<sup>499</sup> “KRS 158.791.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55614>

**Reading Program** that is determined by the department to be reliable, valid, and aligned to Reading and Writing standards.”<sup>500</sup>

- **KRS 158.6459(3):** KDE, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and public postsecondary institutions are responsible for offering “**support and technical assistance to schools and school districts in the development of accelerated learning.**”<sup>501</sup>
- **KRS 158.806:** Establishes the **Read to Succeed Fund** to “train and support teachers and library media specialists to improve the Reading skills of students in kindergarten through grade three.” It also requires to KDE to “**implement teacher professional learning academies** related to evidence-based practices in instruction, instructional materials, and assessment in Reading.” Finally, “the department shall create a **literacy coaching program.**”<sup>502</sup>
- **KRS 158.8402:** The Kentucky Board of Education is charged with establishing “a multitiered system of supports that shall include **evidence-based Mathematics instruction, intervention, and instructional strategies** for district-wide use for students in kindergarten through grade three.” KDE is responsible for providing “technical assistance and training to local districts to assist in the implementation of the district-wide, multitiered system of supports as a means to identify and assist any student experiencing difficulty in Mathematics.”<sup>503</sup>
- **KRS 158.843:** Establishes the **Numeracy Counts Fund** to train and support “teachers to improve the Mathematics content and practices of students in kindergarten through grade eight.” It also calls for the department to **implement teacher professional learning academies** in Mathematics, create a Mathematics coaching program, and provide grants to purchase evidence-based curriculum for kindergarten through grade three.<sup>504</sup>

## Statewide Accountability & Assessments

### Assessments

- **KRS 156.010:** Articulates the Commissioner’s responsibility for “administering, structuring, and organizing the department and its services including...performance and outcome assessments.”<sup>505</sup>
- **KRS 158.6452:** Creates the School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council to “study, review, and make recommendations concerning Kentucky’s system of setting academic standards, assessing learning, identifying academic competencies and deficiencies of individual students, holding schools accountable for learning, and assisting schools to improve their performance.” It also states that the Council should advise “on issues related to the development and communication of academic expectations and core content for assessment, the development and implementation of the statewide assessment and accountability program, recognition of high performing schools, imposition of sanctions, and assistance for schools to improve their performance under KRS 158.6453, 158.782, and 158.805.”<sup>506</sup>
- **KRS 158.6453:** Grants KBE authority to create and implement a “balanced statewide assessment program that measures the students’, schools’, and districts’ achievement of the goals set forth in

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<sup>500</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.305.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54245>

<sup>501</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.6459.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=45618>

<sup>502</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.806.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=52082>

<sup>503</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.8402.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55617>

<sup>504</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.843.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=55619>

<sup>505</sup> “KRS 156.010.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3089>

<sup>506</sup> “KRS 158.6452.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3553>

KRS 158.645 and 158.6451, to ensure compliance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015...and to ensure school accountability.”<sup>507</sup>

### Accountability

- **KRS 158.6455:** Outlines KBE’s responsibility to create an accountability system that includes “an annual meaningful differentiation of all public schools in the state using multiple measures that describe the overall performance of each district, school, and student subgroup.”<sup>508</sup>
- **KRS 158.6458:** KDE is required to “develop a plan for implementing the state assessment and accountability system created under KRS 158.6453 and 158.6455 and shall report quarterly to the Interim Joint Committee on Education on its progress.”<sup>509</sup>
- **KRS 158.649:** Instructs KDE to provide school councils, or principals, student performance data on the state assessments annually by October first.<sup>510</sup>
- **Senate Bill 207 (2025):** Removes the option to use end-of-course exams instead of other criterion-referenced assessments.<sup>511</sup> Districts of Innovation
- **KRS 156.108:** Authorizes KBE to approve districts of innovation for the purposes of improving students’ educational performance. Districts of innovation shall be provided flexibility from selected KAR, KRS, and local board of education policies for school administrators, teachers, and staff to meet the diverse needs of students.”<sup>512</sup>
- **KRS 160.107:** Outlines the application and implementation requirements for Districts of Innovation.<sup>513</sup>

### Targeted and Comprehensive Support and Improvement

- **KRS 160.346:** Establishes the KDE’s authority to annually identify schools for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) annually, as well as identify schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) every three years.<sup>514</sup>
- **House Bill 298** was signed into law by Governor Beshear on March 26, 2025. It amends KRS 160.346 and requires KDE to identify schools for CSI annually, rather than every three years.<sup>515</sup>

### Monitoring & Consolidated Monitoring

- **KRS 156.010:** Specifies that the Commissioner of Education is responsible for “monitoring the management of school districts, including administration and finance, implementation of state laws and regulations, and student performance.”<sup>516</sup>
- **KRS 157.060:** Requires school districts and educational institutions to “make a report to the Board of Education or the Kentucky Technical Education Personnel Board at the close of each scholastic

<sup>507</sup> “KRS 158.6453.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>508</sup> “KRS 158.6455.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>509</sup> “KRS 158.6458.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>510</sup> “KRS 158.649.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>511</sup> “KRS 156.108.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>512</sup> “KRS 156.108.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>513</sup> “KRS 160.107.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>514</sup> “KRS 160.346.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>515</sup> “House Bill 298.” Kentucky General Assembly. March 26, 2025.

<sup>516</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 156.010.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<sup>516</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 156.010.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

year, showing in detail all funds received from the state and from all other sources during the year, and a detailed statement of all expenditures for the year.”<sup>517</sup> **Reporting Required.**

- **KRS 157.061:** Instructs KDE to “conduct an internal fiscal, management, and compliance audit of each school district on an annual basis.”<sup>518</sup> **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.070:** Calls for the Board of Education to “prescribe the conditions and procedures for districts to be approved for the nontraditional instruction (NTI) program.” It also calls for the Board to promulgate administrative regulations to specify the reporting and oversight responsibilities of KDE related to NTI.<sup>519</sup> **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.780:** Grants the Board of Education authority to “establish a program for voluntary management improvement, for involuntary supervision, and for assuming full control of a local school district.”<sup>520</sup>
- **KRS 158.785:** Directs KDE to collect and review management data, including “data relative to the instructional and operational performance of local school districts.”<sup>521</sup> **Reporting Required.**

## Student Support & School Safety

### Comprehensive School Counseling:

- **KRS 158.4416:** Lays out school counseling requirements for districts. Requires local school district superintendents to report to the department the number and placement of school counselors in the district along with the source of funding for each position and the summary of job duties and work undertaken by each counselor and the percent of time devoted to each duty over the year. It also requires that each local board of education must develop a plan for implementing a trauma-informed approach in its schools by July first annually. **Reporting Required.**
- **16 KAR 3:060:** Authorizes the School Counseling Preparation Program Standards.
- **KRS 156.492:** Outlines KDE’s responsibility to train school counselors on providing opportunities for students who seek to enter into trades.
- **KRS 156.101:** Outlines the responsibility of KDE to establish an instructional leadership improvement program that is designed to improve school administration (principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, directors of special education, etc.).

### Academic Programs:

- **KRS 158.142(3):** Outlines the Early High School Graduation program and requirements. Each High School must report all Early Graduation Scholarship Certificate recipients. **Reporting Required.**
- **704 KAR 3:305:** Outlines minimum requirements for high school graduation including requirements around the Individual Learning Plan and early graduation.
- **704 KAR 19:002:** Relates to Alternative education programs, authorizing the Kentucky Board of Education to manage and control these programs. Districts are required to utilize the student information system to enter data for each student in the program, collect data, and maintain education records.
- **KRS 156.160:** Requires the Kentucky Board of Education to promulgate administrative regulations relating to the courses of study for different grades and the minimum requirements for high school graduation.

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<sup>517</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 157.060.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2023.  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=42225>

<sup>518</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 157.061.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3269>

<sup>519</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.070” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=52574>

<sup>520</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.780.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3584>

<sup>521</sup> “KY Rev Stat § 158.785.” Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.  
<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=51318>



**Targeted Interventions:**

- **KRS 158.6453:** Relates to academic standards. One of two statutes that requires interventions for students not meeting academic benchmarks.
- **KRS 158.6459:** Relates to providing students with academic deficiencies the opportunity to participate in accelerated learning designed to address these identified deficiencies prior to high school graduation.

**Safe Schools:**

- **KRS 158.445:** Requires each school and district to do an assessment of school safety and school discipline. It also requires each board of education to adopt a plan for immediate and long-term strategies to address school safety and discipline.
- **KRS 158.156:** Relates to reporting of commission of felony against a student. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.150:** Relates to the suspension or expulsion of pupils and the option to place them into alternative programs. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.155:** Relates to reporting of specific incidents of student conduct, notation on school records, reporting to law enforcement of certain student conduct, and immunity. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 527.070:** Relates to unlawful possession of a weapon on school ground. It requires each school to display prominent signs relating to unlawful possession of weapons.

**Bullying & Harassment**

- **KRS 525.070:** Relates to the definition of harassment.
- **KRS 525.080:** Relates to the definition of harassing communications.
- **KRS 158.148:** Defines bullying and relates to discipline. See Discipline section for additional information.

**District & Public School Building Emergency Management Plans**

- **Senate Bill 8/House Bill 354 (2013):** Pertaining to school safety and each school having an emergency plan.
  - **KRS 158.163:** Amended by HB354 and SB8 to require safety drills within the first month of school.
  - **KRS 158.164:** Amended by HB354 and SB8 to require lockdown practice within the first month of school.
  - **KRS 61.878:** Amended by HB354 to exempt school and school facility emergency plans from public viewing as open records.
  - **KRS 158.445:** Amended by HB354 to include emergency response plans as part of a school's end-of-year annual review.
  - **KRS160.345:** Amended by HB354 to include the adoption of an emergency response plan as part of a school council's duties.
- **KRS 158.162:** Requires all public school buildings to adopt an emergency management response plan (EMP), annually review their EMP, and make necessary updates before the start of school.

**Evidence-based Prevention & Cessation Materials**

- **KRS 158.149: House Bill 142 (2024)** repealed and **KRS 438.345** into **KRS 158.149**, which affects the way KY public schools implement their tobacco-free campus policies. It requires local boards to education to adopt policies that penalize students for possessing alternative nicotine products, tobacco products, or vapor products. It requires departments to report the number of nicotine-related behavior events in school. **Reporting Required.**

**Human Trafficking**



- **KRS 156.095:** Amended by **House Bill 524 (2017)** to require schools to display the national human trafficking hotline. See School Safety and Resiliency Act and Suicide Prevention and Awareness for additional information. **Reporting Required.**

### Juvenile Justice Reform & Education

- **Senate Bill 200 (2013):** Overhauled Kentucky's juvenile justice system and amended or created new obligations for the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), KDE, Court Designated Workers, County Attorneys, District and Family Courts, school resource officers, school security officers, each local school, and directors of pupil personnel. **Reporting Required.**

### Missing Children

- **KRS 156.495:** Requires KDE to distribute names of all missing children and children who have been recovered to all public and private schools. Requires all schools to notify local law enforcement at its earliest known contact with any missing child.
- **KRS 158.032:** Relates to flagging the record of a missing child, the procedure upon recovery, and documents required upon enrollment or transfer.

### Physical Restraint & Seclusion in Public Schools

- **704 KAR 7:160:** Relates to the district requirements for physical restraint and seclusion training along with additional information including the data that must be reported by the district related to incidents of physical restraint and seclusion. **Reporting Required.**

### School Safety & Resiliency Act

This Act seeks to enhance school safety through measures like establishing district and state-level roles, mandating training for staff and school resource officers, and requiring secure school entrances and building security improvements.

- **KRS 16.128 and KRS 95.970:** Encourages Kentucky State Police and the chief of police in each city to receive training on school safety and student-involved trauma. It encourages the Department of Kentucky State Police and the chief of police in each city to collaborate with local school districts on policies and procedures for communicating instances of trauma-exposed students.
- **KRS 156.095:** Relates to professional development programs for School Safety. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.441:** Lays out various definitions related to School Safety, including school safety and school discipline.
- **KRS 158.4410:** Relates to the duties and responsibilities of the state school security marshal. Including presenting an annual report consisting of findings and recommendations made regarding the school safety and security activity of the previous year. See Human Trafficking and Suicide Prevention and Awareness for additional information. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.4412:** Relates to school safety coordinators. Lays out their appointment, functions and duties.
- **KRS 158.4414:** Relates to school resource officers, their policies and procedures, firearm requirements, and training requirements. It goes through the cooperation of school personnel and local boards of education with local and state law enforcement agencies. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.4416:** See Trauma Informed Practices.
- **KRS 158.442:** Relates to the Center for School Safety, its duties, and its board of directors. It also walks through school safety coordinator training program. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.443:** Relates to the term of board members, meetings, selection of administrator, and duties of the board of directors for the Center for School Safety. It lays out the Center for School Safety's responsibility for developing model interagency agreements between local school districts and other local public agencies for cooperative education-related services.

- **KRS 158.4461:** Relates to support for public school districts.

#### **Student Discipline Guidelines & Model Policies:**

- **KRS 158.148:** Relates to student discipline guidelines and model policy. It also defines bullying. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.444:** Relates to administrative regulations relating to school safety, the role of the department to maintain statewide data collection system, reportable incidents, and the annual statistical reports. Reporting of discipline to KDE from student information system. **Reporting Required.**
- **KRS 158.4414:** Amended by **Senate Bill 2 (2024)**, requires KDE to collaborate with the Center for School Safety to develop model interagency agreements between local school districts and other local public agencies to provide cooperative services and sharing of costs for services to students who are at risk of academic failure, at risk of mental health crises, at risk participation in juvenile crime, or who are expelled from the school district.
- **Additional statutes and regulations referenced in the Student Discipline Guidelines**<sup>522</sup> (Note: duplicates from above are not listed unless otherwise specified)
  - Related to the Responsibility and Authority of the District Board of Education:
    - KRS 158.148
    - KRS 158.150
    - KRS 158.155
    - KRS 158.440
    - KRS 158.445
    - KRS 160.290
    - KRS 161.180
  - Related to Responsibility and Authority of the Superintendent and District
    - KRS 160.345
    - KRS 160.370
  - Related to Student Rights and Responsibilities
    - KRS 160.295
  - Related to Legislation References to Develop District Board Policies and Discipline Guidelines including Policies and Procedures, Student Consequences, and Student Violations
    - Processes and Procedures
      - KRS 61.878
      - KRS 158.032
      - KRS 158.140
      - KRS 158.4415
      - KRS 160.700
      - KRS 160.705
      - KRS 160.7120
      - KRS 160.720
      - KRS 160.730
      - KRS 161.200
    - Student Consequences
      - 704 KAR 19:002
      - KRS 157.200
      - KRS 157.320
      - KRS 158.444
      - KRS 161.020
      - KRS 503.110

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<sup>522</sup> "Statewide Student Discipline Guidelines." Kentucky Department of Education. 2024.  
<https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Documents/Student%20Discipline%20Guidelines.pdf>

- Student Violations
  - KRS 158.154
  - KRS 158.165
  - KRS 159.010
  - KRS 159.030
  - KRS 159.051
  - KRS 159.080
  - KRS 159.130
  - KRS 159.150
  - KRS 161.180
  - KRS 218A.500
  - KRS 218A.510
  - KRS 405.025
  - KRS 438.050
  - KRS 438.310
  - KRS 438.311
  - KRS 438.313
  - KRS 505.150
  - KRS 506.140
  - KRS 527.070
  - KRS 527.100

#### Suicide Prevention & Awareness

- **KRS 156.095:** Requires all students in grades six through twelve receive suicide prevention information twice per year. See Human Trafficking and School Safety and Resiliency Act for additional information. **Reporting Required.**

#### Supporting LGBTQI Plus Students

- **KRS 158.191:** Created by **Senate Bill 150 (2023)**, KDE is prohibited from providing guidance related to the use of requested names and pronouns.

#### Trauma Informed Practices:

- **KRS 158.4416:** Requires each local board of education must develop a plan for implementing a trauma-informed approach in its schools by July first annually. **Reporting Required.**

#### Youth Substance Use Disorder

- **KRS 158.149: House Bill 142 (2024)** repealed, reenacted, and amended KRS 438.345 as a new section of KRS 158. Requires each local board of education to amend its written policies that prohibit the use of tobacco, alternative nicotine products, and vapor products to include the distribution of evidence-based, age-appropriate prevention and cessation materials to all students. **Reporting Required.**

### Exceptional Children

- **20 U.S.C 1412:** Outlines the state requirements for receiving federal IDEA funding. Mandates that states ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is available to all children with disabilities, ages three through 21. States must also establish policies for identifying, evaluating, and serving students in the least restrictive environment (LRE), with procedural safeguards and parental involvement.<sup>523</sup>
- **20 U.S.C. 1416:** Establishes general supervision, monitoring and enforcement responsibilities related to the IDEA. Requires states to develop and submit a State Performance Plan (SPP) that

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<sup>523</sup> "Section 1412." IDEA. November 7, 2019. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-ii/1412>

evaluates efforts to implement IDEA and improve outcomes for students with disabilities, using specific indicators defined by the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>524</sup>

- **KRS 157.200:** Defines "exceptional children and youth" as "persons under twenty-one (21) years of age who differ in one (1) or more respects from same-age peers in physical, mental, learning, emotional, or social characteristics and abilities to such a degree that they need special educational programs or services for them to benefit from the regular or usual facilities or educational programs of the public schools in the districts in which they reside."<sup>525</sup>
- **KRS 157.220 to 157.290:** designates the KDE as the state agency with responsibility for carrying out the regulatory functions of the state related to exceptional children. This includes cooperation with state and federal government agencies, nonpublic school programs, and local schools within the state, receiving financial contributions and donations to carry out provision outlined in KRS 157.200 through 157.280 and supervising special educational facilities that are approved by KBE.<sup>526</sup>
- **KRS 157.224:** Outlines the minimum service standards for exceptional students in Kentucky public schools, including special education and gifted and talented education, and ensures exceptional students receive specially designed instruction, access to the general curriculum, and support services in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their needs. Establishes data submission requirements for local school districts and improvement plan requirements for districts found to be noncompliant with state administrative regulations.<sup>527</sup>
- **KRS 158.648:** Establishes the State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education as a required function of KDE. Outlines the council's purpose to make recommendations regarding the provisions of services for gifted and talented students in Kentucky.<sup>528</sup>

## Preschool

- **KRS 157.3175:** Establishes the requirement for local school districts to provide a developmentally appropriate half-day preschool education program for any four-year old child who is at-risk of educational failure, provide a free appropriate public education to three- and four-year-old children with disabilities under the IDEA, and gives KDE authority to promulgate administrative regulations establishing preschool guidelines.
- **KRS 199.8943:** Requires the Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and early care providers, including KDE, to establish a quality-based early care rating system and specifies that the quality-based early childhood rating system cannot be used punitively or to enforce compliance. This statute also requires KDE to promulgate administrative regulations to implement the early care quality rating system for publicly funded preschool programs.

## Career & Technical Education

### Kentucky Revised Statutes

- KRS 156.800-860 generally – Department of Education – Career and Technical Education
- KRS 156.802 Office of Career and Technical Education -- Kentucky Board of Education. Authorizes *Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to establish program standards and Education Professional Standards Board to establish personnel qualification and certification standards.*
- KRS 156.804 Organizational structure of Office of Career and Technical Education – Ombudsman.
- KRS 156.806 Career and Technical Advisory Committee – Purpose – Members

<sup>524</sup> "Section 1416." IDEA. November 7, 2019. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-ii/1416>

<sup>525</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 157.200." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=40170>

<sup>526</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 157.220." Kentucky General Assembly. 2023.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3293>

<sup>527</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 157.224." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=3296>

<sup>528</sup> "KY Rev Stat § 158.648." Kentucky General Assembly. 2024.

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=45411>

- KRS 156.808 Personnel of Office of Career and Technical Education -- Administrative regulations -- Appeals to Kentucky Technical Education Personnel Board. *Authorizes KBE to promulgate personnel regulations to govern OCTE personnel and ATC personnel.*
- KRS 156.810 Posting of full-time vacancies.
- KRS 156.812 Employee benefits.
- KRS 156.814 Personnel files.
- KRS 156.816 Grounds for refusal to consider or to disqualify an applicant for, or to remove a person from, a certified or equivalent position.
- KRS 156.818 Criminal conviction as grounds for disciplinary action.
- KRS 156.820 Employees with continuing status – Appeals.
- KRS 156.822 Appeal from final order of Board.
- KRS 156.824 Payment of reinstated employee.
- KRS 156.826 Employment status.
- KRS 156.828 Employee evaluations.
- KRS 156.840 Kentucky Technical Education Personnel Board.
- KRS 156.842 Office of Career and Technical Education to manage state-operated secondary area vocational education and technology centers.
- KRS 156.844 Local board's petition to commissioner of education seeking power to manage and control state-operated secondary vocational education and technology center -- Issues related to transfer of employees.
- KRS 156.846 Local board's power to relinquish management and control of vocational education center -- Issues related to transfer of employees.
- KRS 156.848 Agreements for training workers.
- KRS 156.850 Federal acts relating to vocational education accepted.
- KRS 156.852 Kentucky Board of Education authorized to carry out vocational education programs.
- KRS 156.854 State Treasurer custodian of funds.
- KRS 156.856 Tuition and fees in secondary area vocational education and technology centers.
- KRS 156.858 Liability insurance for motor vehicles owned or operated by office in vocational schools and centers.
- KRS 156.860 Medical and accident insurance for students.
- KRS 157.069 Definitions -- Distribution of general funds for converted career and technical education centers -- Career and technical education innovation and support fund -- Distribution of funds to state-operated area technology centers and locally operated career and technical education in certain fiscal years -- Oversight by the Office of Career and Technical Education -- Administrative regulations -- Publication of information on Kentucky Department of Education website.
- KRS 157.072 Career and technical education accessibility fund.
- KRS 157.075 Differentiated compensation plans -- Professional compensation fund -- Department of Education recommendations on teacher compensation. *Authorizes a school district to develop differentiated compensation programs that provide additional compensation above the single salary schedule.*
- KRS 157.077 Support for summer learning programs -- Segregation and use of funds.

### ***Kentucky Administrative Regulations***

- Title 780 - Education and Workforce Development Cabinet - Department for Technical Education
- 780 KAR 2:030 Steering and advisory committees for area technology centers primarily serving secondary students.
- 780 KAR 2:040 Live work projects.
- 780 KAR 2:060 Discipline of students.
- 780 KAR 2:110 Student medical and accident insurance.
- 780 KAR 2:140 Tuition and fees.

- 780 KAR 3:010 Classification plan.
- 780 KAR 3:020 Compensation plan.
- 780 KAR 3:030 Appointments.
- 780 KAR 3:035 Employee evaluations.
- 780 KAR 3:040 Special appointments.
- 780 KAR 3:050 Employment lists.
- 780 KAR 3:060 Probationary periods.
- 780 KAR 3:065 Certified and equivalent service administrative regulations.
- 780 KAR 3:072 Attendance, compensatory time, and leave for certified and equivalent service.
- 780 KAR 3:075 Sick leave sharing procedures for certified and equivalent service.
- 780 KAR 3:080 Extent and duration of school term, use of school days and extended employment.
- 780 KAR 3:090 Records and reports.
- 780 KAR 3:100 Employee actions.
- 780 KAR 3:110 Disciplinary actions.
- 780 KAR 3:120 Appeals and hearings.
- 780 KAR 3:130 Employee grievances.
- 780 KAR 3:140 Certification and professional development requirements.
- 780 KAR 3:150 Staff development and in-service.
- 780 KAR 3:160 Local school district service credit.
- 780 KAR 6:005 Unclassified service administrative regulation.
- 780 KAR 6:010 Classification plan.
- 780 KAR 6:020 Compensation plan.
- 780 KAR 6:030 Appointments.
- 780 KAR 6:040 Special appointments.
- 780 KAR 6:050 Probationary periods.
- 780 KAR 6:062 Attendance, compensatory time and leave for unclassified service.
- 780 KAR 6:065 Sick leave sharing procedures for unclassified service.
- 780 KAR 6:070 Records and reports.
- 780 KAR 6:080 Employee actions.
- 780 KAR 6:090 Disciplinary actions.
- 780 KAR 6:100 Appeals and hearings.
- 780 KAR 7:010 Definitions for 780 KAR Chapter 7.
- 780 KAR 7:020 Area technology center facility standards.
- 780 KAR 7:040 Facility maintenance.
- 780 KAR 7:060 Equipment inventory and insurance.

## Area Technology Centers

### Kentucky Revised Statutes

- KRS 156.800-860 generally – Department of Education – Career and Technical Education
- KRS 156.802 Office of Career and Technical Education -- Kentucky Board of Education. Authorizes *Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to establish program standards and Education Professional Standards Board to establish personnel qualification and certification standards.*
- KRS 156.808 Personnel of Office of Career and Technical Education -- Administrative regulations -- Appeals to Kentucky Technical Education Personnel Board. *Authorizes KBE to promulgate personnel regulations to govern OCTE personnel and ATC personnel.*
- KRS 156.842 Office of Career and Technical Education to manage state-operated secondary area vocational education and technology centers.

- KRS 156.844 Local board's petition to commissioner of education seeking power to manage and control state-operated secondary vocational education and technology center -- Issues related to transfer of employees.
- KRS 156.846 Local board's power to relinquish management and control of vocational education center -- Issues related to transfer of employees.
- KRS 156.856 Tuition and fees in secondary area vocational education and technology centers.
- KRS 156.858 Liability insurance for motor vehicles owned or operated by office in vocational schools and centers.
- KRS 156.860 Medical and accident insurance for students.
- KRS 157.069 Definitions -- Distribution of general funds for converted career and technical education centers -- Career and technical education innovation and support fund -- Distribution of funds to state-operated area technology centers and locally operated career and technical education in certain fiscal years -- Oversight by the Office of Career and Technical Education -- Administrative regulations -- Publication of information on Kentucky Department of Education website.
- KRS 157.072 Career and technical education accessibility fund.
- KRS 157.075 Differentiated compensation plans -- Professional compensation fund -- Department of Education recommendations on teacher compensation. *Authorizes a school district to develop differentiated compensation programs that provide additional compensation above the single salary schedule.*
- KRS 157.077 Support for summer learning programs -- Segregation and use of funds.

### ***Kentucky Administrative Regulations***

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- 780 KAR 2:030. Steering and advisory committees for area technology centers primarily serving secondary students.
- 780 KAR 2:040. Live work projects.
- 780 KAR 2:060 Discipline of students.
- 780 KAR 2:110 Student medical and accident insurance.
- 780 KAR 2:140 Tuition and fees.
- 780 KAR 3:010 Classification plan.
- 780 KAR 3:020 Compensation plan.
- 780 KAR 3:030 Appointments.
- 780 KAR 3:035 Employee evaluations.
- 780 KAR 3:040 Special appointments.
- 780 KAR 3:050 Employment lists.
- 780 KAR 3:060 Probationary periods.
- 780 KAR 3:065 Certified and equivalent service administrative regulations.
- 780 KAR 3:072 Attendance, compensatory time, and leave for certified and equivalent service.
- 780 KAR 3:075 Sick leave sharing procedures for certified and equivalent service.
- 780 KAR 3:080 Extent and duration of school term, use of school days and extended employment.
- 780 KAR 3:090 Records and reports.
- 780 KAR 3:100 Employee actions.
- 780 KAR 3:110 Disciplinary actions.
- 780 KAR 3:120 Appeals and hearings.
- 780 KAR 3:130 Employee grievances.
- 780 KAR 3:140 Certification and professional development requirements.
- 780 KAR 3:150 Staff development and in-service.
- 780 KAR 3:160 Local school district service credit.
- 780 KAR 6:005 Unclassified service administrative regulation.
- 780 KAR 6:010 Classification plan.
- 780 KAR 6:020 Compensation plan.



- 780 KAR 6:030 Appointments.
- 780 KAR 6:040 Special appointments.
- 780 KAR 6:050 Probationary periods.
- 780 KAR 6:062 Attendance, compensatory time and leave for unclassified service.
- 780 KAR 6:065 Sick leave sharing procedures for unclassified service.
- 780 KAR 6:070 Records and reports.
- 780 KAR 6:080 Employee actions.
- 780 KAR 6:090 Disciplinary actions.
- 780 KAR 6:100 Appeals and hearings.
- 780 KAR 7:010 Definitions for 780 KAR Chapter 7.
- 780 KAR 7:020 Area technology center facility standards.
- 780 KAR 7:040 Facility maintenance.
- 780 KAR 7:060 Equipment inventory and insurance.

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY RESULTS

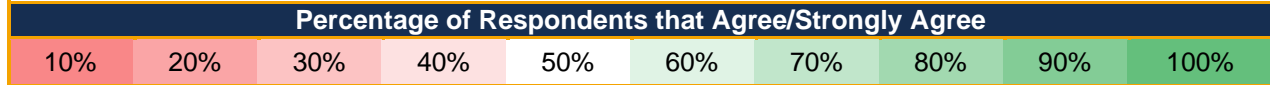
The team developed and distributed eight surveys to gather feedback and sentiment data from the following stakeholder groups:

- Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Staff
- Superintendents
- Area Technology Center (ATC) Staff
- Special Education Directors
- Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) Teachers
- Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Teachers
- KSB Staff
- KSD Staff

The surveys for ATC staff, special education directors, KDE staff, and superintendents—tailored to the specific roles of each group—were conducted using a web-based survey tool called Alchemer. The surveys were distributed by KDE via email. Each was open to its respective participants for approximately three weeks during January and February 2025. The four surveys distributed to teachers and staff of KSB and KSD—tailored to each group’s specific roles—were administered through Google Forms and disseminated via a link sent by the respective school’s administration. Each survey was open for approximately five to seven days in November 2024.

The results from each survey are included below, including both overall results as well as results segmented by office, tenure, supervisory status, and LEA characteristics. For each question, respondents were asked “to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”. The following results show the percentage of respondents who responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” for each statement. For each question, the following color scale was applied to allow for the comparison between subgroups.

FIGURE 212: SURVEY RESULTS COLOR SCALE



## Kentucky Department of Education Staff Survey Responses

FIGURE 213: KDE STAFF SURVEY: ALL STAFF SUMMARY

Question	Percentage Agree/Strongly Agree
My role at KDE is clearly defined.	94%
I have clear expectations for my work at KDE.	94%
I have the right tools and resources to do my job.	94%
I have the right training to do my job.	95%
I have the right skillset to do my job.	98%
My direct supervisor cares about my success.	94%
My colleagues care about my success.	95%
My supervisor holds me accountable for my work.	98%
My colleagues are held accountable for their work.	90%
Agency leadership is transparent in their communication.	88%
I feel informed about Agency priorities.	91%
I am aware of goals and metrics used to define the success of the Agency.	86%
I am aware of goals and metrics used to define the success of my Division.	88%
Morale is high in my work environment.	83%
KDE processes support me in getting my work done effectively.	90%
At KDE, we work effectively across divisions.	86%
The core focus of KDE is student success.	95%
I am proud of the work KDE does.	96%

Source: KDE Staff Survey

FIGURE 214: KDE STAFF SURVEY: SUMMARY BY SUPERVISORY STATUS

Question	Non-Supervisory	Supervisory
My role at KDE is clearly defined.	93%	96%
I have clear expectations for my work at KDE.	94%	96%
I have the right tools and resources to do my job.	95%	91%
I have the right training to do my job.	94%	97%
I have the right skillset to do my job.	97%	100%
My direct supervisor cares about my success.	94%	95%
My colleagues care about my success.	95%	98%
My supervisor holds me accountable for my work.	98%	99%
My colleagues are held accountable for their work.	89%	95%
Agency leadership is transparent in their communication.	87%	93%
I feel informed about Agency priorities.	90%	95%
I am aware of goals and metrics used to define success of the Agency.	84%	90%
I am aware of goals and metrics used to define success of my Division.	87%	92%
Morale is high in my work environment.	82%	88%
KDE processes support me in getting my work done effectively.	91%	87%
At KDE, we work effectively across divisions.	85%	88%
The core focus of KDE is student success.	94%	95%
I am proud of the work KDE does.	95%	99%

Source: KDE Staff Survey

FIGURE 215: KDE STAFF SURVEY: ALL STAFF SUMMARY

Question	Assessment & Accountability	Career & Technical Education	Continuous Improvement & Support	Education Technology	Educator Licensure & Effectiveness	Finance & Operations	Legal Services	Special Education & Early Learning	Teaching & Learning	Office of the Commissioner
My role at KDE is clearly defined.	96%	100%	95%	93%	92%	96%	100%	90%	91%	75%
I have clear expectations for my work at KDE.	96%	100%	95%	91%	100%	99%	100%	85%	91%	75%
I have the right tools and resources to do my job.	100%	100%	97%	98%	85%	97%	100%	83%	91%	83%
I have the right training to do my job.	96%	96%	98%	98%	85%	98%	100%	85%	95%	83%
I have the right skillset to do my job.	96%	100%	100%	98%	92%	100%	100%	94%	98%	92%
My direct supervisor cares about my success.	96%	100%	97%	93%	100%	94%	100%	90%	98%	58%
My colleagues care about my success.	100%	100%	92%	93%	100%	97%	100%	96%	98%	83%
My supervisor holds me accountable for my work.	96%	98%	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%	96%	98%	83%
My colleagues are held accountable for their work.	96%	96%	87%	91%	92%	91%	100%	90%	95%	50%
Agency leadership is transparent in their communication.	88%	93%	91%	91%	85%	94%	91%	81%	79%	67%
I feel informed about Agency priorities.	92%	96%	92%	95%	92%	93%	91%	88%	84%	83%
I am aware of goals and	96%	98%	83%	86%	85%	90%	91%	77%	77%	67%

Question	Assessment & Accountability	Career & Technical Education	Continuous Improvement & Support	Education Technology	Educator Licensure & Effectiveness	Finance & Operations	Legal Services	Special Education & Early Learning	Teaching & Learning	Office of the Commissioner
metrics used to define success of the Agency.										
I am aware of goals and metrics used to define success of my Division.	92%	98%	91%	90%	92%	92%	100%	81%	79%	58%
Morale is high in my work environment.	92%	98%	76%	81%	100%	83%	91%	81%	84%	50%
KDE processes support me in getting my work done effectively.	88%	98%	89%	95%	85%	93%	91%	81%	95%	58%
At KDE, we work effectively across divisions.	96%	98%	79%	91%	85%	97%	91%	73%	72%	50%
The core focus of KDE is student success.	96%	100%	92%	97%	85%	100%	100%	88%	91%	83%
I am proud of the work KDE does.	96%	100%	94%	98%	100%	100%	100%	90%	88%	83%

Source: KDE Staff Survey. Note: The team also disaggregated the KDE staff survey results by years of experience and found minimal differences across groups.

## Superintendents Survey Responses

FIGURE 216: SUPERINTENDENT SURVEY: SUMMARY

Question	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree
I am satisfied with my interactions with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).	87%
I am satisfied with the frequency of communication between my district and KDE.	91%
My inquiries to KDE are responded to in a timely manner.	81%
KDE provides technical assistance and support to my district in a manner that positively impacts student outcomes.	83%
KDE provides professional development for administrators that grows their knowledge and skills as leaders.	66%
KDE provides professional development for teachers that deepens their understanding of both content and pedagogy.	70%
KDE positively contributes to student success in Kentucky.	77%
KDE takes action to improve student success.	79%
KDE considers the diverse needs of families and community stakeholders when making decisions.	83%
KDE produces high-quality resources.	80%
KDE is open to receiving feedback.	77%
KDE is transparent in their communication.	85%
KDE shares information and resources in a timely manner.	84%
KDE shares information and resources in an accessible manner.	91%
It is easy to know where to go if I have a question regarding KDE.	62%
The messaging that I receive from KDE is consistent.	80%
I am able to easily navigate KDE's processes.	61%
I am aware of the United We Learn vision.	92%
I understand the United We Learn Vision.	87%
United We Learn guides the work of KDE.	79%

Source: Superintendent Survey



FIGURE 217: SUPERINTENDENT SURVEY: BY TENURE

Question	TENURE				
	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
I am satisfied with my interactions with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).	94%	92%	88%	81%	83%
I am satisfied with the frequency of communication between my district and KDE.	100%	96%	88%	85%	92%
My inquiries to KDE are responded to in a timely manner.	78%	85%	88%	73%	92%
KDE provides technical assistance and support to my district in a manner that positively impacts student outcomes.	94%	85%	88%	73%	83%
KDE provides professional development for administrators that grows their knowledge and skills as leaders.	78%	65%	53%	66%	67%
KDE provides professional development for teachers that deepens their understanding of both content and pedagogy.	67%	77%	59%	73%	67%
KDE positively contributes to student success in Kentucky.	89%	81%	88%	68%	67%
KDE takes action to improve student success.	83%	92%	82%	71%	67%
KDE considers the diverse needs of families and community stakeholders when making decisions.	94%	89%	88%	73%	75%
KDE produces high-quality resources.	89%	77%	88%	78%	67%
KDE is open to receiving feedback.	89%	89%	65%	73%	67%
KDE is transparent in their communication.	94%	89%	82%	85%	67%
KDE shares information and resources in a timely manner.	89%	92%	94%	76%	75%
KDE shares information and resources in an accessible manner.	94%	96%	82%	93%	83%
It is easy to know where to go if I have a question regarding KDE.	50%	73%	47%	66%	67%
The messaging that I receive from KDE is consistent.	83%	77%	88%	81%	67%
I am able to easily navigate KDE's processes.	56%	69%	53%	63%	58%
I am aware of the United We Learn vision.	83%	92%	94%	95%	92%
I understand the United We Learn Vision.	83%	92%	82%	85%	92%
United We Learn guides the work of KDE.	78%	85%	82%	76%	75%

Source: Superintendent Survey

## Area Technology Center Staff Survey Responses

FIGURE 218: ATC STAFF SURVEY: SURVEY RESULTS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree
My ATC provides professional development that deepens my understanding of content and pedagogy.	72%
I receive high-quality support from my ATC administrator(s).	75%
I engage in meaningful collaboration with my fellow ATC teachers.	76%
I have adequate access to classroom resources.	73%
My teaching courseload feels manageable.	72%
My ATC positively contributes to student success.	98%
My ATC has the right number of staff.	88%
My ATC has the resources necessary for successful operations.	83%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with our host district/school.	93%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with other districts/schools we serve.	78%

Source: ATC Survey

FIGURE 219: ATC STAFF SURVEY: RESULTS BY ROLE

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Principal	Staff Member	Teacher
KDE and the Division of Technical Schools & Continuous Improvement supports my partnership with my host district.	98%	N/A	N/A
KDE and the Division of Technical Schools & Continuous Improvement provides technical assistance and support to my ATC in a manner that positively impacts student outcomes.	93%	N/A	N/A
KDE and the Division of Technical Schools & Continuous Improvement provides professional development for administrators that grows my knowledge and skills.	93%	N/A	N/A
KDE and the Division of Technical Schools & Continuous Improvement provides professional development for teachers that deepens their understanding of content and pedagogy.	84%	N/A	N/A
Overall, I'm satisfied with my interactions with KDE and the Division of Technical Schools & Continuous Improvement.	93%	N/A	N/A
My ATC provides professional development that deepens my understanding of content and pedagogy.	N/A	N/A	92%
I receive high-quality support from my ATC administrator(s).	N/A	N/A	95%
I engage in meaningful collaboration with my fellow ATC teachers.	N/A	N/A	97%
I have adequate access to classroom resources.	N/A	N/A	93%
My teaching courseload feels manageable.	N/A	N/A	92%
My ATC positively contributes to student success.	100%	100%	98%
My ATC has the right number of staff.	67%	88%	93%
My ATC has the resources necessary for successful operations.	71%	77%	85%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with our host district/school.	89%	88%	95%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with other districts/schools we serve.	71%	71%	80%

Source: ATC Survey

FIGURE 220: ATC STAFF SURVEY: RESULTS BY TENURE

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
My ATC provides professional development that deepens my understanding of content and pedagogy.	70%	60%	67%	79%	79%
I receive high-quality support from my ATC administrator(s).	74%	63%	72%	79%	81%
I engage in meaningful collaboration with my fellow ATC teachers.	76%	63%	75%	75%	82%
I have adequate access to classroom resources.	80%	60%	69%	64%	79%
My teaching courseload feels manageable.	72%	63%	74%	68%	77%
My ATC positively contributes to student success.	94%	98%	100%	100%	99%
My ATC has the right number of staff.	82%	77%	93%	100%	90%
My ATC has the resources necessary for successful operations.	84%	75%	82%	79%	87%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with our host district/school.	96%	92%	95%	79%	96%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with other districts/schools we serve.	80%	75%	79%	79%	78%

Source: ATC Survey

FIGURE 221: ATC STAFF SURVEY: RESULTS BY LOCATION

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	On the same campus as a comprehensive high school	Physically attached to a comprehensive high school	Standalone	Other
My ATC provides professional development that deepens my understanding of content and pedagogy.	69%	72%	73%	100%
I receive high-quality support from my ATC administrator(s).	74%	73%	74%	100%
I engage in meaningful collaboration with my fellow ATC teachers.	74%	75%	77%	89%
I have adequate access to classroom resources.	69%	73%	77%	78%
My teaching courseload feels manageable.	69%	74%	72%	100%
My ATC positively contributes to student success.	97%	99%	99%	100%
My ATC has the right number of staff.	90%	85%	87%	100%
My ATC has the resources necessary for successful operations.	81%	84%	85%	67%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with our host district/school.	93%	93%	94%	100%
My ATC has a strong working relationship with other districts/schools we serve.	73%	77%	86%	89%

Source: ATC Survey

## District Special Education Directors Survey Responses

FIGURE 222: SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR SURVEY: SUMMARY

Question	Percentage Agree/Strongly Agree
I understand how LEAs are selected for KDE monitoring activities.	69%
KDE special education monitoring activities with LEAs such as IEP file reviews, on-site reviews, etc. are completed in a timely manner.	77%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with federal requirements in my LEA.	80%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with state special education requirements in my LEA.	83%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with federal special education regulatory requirements.	76%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with state special education regulatory requirements.	78%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve the quality of IEPs for students served by special education in my LEA.	64%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve academic and other performance outcomes for students served by special education in my LEA.	50%
KDE takes reasonable action to make sure LEA noncompliance with special education regulatory requirements is corrected within one year.	91%
The process for submitting required special education data to KDE is efficient.	82%
KDE special education data systems provide me with timely data about my LEA's special education program.	72%
KDE special education data systems provide me with accurate data about my LEA's special education program.	83%
KDE special education data systems provide me with actionable data about my LEA's special education program.	76%
Special education data provided by KDE is useful to support continuous improvement efforts.	72%
KDE makes fair and objective annual special education performance determinations for LEAs.	84%
I am satisfied with my interactions with KDE regarding special education.	76%
I am satisfied with the frequency of communication between my LEA and KDE regarding special education.	86%
My inquiries to the KDE about special education topics are responded to in a timely manner.	82%
KDE considers the diverse needs of educators, families, and community stakeholders when making decisions about special education policies and programs.	64%
KDE provides meaningful opportunities for stakeholder involvement related to special education in the state.	69%
KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is open to receiving feedback.	72%
Communication from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is transparent.	69%
The messaging that I receive from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is consistent.	79%
KDE shares information and resources about special education in an accessible manner.	92%

Question	Percentage Agree/Strongly Agree
I know who or where to go to if I have a question for KDE about special education.	71%
I am knowledgeable about KDE's dispute resolution processes.	85%
KDE's dispute resolution processes are objective and fair.	50%
KDE's dispute resolution processes support positive outcomes for students and families served by special education in my LEA.	52%
KDE produces high-quality special education resources.	77%
KDE provides timely technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	75%
KDE provides accurate technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	77%
KDE provides actionable technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	76%
KDE provides technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics that meet the needs of my LEA.	77%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that improves compliance with special education requirements.	63%
KDE provides professional development for educators that improves compliance with special education requirements.	60%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education,	59%
KDE provides professional development for educators that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education.	57%
KDE provides high-quality support that aids my LEA in reducing disproportionality in special education.	53%

Source: Special Education Director Survey



FIGURE 223: SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR SURVEY: RESULTS BY LEA SIZE

Question	NUMBER OF STUDENTS			
	Less than 500	501 to 2,100	2,101 to 5,000	More than 5,000
I understand how LEAs are selected for KDE monitoring activities.	89%	64%	62%	75%
KDE special education monitoring activities with LEAs such as IEP file reviews, on-site reviews, etc. are completed in a timely manner.	89%	84%	71%	60%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with federal requirements in my LEA.	89%	80%	88%	55%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with state special education requirements in my LEA.	89%	86%	88%	60%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with federal special education regulatory requirements.	83%	76%	77%	65%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with state special education regulatory requirements.	94%	76%	82%	60%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve the quality of IEPs for students served by special education in my LEA.	83%	71%	59%	35%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve academic and other performance outcomes for students served by special education in my LEA.	61%	60%	41%	25%
KDE takes reasonable action to make sure LEA noncompliance with special education regulatory requirements is corrected within one year.	94%	93%	94%	80%
The process for submitting required special education data to KDE is efficient.	83%	84%	79%	80%
KDE special education data systems provide me with timely data about my LEA's special education program.	94%	73%	74%	50%
KDE special education data systems provide me with accurate data about my LEA's special education program.	94%	82%	79%	80%
KDE special education data systems provide me with actionable data about my LEA's special education program.	83%	82%	71%	65%
Special education data provided by KDE is useful to support continuous improvement efforts.	100%	78%	59%	50%
KDE makes fair and objective annual special education performance determinations for LEAs.	89%	89%	82%	70%
I am satisfied with my interactions with KDE regarding special education.	89%	84%	71%	55%
I am satisfied with the frequency of communication between my LEA and KDE regarding special education.	89%	93%	82%	70%
My inquiries to the KDE about special education topics are responded to in a timely manner.	94%	89%	77%	60%
KDE considers the diverse needs of educators, families, and community stakeholders when making decisions about special education policies and programs.	72%	69%	68%	35%
KDE provides meaningful opportunities for stakeholder involvement related to special education in the state.	78%	73%	77%	40%
KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is open to receiving feedback.	83%	73%	79%	45%

Question	NUMBER OF STUDENTS			
	Less than 500	501 to 2,100	2,101 to 5,000	More than 5,000
Communication from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is transparent.	89%	73%	68%	40%
The messaging that I receive from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is consistent.	100%	78%	79%	60%
KDE shares information and resources about special education in an accessible manner.	94%	93%	94%	85%
I know who or where to go to if I have a question for KDE about special education.	78%	78%	68%	50%
I am knowledgeable about KDE's dispute resolution processes.	83%	91%	77%	85%
KDE's dispute resolution processes are objective and fair.	39%	53%	53%	50%
KDE's dispute resolution processes support positive outcomes for students and families served by special education in my LEA.	50%	53%	53%	50%
KDE produces high-quality special education resources.	94%	78%	74%	65%
KDE provides timely technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	89%	80%	74%	50%
KDE provides accurate technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	89%	78%	82%	55%
KDE provides actionable technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	89%	78%	77%	60%
KDE provides technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics that meet the needs of my LEA.	89%	78%	77%	65%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that improves compliance with special education requirements.	72%	78%	50%	35%
KDE provides professional development for educators that improves compliance with special education requirements.	61%	76%	53%	25%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education,	72%	66%	53%	40%
KDE provides professional development for educators that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education.	61%	67%	50%	35%
KDE provides high-quality support that aids my LEA in reducing disproportionality in special education.	67%	62%	44%	30%

Source: Special Education Director Survey

FIGURE 224: SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR SURVEY: RESULTS BY TENURE

Question	SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR TENURE				
	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
I understand how LEAs are selected for KDE monitoring activities.	78%	56%	77%	77%	63%
KDE special education monitoring activities with LEAs such as IEP file reviews, on-site reviews, etc. are completed in a timely manner.	100%	84%	81%	69%	71%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with federal requirements in my LEA.	100%	88%	89%	73%	68%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with state special education requirements in my LEA.	100%	88%	92%	77%	73%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with federal special education regulatory requirements.	89%	68%	92%	69%	71%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with state special education regulatory requirements.	89%	76%	92%	69%	73%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve the quality of IEPs for students served by special education in my LEA.	100%	68%	81%	54%	49%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve academic and other performance outcomes for students served by special education in my LEA.	89%	52%	69%	39%	34%
KDE takes reasonable action to make sure LEA noncompliance with special education regulatory requirements is corrected within one year.	100%	92%	96%	92%	85%
The process for submitting required special education data to KDE is efficient.	89%	76%	89%	85%	78%
KDE special education data systems provide me with timely data about my LEA's special education program.	100%	68%	73%	77%	66%
KDE special education data systems provide me with accurate data about my LEA's special education program.	89%	76%	92%	85%	78%
KDE special education data systems provide me with actionable data about my LEA's special education program.	89%	72%	81%	81%	71%

Question	SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR TENURE				
	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
Special education data provided by KDE is useful to support continuous improvement efforts.	78%	68%	81%	69%	68%
KDE makes fair and objective annual special education performance determinations for LEAs.	89%	84%	92%	73%	85%
I am satisfied with my interactions with KDE regarding special education.	89%	80%	77%	73%	73%
I am satisfied with the frequency of communication between my LEA and KDE regarding special education.	100%	88%	85%	81%	85%
My inquiries to the KDE about special education topics are responded to in a timely manner.	100%	88%	85%	77%	76%
KDE considers the diverse needs of educators, families, and community stakeholders when making decisions about special education policies and programs.	78%	56%	77%	73%	51%
KDE provides meaningful opportunities for stakeholder involvement related to special education in the state.	89%	68%	77%	69%	61%
KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is open to receiving feedback.	89%	68%	89%	73%	59%
Communication from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is transparent.	78%	64%	77%	69%	63%
The messaging that I receive from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is consistent.	100%	88%	96%	62%	68%
KDE shares information and resources about special education in an accessible manner.	100%	88%	89%	92%	95%
I know who or where to go to if I have a question for KDE about special education.	78%	72%	81%	73%	61%
I am knowledgeable about KDE's dispute resolution processes.	78%	68%	89%	81%	98%
KDE's dispute resolution processes are objective and fair.	67%	40%	50%	58%	49%
KDE's dispute resolution processes support positive outcomes for students and families served by special education in my LEA.	56%	48%	54%	54%	51%
KDE produces high-quality special education resources.	100%	80%	85%	73%	68%

Question	SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR TENURE				
	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years
KDE provides timely technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	100%	72%	89%	69%	66%
KDE provides accurate technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	100%	80%	92%	73%	63%
KDE provides actionable technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	89%	80%	92%	73%	63%
KDE provides technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics that meet the needs of my LEA.	89%	84%	89%	69%	68%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that improves compliance with special education requirements.	78%	44%	77%	69%	59%
KDE provides professional development for educators that improves compliance with special education requirements.	67%	52%	69%	65%	54%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education,	67%	56%	73%	62%	49%
KDE provides professional development for educators that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education.	78%	56%	69%	58%	44%
KDE provides high-quality support that aids my LEA in reducing disproportionality in special education.	78%	48%	58%	62%	42%

Source: Special Education Director Survey

FIGURE 225: SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR SURVEY: RESULTS BY MONITORING STATUS (PAST THREE YEARS)

Question	Has your LEA been monitored in the past three years?	
	Yes	No
I understand how LEAs are selected for KDE monitoring activities.	70%	60%
KDE special education monitoring activities with LEAs such as IEP file reviews, on-site reviews, etc. are completed in a timely manner.	77%	80%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with federal requirements in my LEA.	82%	60%
KDE's special education monitoring systems improve compliance with state special education requirements in my LEA.	85%	67%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with federal special education regulatory requirements.	78%	60%
KDE makes fair and objective determinations about LEA compliance with state special education regulatory requirements.	80%	60%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve the quality of IEPs for students served by special education in my LEA.	66%	47%
KDE's special education monitoring systems help improve academic and other performance outcomes for students served by special education in my LEA.	52%	33%
KDE takes reasonable action to make sure LEA noncompliance with special education regulatory requirements is corrected within one year.	92%	87%
The process for submitting required special education data to KDE is efficient.	83%	73%
KDE special education data systems provide me with timely data about my LEA's special education program.	74%	60%
KDE special education data systems provide me with accurate data about my LEA's special education program.	84%	73%
KDE special education data systems provide me with actionable data about my LEA's special education program.	80%	53%
Special education data provided by KDE is useful to support continuous improvement efforts.	74%	53%
KDE makes fair and objective annual special education performance determinations for LEAs.	86%	73%
I am satisfied with my interactions with KDE regarding special education.	79%	60%
I am satisfied with the frequency of communication between my LEA and KDE regarding special education.	85%	93%
My inquiries to the KDE about special education topics are responded to in a timely manner.	81%	87%
KDE considers the diverse needs of educators, families, and community stakeholders when making decisions about special education policies and programs.	65%	53%
KDE provides meaningful opportunities for stakeholder involvement related to special education in the state.	72%	47%

Question	Has your LEA been monitored in the past three years?	
	Yes	No
KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is open to receiving feedback.	73%	60%
Communication from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is transparent.	71%	47%
The messaging that I receive from KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning is consistent.	80%	67%
KDE shares information and resources about special education in an accessible manner.	92%	93%
I know who or where to go to if I have a question for KDE about special education.	72%	60%
I am knowledgeable about KDE's dispute resolution processes.	86%	80%
KDE's dispute resolution processes are objective and fair.	50%	53%
KDE's dispute resolution processes support positive outcomes for students and families served by special education in my LEA.	52%	53%
KDE produces high-quality special education resources.	79%	67%
KDE provides timely technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	74%	80%
KDE provides accurate technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	80%	60%
KDE provides actionable technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics.	78%	67%
KDE provides technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics that meet the needs of my LEA.	79%	67%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that improves compliance with special education requirements.	64%	53%
KDE provides professional development for educators that improves compliance with special education requirements.	62%	47%
KDE provides professional development for leaders that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education,	61%	47%
KDE provides professional development for educators that supports positive outcomes for students served by special education.	58%	47%
KDE provides high-quality support that aids my LEA in reducing disproportionality in special education.	53%	53%

Source: Special Education Director Survey



## KSB Teacher Survey Responses

FIGURE 226: KSB TEACHER TENURE

How long have you worked at the Kentucky School for the Blind?

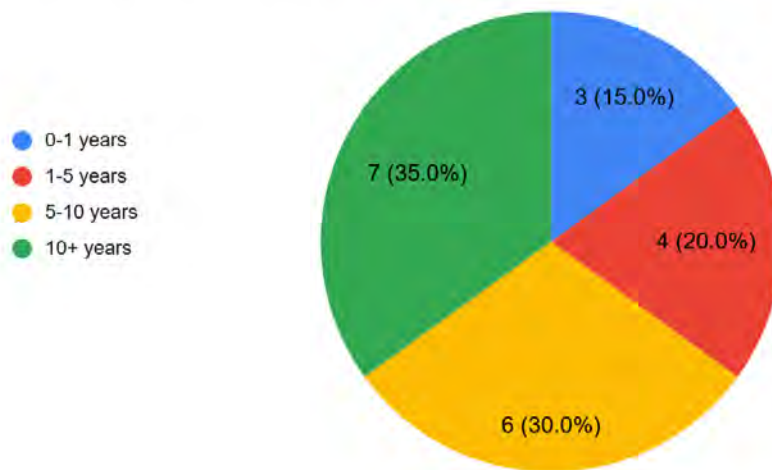


FIGURE 227: KSB TEACHER CERTIFICATIONS

Of the following, what certifications do you hold? If you have any other certifications, please list them below.

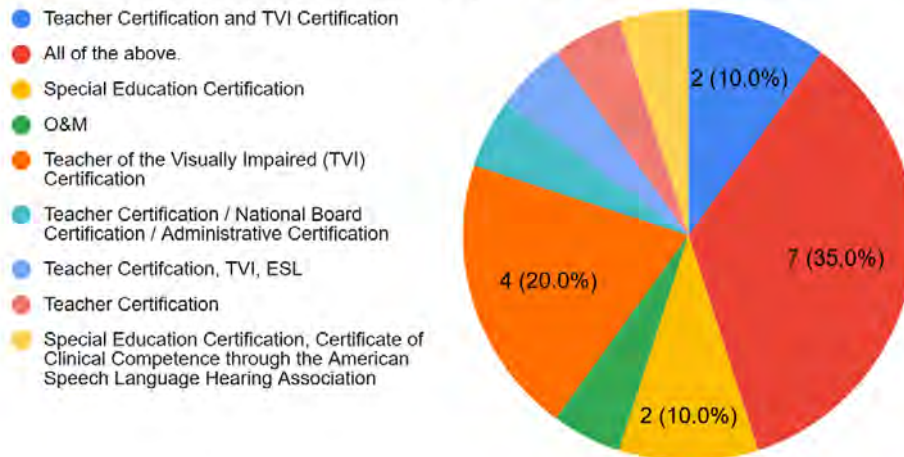


FIGURE 228: KSB TEACHER TRAINING

Are you sufficiently trained for your position?

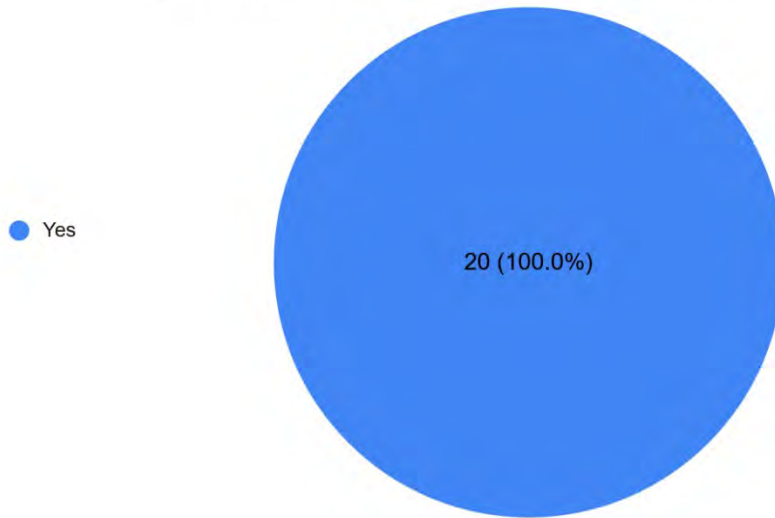


FIGURE 229: KSB TEACHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Does the Kentucky School for the Blind provide sufficient training opportunities for teachers?

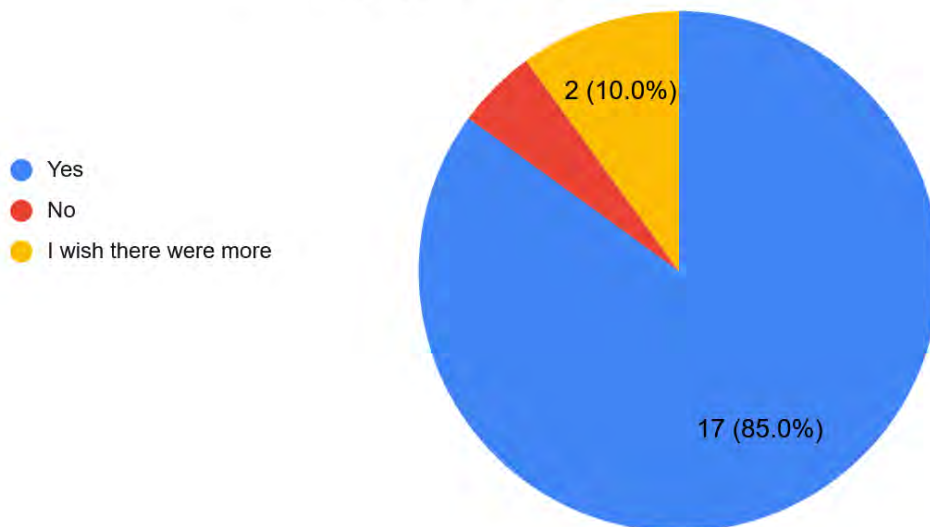


FIGURE 230: KSB TEACHER ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

What level of support do you receive from your school's administration?

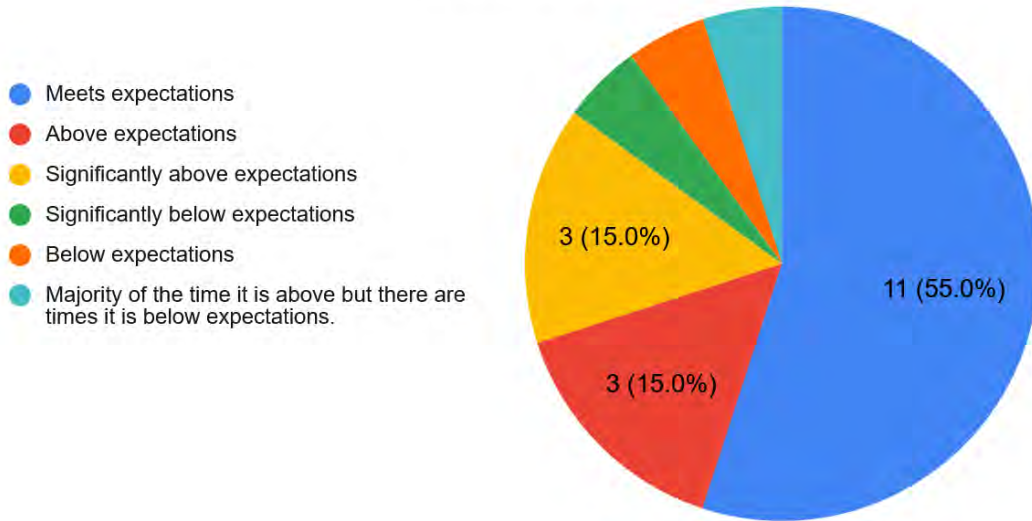


FIGURE 231: KSB TEACHER SUPPORT FROM KDE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Blind receive from the Kentucky Department of Education?

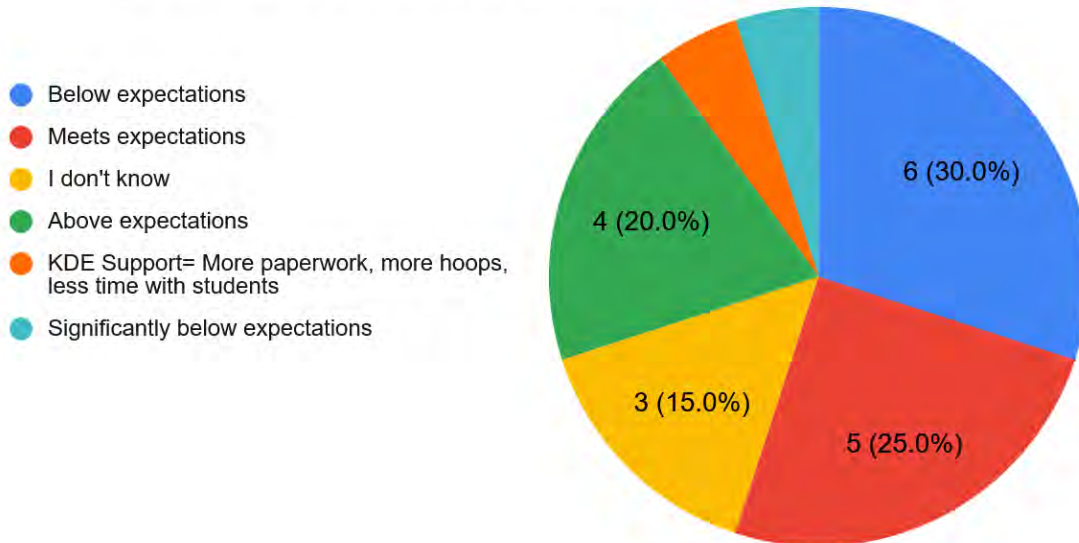


FIGURE 232: KSB TEACHER SUPPORT FROM KBE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Blind receive from the Kentucky Board of Education?

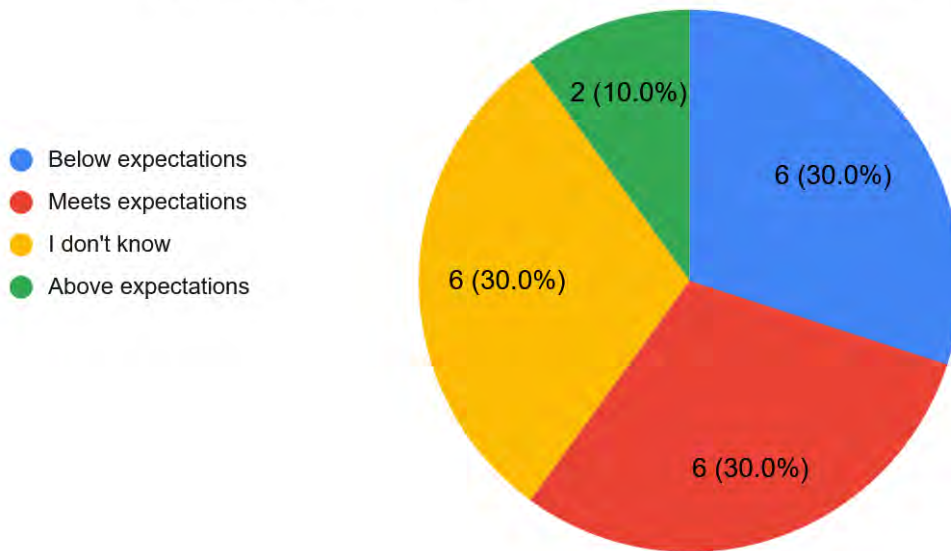


FIGURE 233: KSB TEACHER CLEAR LINE OF COMMUNICATION

Is there a clear line of communication between students, teachers, and administration that promotes an effective and adaptive learning environment?

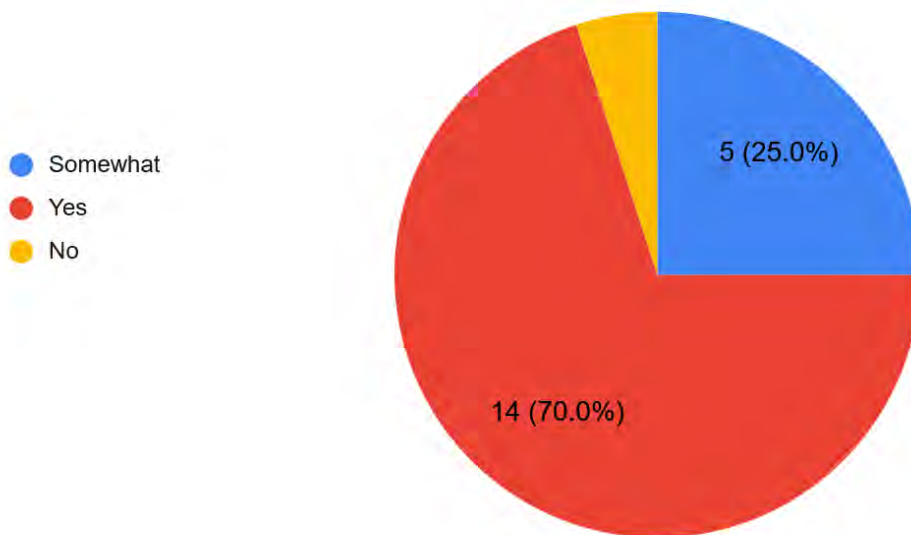


FIGURE 234: KSB TEACHER QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION – TEACHER & STUDENT

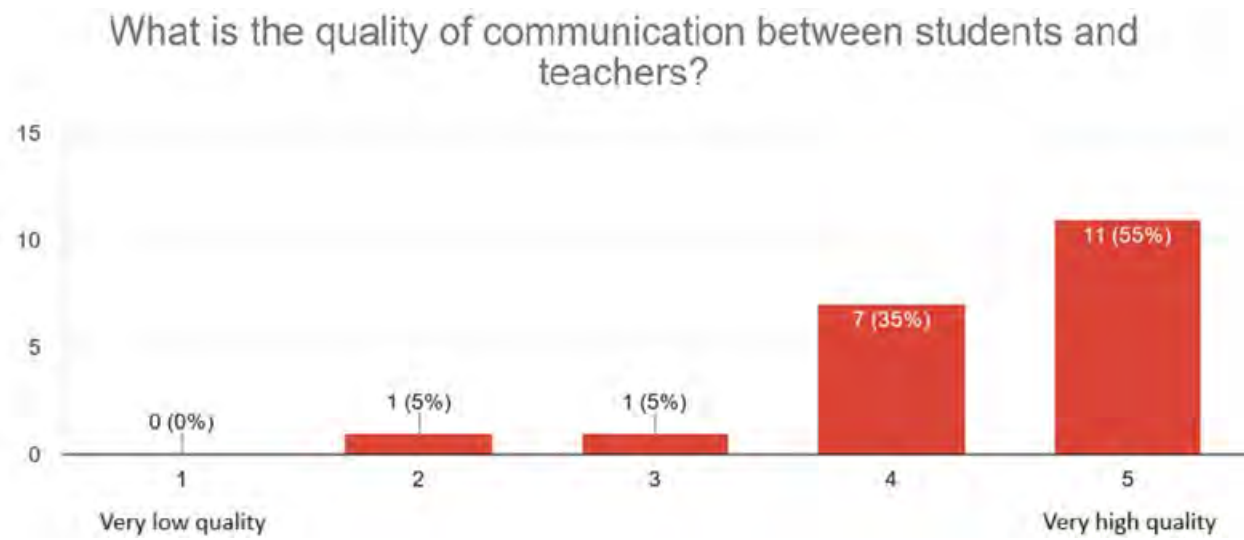


FIGURE 235: KSB TEACHER QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION – TEACHER & ADMIN

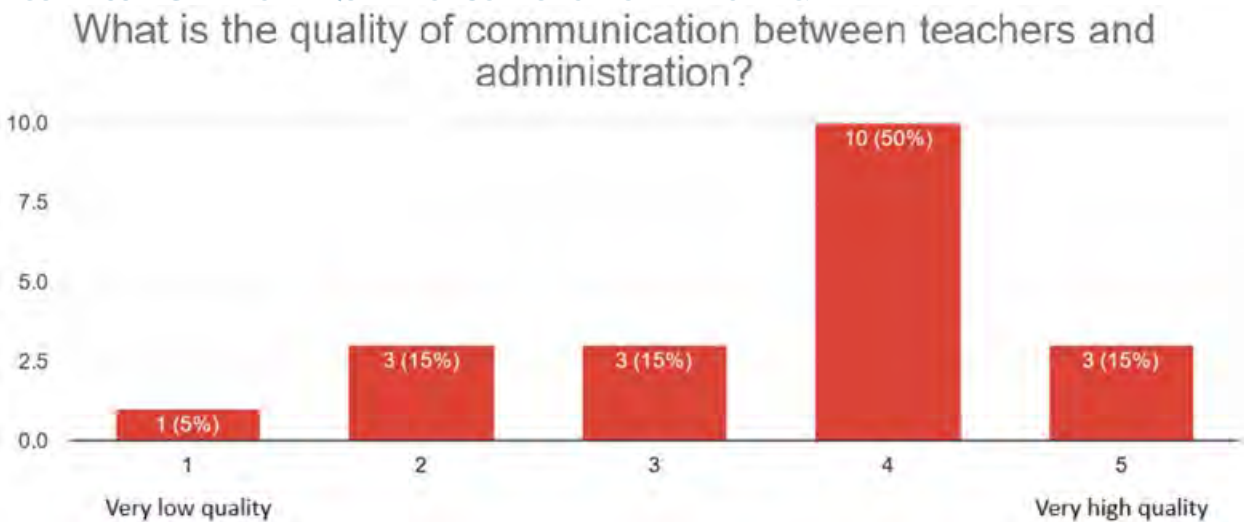


FIGURE 236: KSB TEACHER QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION – KSB & KDE

What is the quality of communication between the Kentucky School for the Blind and the Kentucky Department of Education?

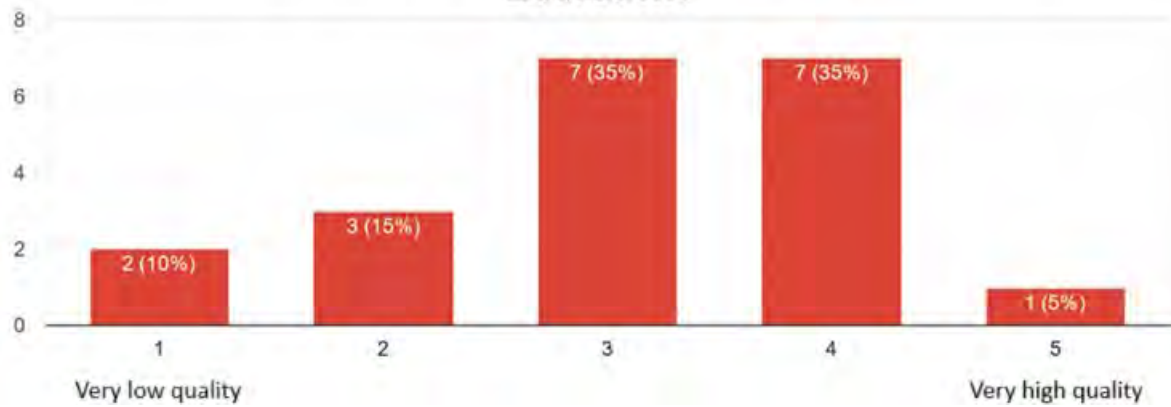


FIGURE 237: KSB TEACHER QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION – KSB & KBE

What is the quality of communication between the Kentucky School for the Blind and the Kentucky Board of Education?

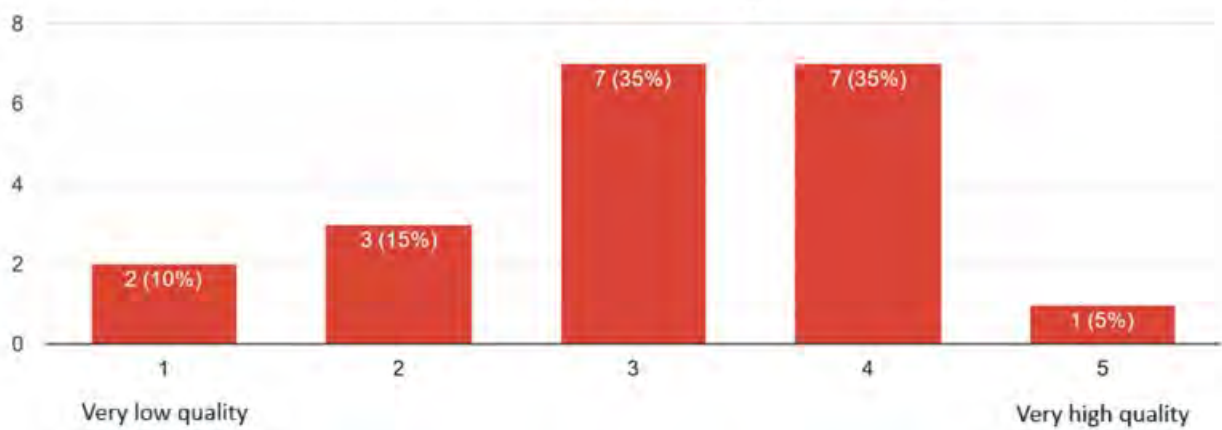




FIGURE 238: KSB TEACHER CONTROL OVER CURRICULUM & LESSON PLANS

How much control do you have over your curriculum and lesson plans?

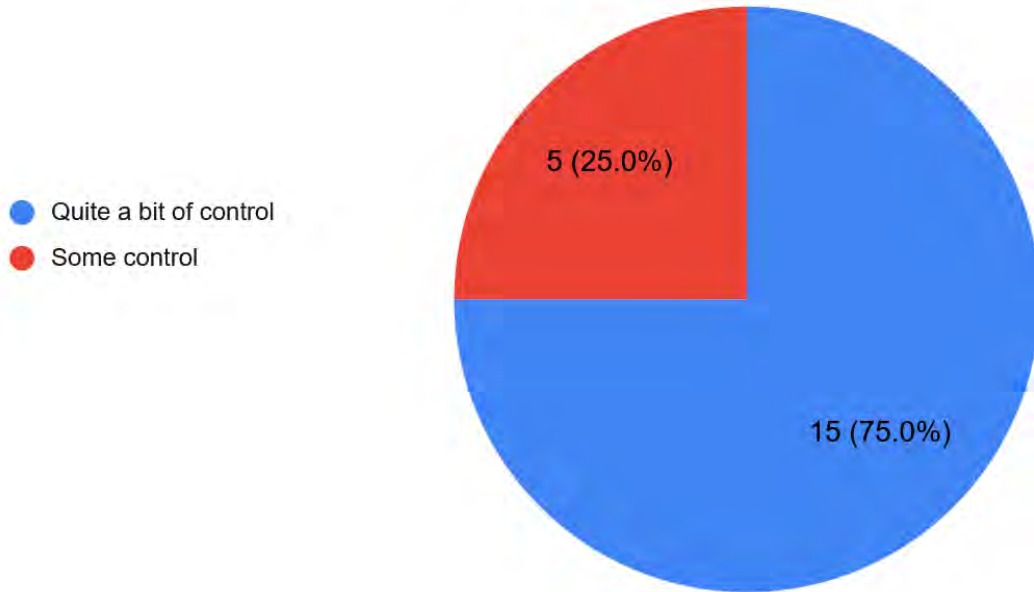


FIGURE 239: KSB TEACHER – KSB FUNDING FROM KDE

Is the Kentucky School for the Blind sufficiently funded by the Kentucky Department of Education?

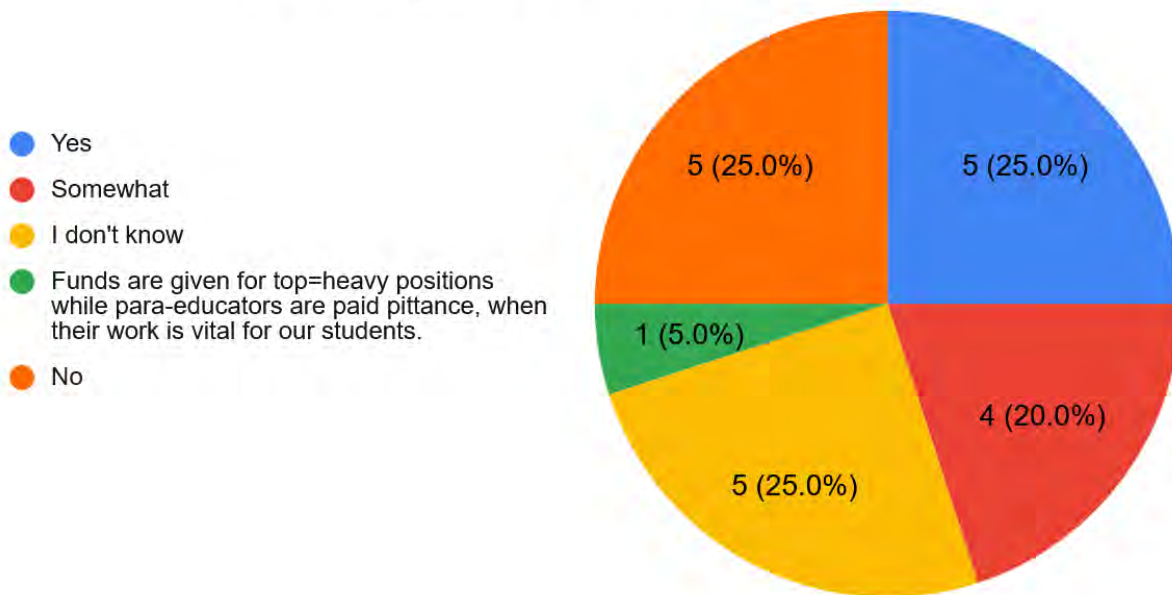




FIGURE 240: KSB TEACHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Does the Kentucky School for the Blind provide the resources you need to teach your students?

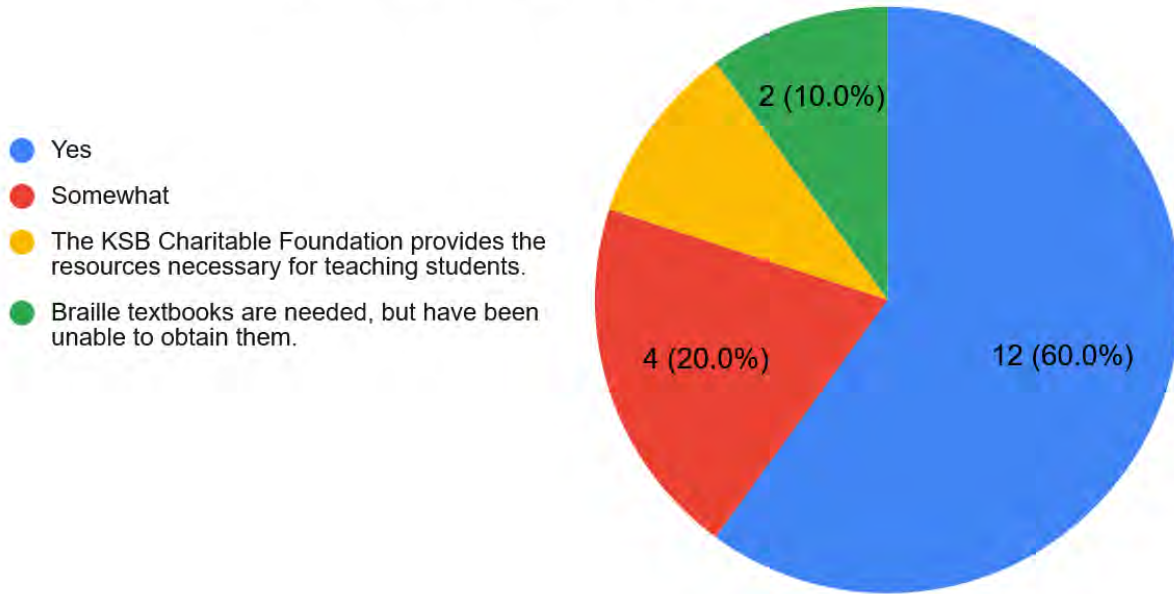


FIGURE 241: KSB TEACHER CLASSROOM RESOURCES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Does the Kentucky School for the Blind provide students with the resources they need to be successful in the classroom?

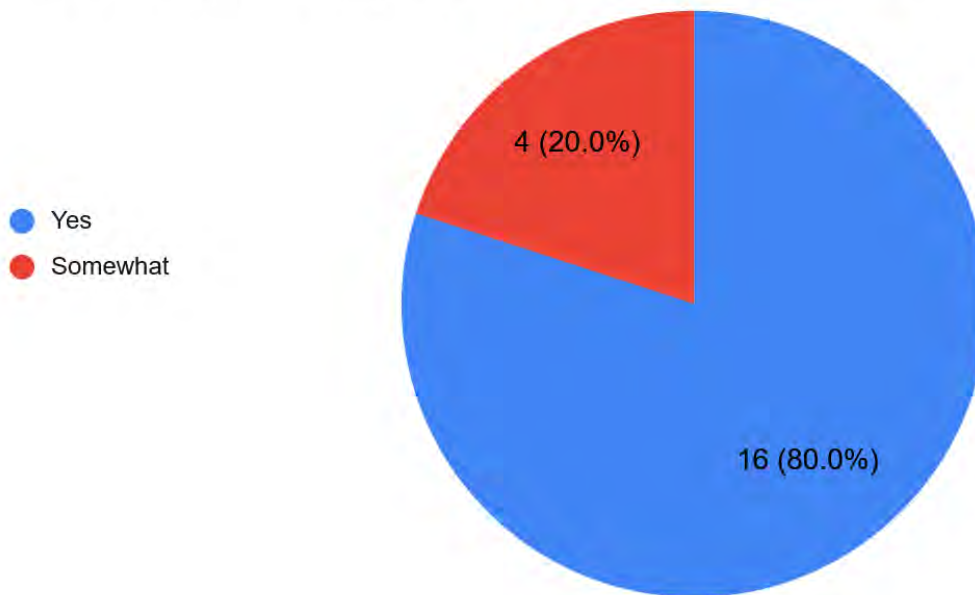


FIGURE 242: KSB TEACHER CLASSROOM BUDGET

Do you receive a budget from the Kentucky School for the Blind to spend on specific needs in your classroom?

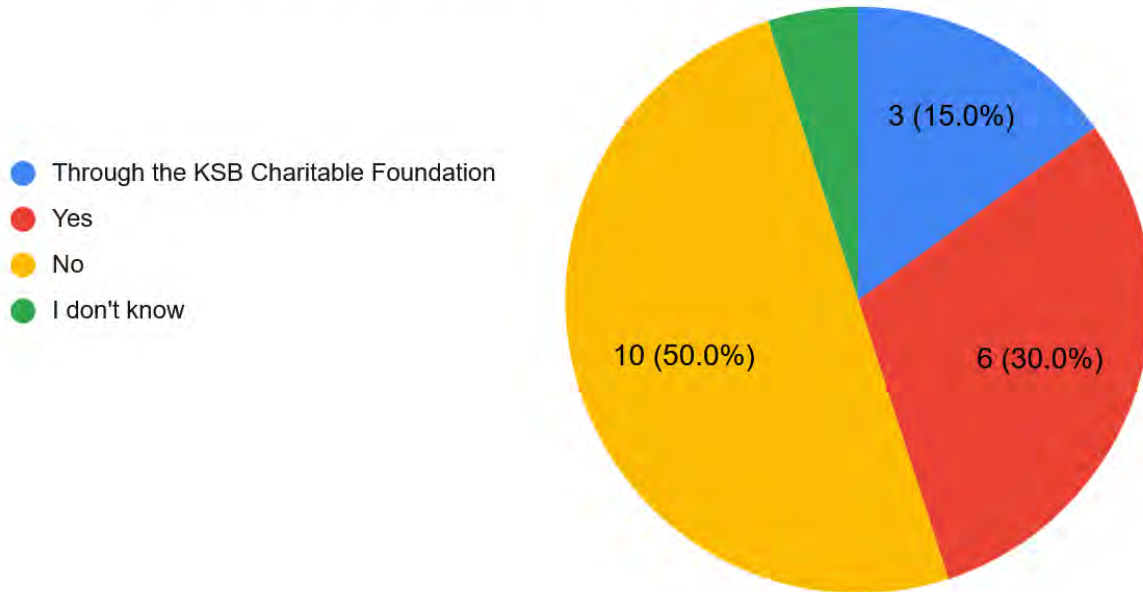


FIGURE 243: KSB TEACHER PERSONAL FUNDS FOR CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

Have you used personal funds to purchase essential classroom items? If so, how much did you spend per year?

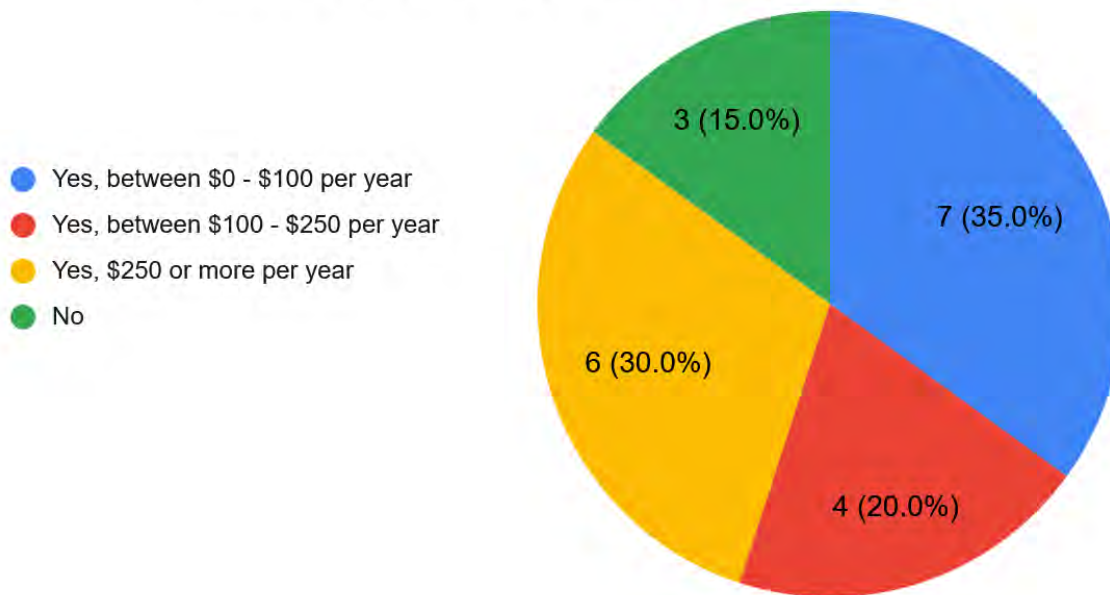


FIGURE 244: KSB TEACHER PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Do you know the procurement process to request the purchase of an item or service?

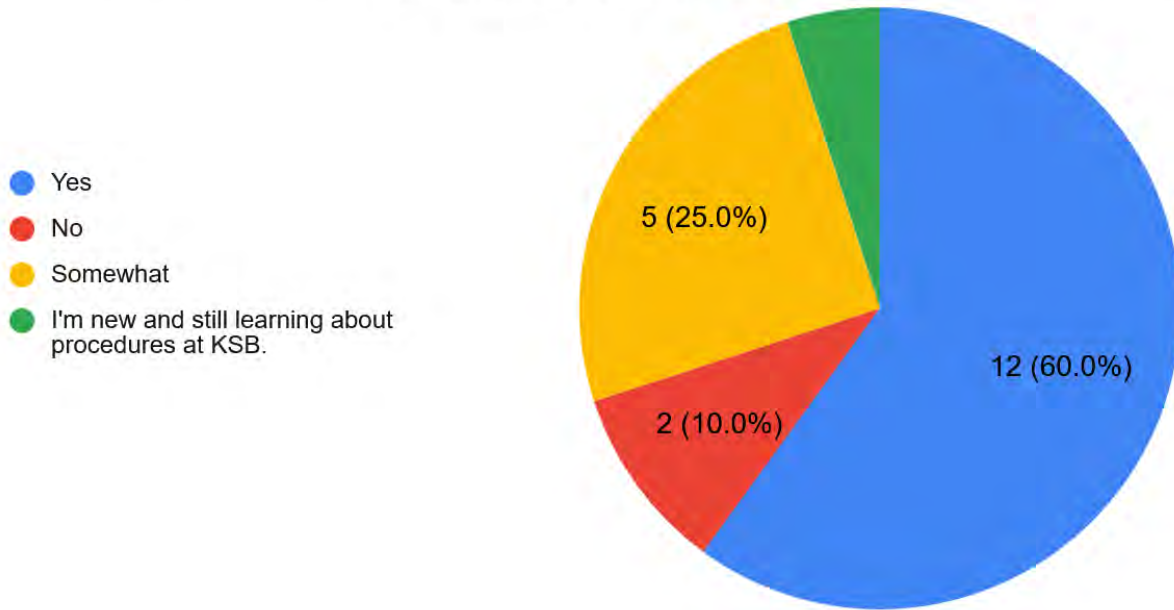


FIGURE 245: KSB TEACHER REQUEST TIMELINE

Are you satisfied, on average, with the amount of time it takes to request and receive items/services?

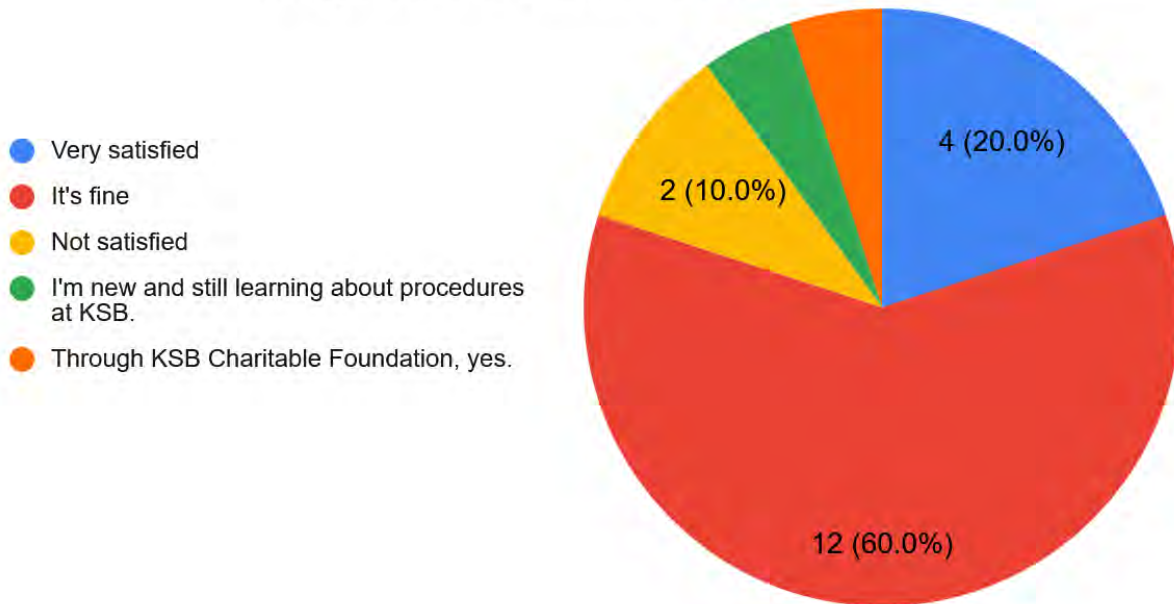


FIGURE 246: KSB TEACHER BRAILLE FLUENCY

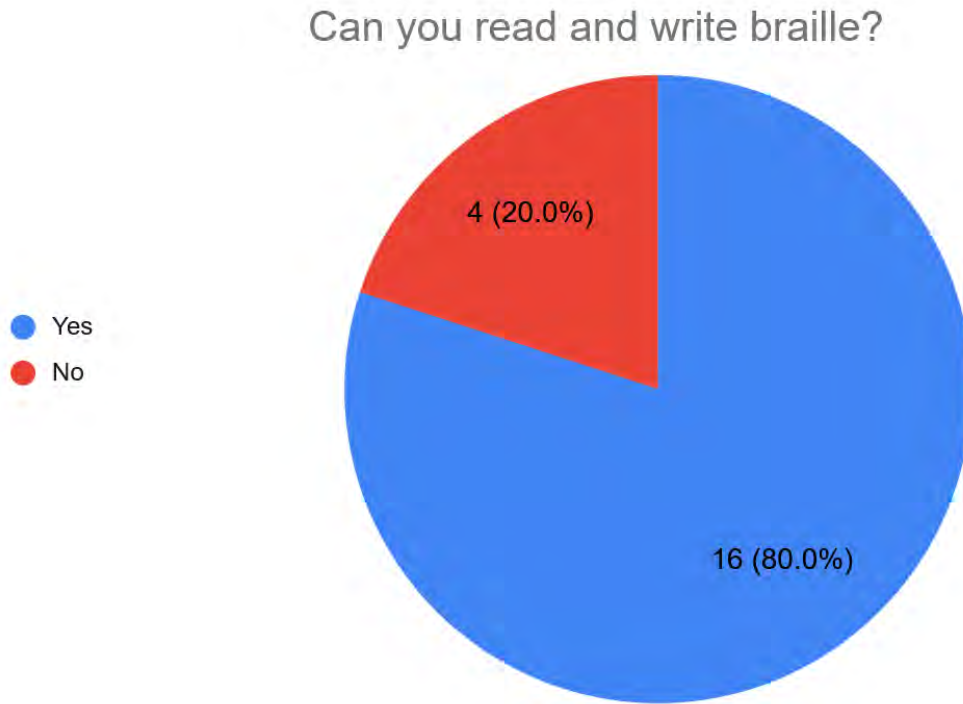


FIGURE 247: KSB TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

If you cannot read and write in braille, has this hindered your communication with students?

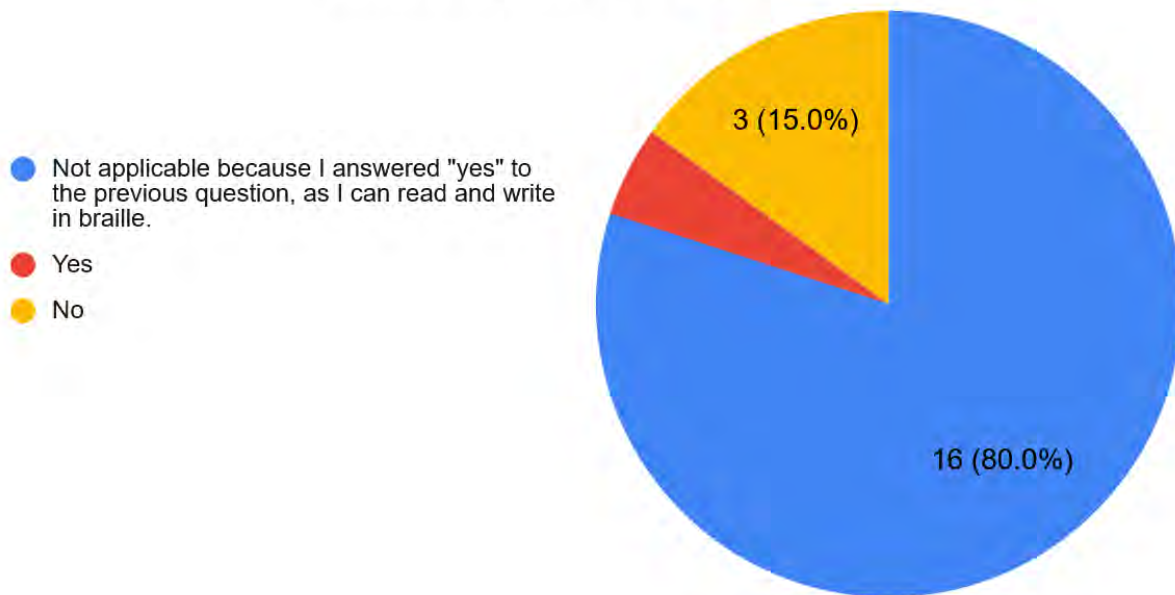


FIGURE 248: KSB TEACHER EVALUATIONS BY ADMIN

Are you frequently evaluated by the administration to determine whether your educational strategies are effective?

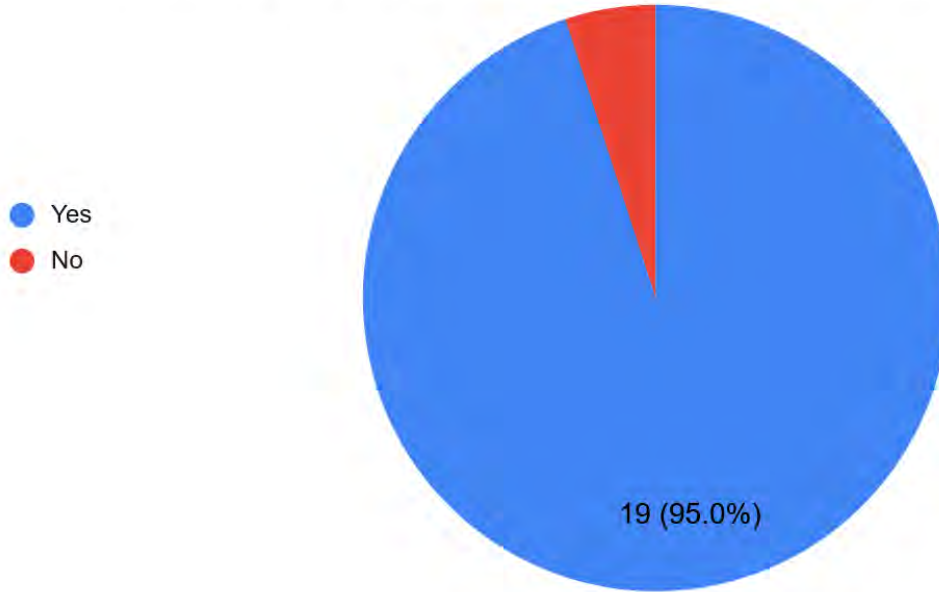


FIGURE 249: KSB TEACHER EVALUATIONS BY STUDENTS

Are you frequently evaluated by students to determine whether your educational strategies are effective?

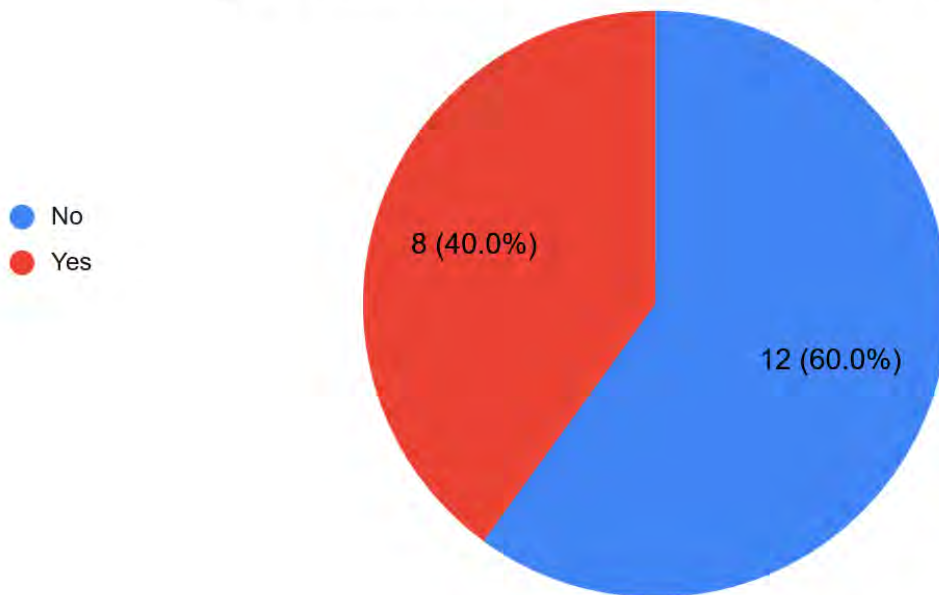




FIGURE 250: KSB TEACHER COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Are you aware of the Kentucky School for the Blind's complaint procedure for staff, teachers, students, and parents?

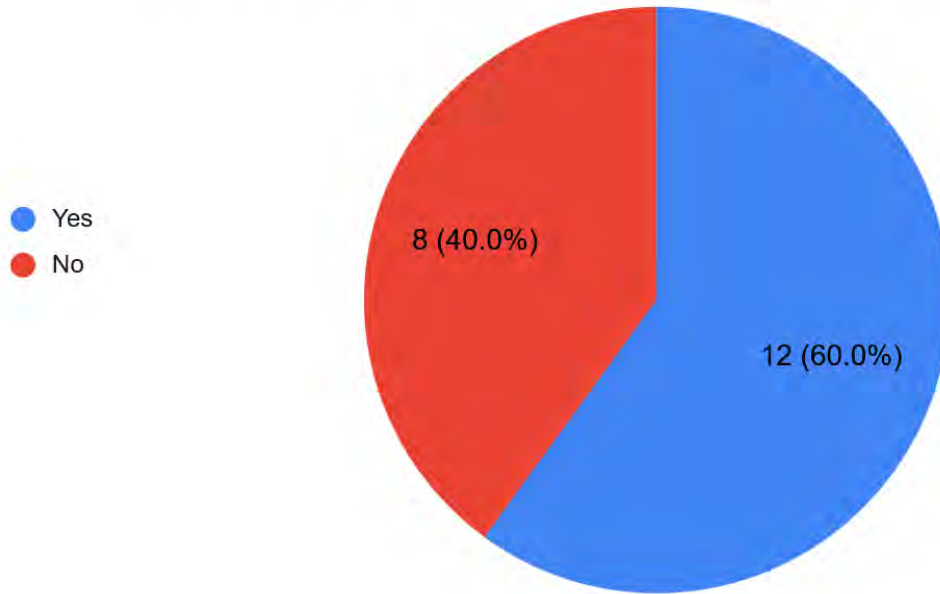


FIGURE 251: KSB TEACHER – KSB ADDRESS COMPLAINTS

Is the Kentucky School for the Blind capable of adequately addressing complaints?

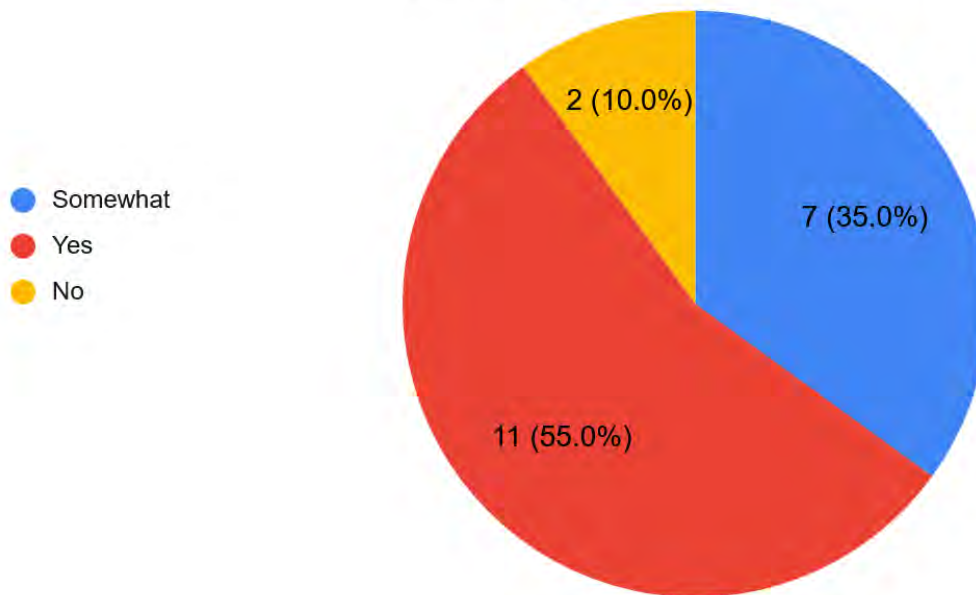


FIGURE 252: KSB TEACHER – KDE ADRESS COMPLAINTS

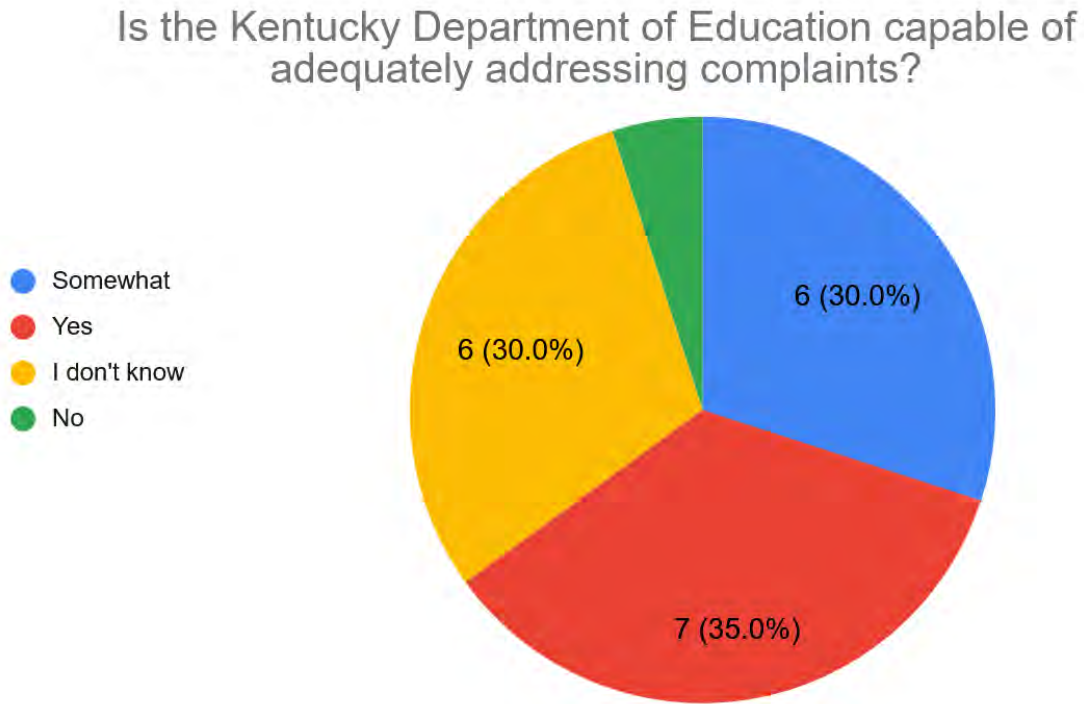
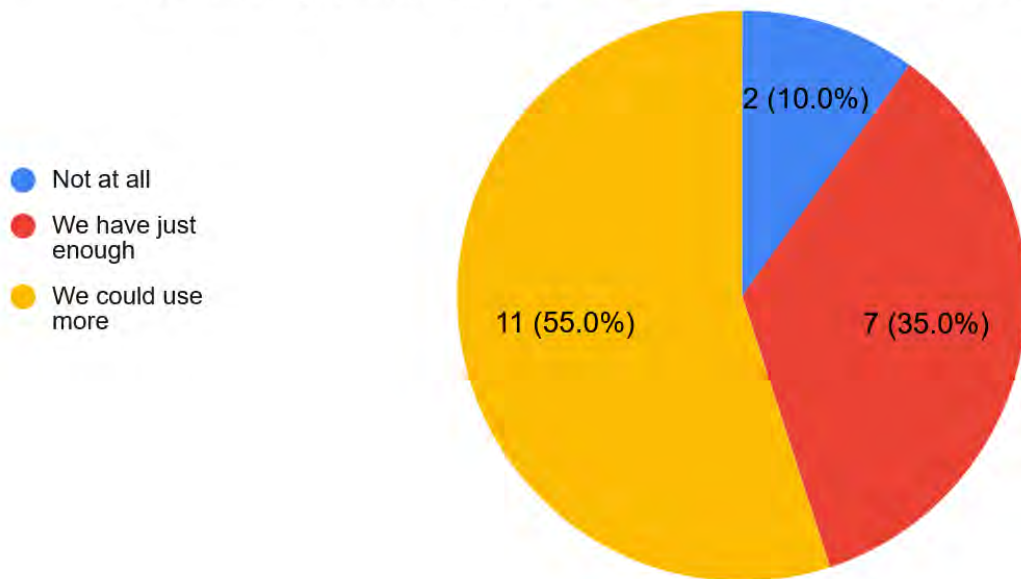


FIGURE 253: KSB TEACHER STAFFING

Is the Kentucky School for the Blind properly staffed? If you have additional thoughts or suggestions on which positions need more or less staffing, please add those to the comment box below.





### KSD Teacher Survey Responses

FIGURE 254: KSD TEACHER TENURE

How long have you worked at the Kentucky School for the Deaf?

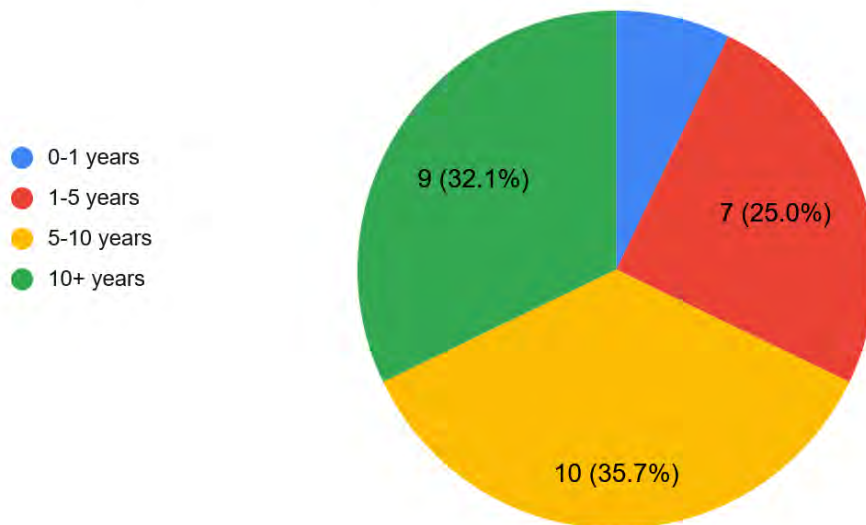


FIGURE 255: KSD TEACHER CERTIFICATIONS

Of the following, what certifications do you hold? If you have any other certifications, please list them below.

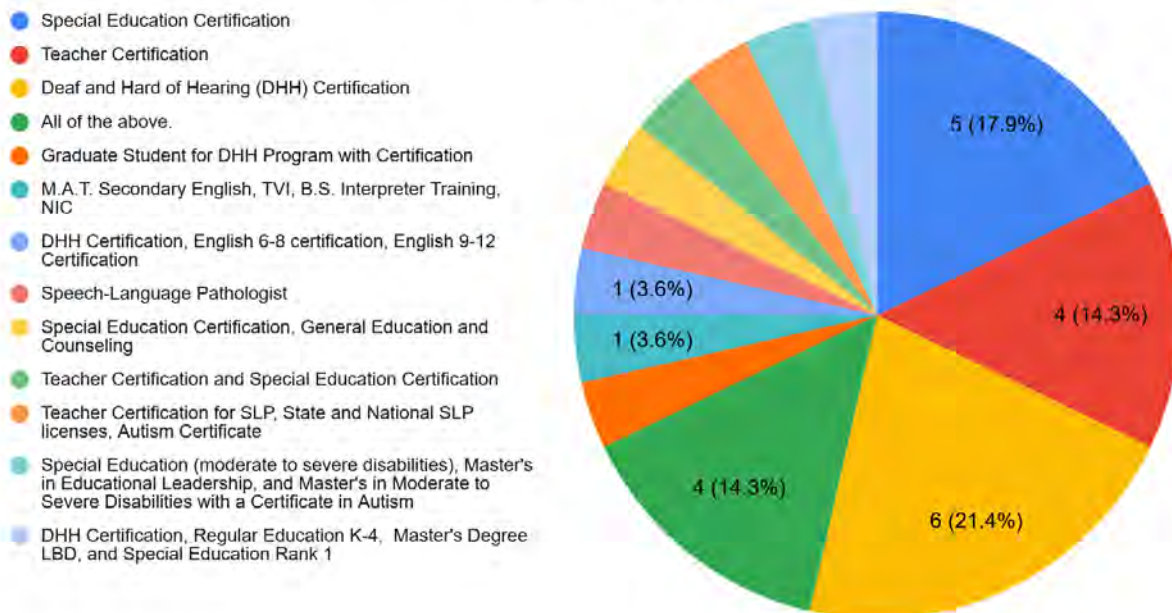


FIGURE 256: KSD TEACHER TRAINING

Are you sufficiently trained for your position?

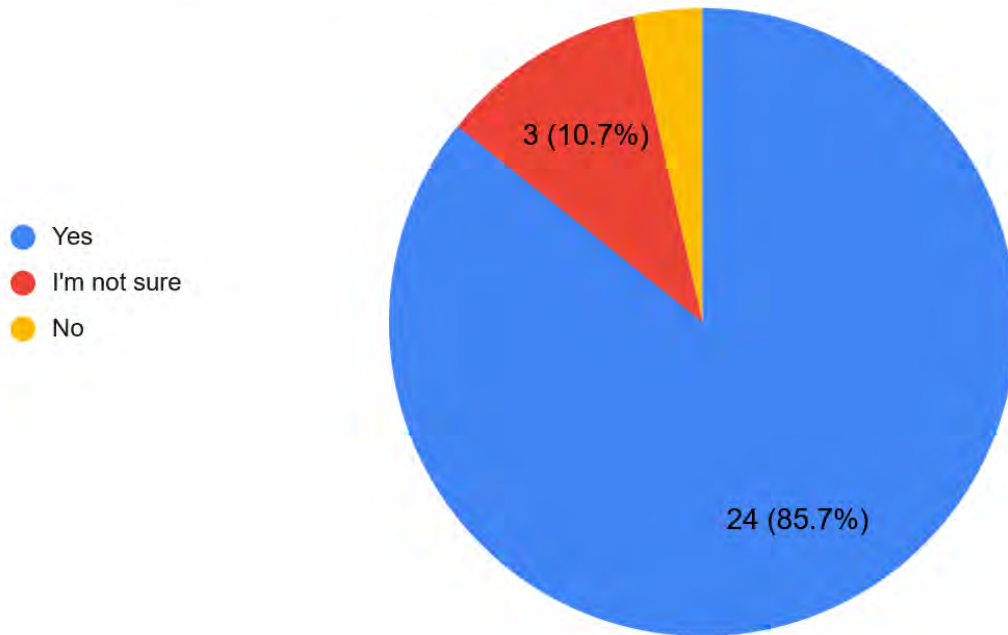


FIGURE 257: KSD TEACHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Does the Kentucky School for the Deaf provide sufficient training opportunities for teachers?

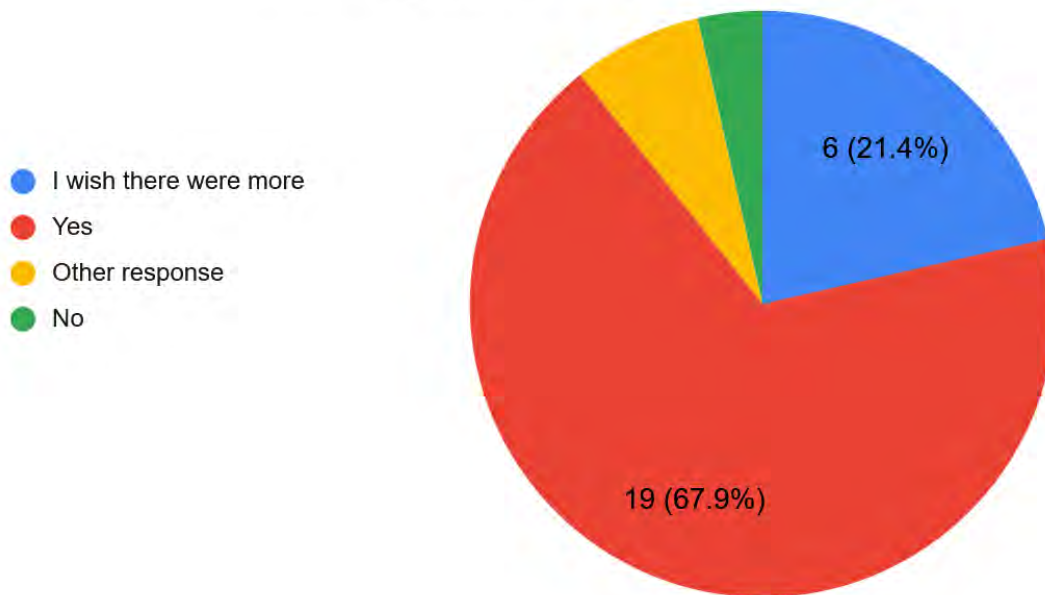


FIGURE 258: KSD TEACHER ADMIN SUPPORT

What level of support do you receive from your school's administration?

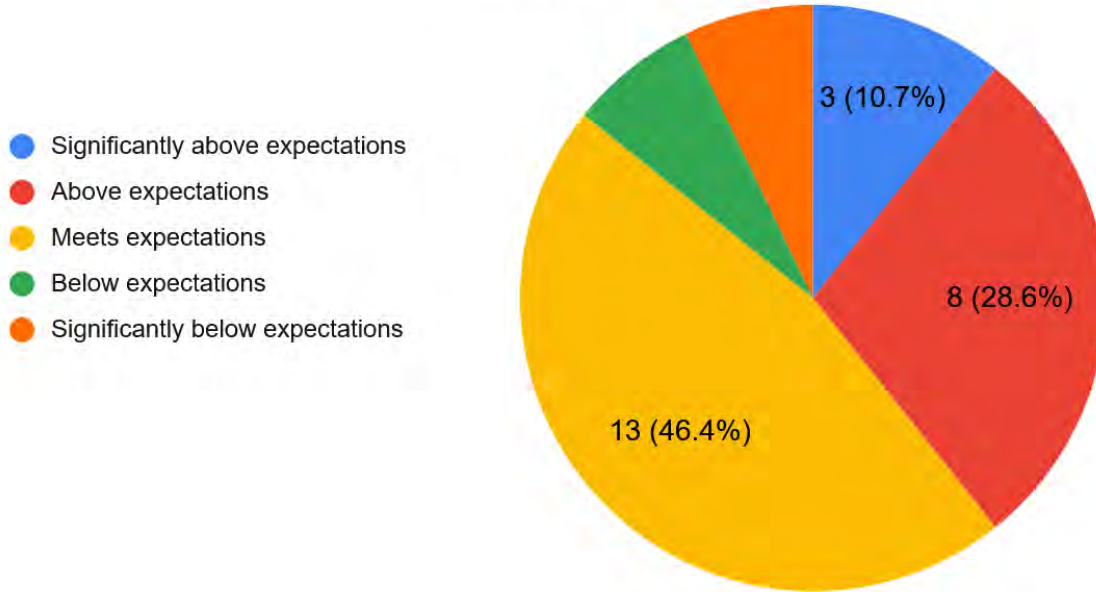


FIGURE 259: KSD TEACHER – KSD SUPPORT FROM KDE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Deaf receive from the Kentucky Department of Education?

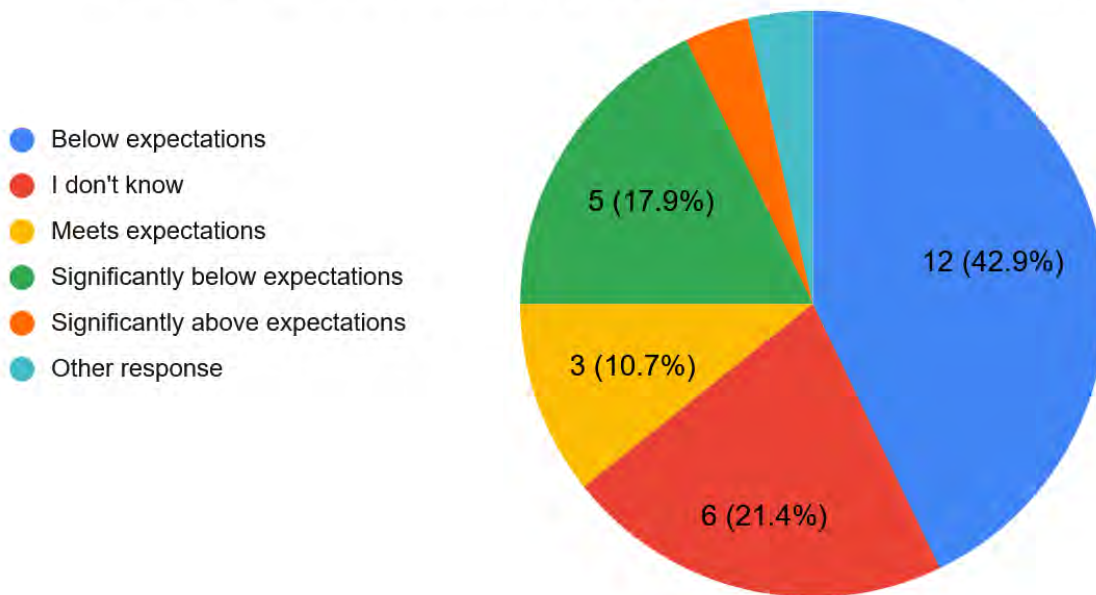


FIGURE 260: KSD TEACHER – KSD SUPPORT FROM KBE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Deaf receive from the Kentucky Board of Education?

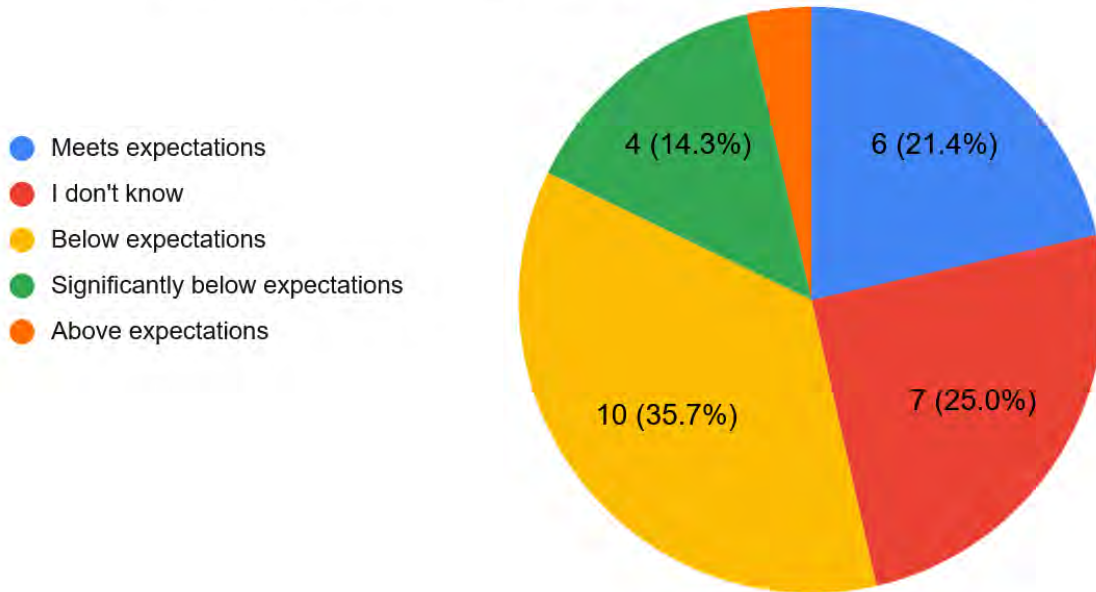


FIGURE 261: KSD TEACHERS COMMUNICATION

Is there a clear line of communication between students, teachers, and administration that promotes an effective and adaptive learning environment?

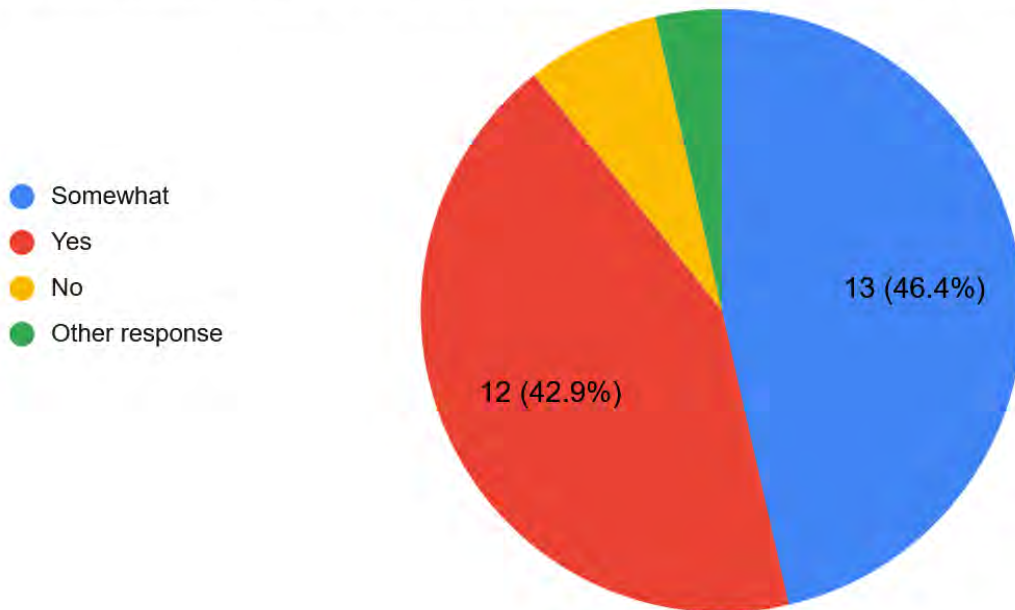




FIGURE 262: KSD TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

What is the quality of communication between students and teachers?

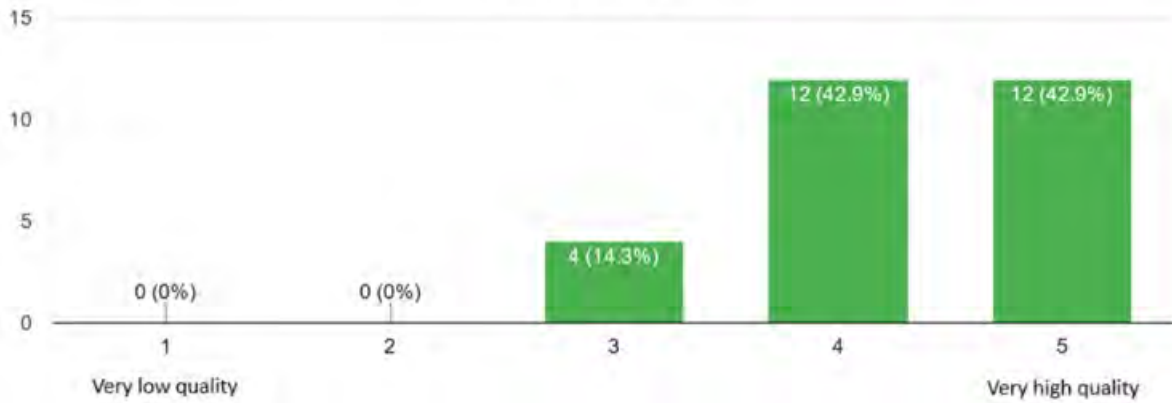


FIGURE 263: KSD TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH ADMIN

What is the quality of communication between teachers and administration?

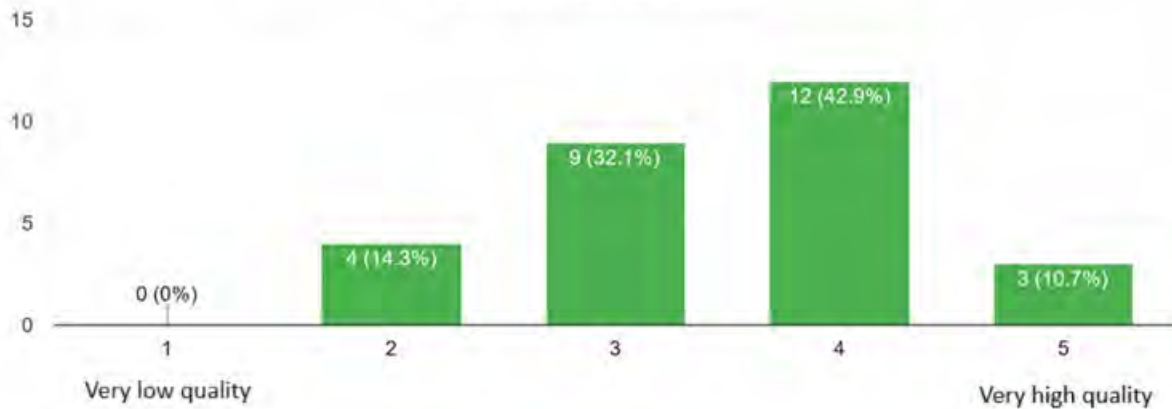


FIGURE 264: KSD TEACHER – COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KSD & KDE

What is the quality of communication between the Kentucky School for the Deaf and the Kentucky Department of Education?

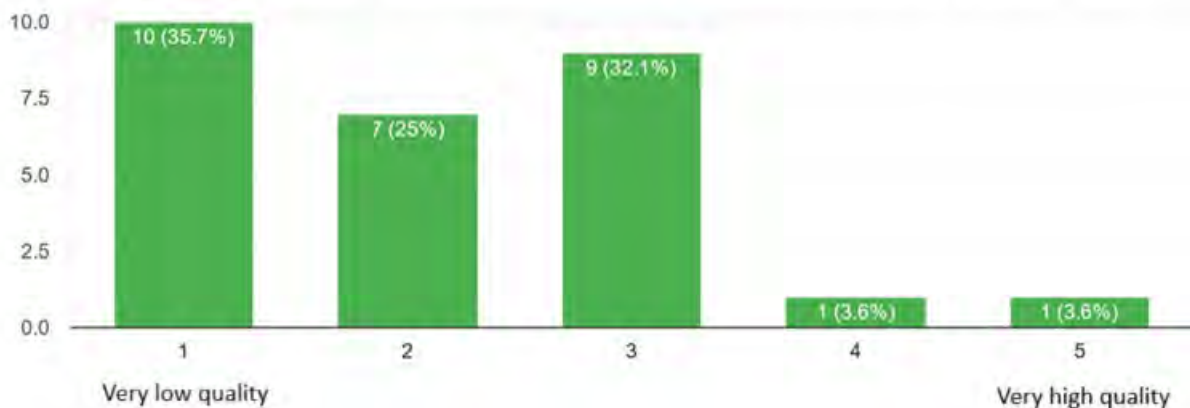


FIGURE 265: KSD TEACHER – COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KSD & KBE

What is the quality of communication between the Kentucky School for the Deaf and the Kentucky Board of Education?

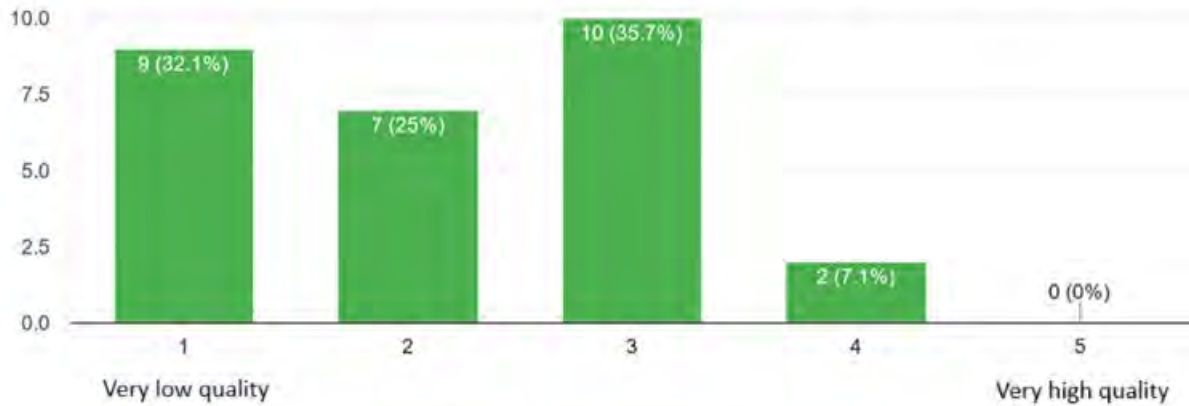


FIGURE 266: KSD TEACHER CURRICULUM CONTROL

How much control do you have over your curriculum and lesson plans?

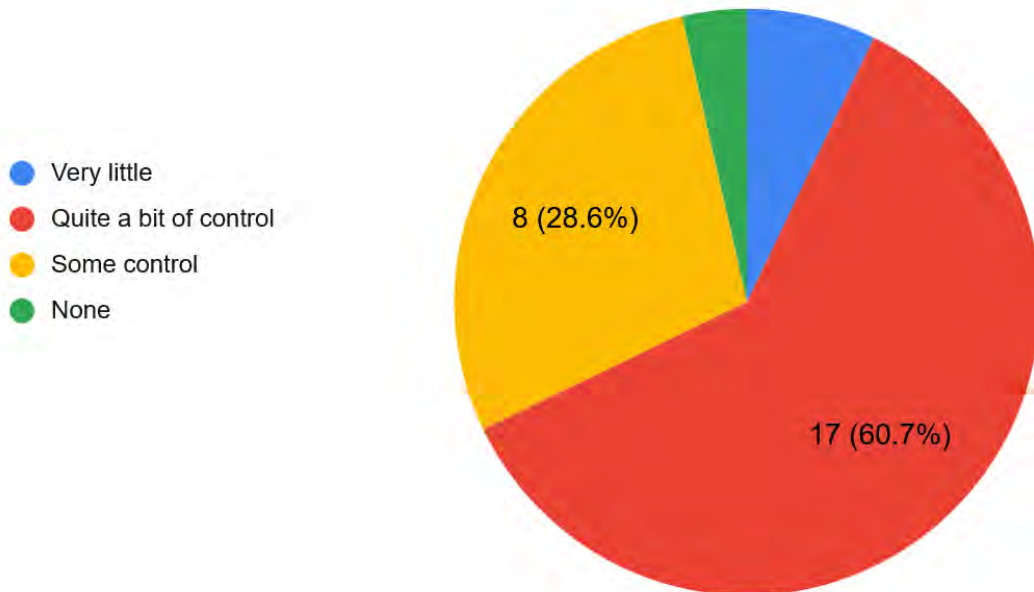


FIGURE 267: KSD TEACHER FUNDING BY KDE

Is the Kentucky School for the Deaf sufficiently funded by the Kentucky Department of Education?

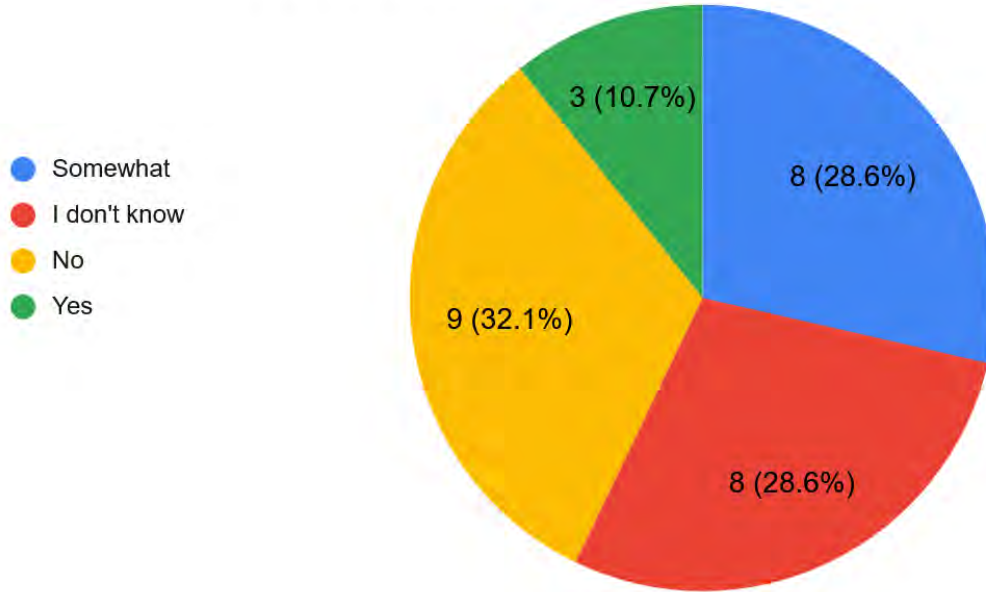


FIGURE 268: KSD TEACHER RESOURCES FOR TEACHING

Does the Kentucky School for the Deaf provide the resources you need to teach your students?

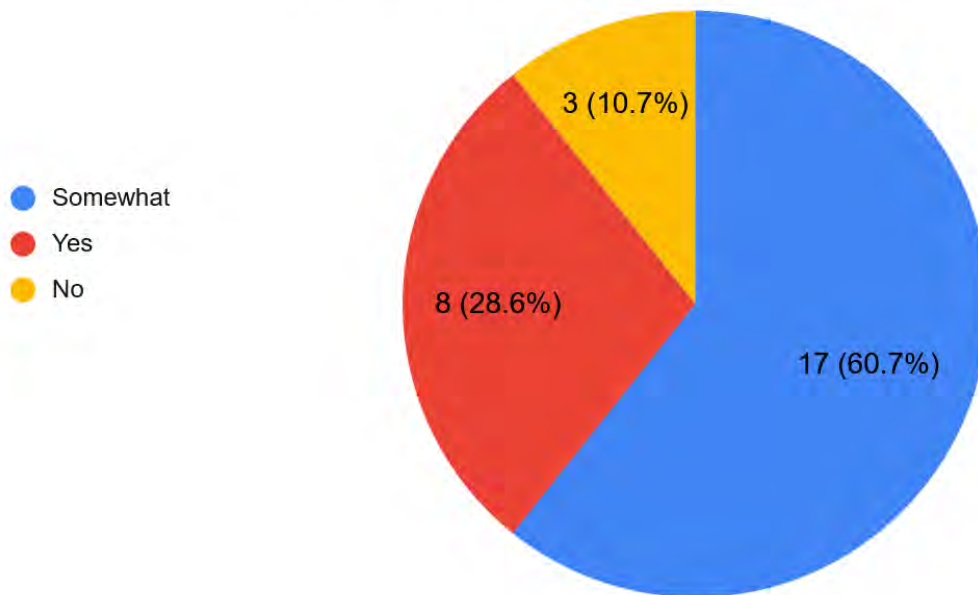




FIGURE 269: KSD TEACHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Does the Kentucky School for the Deaf provide students with the resources they need to be successful in the classroom?

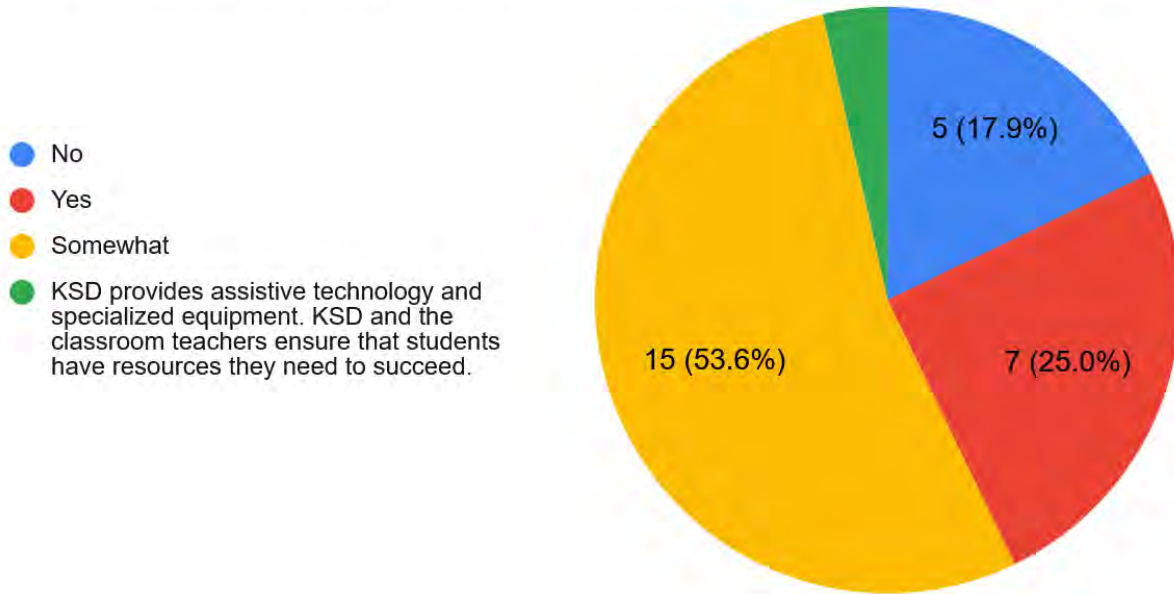


FIGURE 270: KSD TEACHER CLASSROOM BUDGET

Do you receive a budget from the Kentucky School for the Deaf to spend on specific needs in your classroom?

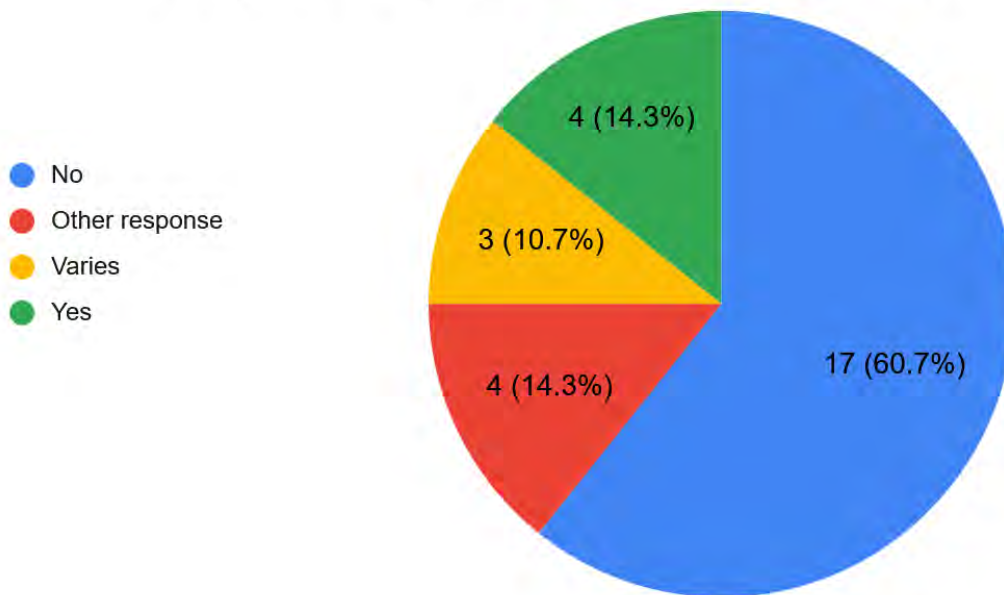


FIGURE 271: KSD TEACHER PERSONAL FUNDS

Have you used personal funds to purchase essential classroom items? If so, how much did you spend per year?

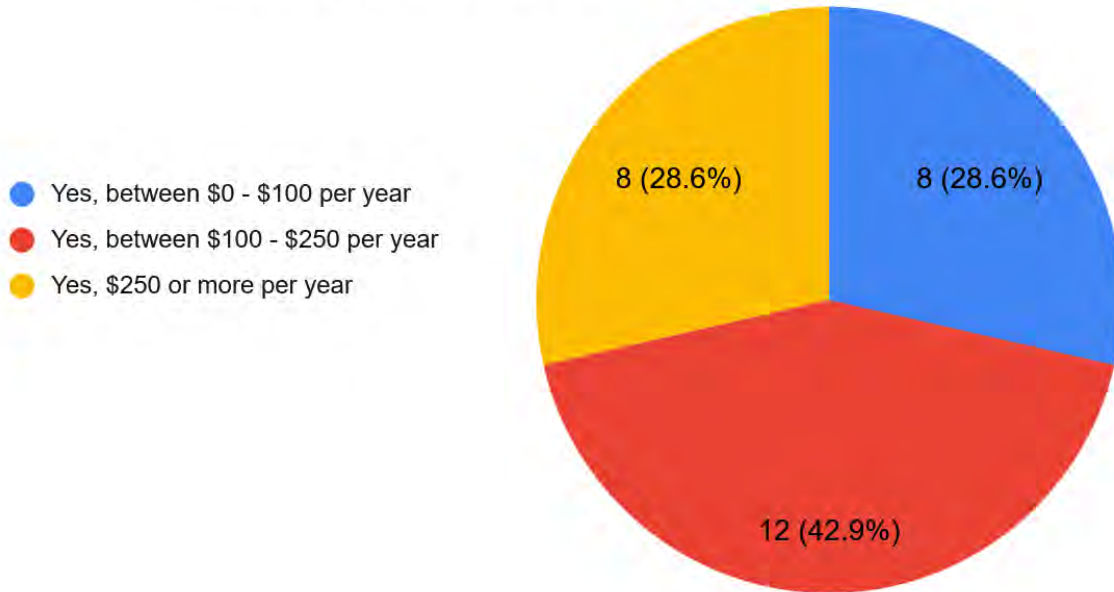


FIGURE 272: KSD TEACHER PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Do you know the procurement process to request the purchase of an item or service?

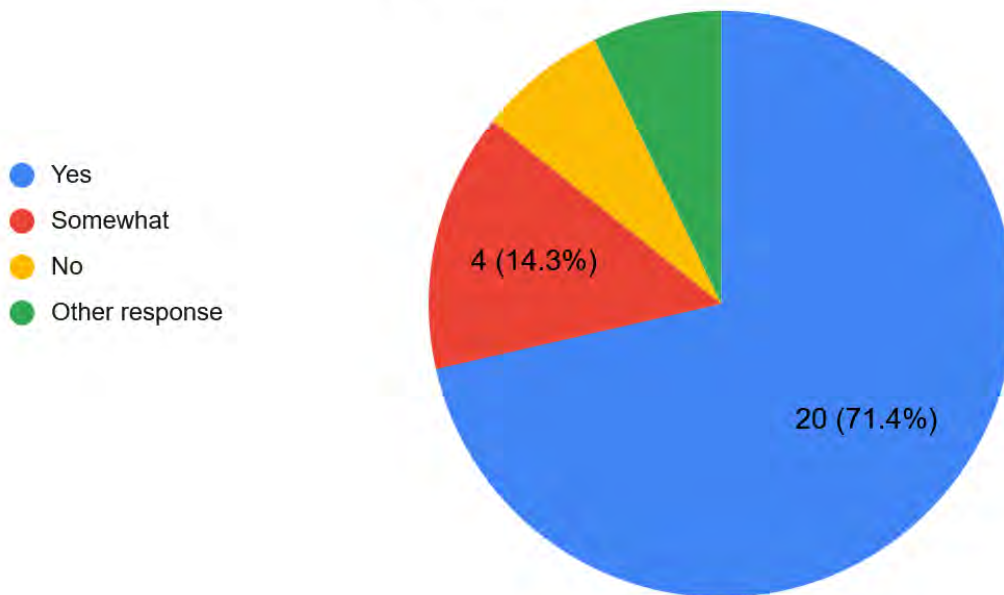


FIGURE 273: KSD TEACHER PROCUREMENT TIMELINE

Are you satisfied, on average, with the amount of time it takes to request and receive items/services?

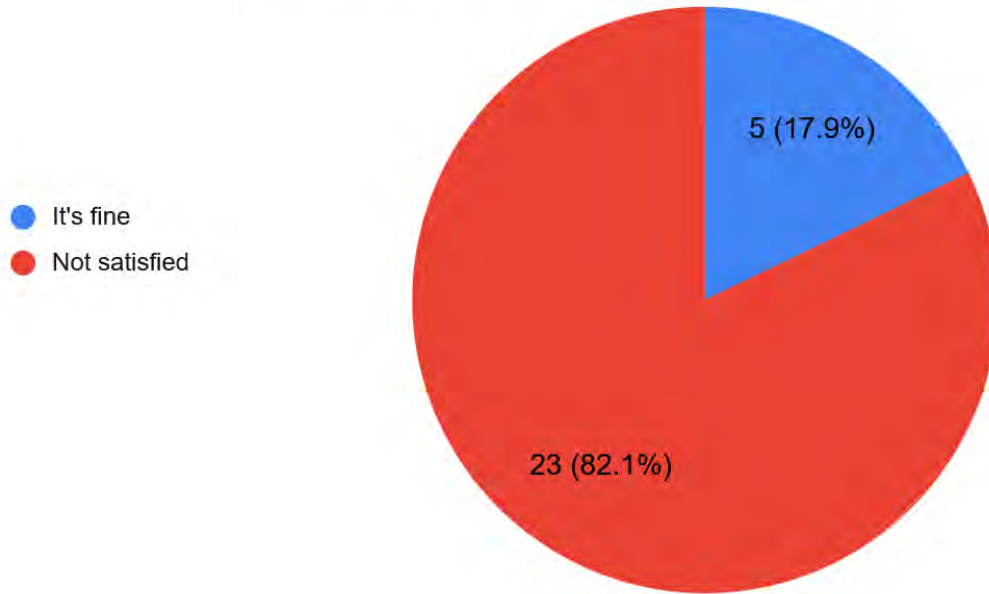


FIGURE 274: KSD TEACHER ASL FLUENCY

Are you fluent in American Sign Language?

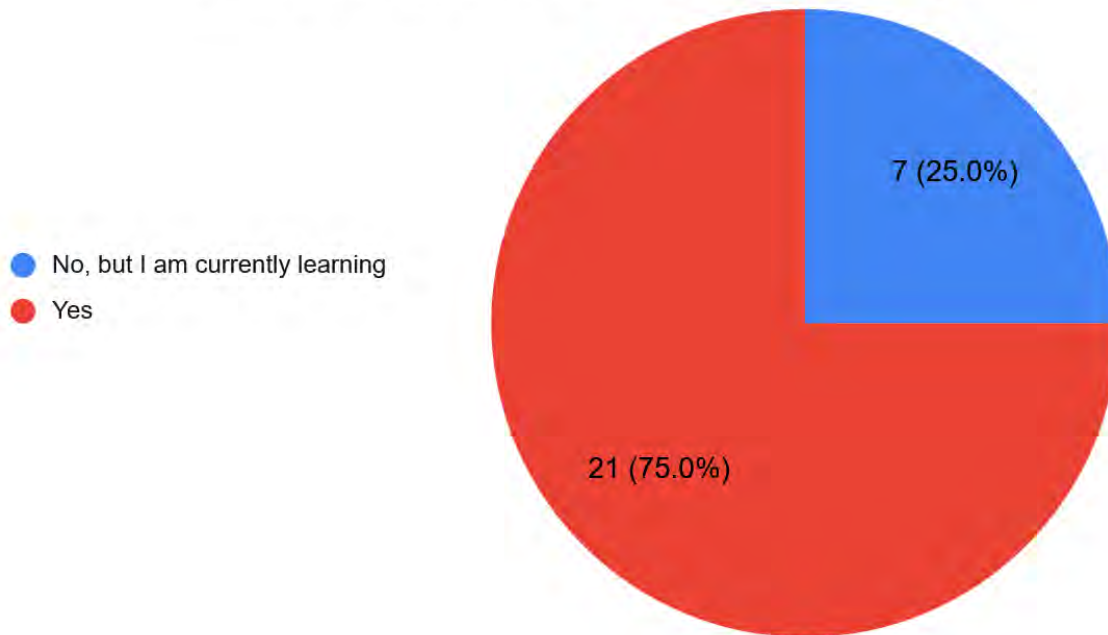


FIGURE 275: KSD TEACHER ASL LESSONS

If you are fluent in American Sign Language, do you ever teach a lesson fully in American Sign Language, or are multiple forms of communication always in use?

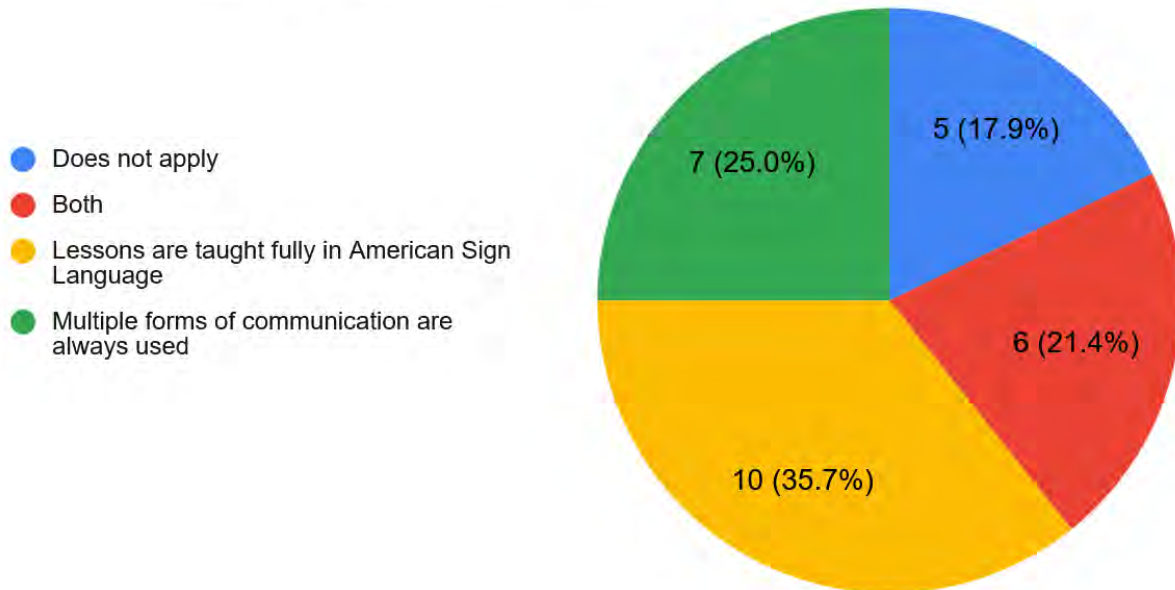


FIGURE 276: KSD TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

If you are not fluent in American Sign Language, have you ever felt this hindered your communication or teaching with your students? In the comment box, please tell us what other communication forms you use to teach your students.

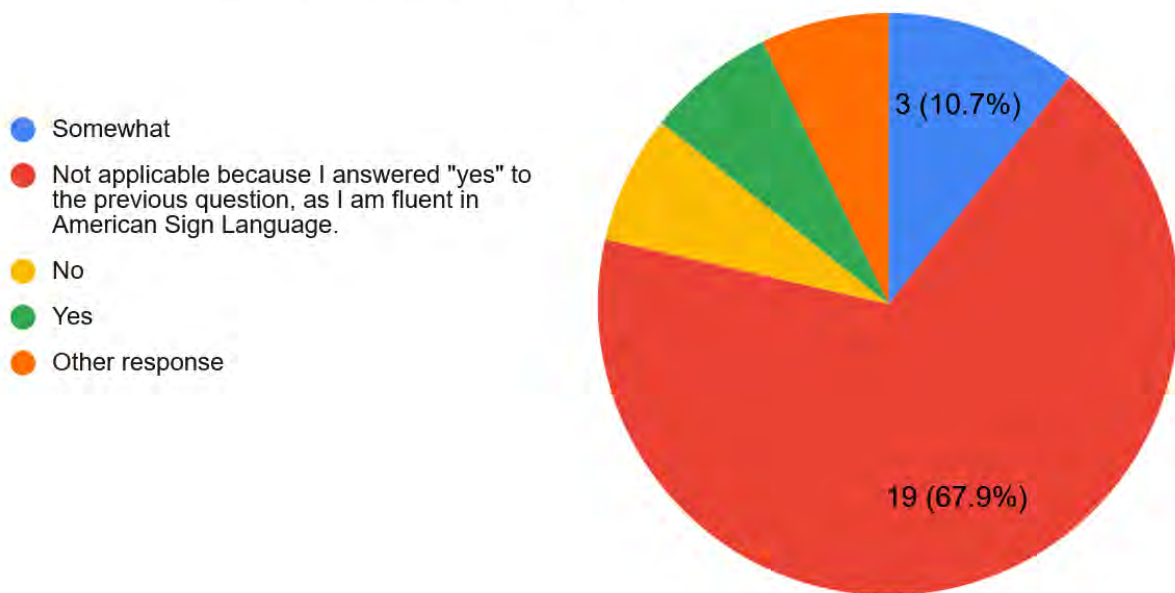




FIGURE 277: KSD TEACHER EVALUATION BY ADMIN

Are you frequently evaluated by the administration to determine whether your educational strategies are effective?

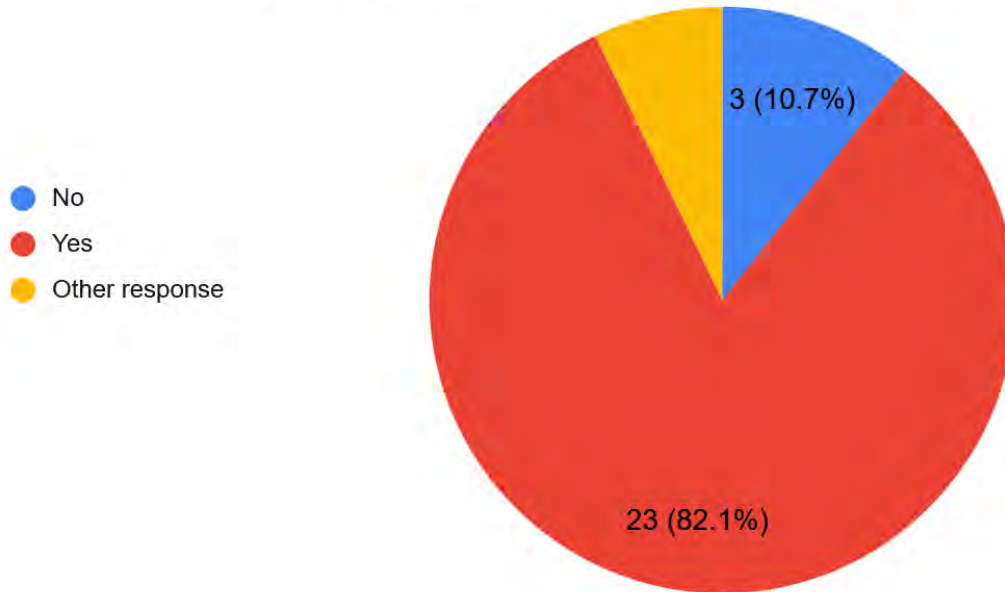


FIGURE 278: KSD TEACHER EVALUATION BY STUDENTS

Are you frequently evaluated by students to determine whether your educational strategies are effective?

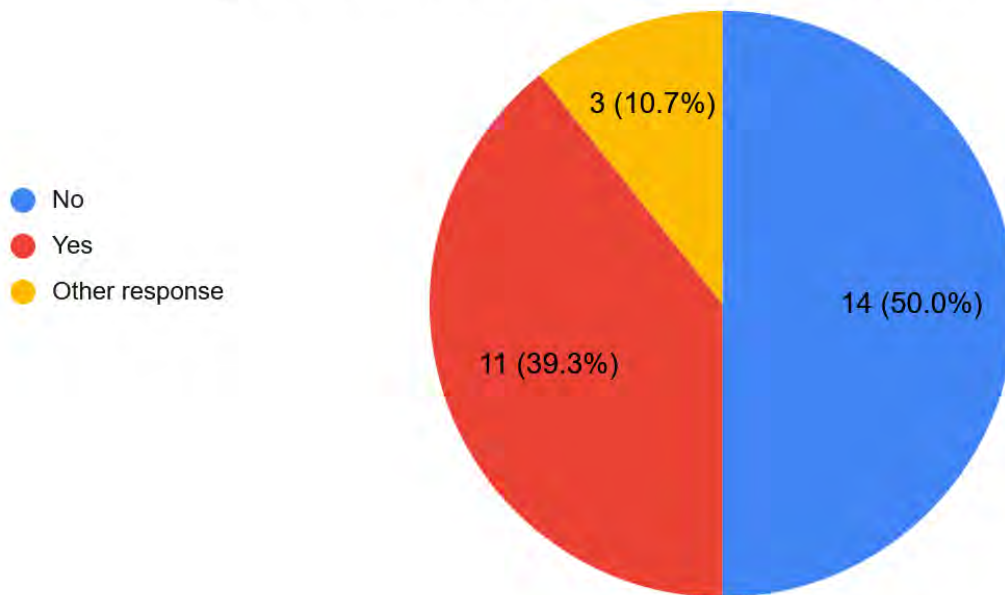


FIGURE 279: KSD TEACHER COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Are you aware of the Kentucky School for the Deaf's complaint procedure for staff, teachers, students, and parents?

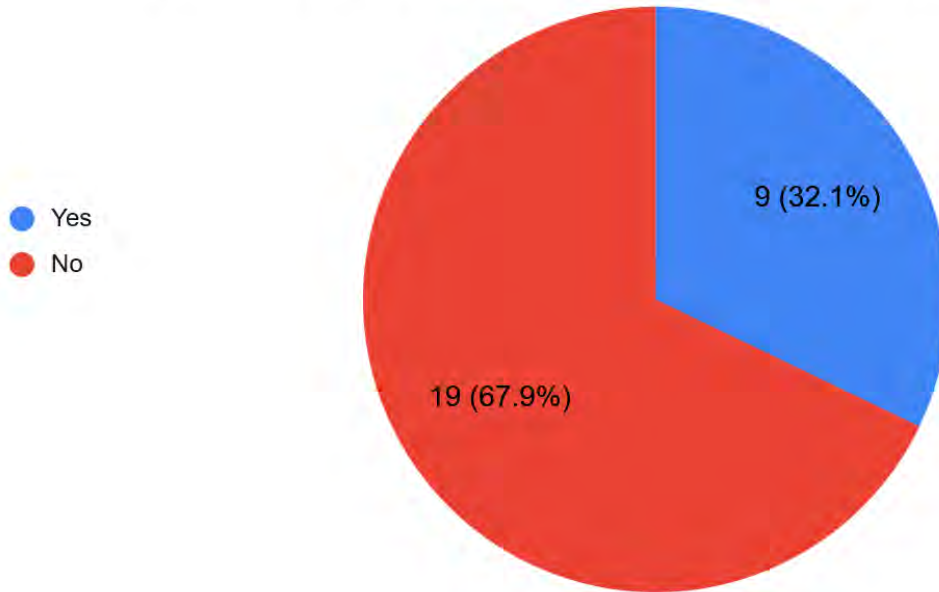


FIGURE 280: KSD TEACHERS – KSD ADDRESS COMPLAINTS

Is the Kentucky School for the Deaf capable of adequately addressing complaints?

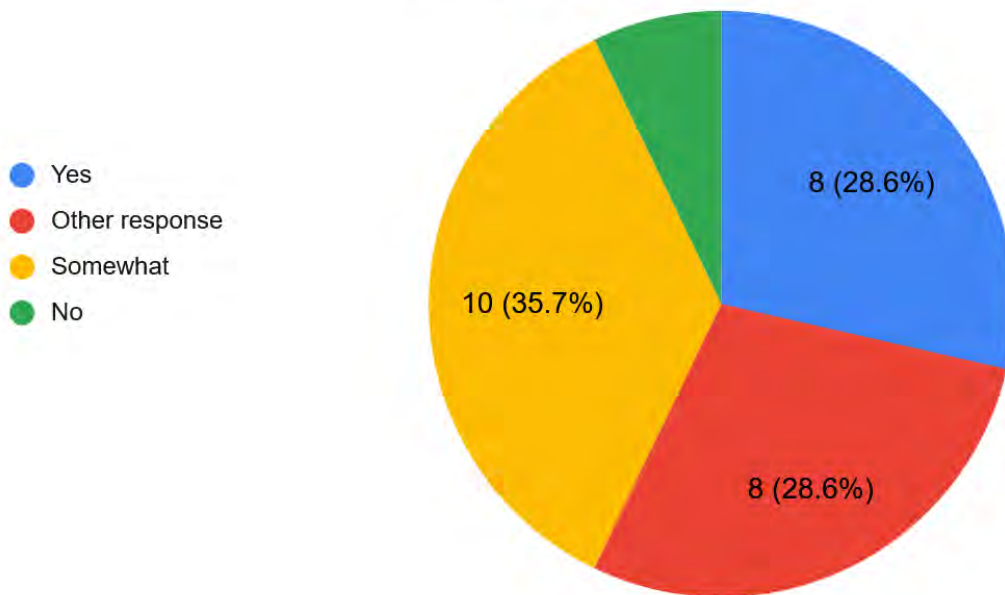


FIGURE 281: KSD TEACHERS – KDE ADDRESS COMPLAINTS

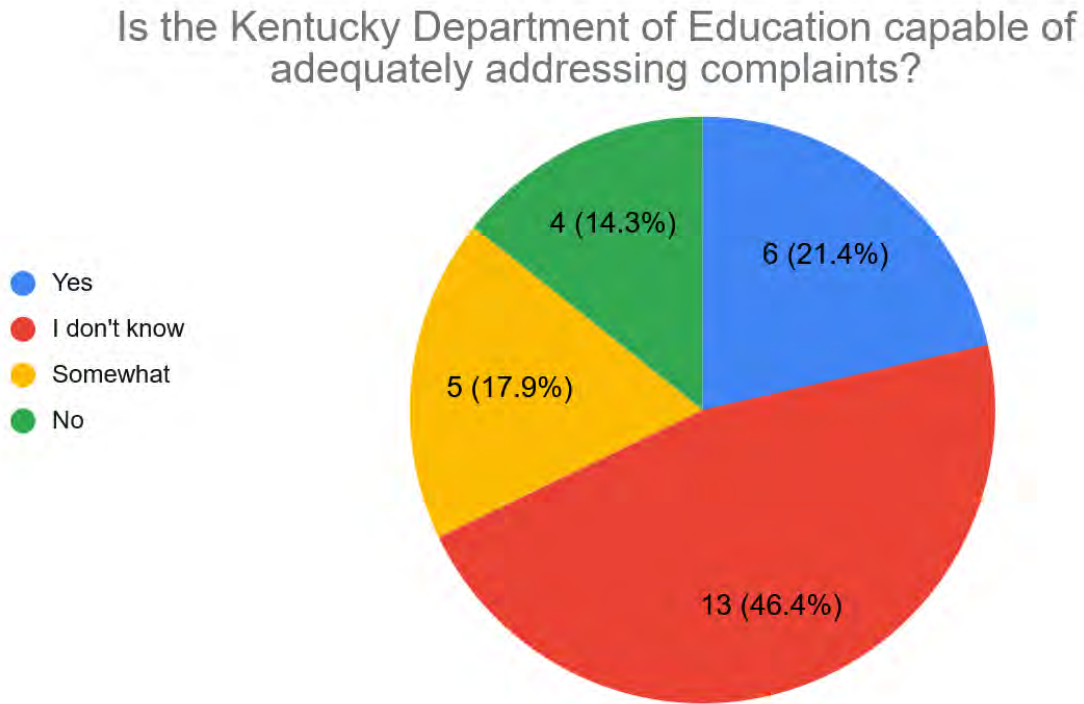
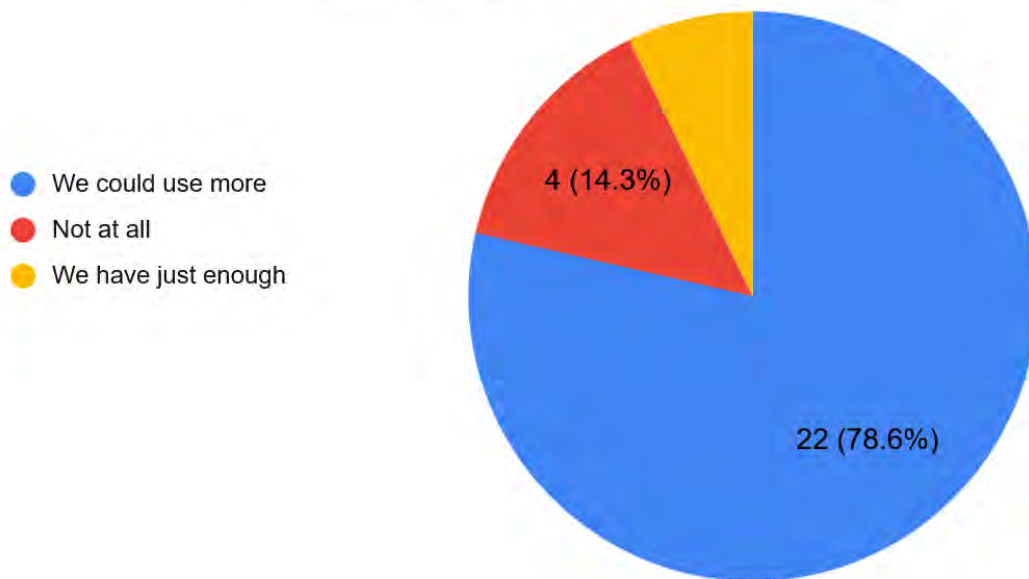


FIGURE 282: KSD TEACHER STAFFING

Is the Kentucky School for the Deaf properly staffed? If you have additional thoughts or suggestions on which positions need more or less staffing, please add those to the comment box below.





### KSB Staff Survey Responses

FIGURE 283: KSB STAFF TENURE

How long have you worked at the Kentucky School for the Blind?

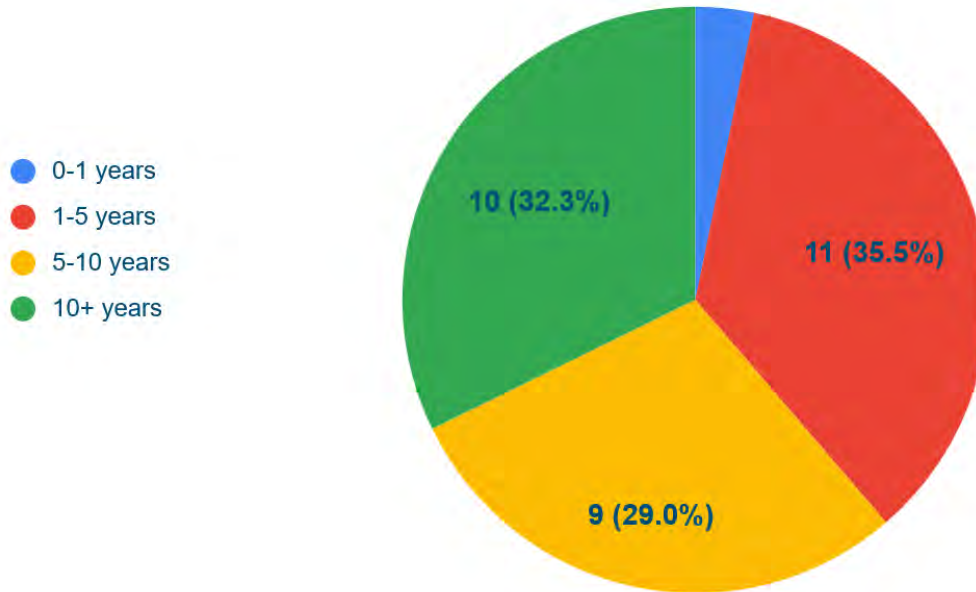


FIGURE 284: KSB STAFF TRAINING

Are you sufficiently trained for your position?

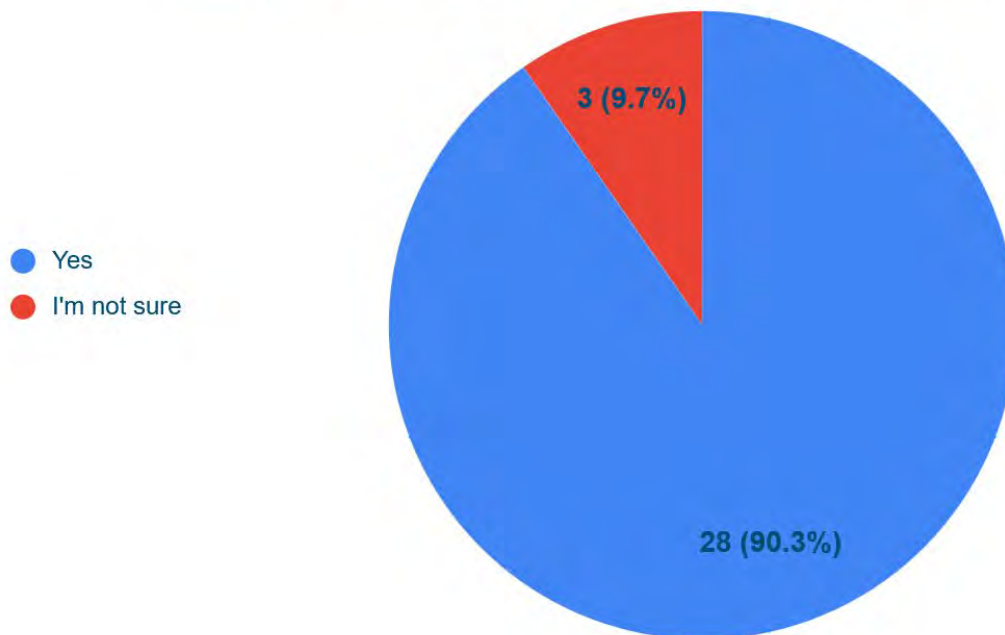


FIGURE 285: KSB STAFF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Does the Kentucky School for the Blind provide sufficient training opportunities for staff?

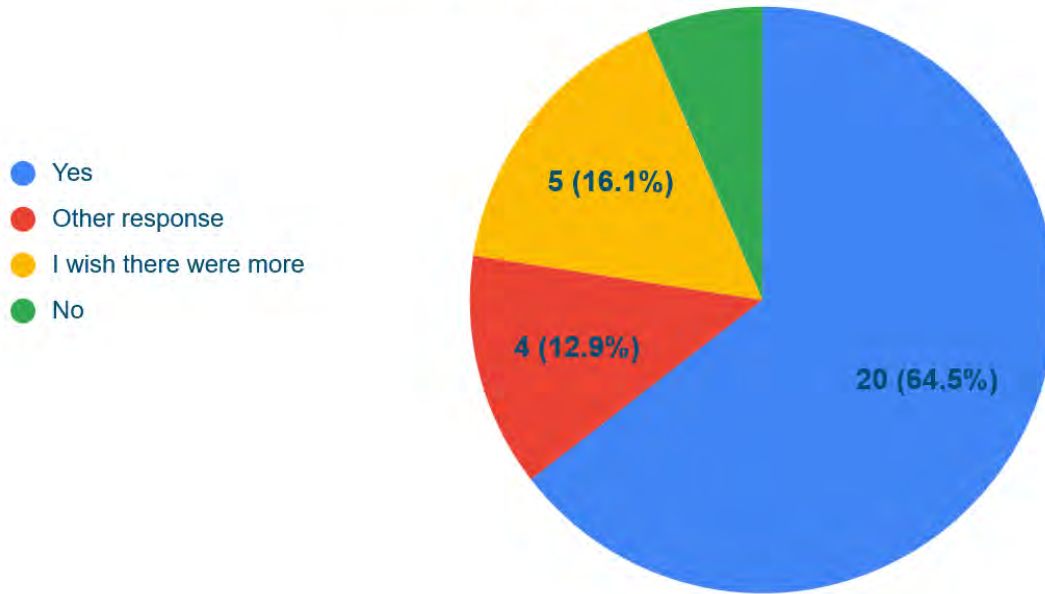


FIGURE 286: KSB STAFF ADMIN SUPPORT

What level of support do you receive from your school's administration?

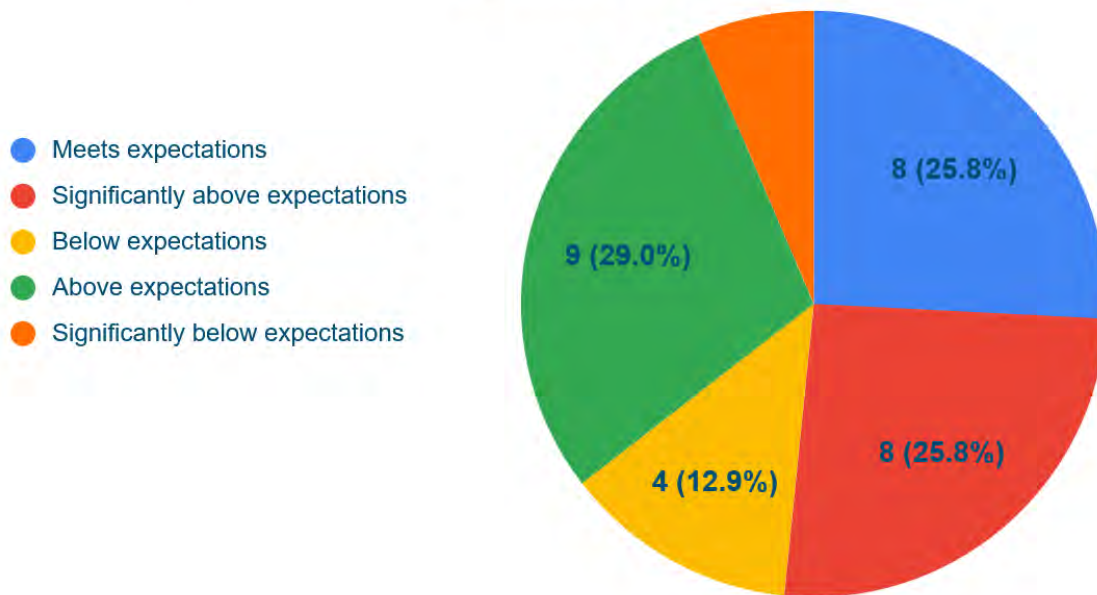


FIGURE 287: KSB STAFF – KSB SUPPORT FROM KDE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Blind receive from the Kentucky Department of Education?

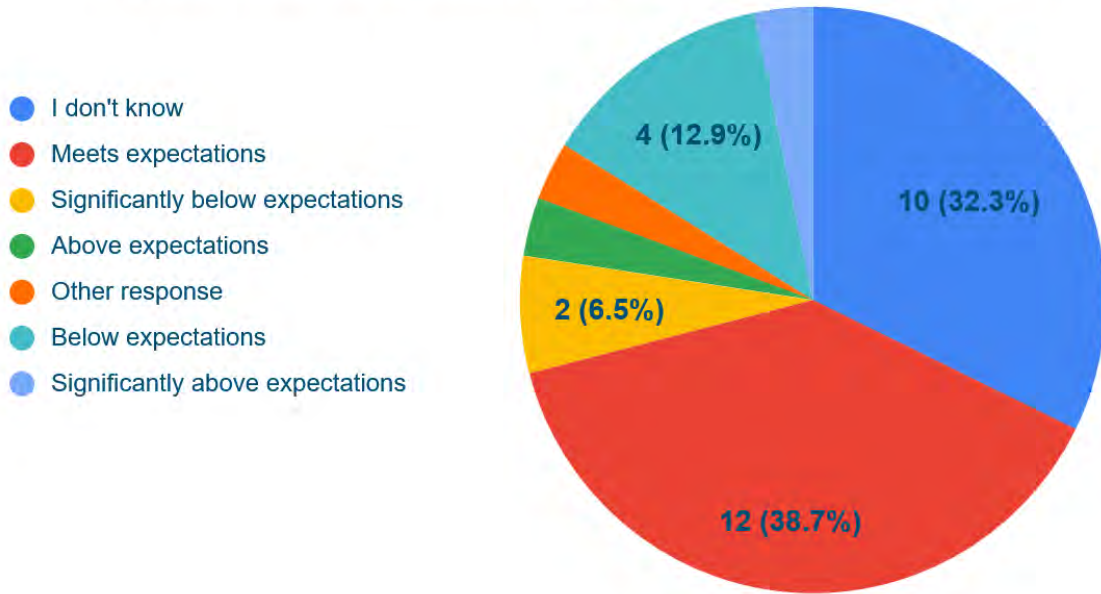


FIGURE 288: KSB STAFF – KSB SUPPORT FROM KBE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Blind receive from the Kentucky Board of Education?

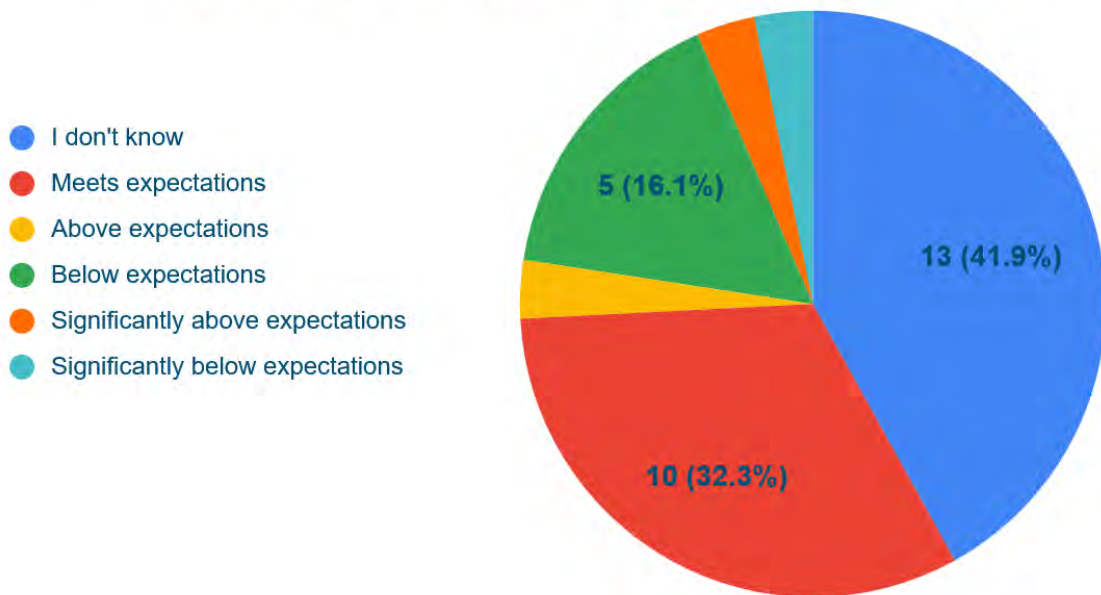


FIGURE 289: KSB STAFF CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Is there a clear line of communication between staff, teachers, and administration that promotes an effective and adaptive learning environment?

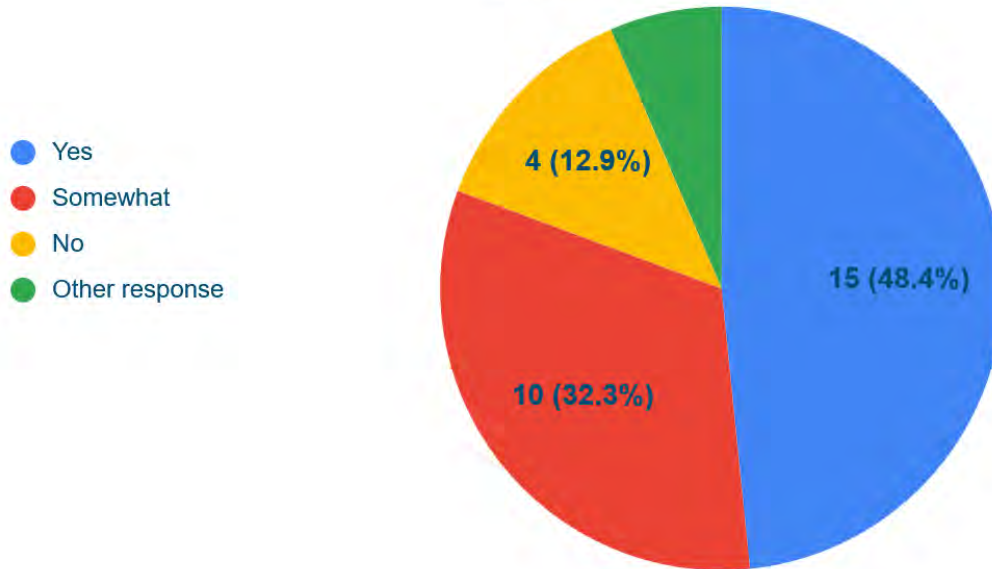


FIGURE 290: KSB STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

What is the quality of communication between students and staff?

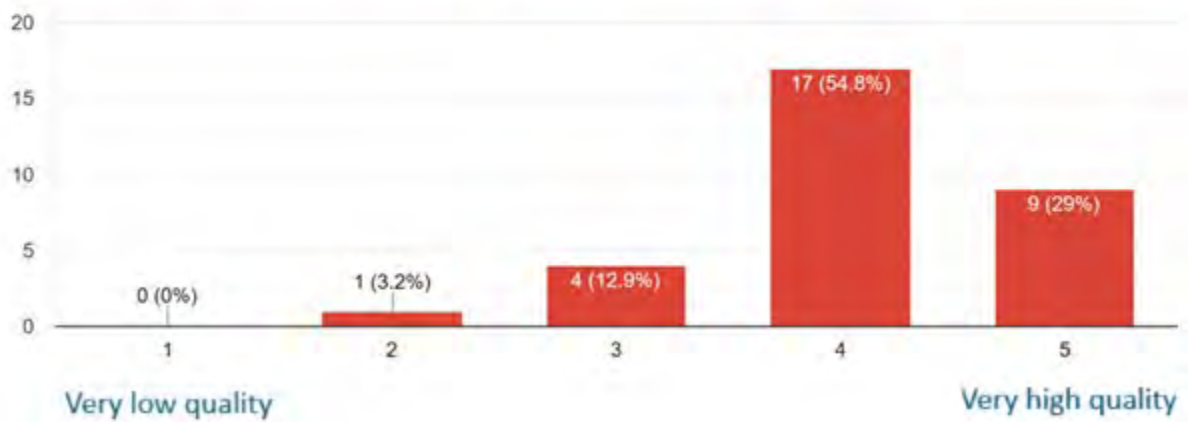




FIGURE 291: KSB STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH ADMIN

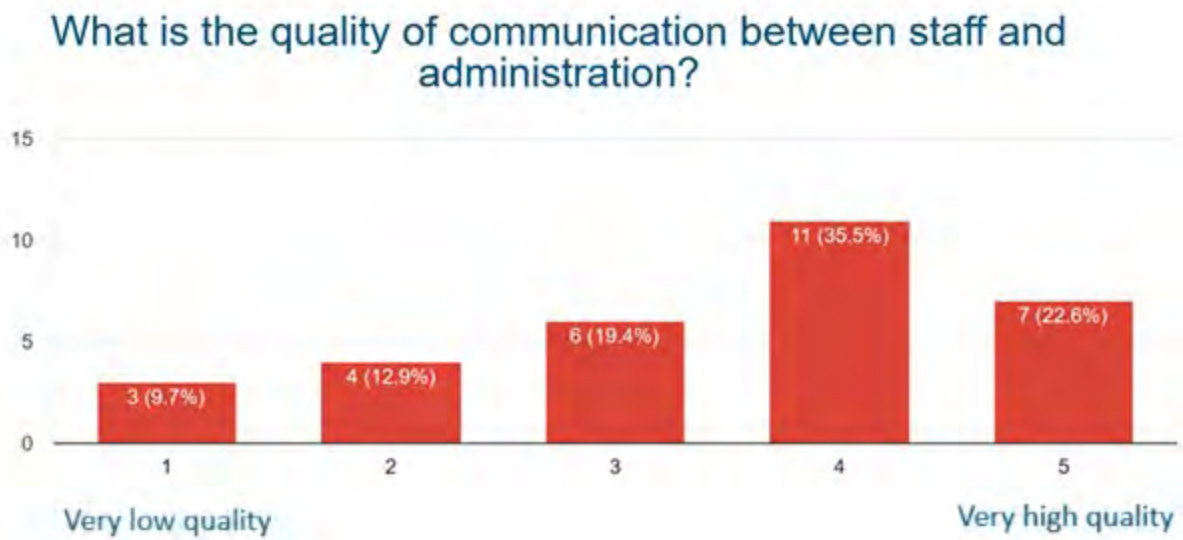


FIGURE 292: KSB STAFF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KSB & KDE

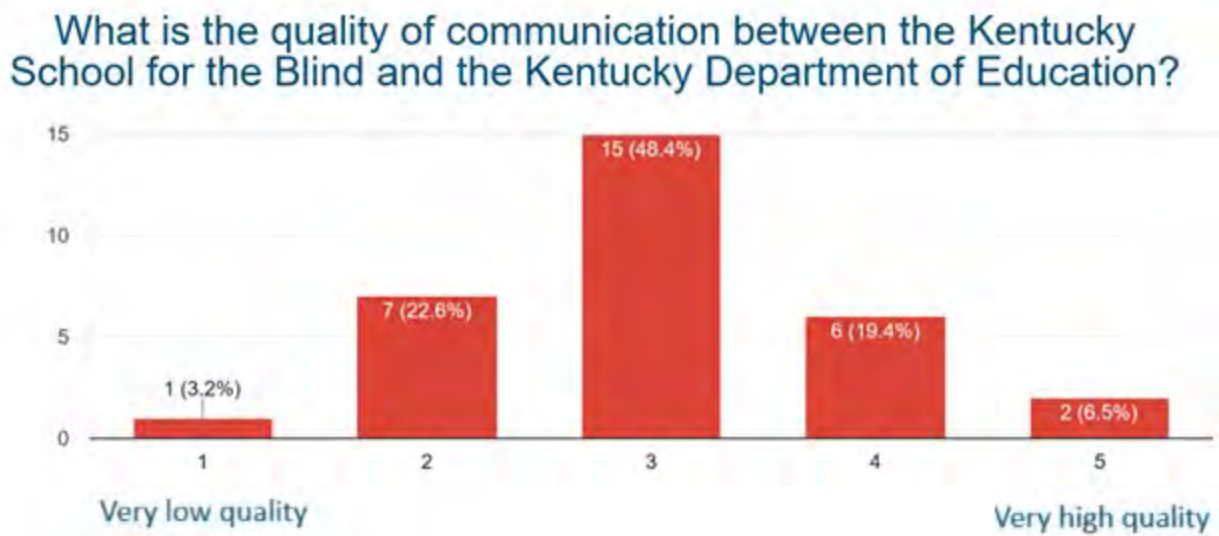


FIGURE 293: KSB STAFF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KSB & KBE

What is the quality of communication between the Kentucky School for the Blind and the Kentucky Board of Education?

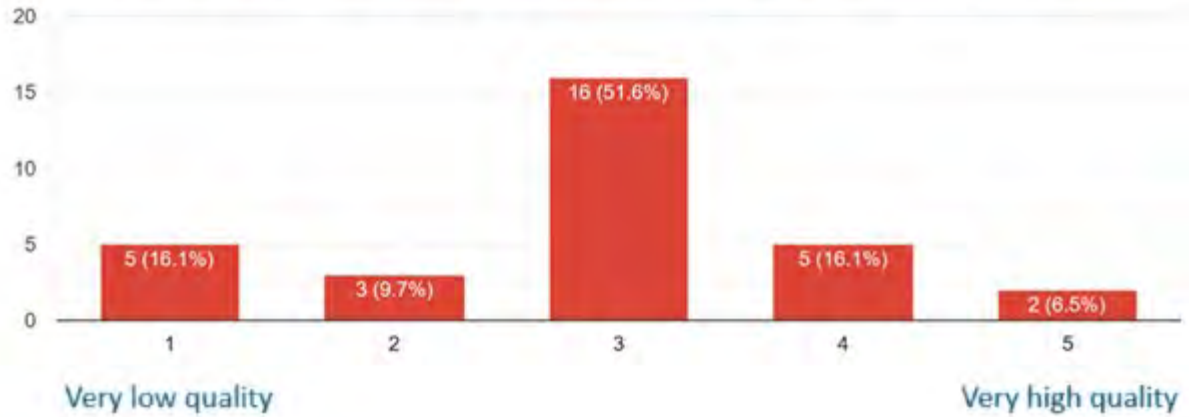


FIGURE 294: KSB STAFF FUNDING FROM KDE

Is the Kentucky School for the Blind sufficiently funded by the Kentucky Department of Education?

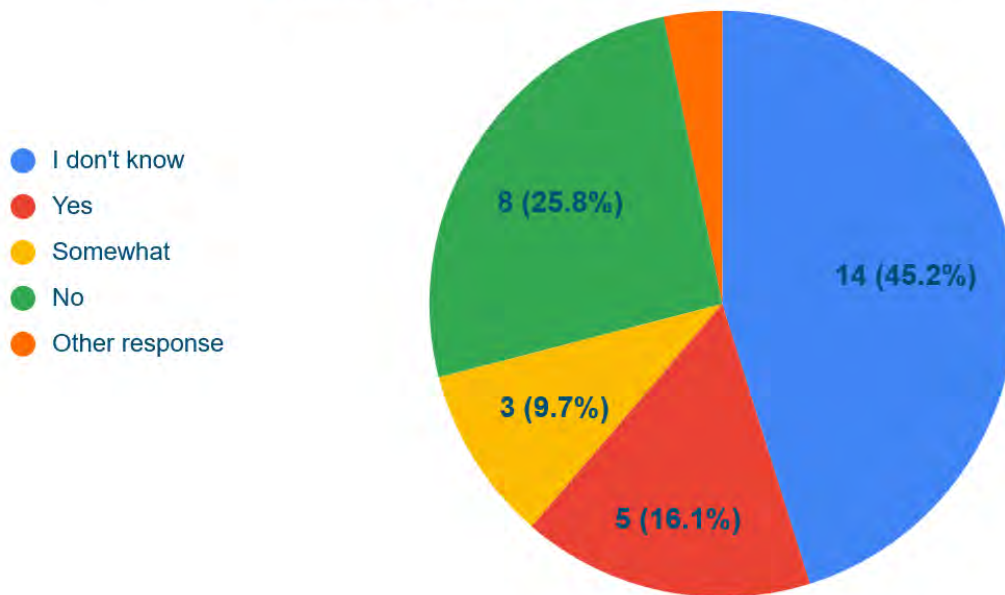


FIGURE 295: KSB STAFF NECESSARY RESOURCES

Does the Kentucky School for the Blind provide the resources you need to perform your duties?

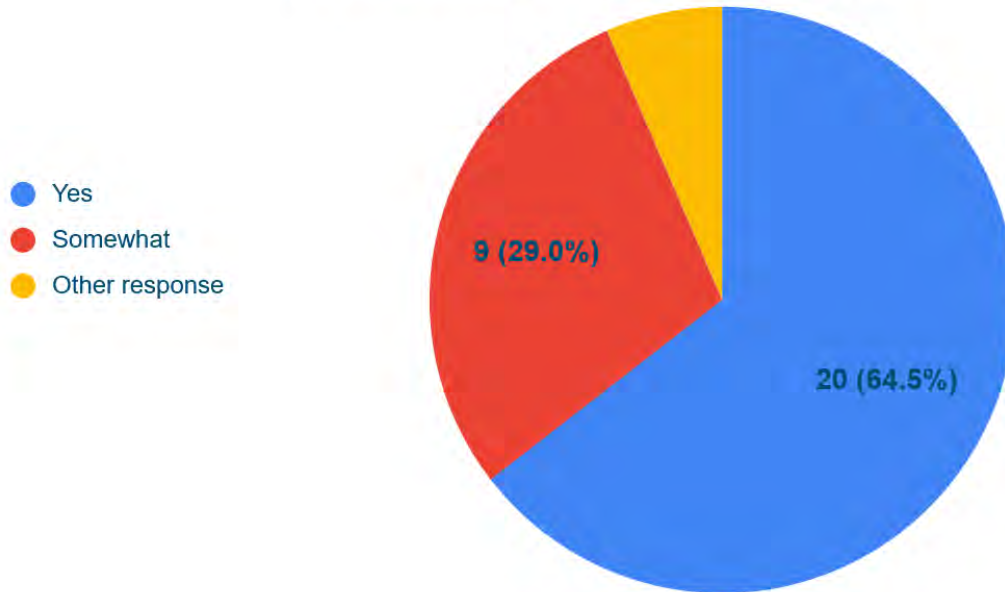


FIGURE 296: KSB STAFF PERSONAL FUNDS

Has there been a time you had to use personal funds to make purchases for essential items?

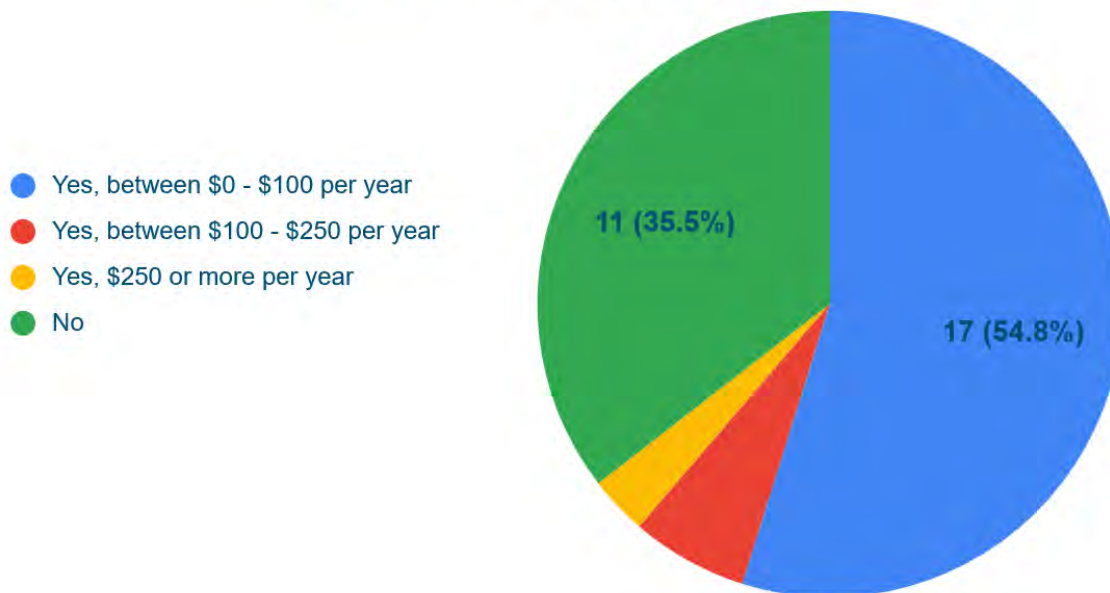




FIGURE 297: KSB STAFF PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Do you know the procurement process to request the purchase of an item or service?

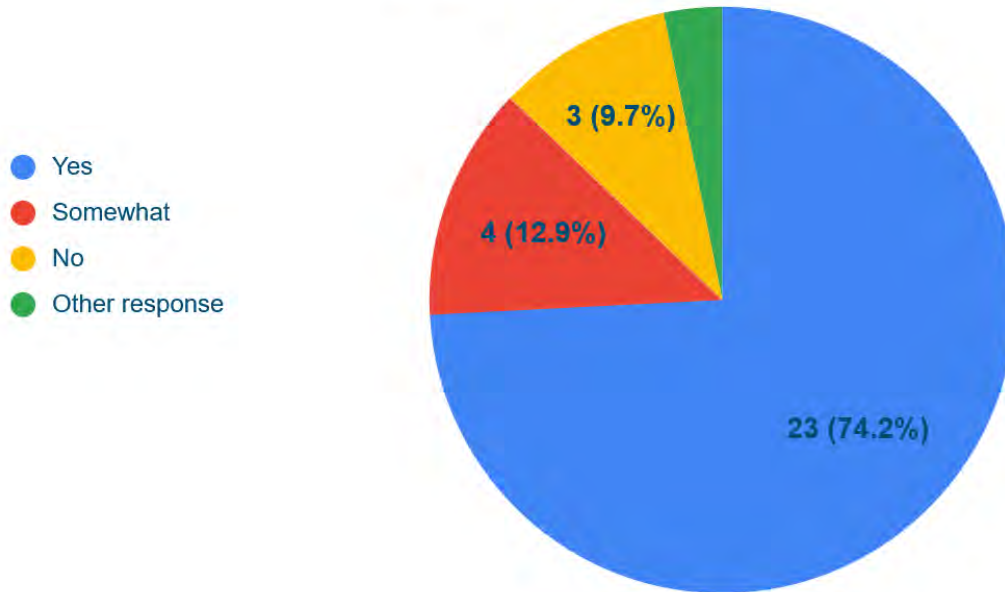


FIGURE 298: KSB STAFF SERVICE TIMELINE

Are you satisfied, on average, with the amount of time it takes to request and receive items/services?

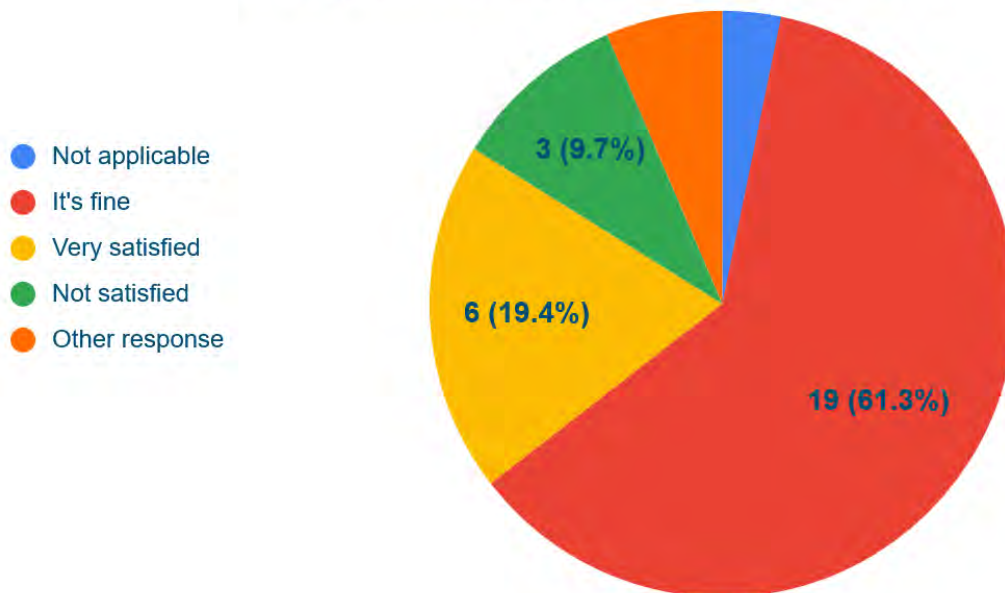


FIGURE 299: KSB STAFF BRAILLE FLUENCY

Can you read and write braille?

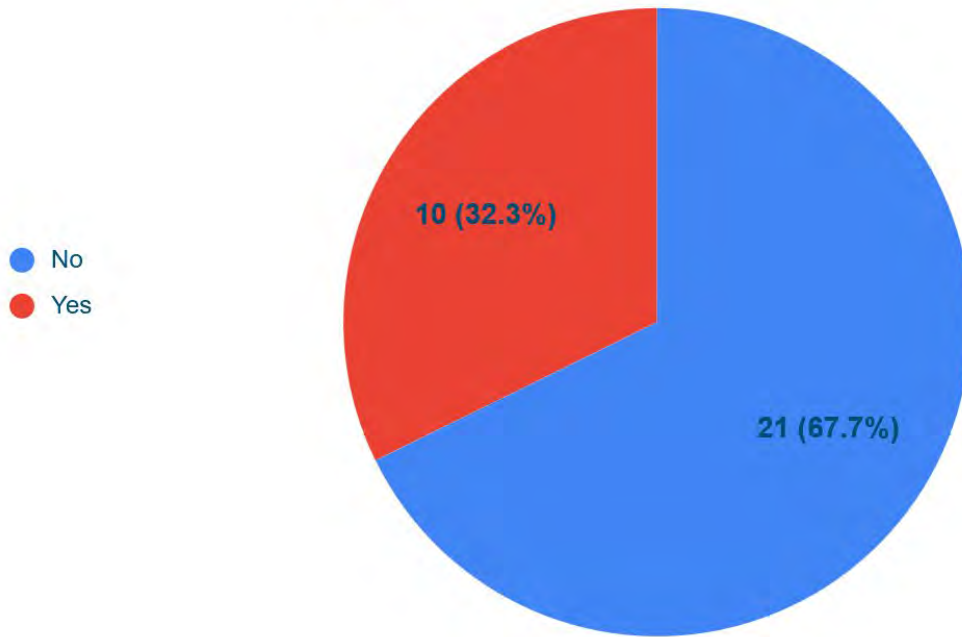


FIGURE 300: KSB STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

If you cannot read and write in braille, has this hindered your communication with students?

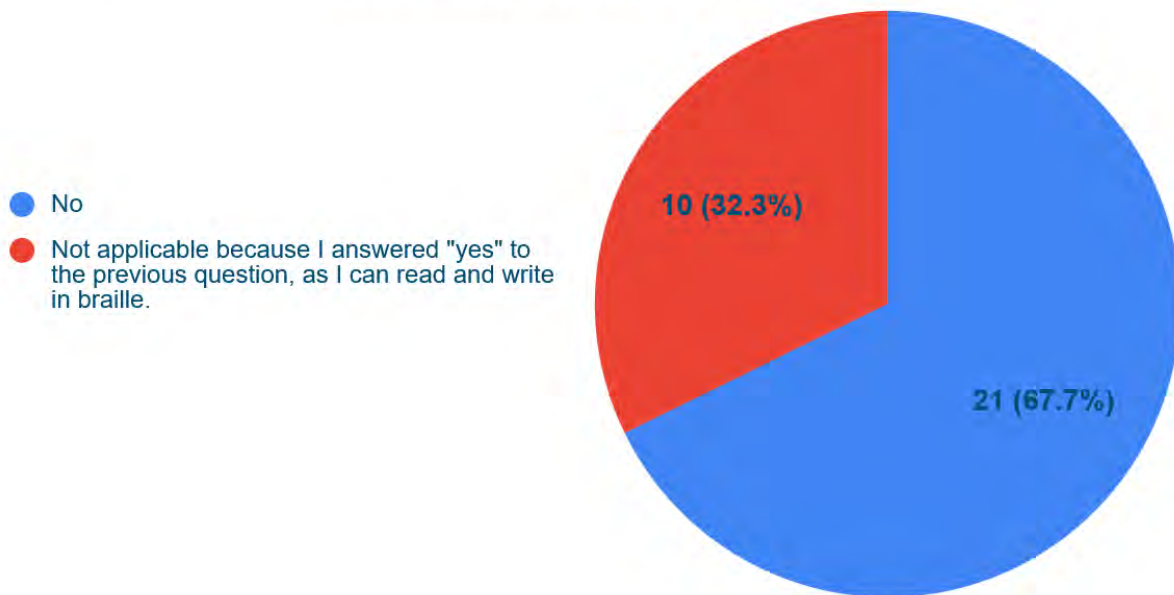


FIGURE 301: KSB STAFF COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Are you aware of the Kentucky School for the Blind's complaint procedure for staff, teachers, students, and parents?

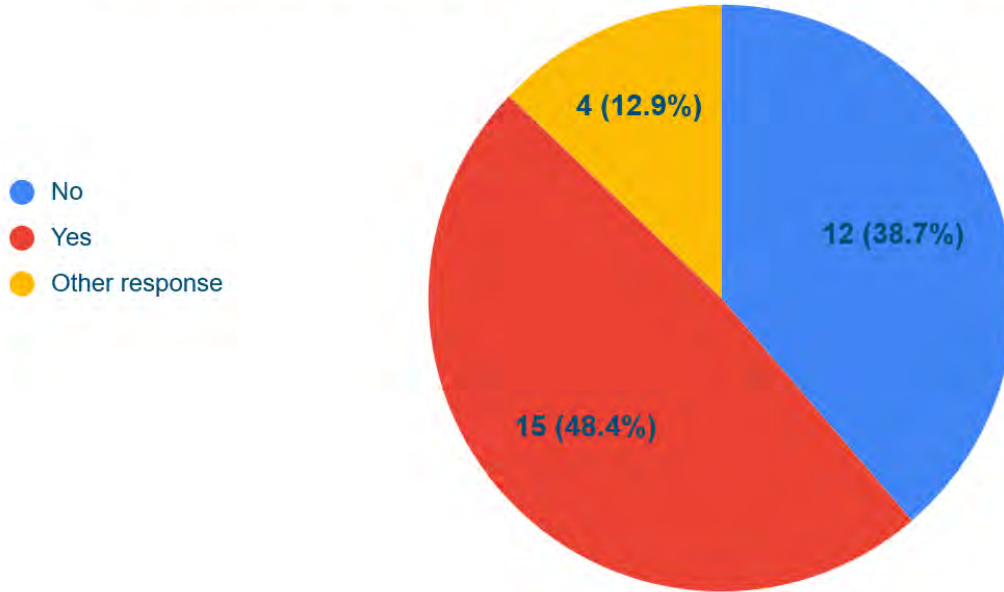


FIGURE 302: KSB STAFF COMPLAINTS ADDRESSED BY KSB

Is the Kentucky School for the Blind capable of adequately addressing complaints?

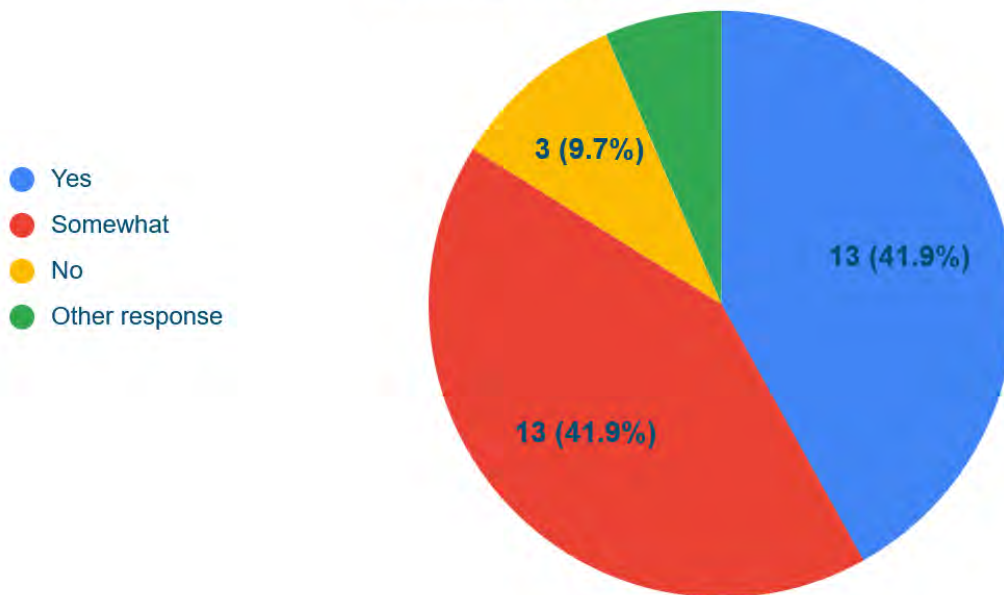


FIGURE 303: KSB STAFF COMPLAINTS ADDRESSED BY KDE

Is the Kentucky Department of Education capable of adequately addressing complaints?

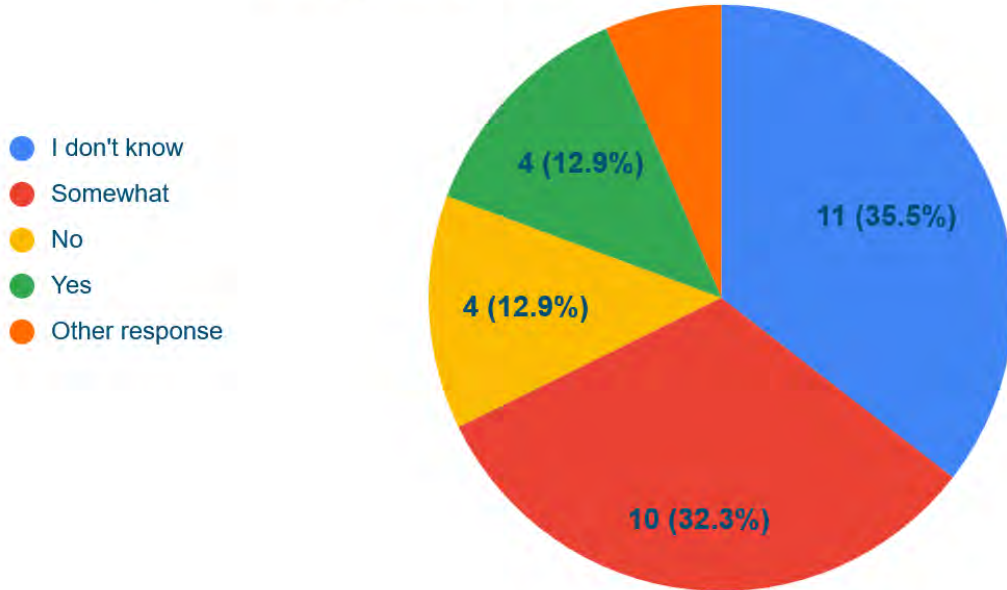
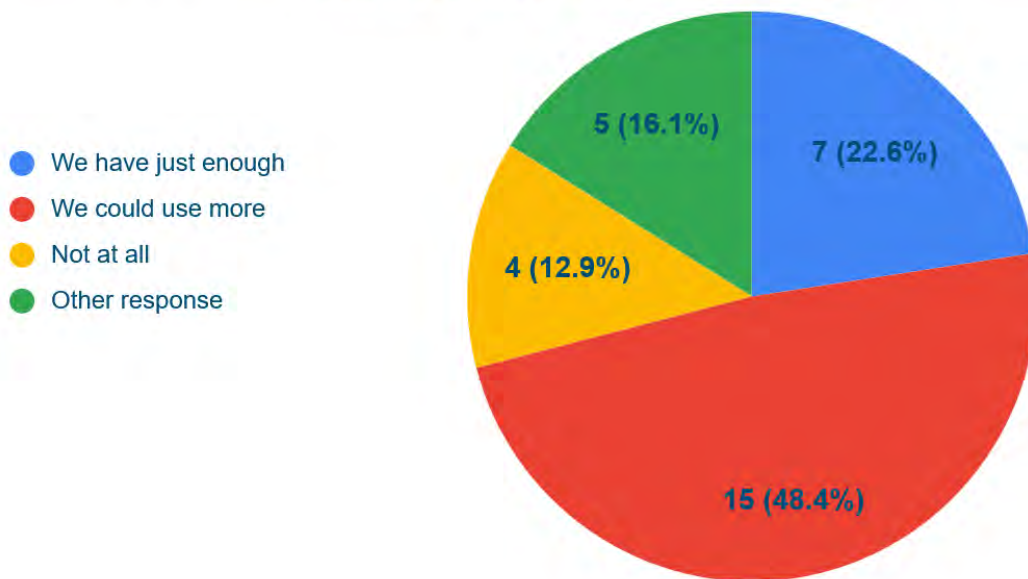


FIGURE 304: KSB STAFF STAFFING

Is the Kentucky School for the Blind properly staffed? If you have additional thoughts or suggestions on which positions need more or less staffing, please add those to the comment box below.





### KSD Staff Survey Responses

FIGURE 305: KSD STAFF TENURE

How long have you worked at the Kentucky School for the Deaf?

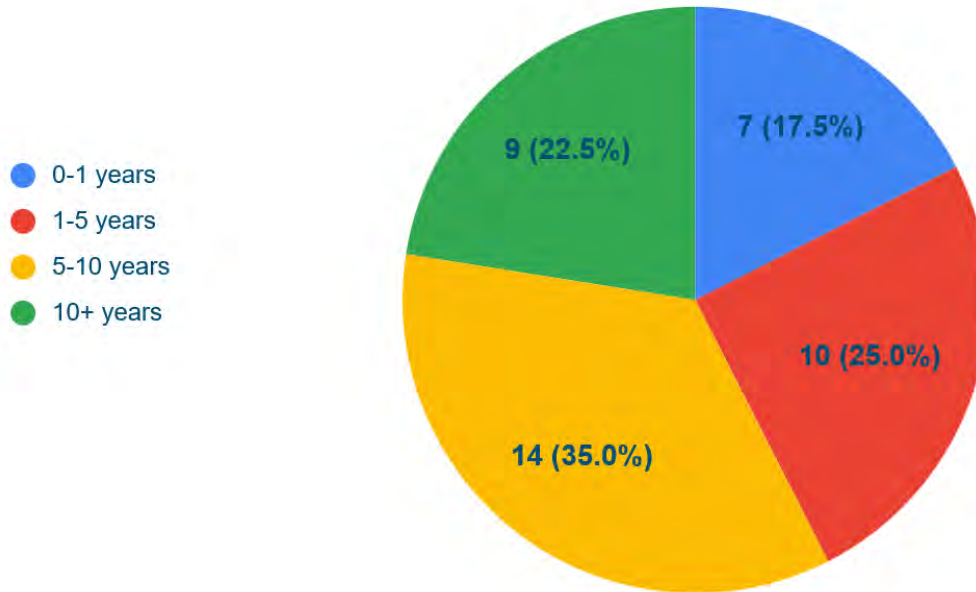


FIGURE 306: KSD STAFF TRAINING

Are you sufficiently trained for your position?

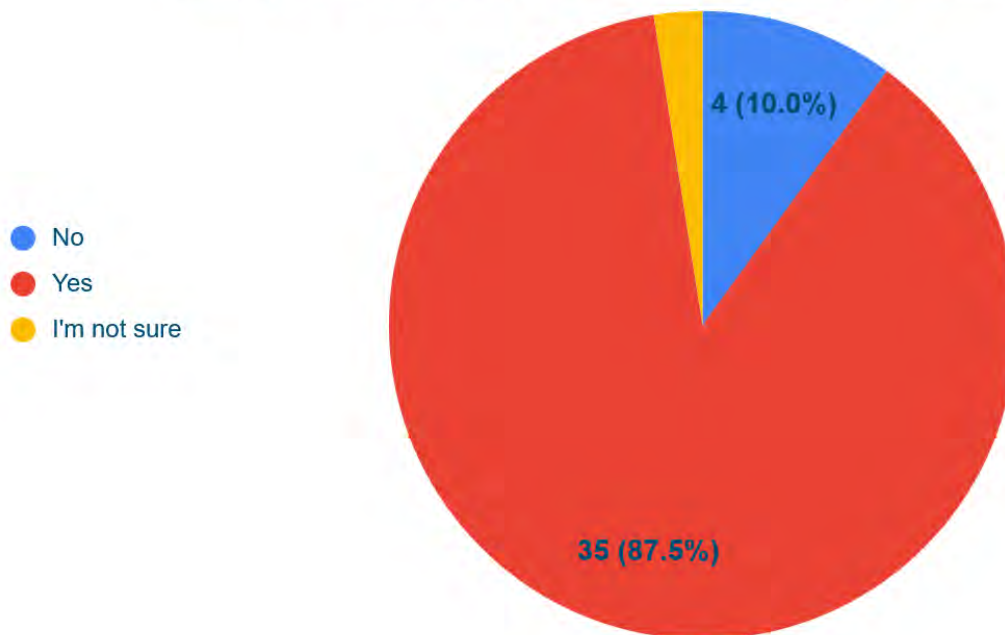


FIGURE 307: KSD STAFF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Does the Kentucky School for the Deaf provide sufficient training opportunities for staff?

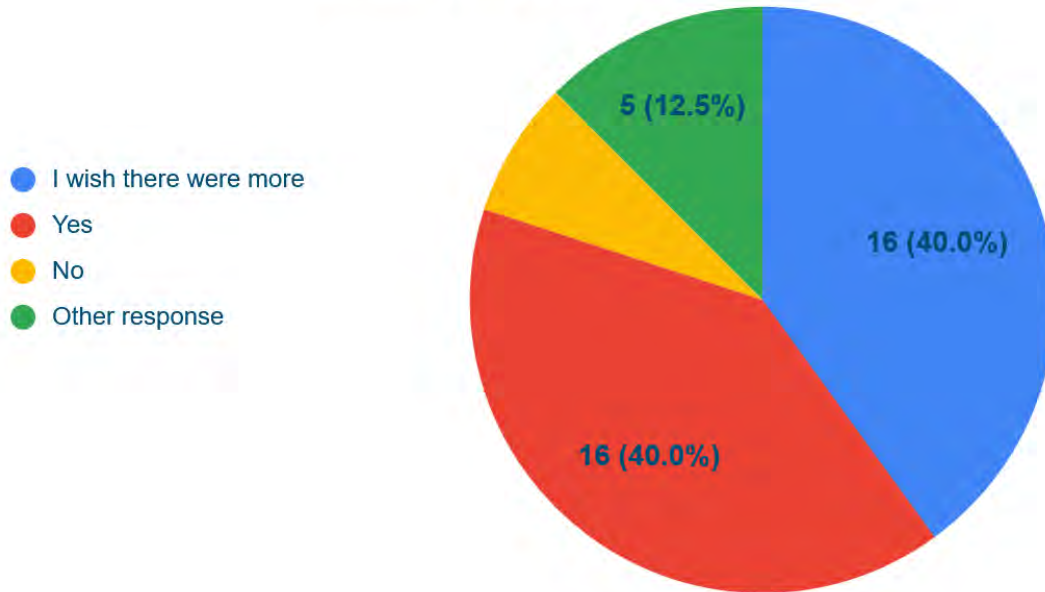


FIGURE 308: KDE STAFF ADMIN SUPPORT

What level of support do you receive from your school's administration?

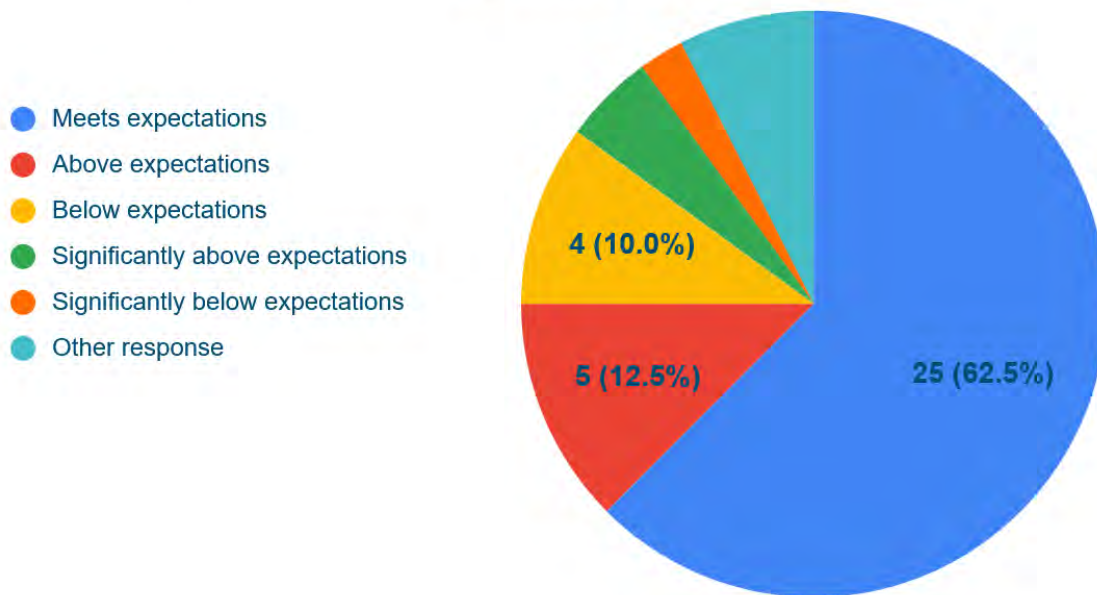


FIGURE 309: KSD STAFF SUPPORT FROM KDE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Deaf receive from the Kentucky Department of Education?

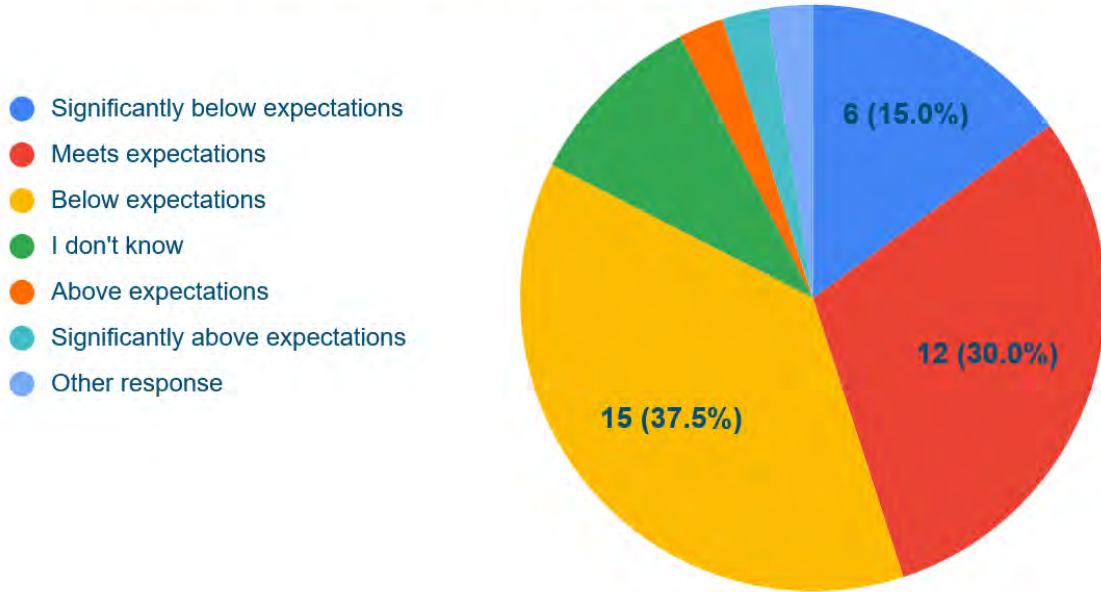


FIGURE 310: KSD STAFF SUPPORT FROM KBE

What level of support does the Kentucky School for the Deaf receive from the Kentucky Board of Education?

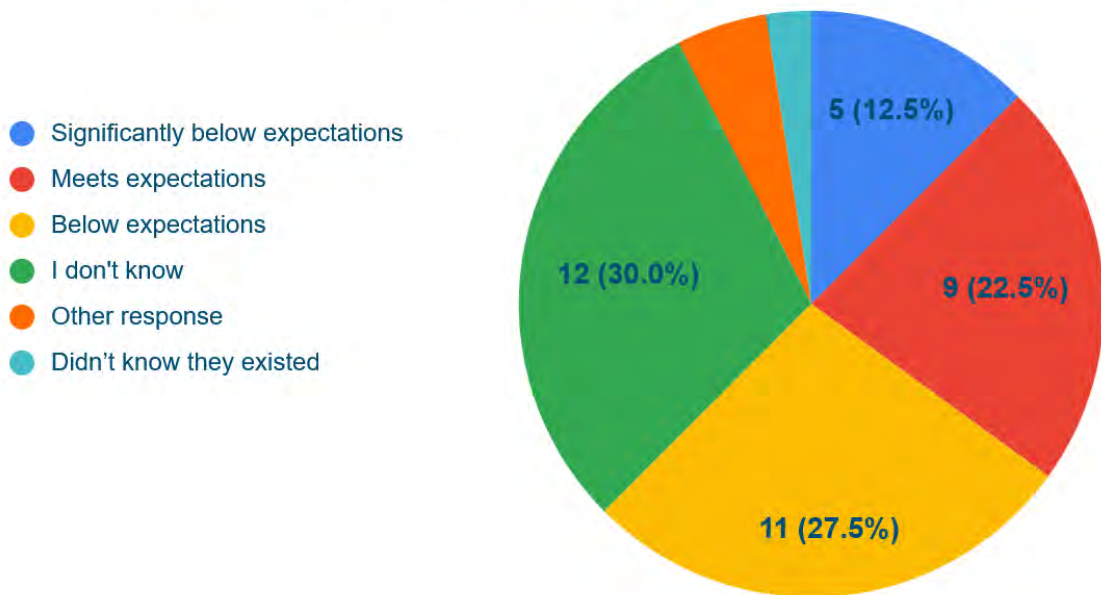




FIGURE 311: KSD STAFF COMMUNICATION

Is there a clear line of communication between staff, teachers, and administration that promotes an effective and adaptive learning environment?

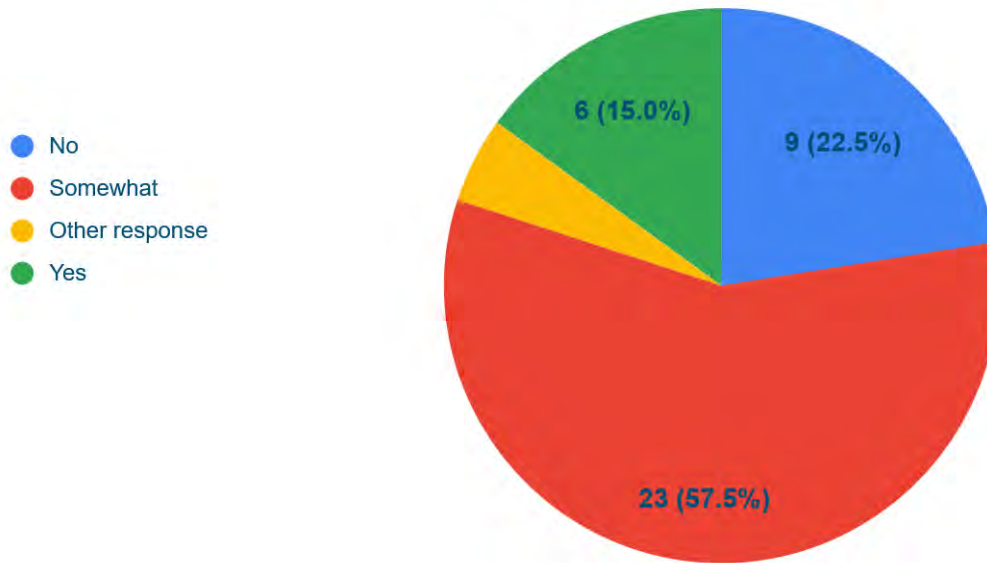


FIGURE 312: KSD STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

What is the quality of communication between students and staff?

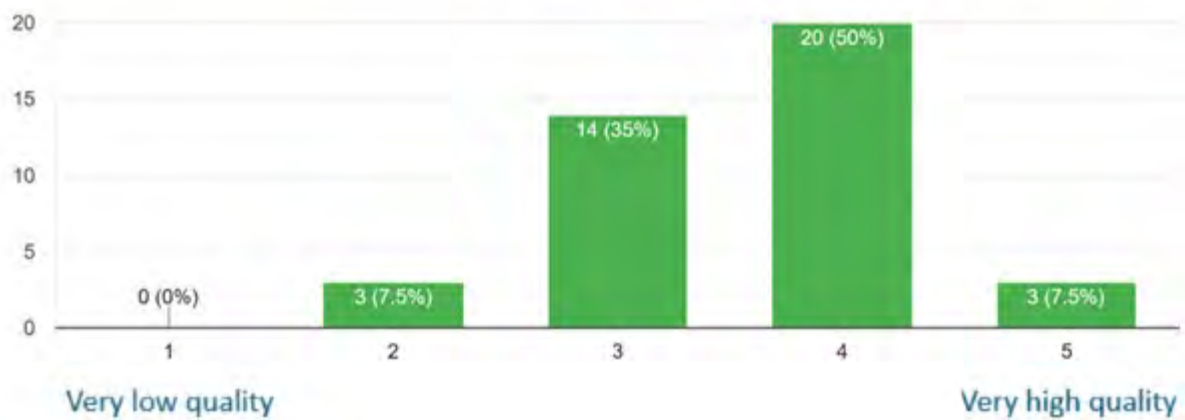


FIGURE 313: KSD STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH ADMIN

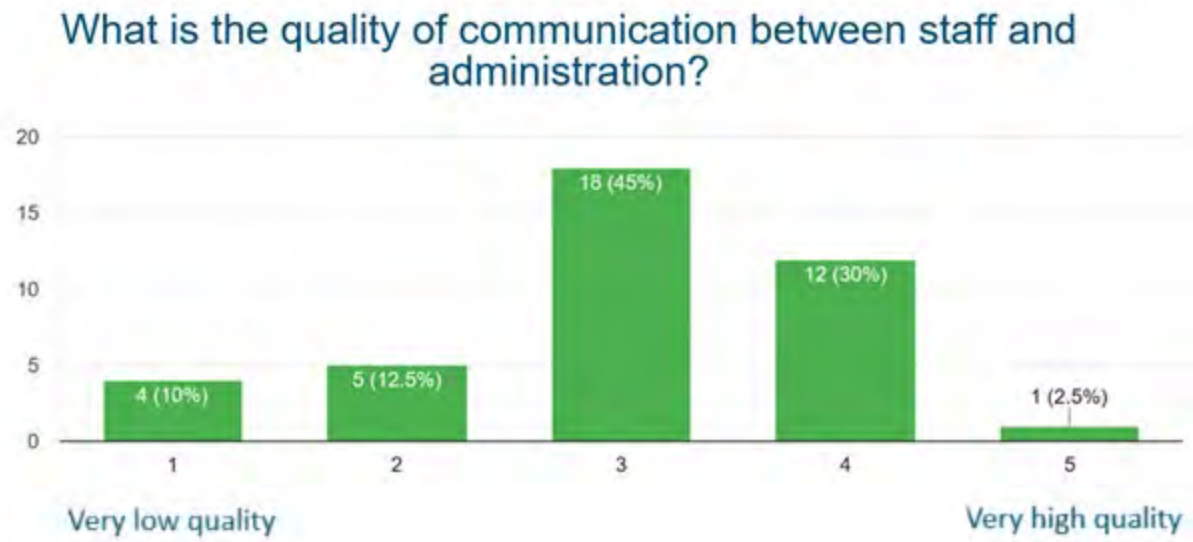


FIGURE 314: KSD STAFF – COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KSD & KDE

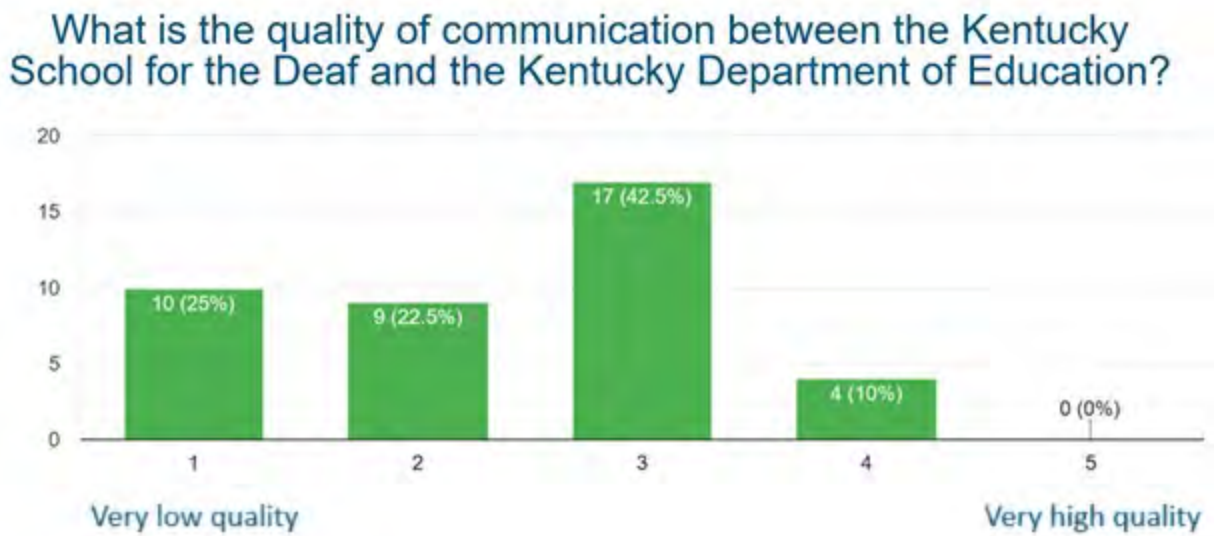


FIGURE 315: KSD STAFF – COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KSD & KBE

What is the quality of communication between the Kentucky School for the Deaf and the Kentucky Board of Education?



FIGURE 316: KSD STAFF FUNDING BY KDE

Is the Kentucky School for the Deaf sufficiently funded by the Kentucky Department of Education?

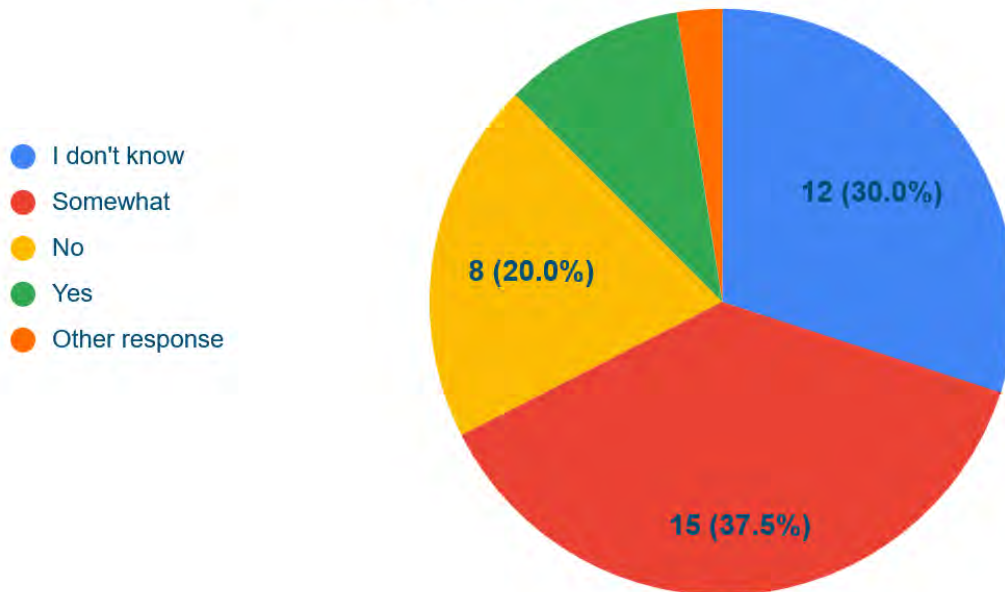


FIGURE 317: KSD STAFF RESOURCES

Does the Kentucky School for the Deaf provide the resources you need to perform your duties?

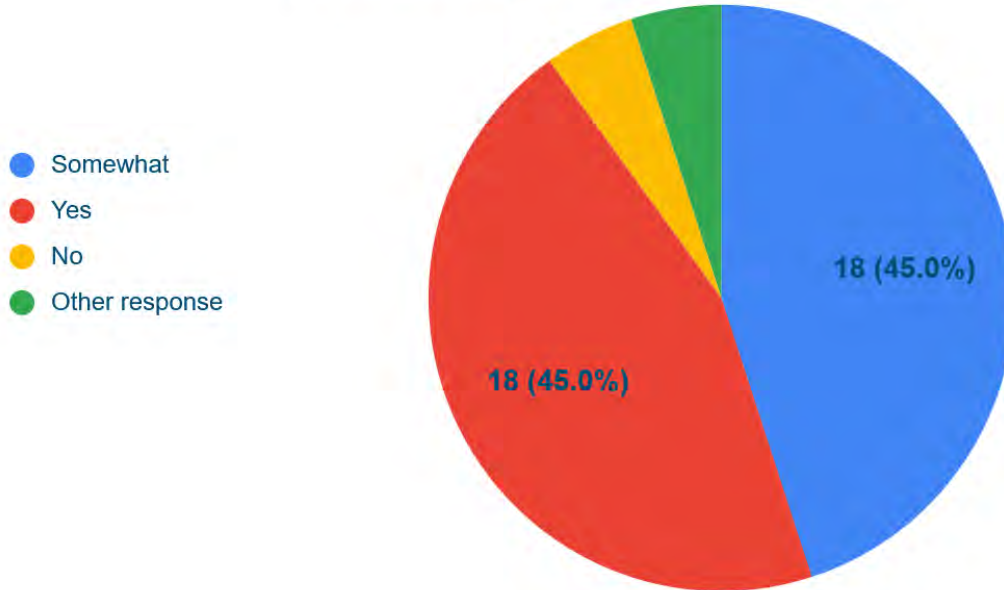


FIGURE 318: KSD STAFF PERSONAL FUNDING

Has there been a time you had to use personal funds to make purchases for essential items?

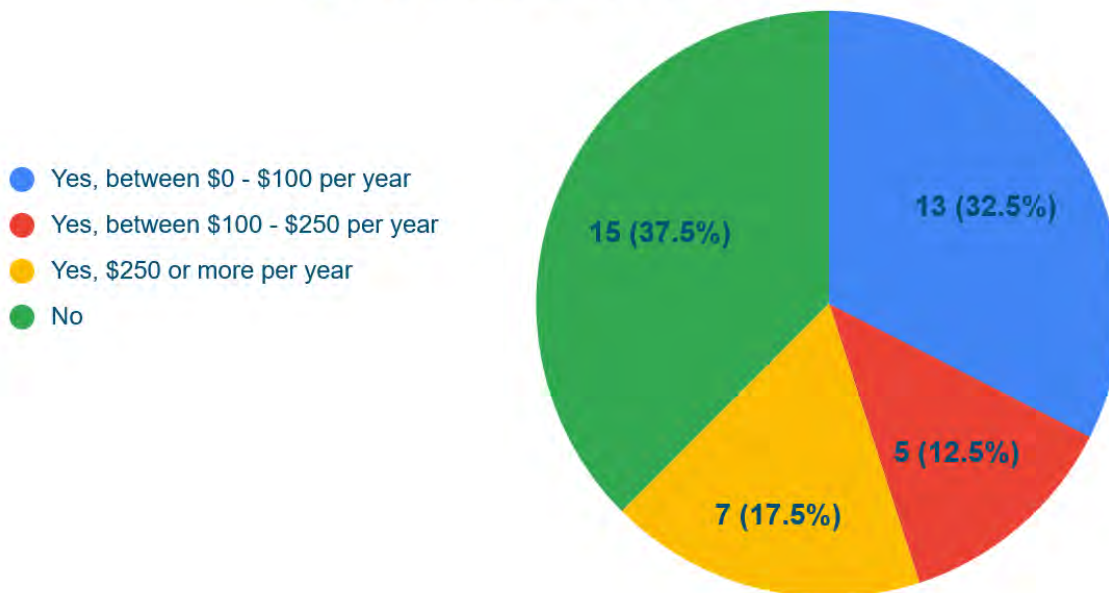


FIGURE 319: KSD STAFF PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Do you know the procurement process to request the purchase of an item or service?

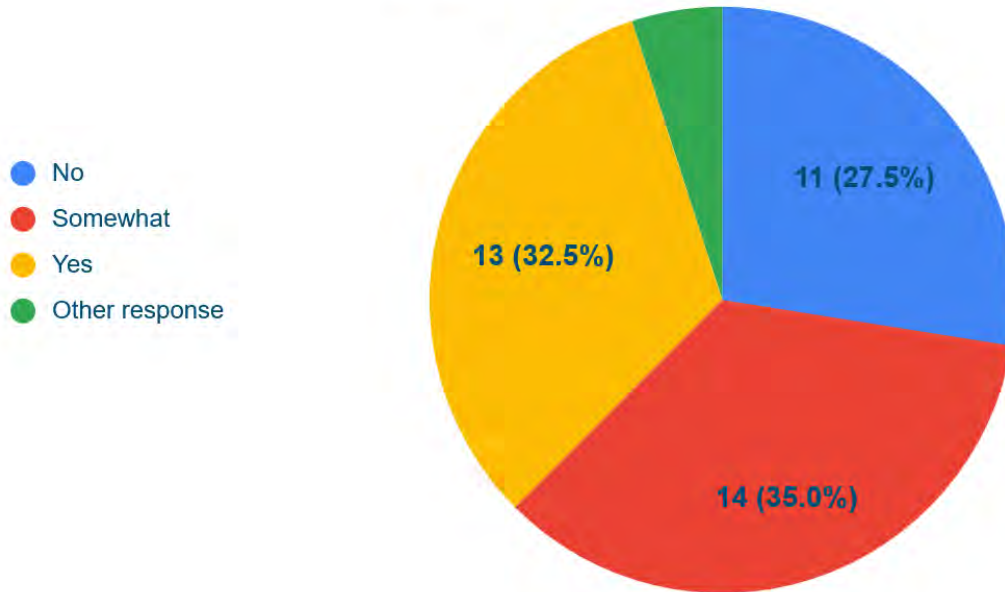


FIGURE 320: KSD STAFF PROCUREMENT TIMELINE

Are you satisfied, on average, with the amount of time it takes to request and receive items/services?

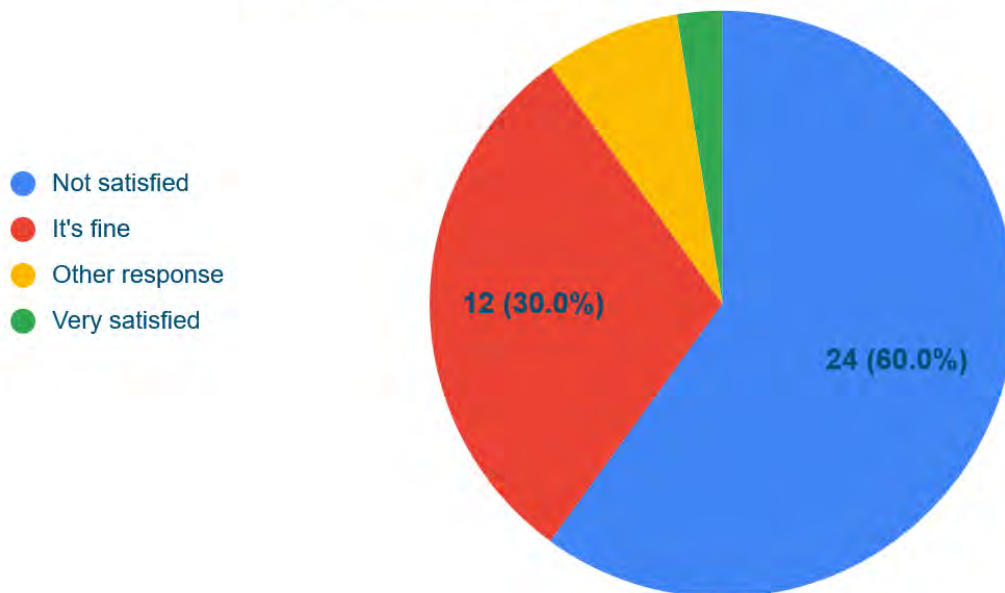




FIGURE 321: KSD STAFF ASL FLUENCY

### Are you fluent in American Sign Language?

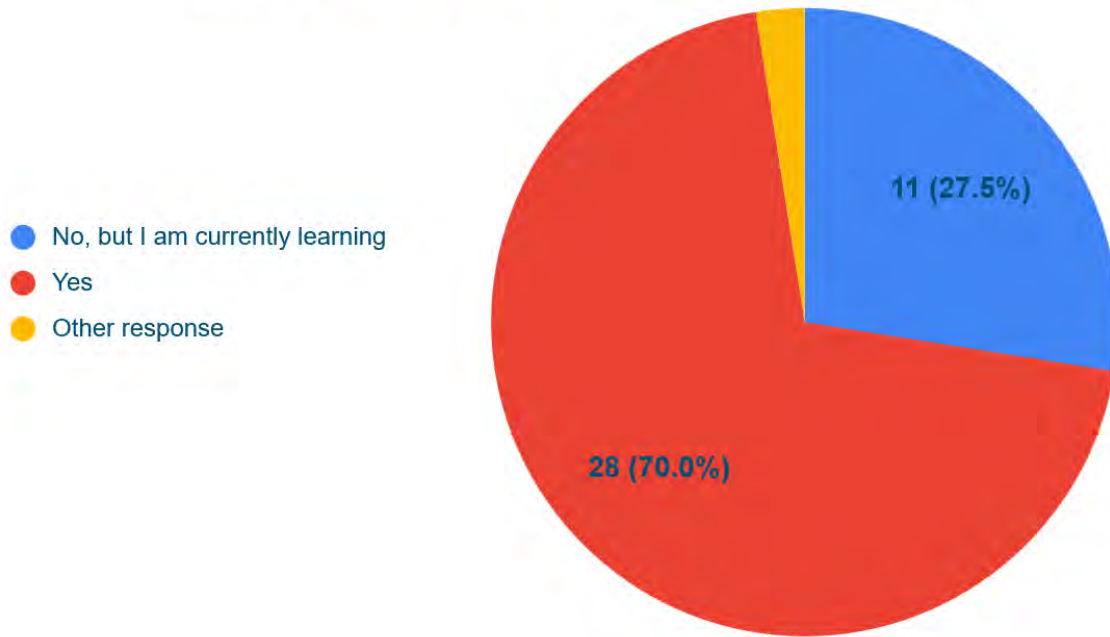


FIGURE 322: KSD STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

If you are not fluent in American Sign Language, has this hindered your communication with students? In the comment box, please tell us what other communication forms you use to communicate with students.

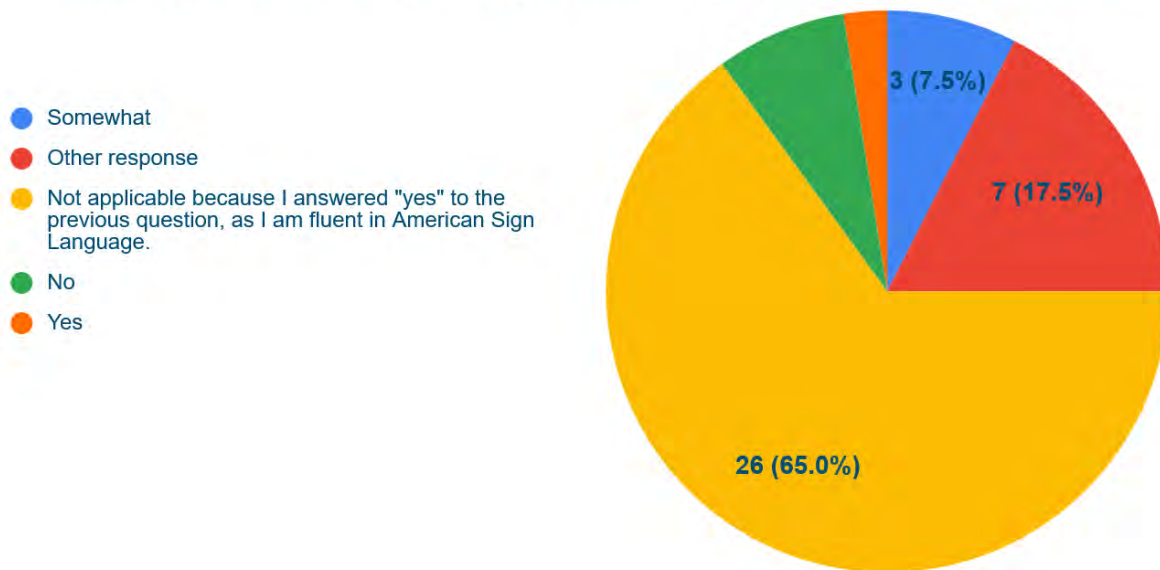


FIGURE 323: KSD STAFF COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Are you aware of the Kentucky School for the Deaf's complaint procedure for staff, teachers, students, and parents?

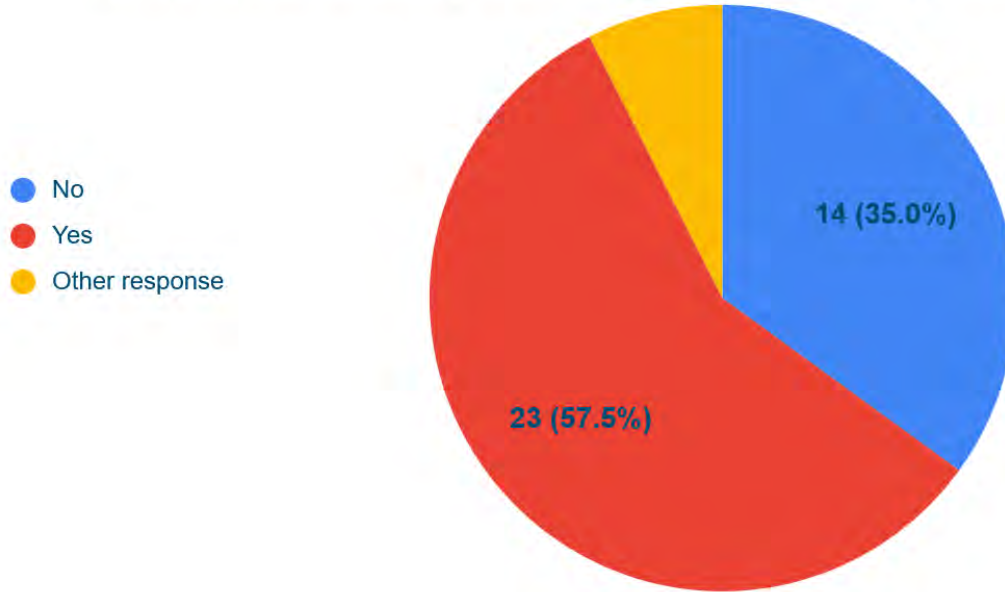


FIGURE 324: KSD STAFF – KSD ADDRESS COMPLAINTS

Is the Kentucky School for the Deaf capable of adequately addressing complaints?

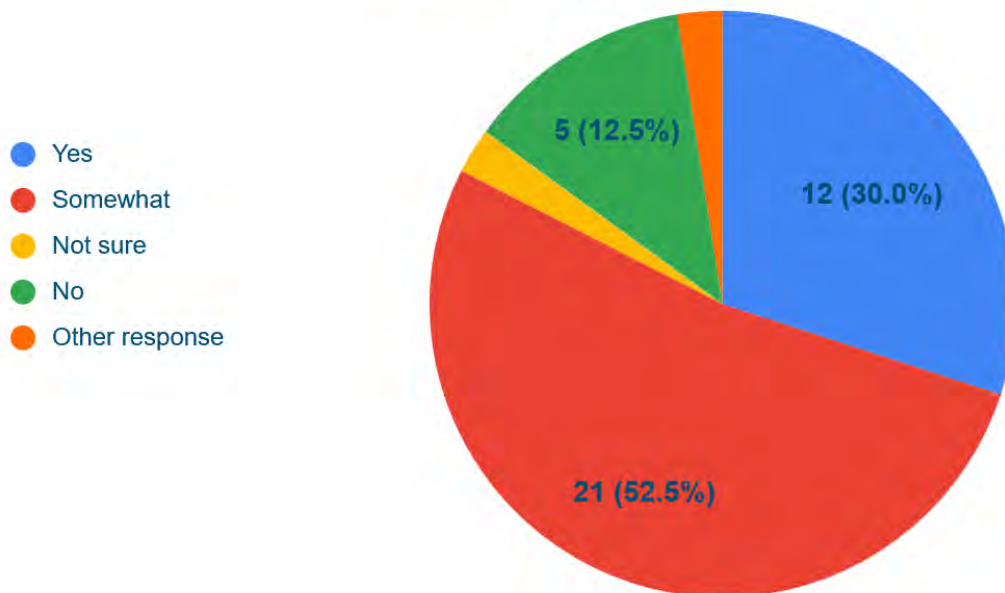




FIGURE 325: KSD STAFF – KDE ADDRESS COMPLAINTS

Is the Kentucky Department of Education capable of adequately addressing complaints?

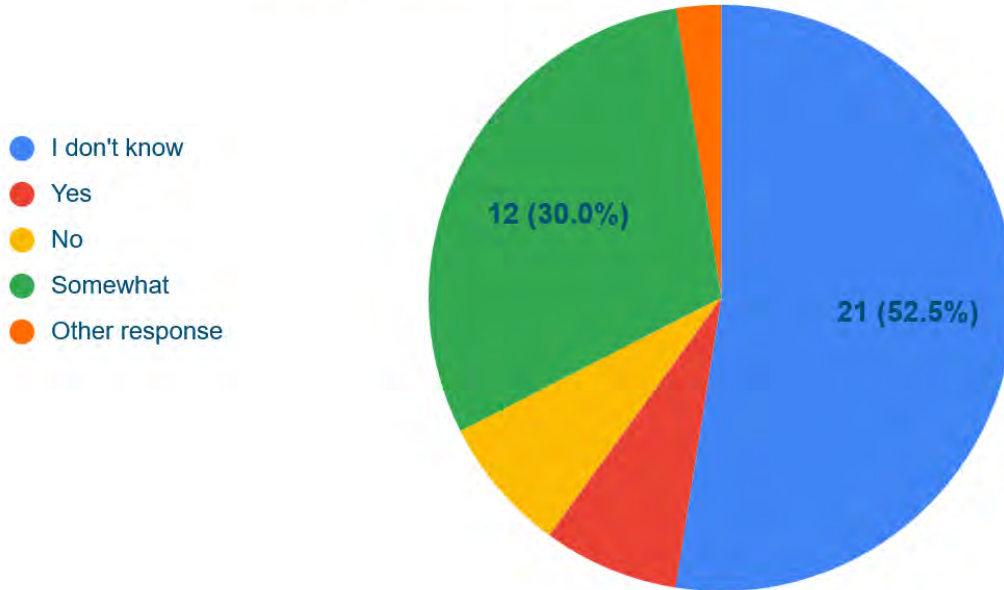
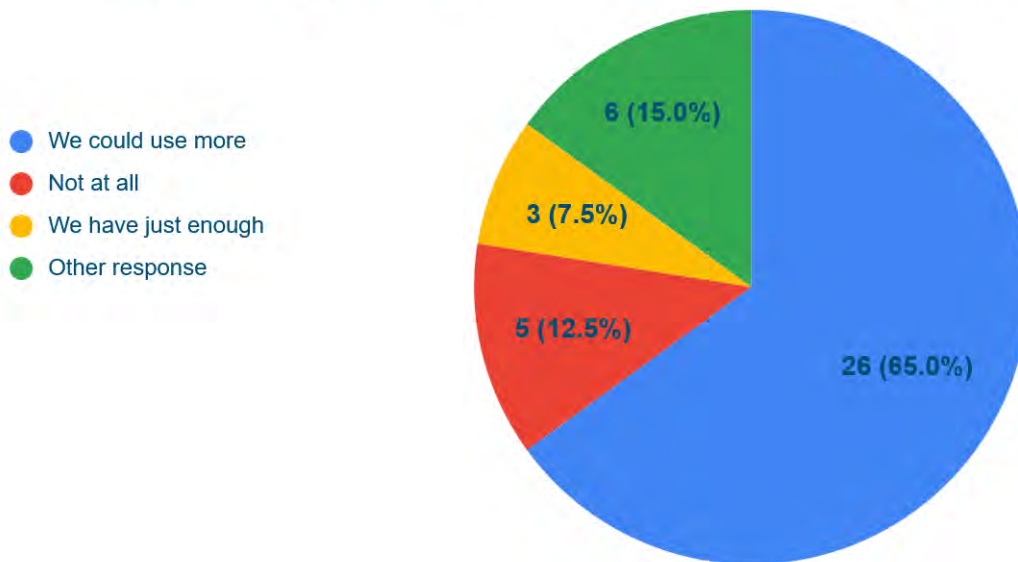


FIGURE 326: KSD STAFF STAFFING

Is the Kentucky School for the Deaf properly staffed? If you have additional thoughts or suggestions on which positions need more or less staffing, please add those to the comment box below.



## APPENDIX D: KENTUCKY CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION PATHWAYS, 2024-2025

Program Areas	Career Pathways
<b>Agricultural Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agribusiness Systems</li> <li>• Agricultural Power, Structural, Technical Systems</li> <li>• Agriculture TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Animal Science Systems</li> <li>• Environmental Science and Natural Resources Systems</li> <li>• Food Science and Processing Systems</li> <li>• Plant Science Systems</li> </ul>
<b>Business &amp; Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounting</li> <li>• Administrative Support</li> <li>• Business Education TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• E-Commerce</li> <li>• Financial Services</li> <li>• Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Recreation</li> <li>• Management and Entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Marketing Education TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Retail Services</li> <li>• Supply Chain Management</li> </ul>
<b>Computer Science</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additive Manufacturing</li> <li>• Computer Programming</li> <li>• Computer Science TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Cybersecurity</li> <li>• Data Science</li> <li>• Digital Design and Game Development</li> <li>• Information Support and Services</li> <li>• Network Administration</li> <li>• Network Security</li> <li>• Web Development/Administration</li> </ul>
<b>Construction Technology</b>	Air Conditioning Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Environmental Control System Technician</li> </ul>
	Building Construction Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Residential Maintenance Carpenter Assistant</li> </ul>
	Construction Carpentry Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Carpentry TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Construction Architectural Engineering</li> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Residential Carpenter Assistant</li> <li>• Structural Engineering</li> </ul>
	Electrical Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction Electrical TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Electrical Construction Engineering</li> <li>• Industrial Electrician Assistant</li> </ul>
	Heavy Equipment Sciences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction Heavy Equipment TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul>

Program Areas	Career Pathways
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy Equipment Sciences</li> </ul> Masonry Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bricklayer Assistant</li> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Masonry TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship</li> </ul> Plumbing Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Plumber Assistant</li> </ul>
<b>Education &amp; Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul>
<b>Engineering Technology</b>	Energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy Management</li> <li>• Sustainability and Energy Application Technician</li> </ul> Engineering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aerospace Engineering</li> <li>• Automation Engineering</li> <li>• Civil Engineering</li> <li>• Electrical/Electronics Engineering</li> <li>• Engineering Design</li> <li>• Engineering TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Mechanical Engineering</li> </ul> Engineering Hybrid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additive Manufacturing</li> <li>• Automotive Engineering</li> <li>• Computerized Manufacturing and Machining (CMM) Engineering</li> <li>• Construction Architectural Engineering</li> <li>• Design Engineering</li> <li>• Electrical Construction Engineering</li> <li>• Fabrication Engineering</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance Engineering</li> <li>• Structural Engineering</li> <li>• Welding Engineering</li> <li>• Wood Manufacturing Engineering</li> </ul> Flight and Aviation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aircraft Maintenance Technician</li> <li>• Flight and Aeronautics</li> </ul>
<b>Family &amp; Consumer Sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer and Family Services</li> <li>• Consumer and Family Services TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Culinary and Food Services</li> <li>• Culinary and Food Services TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Early Childhood Education</li> <li>• Early Childhood Education TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Fashion and Interior Design</li> <li>• Food Science and Dietetics</li> <li>• Fundamentals of Teaching</li> <li>• Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Recreation</li> </ul>
<b>Health Science</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allied Health</li> <li>• Biomedical Sciences</li> <li>• Clinical Medical Assisting</li> </ul>

Program Areas	Career Pathways
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dental Assisting</li> <li>• EKG Technology/Technician</li> <li>• Emergency Medical Technology/Technician</li> <li>• Healthcare TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Medical Administrative Assisting</li> <li>• Patient Care Technician</li> <li>• Pharmacy Technician</li> <li>• Phlebotomy Technician</li> <li>• Pre-Nursing</li> <li>• Veterinary Assistant</li> </ul>
<b>JROTC/Law &amp; Public Safety</b>	<b>JROTC:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Force JROTC</li> <li>• Army JROTC</li> <li>• Marine Corps JROTC</li> <li>• Navy JROTC</li> </ul>
	<b>Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corrections</li> <li>• Fire Science/Firefighting</li> <li>• Homeland Security</li> <li>• Law Enforcement Services</li> <li>• Pre-Law Studies</li> <li>• Law and Public Safety TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul>
<b>Manufacturing Technology</b>	<b>Computer-Aided Design (CAD):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architectural Technology</li> <li>• Civil Designer</li> <li>• Manufacturing TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Mechanical Designer</li> </ul>
	<b>Computerized Manufacturing and Machining:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Operator</li> <li>• Machinist Operator</li> <li>• Manufacturing TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul>
	<b>Industrial Maintenance Technology:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrical Technician</li> <li>• Maintenance Machinist</li> <li>• Maintenance Mechanic</li> <li>• Manufacturing TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Welding Maintenance Technician</li> </ul>
	<b>Manufacturing Hybrid:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additive Manufacturing</li> <li>• Computerized Manufacturing and Machining (CMM) Engineering</li> <li>• Design Engineering</li> <li>• Fabrication Engineering</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance Engineering</li> <li>• Welding Engineering</li> <li>• Wood Manufacturing Engineering</li> </ul>
	<b>Metal Fabrication:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Metal Fabrication TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Sheet Metal Technician</li> </ul>

Program Areas	Career Pathways
	Welding Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Welding TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Welder-Entry Level</li> </ul> Wood Manufacturing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Wood Manufacturing</li> </ul>
Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cinematography and Video Production</li> <li>• Graphic Design</li> <li>• Interactive Media</li> </ul>
Transportation	Automotive Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair Technician</li> <li>• Automobile Service Technology</li> <li>• Automotive Engineering</li> <li>• Automotive Technology TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul> Collision Repair Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry Level Collision Repair Painter</li> <li>• Entry Level Non-Structural Damage and Repair Technician</li> <li>• Automotive Technology TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul> Diesel/Medium-Heavy Truck Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diesel Medium Heavy Truck Inspection, Maintenance, and Minor Repair Technician</li> <li>• Diesel Medium/Heavy Truck Service Technology Technician (TST)</li> <li>• Automotive Technology TRACK Youth Apprenticeship</li> </ul>

Note: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, Career and Technical Education. [March 31, 2025]. 2024-2025 Program of Studies. Retrieved from [https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/24-25\\_CTE\\_POS.pdf](https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/24-25_CTE_POS.pdf).

# APPENDIX E: KDE PROCUREMENT GUIDE

## KDE, KSB & KSD Procurement Guide

If you have questions, contact your Procurement Contact prior to starting the procurement process.

Revised 8.12.24

TECHNOLOGY (IT)	FURNITURE	PRINT REQUESTS FAP 111-12-00	Less than \$1,000 ProCard FAP 111-58-00	\$1,000 - \$5,000 ProCard FAP 111-58-00	Master Agreement (MA)  Delivery Order (DO / DO4)	Not on Master Agreement  \$0 - \$5,000 Purchase Order (PO)	Not on Master Agreement  Between \$5,000 - \$20,000 Purchase Order (PO)	Not on Master Agreement  Over \$20,000 Requisition (RQS)
<p>IT purchases <b>REQUIRE</b> a DPR, blanket DPR's cannot be used</p> <p>SPR1 Request Form, if applicable</p> <p>SPR1 is <b>REQUIRED</b> for ALL Software regardless of cost or payment method</p> <p>SPR1 is <b>REQUIRED</b> for ALL IT purchases over \$1,000 including Network and Non-Network</p> <p>Proceed to the column that is related to the specific purchase.</p>	<p>Email Surplus Properties &amp; KCI to see if they have what you need.</p> <p><i>Recommend sending specs and/or pictures, quantities, and expected delivery date.</i></p> <p>Division of Surplus Properties Samuel Drake Samuel.Drake@ky.gov (502) 573-4836</p> <p>KCI Charles Wilkerson charles.wilkerson@ky.gov (502) 330-5983 (Can use ProCard for KCI or paid off IT)</p> <p>Check State MAs</p> <p>Purchase from other vendor, following ALL procurement guidelines, quote requirements, etc.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go to the Kentucky Design &amp; Print Services web page at <a href="https://transportation.ky.gov/Print/Pages/default.aspx">https://transportation.ky.gov/Print/Pages/default.aspx</a> to see what design and printing services they offer.</li> <li>If you have questions or need assistance contact them at <a href="mailto:KCI@printlogistics@ky.gov">KCI@printlogistics@ky.gov</a> or 502-564-3890.</li> <li>Create a Print Request <a href="http://transportation.ky.gov/Print/Request.pdf">http://transportation.ky.gov/Print/Request.pdf</a> and send it to <a href="mailto:Print@ky.gov">Print@ky.gov</a> to obtain a quote.</li> <li>Submit a request form and all supporting documentation to <a href="mailto:Chris.Montros@education.ky.gov">Chris.Montros@education.ky.gov</a>.</li> <li>Chris will Email approved print request along with quote to <a href="mailto:Print@ky.gov">Print@ky.gov</a> to place the order.</li> <li>The printing order will be submitted, and have it delivered.</li> </ol> <p>If KYTC or KCI are not able to fulfill the print job then all printing not performed as outlined above, shall be procured by Request for Solicitation (RQS) through the state's eProcurement system or other approved electronic format and requires a DPR. Printing shall not be obtained through an agency's small purchase authority. Email Procurement for assistance with your request.</p>	<p>Approved DPR is preferred. Need to obtain supervisor approval <b>prior</b> to purchase or follow internal process.</p> <p>Order to be processed via ProCard upon approval of DPR or supervisor approval</p> <p>Obtain receipt and sign</p> <p>Send all documents to: <a href="mailto:KDEProCardDocuments@education.ky.gov">KDEProCardDocuments@education.ky.gov</a></p> <p>NOTE: Plan ahead to purchase from MA vendors</p> <p><b>PURCHASES SHALL NOT BE PARCELED, SPLIT, DIVIDED, OR SCHEDULED OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO CIRCUMVENT THE SMALL PURCHASE LIMIT.</b></p>	<p>DPR is required for approval. Blanket DPR or supervisor email approval is not acceptable.</p> <p>Order to be processed via ProCard upon approval of DPR</p> <p>Obtain receipt and sign</p> <p>Send all documents to: <a href="mailto:KDEProCardDocuments@education.ky.gov">KDEProCardDocuments@education.ky.gov</a></p> <p>NOTE: Plan ahead to purchase from MA vendors</p> <p><b>PURCHASES SHALL NOT BE PARCELED, SPLIT, DIVIDED, OR SCHEDULED OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO CIRCUMVENT THE SMALL PURCHASE LIMIT.</b></p>	<p>Must have quote (must include MA number) or screenshot of cart</p> <p>Approved DPR or Blanket DPR can be used</p> <p>Final DO / DO4 sent to vendor to place order</p> <p>Invoice to be sent along with DPR to <a href="mailto:KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov">KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov</a></p>	<p>Obtain at least One (1) Quote</p> <p>Confirm Vendor has VSS Account</p> <p>Approved DPR or Blanket DPR can be used</p> <p>Final PO sent to vendor to place order</p> <p>Annual Affidavit for Bidders, Offerors, &amp; Contractors is REQUIRED for all purchases over \$1,000 not currently on MA</p> <p>Invoice to be paid via copy forward PRC from the PO or sent to <a href="mailto:KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov">KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov</a></p> <p><b>PURCHASES SHALL NOT BE PARCELED, SPLIT, DIVIDED, OR SCHEDULED OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO CIRCUMVENT THE SMALL PURCHASE LIMIT.</b></p>	<p>Obtain at least three (3) Quotes or submit specs for RFQ to the Procurement Lead</p> <p>Sole Source or Not Practical to Bid exceptions are possible depending on purchase.</p> <p>Confirm Vendor has VSS Account</p> <p>Approved DPR or Blanket DPR can be used</p> <p>Final PO sent to vendor to place order</p> <p>Annual Affidavit for Bidders, Offerors, &amp; Contractors is REQUIRED for all purchases over \$1,000 not currently on MA</p> <p>Invoice to be paid via copy forward PRC from the PO or sent to <a href="mailto:KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov">KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov</a></p> <p><b>PURCHASES SHALL NOT BE PARCELED, SPLIT, DIVIDED, OR SCHEDULED OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO CIRCUMVENT THE SMALL PURCHASE LIMIT.</b></p>	<p>Sole Source or a Not Practical to Bid exception is possible depending on the purchase</p> <p>Identify need and provide detailed specifications to Procurement Contact</p> <p>Procurement Contact Issues Request for Solicitation (RQS).</p> <p>Finance OPS issues solicitation, accepts bids, creates contract (CT or MA) and obtains affidavit.</p> <p>Approved DPR or Blanket DPR can be used</p> <p>Invoice to be paid via copy forward PRC from the DO or CT or sent to <a href="mailto:KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov">KDEElectronicrequests@education.ky.gov</a></p>

Source: Document provided by KDE.



# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE

Andy Beshear  
Governor



Jamie Link  
Secretary  
Education and Labor Cabinet

Dr. Robbie Fletcher  
Commissioner of Education

## KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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June 23, 2025

Hon. Allison Ball  
Auditor of Public Accounts  
209 St. Clair Street  
Frankfort, KY 40601

VIA EMAIL: [alexander.magera@ky.gov](mailto:alexander.magera@ky.gov)

### RE: AGENCY RESPONSE TO JUNE 6, 2025 DRAFT REPORT

Dear Auditor Ball:

On June 6, 2025, the Kentucky Department of Education ("KDE") received your draft report resulting from the special examination conducted by the Auditor of Public Accounts ("APA") as directed by HB 825 (2024) ("Draft Report"). Thank you for sharing the Draft Report with my office for review and response.

Attached hereto, please find a chart which details errors or misstatements contained within the Draft Report and identified by KDE. KDE respectfully requests that the APA review the attached chart and consider amendments to the Draft Report based on the responses provided by KDE.

In response to the Draft Report, KDE finds it necessary to highlight what may be perceived as a conflict of interest of Public Consulting Group, LLC ("PCG") as it relates to the special examination. As noted in the Draft Report, the APA conducted this special examination in collaboration with PCG. On October 15, 2024, the APA announced its selection of PCG to assist in the special examination of KDE. PCG representatives conducted extensive interviews during the special examination. These PCG representatives conducted themselves with professionalism throughout the special examination and demonstrated expertise in the field of public education.

Nevertheless, at the time of PCG's involvement in the special examination, it held contracts with KDE and was an active bidder on two KDE solicitations. RFP 758 2500000042 was issued on August 8, 2024. PCG responded to the RFP. On March 21, 2025, a master agreement was issued as a result of the solicitation, but PCG was not the selected vendor. Likewise, RFP 540 2500000020 was issued on July 24, 2024, and PCG responded to the RFP. On March 7, 2025, KDE determined that it would not award a contract for the solicitation. Simply put, PCG was interested in two contract opportunities with KDE during the time of the special examination but was not awarded a contract as a result of its bids. PCG also held two active contracts with KDE during the special examination period. See PON2 540 2400002021 and MA 758 2400000139.

PCG's involvement in these opportunities and contracts with KDE may affect the perception of PCG's impartiality in the special examination. KDE remains committed to maintaining transparency and integrity, which is why it is essential to point out these contracts and solicitation responses that occurred during the special examination period.

In closing, KDE is an organization focused on continuous improvement. As the Draft Report notes, "[t]he 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." KDE looks forward to utilizing the APA's final report as it identifies opportunities for future growth and plans for its continued improvement in service of Kentucky's public school students. KDE welcomes the opportunity to work with the Kentucky General Assembly for legislative changes necessary to accomplish recommendations within the Draft Report. KDE will share the APA's final report with its staff and the Kentucky Board of Education.

Sincerely,



Dr. Robbie Fletcher  
Commissioner of Education

Attachment

# APA & PCG REPLIES TO KDE RESPONSE

## AUDITOR'S REPLY



ALLISON BALL  
AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

July 1, 2025

Robbie Fletcher, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education  
Kentucky Department of Education  
300 Sower Blvd., 5th Floor  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
[robbie.fletcher@education.ky.gov](mailto:robbie.fletcher@education.ky.gov)

RE: Auditor Reply to KDE's Response

Dear Commissioner Fletcher,

We are happy to hear the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has found the Auditor of Public Account's (APA) report helpful for improving public education in Kentucky. As KDE has stated in its response to this report, it "looks forward to utilizing the APA's final report as it identifies opportunities for future growth and plans for its continued improvement in service of Kentucky's public school students." The APA, with the help of Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG), has diligently prepared a thorough report to accomplish that very goal.

Education in Kentucky needs drastic improvement. Less than half of all of Kentucky's elementary, middle, and high school students are proficient in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing.<sup>1</sup> And in some subjects for some of those groups of students, the proficiency rating is far lower.

The Findings, Observations, and Recommendations outlined in this report put Kentucky on a path towards ensuring (1) children receive the education they need to be successful in the real world, (2) teachers and school-district staff are appropriately equipped and supported as they mold our children to do just that, and (3) parents can have confidence in a system to which they entrust their children.

Notably, KDE has not even responded to almost 200 of the APA's Findings, Observations, and Recommendations. This suggests that KDE understands the need to fix the issues outlined in the APA's Findings and Observations by using the APA's Recommendations. And for those Findings, Observations,

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Ragusa, *KDE releases 2023-2024 accountability and assessment data*, Kentucky Teacher (Oct. 3, 2024), <https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/news/2024/10/kde-releases-2023-2024-accountability-and-assessment-data/>.



Robbie Fletcher, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education  
Kentucky Department of Education  
July 1, 2025

and Recommendations to which KDE has provided responses, the APA stands firmly by what this special examination revealed and has provided replies to those KDE responses as outlined below.

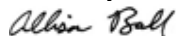
In its response, KDE has suggested that there may be some kind of “perceived . . . conflict of interest” of PCG as it relates to this special examination. To start, the APA announced on October 15, 2024, that it had secured the assistance of PCG for this examination. Not a single time over the course of this examination did KDE ever inform the APA or PCG of its view of a perceived conflict-of-interest. Instead, KDE decided to raise this issue for the first time now, *after* it saw the APA’s 466-page report outlining areas needed for improvement within KDE.

In fact, KDE admits that PCG “held two active contracts with KDE during the special examination period.” If anything, this would suggest that PCG would be *less* inclined to critically analyze KDE for fear of retaliation by KDE in their business relationship. But as shown by the report, the APA and PCG worked side-by-side to critically analyze KDE, without reservation. And as far as potential retaliation by KDE goes, KDE admits it rejected PCG’s bids on two KDE contracts about five months *after* PCG began its work in this investigation.

PCG is a highly regarded public sector consulting firm that has current education contracts in 49 states, Washington D.C, the U.S Virgin Islands, and seven countries. Its assistance to the state of Alabama, for example, improved Alabama’s national educational assessment rankings in Mathematics by 20 spots and in Reading by 14 spots.<sup>2</sup>

PCG’s expertise in education, coupled with the APA’s Kentucky-specific knowledge, has resulted in a report that could see Kentucky reach such improvement in education. To do that, Governor Beshear and KDE must take this report seriously, and the APA hopes that they do so. The future of Kentucky depends on it.

Sincerely,



Allison Ball  
Auditor of Public Accounts

Cc: Stacy Ball, Executive Secretary, [stacy.ball@education.ky.gov](mailto:stacy.ball@education.ky.gov)

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<sup>2</sup> Press Release, Alabama Governor’s Office, *Governor Ivey Announces Alabama’s Rank in 4th Grade Math Moves from 52nd to 32nd; Rank in 4th Grade Reading Moves from 49th to 34th During Her Term* (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://governor.alabama.gov/newsroom/2025/01/governor-ivey-announces-alabamas-rank-in-4th-grade-math-moves-from-52nd-to-32nd-rank-in-4th-grade-reading-moves-from-49th-to-34th-during-her-term/>.



## PCG'S REPLY



Solutions that Matter

Public Consulting Group LLC (PCG) is a consulting firm that helps government entities make measurable improvements to their performance and processes. The firm was established in 1986, and PCG has been in business for almost four decades. PCG has nearly 2,000 employees who work in the areas of education, health, human services, and technology. Current clients include 38 state education agencies and 17 of the 20 largest U.S. school districts.

PCG strives to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct for its business operations and employees, and PCG is proud of our excellent track record in this regard. PCG maintains a Code of Conduct and detailed policies and procedures that reflect PCG's commitment to ethical conduct, its comprehensive risk assessment and management process, and a robust compliance monitoring and training program that is overseen by PCG's Governance, Risk and Compliance Department (GRC) in conjunction with the firm's Legal, Human Capital Management (HCM), and Finance Departments. PCG's Legal, HCM, and GRC functions work together to identify and mitigate any conflicts or potential conflicts, apply and monitor adherence to cooling off periods, and ensure and exceed any applicable disclosure and compliance requirements. PCG takes measures which are designed to avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest that may vary widely across states and contracts.

Before responding to any RFP or other opportunity, PCG conducts a conflict check. The check matches the potential services in the RFP against a database of all current and recent consulting and operations contracts performed by PCG and its employees, both in the RFP subject state and nationally. This conflict check includes determining if any employees associated with the potential project are former employees of the client or other stakeholder groups. Any circumstance presenting a potential conflict, real or perceived, is independently reviewed by GRC and Legal. If risk mitigation steps are deemed appropriate, PCG will work in consultation with the client to implement appropriate safeguards to ensure an actual or potential conflict is mitigated. Mitigation strategies may include, but are not limited to, reassigning employees to other projects, and/or constructing a compliance "wall" to prohibit interaction between the relevant employees and project information. PCG does not submit proposals in circumstances where, in its judgment, the potential for conflict is beyond the limits of reasonable mitigation, which would otherwise not impair our ability to perform services to satisfy the requirements of project of a prospective client. PCG applied this same protocol to this procurement.

PCG has a long relationship working with the Commonwealth of Kentucky at the state and local levels. PCG affirmatively disclosed existing contracts in our proposal response to APA. PCG has worked with the Kentucky Department of Education to recover over \$70.3M in school-based Medicaid claims since 2009 (PON2 540 2400002021). PCG has also partnered with KDE to provide *Title1Next*, a cloud-based compliance and document storage software solution designed to support and streamline administration of district's Title I program since 2023 (MA 758 2400000139). At the time of the relevant proposal, eighty-eight school districts and 289 Title 1 Schools were registered to utilize *Title1Next*. PCG's audit team for this project is independent of the teams that currently perform other work with KDE, and PCG continues to maintain separation and independence throughout the audit review process.

PCG's other state-level clients include the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, the Kentucky Department of Community Based Services and the Kentucky Board of Emergency Medical Services. The Commonwealth of Kentucky also selected PCG to pilot a Digital Wallet as part of a learning and employment records (LER) ecosystem. This project is funded through the Everybody Counts Initiative, supporting Kentucky's high school seniors in identifying and securing post-graduation pathways.

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Solutions that Matter

As noted, PCG submitted two proposals to KDE in 2024 prior to the award of this contract. **Neither of these resulted in an award.** RFP 758 2500000042 was submitted by PCG's Technology Consulting practice area, a separate practice area within PCG.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna d'Entremont". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anna d'Entremont  
Manager  
Public Consulting Group LLC



## APA'S REPLY TO KDE'S INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

Draft Report Page Number	Draft Report Section	Statement Contained within Draft Report	Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Response	Auditor Reply
13	Introduction	The first page of the draft report provided to KDE for review begins at pg. 13.	It appears there is either a page numbering issue with the draft report, or pages 1-12 were not provided to KDE for review and response. The responses contained herein correspond to the page numbers listed in the draft report provided to KDE.	The first twelve pages of the report were reserved for the APA's report submission letter and the Table of Contents. No substantive information is contained in those pages.
17	Introduction: Methodology	"The four surveys distributed to teachers and staff of KSB and KSD—tailored to each group's specific roles— were administered through Google Forms and disseminated via a link sent by the respective school's administration. Each survey was open for approximately five to seven days in November 2024."	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and School for the Deaf (KSD) teachers and staff were not allotted the same time frame for increased participation as the surveys for ATC staff, special education directors, KDE staff, and superintendents. As a result, KSB/KSD teachers and staff surveys resulted in three of the four lowest participation rates (Figure 2, Complete Survey Response Totals, Page 17).</p> <p>Per page 17, the surveys for ATC staff, special education directors, KDE staff, and superintendents—tailored to the specific roles of each group—were conducted using a web-based survey tool called Alchemer. The surveys were distributed by KDE via email. Each survey was open to its respective participants for <b>approximately three weeks during January and February 2025</b>. As noted in the report, KSB and KSD staff were provided a fraction of this amount of time to respond which may have resulted in a lower response rate.</p>	The survey response time was more than sufficient to receive a plethora of responses from KSB and KSD teachers and staff. As outlined in Appendix C from pages 413 to 462, responses were thorough and detailed and gave the APA an inside look at how KSB and KSD teachers and staff feel about KDE and KBE. The APA encourages KDE and KBE to address the numerous issues and concerns relayed by those within KSB and KSD.
26 – 44	Exam Overview	Observations, Findings, and Recommendations	The summary of Observations, Findings, and Recommendations should be updated to reflect changes recommended and detailed herein.	The APA has updated this section of the report only when deemed appropriate.

36	Exam Overview: Exceptional Children	Noteworthy Accomplishments: “Kentucky achieved and sustained a ‘Meets Requirements’ determination within the U.S. Department of Education’s Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) system between 2017 and 2024. This designation shows the state’s commitment to the federal implementation and general supervision systems that support students with disabilities.”	This statement notes that Kentucky achieved a Meets Requirements Determination from the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. ED) from 2017 to 2024. However, Kentucky achieved this determination for 14 consecutive years dating back to 2011.  In addition, the Noteworthy Accomplishments fails to include the <a href="#">U.S. Department of Education’s 2024 special education monitoring report for Kentucky</a> required no corrective actions. To date, under the U.S. ED’s current special education monitoring process, Kentucky is the only state monitored with no corrective actions required.	The APA is happy to note in the report the achievements mentioned here.
48	Office Functions: Office of Continuous Improvement & Support	On page 48, the report notes that OCIS has 76 field-based staff. Later on page 179, the report indicates 90 field-based staff in OCIS.	As of May 2025, there are 83 field based staff in the Division of School and Program Improvement in OCIS.	The APA received from KDE two different figures at two different points in time on this point. The report has been updated accordingly.
49	Office Functions: Office of Educator Licensure & Effectiveness	“The Division of Educator Preparation and Certification evaluates and monitors teacher accreditation, continuing education, and rank change programs.”	The Division of Educator Preparation and Certification evaluates and monitors all educator preparation programs for teacher certification, advanced certification, alternative routes to certification and rank change.	The APA is happy to word the responsibilities of the Division of Educator Preparation and Certification according to KDE’s preference.
49	Office Functions: Office of Finance & Operations	“There are 145 OFO staff members, including the Associate Commissioner who supervises the Office, and eight Directors and Assistant Directors who oversee the four divisions in OFO.”	OFO has four Directors and five Assistant Directors.	At the time the APA wrote that statement, one of the Assistant Director positions was vacant. Nonetheless, the APA has updated this figure in the report.

<p>53</p>	<p>Organizational Structure: Structure of the Executive Team</p>	<p>The draft report states: “The Deputy Commissioner roles do not have defined responsibilities as far as department management, strategy, or accountability. As it stands, these Deputy Commissioner roles are not effective leadership roles for the agency. They do not appear to manage a portfolio of work, oversee offices, or have executive-level direct reports. They are not being utilized effectively to manage portions of the agency and help reach KDE’s strategic goals and objectives.”</p>	<p>The Deputy Commissioner roles are more closely aligned with the Chief of Staff role provided in Recommendation 1.1.b. The Deputy Commissioners provide decision-making support and strategic advice to the Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioners work with leaders across the agency to coordinate KDE’s work and refine recommendations before they come to the Commissioner for final approval. Furthermore, Deputy Commissioners do manage portfolios of work as assigned by the Commissioner. One Deputy Commissioner provides this support in the area of academics, while the other provides this support in the area of operations.</p> <p>Update Recommendations 1.1.a and 1.1.b accordingly.</p>	<p>KDE does not dispute Finding 1.1, and its response here confirms the need for Recommendations 1.1.a and 1.1.b. As outlined in Finding 1.1, there are various discrepancies between job responsibilities on paper, in practice, and according to perceptions.</p>
<p>54</p>	<p>Organizational Structure: Government Affairs &amp; Policy</p>	<p>“1.2 Finding: KDE has a higher staff count and a more decentralized structure for staff dedicated to policy and legislation when compared with other state education agencies. KDE’s policy advisors are embedded in the offices, as opposed to being housed with government and legislative affairs.”</p>	<p>The report ignores the duties and responsibilities of KDE’s Policy Advisors aside from legislation. The current policy structure at KDE ensures that each office has adequate professional expertise to inform, implement, monitor, and improve educational policies, not just track legislation. Centralizing the policy structure into an office that is disconnected from the day-to-day work of the individual program areas would silo the policy specialists and limit their immediate working knowledge of programs and their requirements across the agency.</p>	<p>KDE misunderstands and ignores the totality of Finding 1.2. That finding does discuss KDE’s Policy Advisors’ roles outside of legislation. It explains why the number of policy advisors within KDE is unnecessary. It also explains why the organizational structure within which those advisors serve is not optimally coordinated for efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>KDE’s number one priority should be pushing resources toward the success of Kentucky’s students and teachers. Although administrative requirements and political responsiveness are realities of a state department of education, they come second to Kentucky’s kids and teachers.</p>

56	Organizational Structure: Government Affairs & Policy	“1.2.a Recommendation: KDE should reduce and consolidate all job functions related to interpreting laws that impact the Department to designated policy advisor positions that report to the Director of Government Relations.”	The report ignores the duties and responsibilities of KDE’s Policy Advisors aside from legislation. The current policy structure at KDE ensures that each office has adequate professional expertise to inform, implement, monitor, and improve educational policies, not just track legislation. Centralizing the policy structure into an office that is disconnected from the day-to-day work of the individual program areas would silo the policy specialists and limit their immediate working knowledge of programs and their requirements across the agency.	The APA’s previous reply applies here, as well.
58	Organizational Structure: Communications	“1.5.a Recommendation: KDE should create a coherent partnership between all communications-related staff to align the Department’s messaging, branding, timing, and material for both internal and external stakeholders. The Division of Communications should function as the communications experts, setting strategy and overseeing relationships. The program communications staff across the agency should work closely with the Division of Communications as content partners.”	KDE Communications staff have regular monthly meetings with all other communications staff across the agency to share information about upcoming events, coverage needs and agency priorities to keep communications efforts aligned agencywide.	Finding 1.5 notes KDE's current efforts are not as effective or impactful as desired. As a result, KDE's response does not refute the finding or the need for the implementation of Recommendation 1.5.a.

59	Organizational Structure: Communications	“The Division of Communications oversees the Kentucky Teacher of the Year awards program. The winner of the program is honored at a ceremony in the state capitol building and receives a professional sabbatical opportunity coordinated by KDE and represents Kentucky in the National Teacher of the Year program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers.”	The Teacher of the Year awards program is now operated by the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness.	It appears this is a recent change KDE has implemented. The APA is happy to update its report to reflect this change.
64	Organizational Structure: Communications	“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. Under the direction of a designated KDE webmaster and the Division of Communications, develop a Brand Guide and train relevant staff on its use.”	KDE has a Visual Style Guide, KDE Brand – Color & Font Palettes and a Website Style Guide and Best Practices available to all KDE staff on SharePoint.  Recommend change “develop a Brand Guide and train relevant staff on its use” to “train relevant staff on the use of the Visual Style Guide.”	KDE does not dispute Finding 1.6, the point of which is to convey that KDE needs to overhaul its website. Recommendation 1.6.a has been updated to reflect the full suite of existing KDE web and communications materials that should be updated and used to train relevant staff.
65	Resource Management: Hiring Practices	“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.”	KDE has and continues to work closely with the Personnel Cabinet to request efficiencies in the 18A hiring process. However, that process is within the authority of the legislature and Personnel Cabinet, not KDE. The recommendation does not correlate with the finding. That is, the finding recognizes that administrative requirements are beyond KDE’s control, but does not acknowledge KDE’s attempts to request improvements in processes. 1.7.a Recommendation should be updated accordingly.	The APA did not find sufficient evidence to support the assertion that KDE is working as closely as it should be with the General Assembly and the Personnel Cabinet to maximize the efficiency of its hiring process.

<p>67</p>	<p>Resource Management: Personnel Policies</p>	<p>1.9.a Recommendation states: “KDE should clarify and communicate the Department’s telecommuting policy.”</p>	<p>KDE has an extensive telecommuting policy that is eight pages in length. The policy details who is eligible for telecommuting; expectations regarding work hours, productivity, and dress code when telecommuting; safety and confidentiality while telecommuting; use of agency equipment; and termination of telecommuting privileges. The policy is posted on KDE’s intranet site which all employees may access at any time. The same intranet page also contains a Telecommuting Frequently Asked Questions document that is seven pages in length. The telecommuting policy is part of every telecommuting agreement that employees must sign as part of their telecommuting arrangement. Finally, on September 30, 2024, KDE clarified its telecommuting expectations for all employees. KDE’s telecommuting policy is clearly communicated to its employees. Recommendation 1.9.a should be updated accordingly.</p>	<p>KDE may believe that its telecommuting policy has been clarified and communicated to employees, but, as outlined in Observation 1.9, that sentiment is not shared by KDE staff.</p>
<p>78-79</p>	<p>Resource Management: Inventory Management</p>	<p>“1.10 Observation: KDE may be dedicating too much time and effort to asset tagging and related management functions.”          “1.10.a Recommendation: KDE should use technological solutions to perform automated IT equipment inventory functions and disabling of devices that may be lost or stolen.” “1.10.b Recommendation: KDE should perform a comprehensive review of older items and clean up the inventory files by removing outdated information or data.”</p>	<p>Pursuant to FAP 120-20-01 in the <a href="#">Finance and Administration Cabinet Manual of Policies and Procedures</a>, the Kentucky Department of Education must “maintain a current fixed asset record of equipment having an original cost of \$500 or more and a useful life of greater than one (1) year [ . . . ] The administrative head of an agency shall be responsible and accountable for the custody and safekeeping of all personal property assigned to, purchased, or otherwise acquired by the agency. Each agency head shall either serve as, or appoint an employee of the agency to serve as, agency property officer with responsibility for both maintaining the agency’s fixed asset records and taking the annual physical inventory.”</p> <p>FAP 120-20-01 also states: “All non-expendable property valued at \$500 or more shall be recorded as a line item. This record shall include agency number, state property identification tag number, make, description, model number, serial number, quantity, location by building and cost [ . . . ] The property officer of each agency shall affix a property identification tag to all non-expendable property. The property identification tag shall be affixed to the left side of the item when the item is in its normal operating position.”</p> <p>As noted by FAP 120-20-01, KDE must perform an “annual</p>	<p>KDE’s response here misses the point. KDE should not be spending the amount of time it does asset tagging, especially for items that do not meet the established value of \$500 or more. Asset tagging can be done in a more efficient and effective manner, as outlined in Observation 1.10. If KDE feels as though it is hamstrung by the Finance and Administration Cabinet, it should work with the Cabinet to optimize that process.</p>



			<p>physical inventory.” The Finance and Administration Cabinet, FY25 Physical Inventory Procedures, also reference an annual physical inventory: “To comply with Governmental Accounting Standards (GASB 34) and to assure maintenance of accurate fixed records, the Finance and Administration Cabinet (FAC), Division of Statewide Accounting Services (SAS) requires an annual physical inventory of fixed assets by all state departments. The accuracy of the fixed asset records is necessary in order for management to demonstrate stewardship and properly insure the property as well as report accurately the Commonwealth’s financial position at year-end through the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). Non-expendable personal property observations are required every year. Every four years (2021, 2025, 2029 etc.), real property is included in the inventory observation. <u>BOTH non-expendable personal property and real property are required to be inventoried for Fiscal Year 2025.</u>”</p> <p>A physical inventory requires that each applicable item be seen by the person conducting the inventory. KDE continuously reviews its inventory to remove outdated items.</p>	
79	Fiscal Policies and Procedures: Workflow	<p>“1.11 Observation: KDE’s fiscal workflow can improve.”</p> <p>“1.11.a Recommendation: KDE should conduct a needs analysis and detailed workflow documentation of budgets, expenditure approvals, and disbursements. This should include consulting internal KDE stakeholders who can articulate their issues and suggested solutions for KDE to evaluate and implement.”</p> <p>“1.11.b Recommendation: KDE should create a purchase request and payment workflow diagram.”</p> <p>“1.11.c Recommendation: KDE should compare the Department’s needs for budgeting and accounting system capabilities with Kentucky Budgeting System (KBUD) and Management Administrative &amp;</p>	<p>KDE utilizes a SharePoint based Department Purchase Request (DPR) system for all purchasing and fiscal activities across the department, including Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB), Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) and Area Technology Centers (ATCs).</p> <p>KDE also has a SharePoint based Financial Routing system where department contracts, Request for Proposals, and Request for Applications are routed for programmatic, fiscal, legal, and Commissioner review.</p> <p>The DPR and Financial Routing systems were both updated in May 2025. Division of Budgets and Financial Management (DBFM) staff provided training to select KDE staff on the new DPR system, including KSB and KSD fiscal managers. The trainings provided by DFBM staff were recorded and made available to staff. DBFM also provided applicable staff with a guide for submitting an initial DPR and DPR for payment after the service/product is received. DBFM also consistently provides trainings for fiscal processes.</p>	<p>It appears that KDE has addressed some of the fiscal workflow concerns relayed by KDE staff during the audit period. KDE should continue to adhere to Recommendations 1.11.a, .b, and .c.</p>

		Reporting System (eMARS). For unmet KDE needs, the Department should create and execute an implementation plan or explore enhancements to the systems as applicable.	Kentucky Budgeting System (KBUD) and the Enhanced Management Administrative Reporting System (eMARS) are systems used by DBFM. A few additional KDE staff have eMARS read-only access to monitor fund activity, but all payments, allotment modifications, appropriation increases, etc., are handled by DBFM staff. DBFM works with the Office of the Controller in the Finance and Administration Cabinet on additional needs and workflows in eMARS that would improve KDE processes.	
79	Fiscal Policies and Procedures: Procurement	<p>“1.12 Observation: KDE purchasing processes present challenges for KDE internal staff, Area Technology Centers (ATCs), the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD), and the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB), especially those processes related to the Master Agreement and technology approvals. This is especially the case at the KDE-run schools, which need to operate as schools, not state agencies. These challenges result in lost purchasing power and other adverse impacts at the ATCs.”</p> <p>“1.12.a Recommendation: KDE should streamline IT procurement approvals.”</p>	KDE has begun working to streamline the process to procure the items that all ATCs utilize such as the industry standard certifications. KDE staff are working with the ATCs and vendors to obtain one price quote and then issue one department purchase request, strategic purchase request (SPR1), and purchase order for all ATCs to use rather than each ATC submitting their own. KDE will continue to work on IT approvals to improve timeliness.	The APA commends KDE for its adherence to Observation 1.12 and newfound desire to improve procurement processes. KDE should adhere to the specific recommendations outlined in this report regarding those processes, especially as it relates to ATCs, KSD, and KSB.
81	Fiscal Policies and Procedures: Procurement	Recommendation 1.12.b states: “KDE should change ATC, KSD, and KSB procurement practices to procure goods and services under the Kentucky Model Procurement Code (KMPC).”	<p>KDE (including the ATCs, KSD, and KSB) does procure goods and services under the Kentucky Model Procurement Code (KMPC). This is a requirement of the state legislature pursuant to KRS Chapter 45A. The Master Agreements complained of within the report are a function of the KMPC.</p> <p>As currently written, the report fails to recognize the procurement requirements imposed on KDE by the legislature. That is, KDE (including the ATCs, KSD, and KSB) must comply with the <u>entirety</u> of the KMPC. School districts that operate under the KMPC, however, need only</p>	The APA has clarified what it meant by Recommendation 1.12.b. The point is that KDE should explore ways to allow ATCs, KSD, and KSB to operate more like school districts than KDE as it relates to procurement.

			<p>comply with a <u>portion</u> of the KMPC. See KRS 45A.343. Simply put, if KDE (including the ATCs, KSD, and KSB) is to procure goods and services consistent with a school district, a legislative change is needed.</p> <p>The recommendation should be updated to reflect that the legislature is the entity that must make a change, not KDE.</p>	
82-83	Technology Systems: Modernizing Internal KDE Tech Capabilities	<p>“1.13 Observation: KDE has several paper-based, email-based, and spreadsheet-based processes, some of which involve the disbursement of billions of dollars in Commonwealth funds. Some of these are in the process of automation but are not yet complete, such as the third-party vendor creation of a system to support disbursement of SEEK funds. Others are travel reimbursement (paper/email based), purchase requests (email based), and internal budget tracking (spreadsheet based).”</p> <p>“1.13.a Recommendation: KDE should create or purchase IT systems to move away from using spreadsheet software for major processes.”</p>	<p>KDE currently utilizes a mandatory internal department purchase request (DPR) system to track purchasing and a mandatory internal financial routing system to track contracts, request for applications, request for proposals, etc. These are not paper based systems. The DPR system requires approvals of supervisors, fiscal office, and IT. The financial routing system requires program expert, supervisor, fiscal, legal, and Commissioner review and approval. For spreadsheets containing fiscal information, these are available on KDE’s website for districts and the public to view.</p> <p>For SEEK allocations, KDE is currently in discussion with the Finance and Administration Cabinet regarding a competitive solicitation to automate the allocation process.</p>	<p>The APA observed KDE staff relying heavily on paper-based, email-based, and spreadsheet-based systems involving the disbursement of billions of dollars in Commonwealth funds. The risks inherent in those systems are obvious—carryover error, security breaches, approval mix-ups, and more. The point of the observation is that KDE should more effectively use technology to avoid those risks. KDE can be just as transparent in using those processes as it is with publicly posting spreadsheet information.</p>
83	Technology Systems: Modernizing Internal KDE Tech Capabilities	<p>“1.14 Observation: Student data tracking audit information comes in from the 171 districts in various paper and electronic formats and is saved on a shared drive. The group responsible for student data tracking audits has three people to monitor the 171 audits for submission and content.”</p> <p>“1.14.a Recommendation: KDE</p>	<p>The KDE Student Tracking Branch is working to obtain electronic devices to organize and eliminate overburdensome paperwork. The Student Tracking Branch intends to create a system that electronically tracks and captures attendance audit discrepancies and corrections. Due to the confidential nature of these records (i.e. the use of student names and identification numbers), this data must be stored securely, and the system will be required to have specialized fields specific to Kentucky. As such, at this time KDE does not believe that an off-the-shelf product can be utilized.</p>	<p>The APA commends KDE for recognizing the problems outlined in Observation 1.14. As the APA has recommended, KDE should explore products that it believes protect the confidentiality of the information discussed here.</p>

		should implement Commercial Off- the-Shelf (COTS) document and/or audit management systems. Purpose- built auditing and document management software have specific functions and even artificial intelligence to automate some of the more routine functions.”		
83	Technology Systems: Modernizing Internal KDE Tech Capabilities	“1.14.b Recommendation: KDE should review the document retention schedule with Kentucky Department for Library and Archives. Where it is not obvious, jointly understand the need and basis for document retention, including the format (paper, electronic, etc.) requirements. Where possible, update the retention schedule, and even statute or regulation as needed.”	<p>KDE just conducted an agency wide review and update of the entirety of its <a href="#">records retention schedule in June 2023</a>. This project was led and managed by KDE’s Deputy Commissioner &amp; General Counsel.</p> <p>KDE does not have the ability to change statutes. Changing statutes is a legislative power.</p>	The point of Recommendation 1.14.b is to suggest to KDE that it should move away from collecting and storing so many records in paper format as opposed to a more efficient and effective electronic storage method. KDE should explore whatever change is needed to move in that direction.
85	District Support: Facilities	<p>“1.18 Observation: The facility funding formula is 35 years old and may lead to inequitable facilities conditions statewide.”</p> <p>“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.”</p>	<p>KDE has no statutory authority to change the facility funding model. However, as part of its interactions with stakeholders, school district personnel, and legislators, KDE has spent many years educating others about the current education funding model as well as issues that have arisen over time with the existing funding for schools, including facilities funding. KDE has presented to educational cooperatives, legislative committees, legislative task forces, as well as advisory committees.</p> <p>To add, the Commissioner has charged the Superintendents Advisory Council to review the current facilities funding model and to review funding models from other states in order to make recommendations to the General Assembly.</p>	The APA commends KDE for recognizing the importance of Observation 1.18 and its corresponding recommendation by attempting to engage relevant parties to work toward solutions.

<p>101-102</p>	<p>Results for Further Financial Analysis: SEEK Review</p>	<p>“2.1 Finding: KDE improperly returned budgeted Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funds.”                  “2.1.a Recommendation: KDE should heed the language of the biennial budget bill and utilize all SEEK funds as legally permitted. Excess funds should not lapse but be utilized to support allowable adjustment factors as needed.”</p>	<p>This Finding and Recommendation appears to relate to language in House Bill 6 (R.S. 2024) which states on page 54:  <b>“(9) SEEK Adjustment Factors:</b> Funds allocated for the SEEK base and its adjustment factors that are not needed for the base or a particular adjustment factor may be allocated to other adjustment factors, if funds for that adjustment factor are not sufficient.                  Mandated reports shall be submitted pursuant to Part III, 24. of this Act.”</p> <p>The keywords, in this case, are <u>“if funds for that adjustment factor are not sufficient...”</u>.</p> <p>On page 58 of House Bill 6, the budget appropriation for SEEK Transportation states:  <b>“(20) SEEK Transportation:</b> Notwithstanding KRS 157.370 and 157.360(2)(c), included in the above General Fund appropriation is \$358,996,100 in fiscal year 2024-2025 and \$398,884,500 in fiscal year 2025-2026 to support pupil transportation. Mandated reports shall be submitted pursuant to Part III, 24. of this Act.”</p> <p>The language “notwithstanding” suspends the statutes which determine the full cost of SEEK Transportation. Therefore, the funding provided is sufficient for this adjustment factor. In this case, KDE would not have the authority to adjust the appropriation to the full cost of SEEK Transportation. In FY 24, there was no excess to be applied to other SEEK adjustment factors. However, in reviewing past budget bills, the language mentioned above was not included and the ability to apply “excess” funds to other SEEK adjustment factors was allowable. In the future, KDE will verify the allowability of moving excess funds with the appropriate state agencies.</p>	<p>KDE essentially admits that it failed to recognize the subsection (9) language in the past four fiscal years to ensure proper SEEK-adjustment-factor funding. KDE’s response here invents a flawed and improper legal position in an attempt to justify its failure to fully utilize the tools the General Assembly gave it to ensure proper funding of all SEEK adjustment factors.</p> <p>The “notwithstanding” language KDE highlights in an attempt to support its failure to ensure proper SEEK-adjustment-factor funding misses the mark. The General Assembly included that language to save KDE the trouble of conducting the SEEK transportation cost calculation outlined in KRS 157.360(2)(c) and KRS 157.370. That language does <i>not</i>, however, prohibit KDE from using the quoted subsection (9) from House Bill 6 to ensure full SEEK-transportation-adjustment-factor funding if the amount of money the General Assembly specified in subsection (20) turns out to be insufficient. If the General Assembly truly intended the prohibition KDE alleges, the General Assembly would have included subsection (9) in the “Notwithstanding” language KDE points to instead of simply the calculation statutes cited.</p> <p>The APA recommends that, in the</p>
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				future, KDE consult the General Assembly on matters like this instead of publicly criticizing it. Had KDE done so here, it would have been able to properly allocate excess SEEK funds the General Assembly gave it to cover any alleged funding shortfalls.
106	Strategic Initiatives: United We Learn	“This work will culminate in a new state framework for assessment and accountability that will be presented to the General Assembly for approval in spring 2025 and for implementation to begin in summer 2025.”	This work will culminate in a new state framework for assessment and accountability that will be presented to the General Assembly for approval in spring 2026 and for implementation to begin in summer 2026.	The APA will update the report to reflect KDE’s updated United We Learn initiative implementation plan.
111	Government Relations & Partnerships: Governor’s Office	“While there are formal instances of these aforementioned education and labor state agency leaders interacting through Boards or committees, they reportedly do not meet informally or for the purposes of collaborating on strategy alignment, despite them proclaiming the importance of doing so.”	As tasked by the Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC), Division of Innovation and CPE staff meet monthly to discuss progress towards individual program goals and collaborative efforts, including alignment across a P-20 competency continuum. A crosswalk between model performance outcomes at 12 <sup>th</sup> grade and those determined at “benchmark” level upon college entry is underway. Furthermore, the Commissioner meets regularly with the Secretary of the Education & Labor Cabinet, and the President of the Council on Postsecondary Education.	The point of Observation 3.4 and Recommendation 3.4.a is to inform KDE that its current collaboration and communication across the executive branch’s various relevant boards and committees is insufficient. The APA encourages KDE to improve that collaboration and communication.
115	State Laws & Regulations	“3.7 Observation: KDE appears overly focused on compliance with laws and regulations.” The report also states: “During focus groups and interviews, staff cited state regulations with ease and frequency when discussing their work. The team noted that compared with other state education agency reviews they have conducted, the intensity of focus on regulations by staff across all levels is unusual.”	As written, this portion of the report suggests that KDE and its staff should ignore applicable statutes and regulations. KDE is an executive branch agency that must implement the laws passed by the legislative branch. Furthermore, the Kentucky Board of Education promulgates administrative regulations governing the public schools throughout the state, as well as the operations of KDE. KRS 156.029. Pursuant to KRS 156.148, the Commissioner of Education “shall carry out all duties assigned to him or her by law.” In fact, House Bill 825 (2024) which called for this special examination required an assessment of “the extent to which the department complies with statutory mandates and requirements.” Being “overly focused” on compliance with applicable laws is contrary to the very charge of KDE and HB 825.	The point of Observation 3.7 and Recommendation 3.7 is to inform KDE that its focus on compliance with laws and regulations is causing it to lose sight of opportunities to innovate and make improvements in support of student success. In short, KDE is more reactive than proactive. The purpose of Observation 3.7 and Recommendation 3.7.a is not to discourage adherence to laws and regulations; rather, it is to encourage KDE to work with the



			From a federal funding perspective, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) requires the SEA of a state to ensure compliance with all federal programs. This vital function ensures that federal dollars are distributed to LEAs without interruption.	General Assembly to prioritize impactful legislation for Kentucky’s students and to shift KDE’s focus from a compliance mindset to that of an agency focused on support of Kentucky’s schools and students.
116	State Laws & Regulations	The current report describes the Kentucky School Law Book by stating: “This document is 2,006 pages and is available for purchase on Lexis Nexus in paper format.” The report continues: “It does not appear to include any information than what is already publicly available and well-organized on the Kentucky General Assembly website.”	Currently, the report does not make clear that the Kentucky School Laws Book is also available free of charge on KDE’s website: <a href="https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Pages/Kentucky-School-Laws.aspx">https://www.education.ky.gov/districts/legal/Pages/Kentucky-School-Laws.aspx</a>  The report fails to explain that the Kentucky School Laws Book is annotated. That is, for every statute contained within the book, applicable court opinions, attorney general opinions, and related administrative regulations are noted. For court opinions and attorney general opinions, a brief summary of the decision is included. None of these things are available on the Kentucky General Assembly website. Furthermore, the Kentucky School Laws Book is indexed by topic so that interested parties may locate applicable laws by searching the index for a general topic description.	The APA is happy to update its report with this information. But this information only adds to the overall point that KDE is mainly focused on compliance with the law instead of being equally focused on opportunities to innovate and make improvements in support of student success.  Moreover, given the volume of information and length of the document, the Kentucky School Law Book appears to require a great deal of time and resources to assemble and annotate. The utility of the Kentucky School Law Book, including the frequency of access and user type, is unknown.
116	State Laws & Regulations	“Although 78 education-related bills were introduced in 2024, only 20 became law.”	Although <b>251</b> education-related bills and resolutions were introduced in 2024, only <b>26</b> became law.	It appears the APA and KDE have a difference of opinion as to what constitutes a relevant education-related bill for purposes of this examination. Figure 53 explains the APA’s methodology behind its identification of what an “education-related bill” is for purposes of the report.

125	Historical Context of the State Board of Education	The report currently states: “During the 1980s, KBE members were appointed by the Governor with little structural oversight. The Board appointed the Commissioner of Education, but there was little direct influence over local districts with much power resting at the district level.”	In the 1980s, the KBE did not appoint a Commissioner of Education. At that time, the chief state school officer was an elected Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990, in an effort to remove the political influence of a statewide elected chief state school officer from the public school system, created the Commissioner of Education post. Later, the Kentucky Constitution was amended to abolish the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction.	The APA is happy to update its report with the additional historical information provided by KDE.
126	Board Composition	The report states: “There is no current private industry or business representation on the Board.”	The report acknowledges that one KBE member is a former university president. However, it fails to acknowledge that the board member is also a seasoned business professional who founded and managed multiple companies throughout his career.  Furthermore, another KBE member is referred to as a “parent/family advocate” but her past business experience as an administrator and founder of multiple companies is overlooked.	The APA’s assertion still rings true, as there is not <i>current</i> private industry or business representation on the Board. Moreover, for the KBE member referred to as “parent/family advocate,” there is no mention of past business experience in her biography found on the SBE webpage.
126	Board Composition	The report currently states: “There are two members with terms that expire in 2026.”	There are <b>four voting and two non-voting</b> members with terms that expire in 2026.	The APA is happy to update its report to reflect KDE’s additional information.
127	Board Composition	“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.”	Appointments to the KBE are made by the Governor.	KDE correctly recognizes the role of Governor Beshear in Kentucky’s education system. As the “Chief Magistrate” of Kentucky with “supreme executive power,” Ky. Const. § 69, and the constitutional

				duty to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed,” Ky. Const. § 81, Governor Beshear bears responsibility for the performance of KDE and KBE as outlined throughout this report. The APA encourages Governor Beshear to take this report seriously and follow its recommendations to improve education across the Commonwealth for students, parents, teachers, and school district staff.
127-135	Board Self-Assessment; Board Mission, Priorities, & Goals; Board Agendas, Meetings, & Support; Governance & Leadership	4.2.a Recommendation through 4.8.a Recommendation	<p>The KBE Chair and Vice Chair will bring these recommendations before the board for further discussion and consideration at its August 2025 retreat and regularly scheduled meetings as needed. As these recommendations concern board operations and ongoing board development, it is important to gather input from the full board as to implementation.</p> <p>The KBE will also consider the recommendations related to the Commissioner goals that address student achievement issues and teacher recruitment and retention as priority goals.</p>	The APA is happy to hear that KDE and KBE will take seriously this portion of the report.
130	Board Action	“4.4.a Recommendation: Share presentations or other materials ahead of time to allow Board members to consider questions and points of discussion.”	The report at page 132 correctly acknowledges that “[a] Board portal provides Board members with information on all agenda items in advance of the meeting,” and that “the Board is given a great deal of information and reports through the portal.” Recommendation 4.4.a should be updated for consistency.	The APA has clarified its recommendation to focus more on the point it is trying to convey: KBE needs to be getting the right information in a timely manner to allow for robust, action-oriented discussion. If that were to happen, then less meeting time can be spent on long presentations and more on meaningful discussion.
131	Board Agendas, Meetings & Support: Meeting Duration & Attendance	Figure 67: KBE Meeting Duration & Attendance Long is listed as absent for December 2024 and February 2025 meetings.	Long, who resigned on November 4, 2024, should be replaced with “Vacancy” for the December 2024 and February 2025 meetings.	The APA is happy to update its report with this additional information.

133	Board Agendas, Meetings & Support: Operation of the Meeting	“4.6.a Recommendation: KDE should ensure all detailed relevant background information is included in the pre-meeting Board packet[.]”	The report at page 132 correctly acknowledges that “[a] Board portal provides Board members with information on all agenda items in advance of the meeting,” and that “the Board is given a great deal of information and reports through the portal.” Recommendation 4.6.a should be updated for consistency.	The APA has clarified its recommendation to focus more on the point it is trying to convey: KBE needs to be getting the right information in a timely manner to allow for robust, action-oriented discussion. If that were to happen, then less meeting time can be spent on long presentations and more on meaningful discussion.
133	Board Agendas, Meetings & Support: Operation of the Meeting	“4.7 Observation: Additionally, in January there was the announcement of a lawsuit brought by a group of Kentucky high school students alleging the state is not meeting its constitutional duty to provide adequate and equitable education for all children. The Board made no mention of either matter in subsequent meetings.” “4.7.a Recommendation: While legal counsel might suggest some limitations in discussing a legal matter, the fact that the Board did not even acknowledge the student lawsuit that was news across the country cannot be justified.”	The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) is a defendant in the student suit referenced. During its meeting on February 5, 2025, the KBE went into closed session with its legal counsel for the purpose of discussing the pending student suit filed against the KBE. See <a href="#">video recording beginning at 11:09</a> . KRS 61.810(1)(c) specifically exempts “discussions of proposed or pending litigation against or on behalf of the [KBE]” from occurring in meetings open to the public. Furthermore, there is no requirement that public servants or agencies publicly acknowledge every lawsuit filed against it in an open meeting. As such, Observation 4.7 and Recommendation 4.7.a are inaccurate representations of the KBE’s action in response to the student suit. The KBE discussed the legal action pending against it, but it did so in closed session as anticipated by the Kentucky Open Meetings Act. Communication between the KBE’s legal counsel and the KBE related to the student suit are protected by the attorney-client privilege. Furthermore, the KBE’s answer filed in response to the student suit was filed in court records that are open to the public for inspection.  As correctly noted elsewhere in the APA’s draft report, the KBE receives routine litigation reports from its legal counsel.	The point of Observation 4.7 and Recommendation 4.7.a is to inform KDE that the public is not perceiving KBE as addressing critical education matters. Section 14 of the Kentucky Constitution commands that “[a]ll courts shall be open.” This means that, no matter what is discussed behind closed doors, the public will hear all the details about lawsuits against KBE and KDE. If KBE does not at least somewhat speak about lawsuits against it in open meetings, KBE and KDE’s transparency is called into question. Plus, without such open communication, the public will not believe KBE and KDE are taking these lawsuits seriously. Observation 4.7 and Recommendation 4.7.a. have been tweaked to focus on these points.
134	Governance & Leadership: Policy Implementation & Oversight	The report states: “While the issue of student cell phone use in schools caused some Board discussion about a potential policy decision, the Board has been reluctant to discuss oversight of standards-seeming to be comfortable allowing	As currently written, this statement suggests the KBE deferred decision-making or setting policy within its authority. However, such a suggestion is inaccurate.  At the time of the board discussion and the draft report, KRS 158.165 provided: “The board of education of <u>each school district</u> shall develop a policy regarding the possession and use of a personal telecommunications device by a student	The report is accurate as written. Regardless of whether statutes place ultimate responsibility on KBE for a particular policy, KBE absolutely has the authority to suggest policies that school districts should adopt. See, e.g., KRS 156.029; KRS 156.070. In fact, KBE has

		decisions to be made at the local level.”	while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, and shall include the policy in the district’s written standards of student conduct.” The KBE cannot regulate a different procedure when the legislature has specifically provided how matters are to be managed at the local school district level. See KRS 13A.120(2)(e). The report should be updated to remove any suggestion that the KBE failed or deferred taking action regarding student cell phone use.	“management and control of the common schools and all programs operated in these schools,” KRS 156.070, so it has the duty to offer guidance to schools on appropriate education policies. The point of the quoted statement of the report is to encourage KBE to offer school districts needed guidance, like in the area of student cell phone use.
138	Model Curriculum Framework	<p>“5.2 Finding: Little evidence was found to indicate that KDE is systematically tracking MCF implementation in districts. KDE is unable to determine the impact of the MCF on teaching quality or student outcomes.”</p> <p>“5.2.a Recommendation: KDE should create a data system to track districts’ use of the MCF.”</p>	The Office of Teaching & Learning (OTL) is currently engaged in work with RIVET Education to build a state and local district dashboard aligned with the KDE: (1) <a href="#">Curriculum Implementation Framework</a> as part of Section 1 of the MCF; and (2) Instructional Practice Guides to support classroom observation, feedback and reflection as part of the <a href="#">Curriculum-Based Professional Learning Guidance</a> document. This dashboard will support and track curriculum implementation and curriculum-based professional learning at the state and local level. The dashboard will be piloted in 2025-2026 and available for statewide use in 2026-2027.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Finding 5.2 and Recommendation 5.2.a outlined in the report.
139	Academic Standards: Overview	“5.3 Finding: The KYStandards.org website is easy to navigate overall, but the PDF documents that contain the standards are difficult to navigate. For example, the Reading and Writing standards for all grade levels are embedded in a 458-page document. The Mathematics standards are included in a 260-page document.”	<p>The <a href="#">Course Code Standards documents</a> exist for the purpose of being an easier format for teachers to view standards by a particular grade-level and course. They may be found on the KDE website as well as Kystandards.org.</p> <p>The standards documents themselves are developed to not only communicate the grade-level or grade-band standards but also to support teacher clarity and are approved by the Advisory Panels and Review Committee for each content area. They are included in board regulation as documents incorporated by reference and cannot be altered without a regulatory amendment.</p>	The point of Finding 5.3 is to underscore the need for KDE to simplify and streamline the resources it supplies to teachers, particularly as it relates to education standards. Course code standards documents work only as well as teachers and other relevant staff are able to access, understand, and implement them.

141-42	Academic Standards: Academic Standards Review Process	“5.4 Observation: The next review for Technology and Library/Media standards is not included in KDE’s published Standards Review Timeline.” “5.4.a Recommendation: KDE should update the published timeline for reviewing Academic Standards to reflect a complete timeline for all reviews.”	The published <a href="#">timeline</a> was updated in June 2025 to reflect a complete timeline for all reviews.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE updated its timeline in light of the APA’s report.
143	Selecting High-Quality Instructional Resources: Overview	“In the 2025 legislative session, House Bill 156 was introduced to amend KRS 165.405. It calls for reestablishing the STC as the State Instructional Materials Commission.”	In the 2025 legislative session, <b>Senate Bill 207</b> was introduced and passed to amend outdated statutes provided in KRS Chapter 156 related to textbooks and the State Textbook Commission to reflect the current needs of local school districts in selecting and implementing K-12 high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs). SB 207, Section 14(1) amends KRS 156.405 to repurpose the State Textbook Commission and establish the State Quality Curriculum Task Force.	The APA is happy to include information about Senate Bill 207 in its report. That information does not change the point of the discussion about the State Textbook Commission, which is the fact that it has not met since 2015.
144	Selecting High-Quality Instructional Resources: Tracking the Usage of HQIR	“5.6.a Recommendation: KDE should create incentives, or requirements, for all districts to complete the annual HQIR survey to allow KDE to identify gaps among districts and opportunities for statewide collaboration.”	Unfortunately, KDE/KBE cannot impose a requirement to report this information. HB 48 (2025) provides: “On or after the effective date of this Act, the state board shall not impose any new reporting requirement upon public schools or public school districts that is not expressly authorized by state statute or federal law.” See Sec. 11(6). The report should be updated to reflect the inability of KDE/KBE to impose such a requirement.	The point of Finding 5.6 is that KDE is not obtaining the information it needs to determine the effectiveness of its HQIRs. Although it may believe that it cannot force districts to give it such information, KDE does not dispute that it can provide incentives for districts to do so.
145-146	Selecting High-Quality Instructional Resources: Comparison States	“5.7 Finding: Districts must budget locally for the adoption of HQIRs because state funds are not provided for implementation.” “5.7.a Recommendation: KDE should evaluate its budget and/or work with the General Assembly to ensure funds can be allocated towards the adoption of HQIRs.”	KDE intends to make an additional budget request for \$17,000,000 to be appropriated in the 2026-2028 biennial budget to support HQIRs.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE intends to act on Finding 5.7 and Recommendation 5.7.a.





146	Professional Learning: Overview	“Professional learning that many districts use is Rivet Education, a national provider for curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL). They developed an implementation framework which outlines the structures, types, and characteristics of CBPL that ‘supports and strengthens instruction’ for teachers to skillfully use HQIRs.’ This framework, in addition to Rivet Education’s other professional learning resources like the Professional Learning Partner Guide, are provided as complementary resources for Kentucky districts in planning and executing CBPL related to the HQIRs used locally.”	Districts are encouraged to invest in curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) aligned to their adopted HQIRs. Rivet Education, a national leader in defining CBPL and signaling quality for states and districts on the nation’s best CBPL providers, has developed an implementation framework which outlines the structures, types, and characteristics of CBPL that “supports and strengthens instruction” for teachers to skillfully use HQIRs.” This framework, in addition to Rivet Education’s other professional learning resources like the Professional Learning Partner Guide, are provided as complementary resources for Kentucky districts in planning and executing CBPL related to the HQIRs used locally.	The APA is happy to include in the report the information that KDE has provided here.
151	Early Literacy and Structured Literacy: Overview	“Relatedly, the Ready to Read Act (KRS 158.305), establishes KDE’s responsibilities related to structured literacy.”	Relatedly, the <b>Read to Succeed Act</b> (KRS 158.305) establishes KDE’s responsibilities related to structured literacy.	The APA has clarified the acts it is referencing in the report.
152, 154	Early Literacy & Structured Literacy: Coaching Model	“5.9 Finding: The current number of Early Literacy coaches (23) is not sufficient to meet the stated literacy goals. KDE staff described the goal of having 80 coaches, which is a number more aligned to other successful peer state models.” “5.9.a Recommendation: KDE should determine the additional resources and funding needed to increase the number of State Literacy Coaching Specialists (SLCSs) in schools and communicate this need to the General Assembly.”	As of July 1, 2025, the Division of Early Literacy will have 5 state regional literacy directors, 37 school-based literacy coaches, and 8 regional principal support leaders. This moves KDE closer to the goal of 80 coaches while still ensuring local schools are partnered with individuals who have great evidence-based early literacy expertise.	The APA is happy to see that KDE had made progress towards Finding 5.9 and Recommendation 5.9.a.

<p>155</p>	<p>Early Literacy &amp; Structured Literacy: The Three-Cueing Model</p>	<p>Figure 80: Three-Cueing Bills by Comparison State.</p> <p>“Kentucky Three-cueing system status: Not banned Information on Bill, Act or Code: HB 612 (2024) and HB 528 (2025) proposed banning the three-cueing system. Date/Year Passed or Adopted: HB 612 passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate failed to vote on it – not passed. HB 528 did not make it to a vote – not passed.”</p>	<p>Revise chart to reflect accurate information.</p> <p>State: Kentucky Three-cueing system status: Not banned - <b>requires schools to implement a comprehensive reading program to include instructional resources in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension</b></p> <p>Information on Bill, Act or Code: HB 612 (2024) and HB 528 (2025) proposed banning the three-cueing system. <b>SB 9 (2022) amended KRS 158.305 to state "each superintendent or public charter school board shall adopt a common comprehensive reading program that is determined by the department to be reliable, valid, and aligned to reading and writing standards required by KRS 158.6453 and outlined in administrative regulation promulgated by the Kentucky Board of Education for kindergarten through grade three (3)."</b></p> <p><b>SB 9 (2022) also amended KRS 158.791(c) to state "[t]he Kentucky Department of Education shall provide technical assistance to local school districts in the identification of high- quality professional development, including teaching strategies to help teachers in each subject area to:</b> <b>1. Implement evidence-based reading, intervention, and instructional strategies that emphasize phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and connections between reading and writing acquisition, and motivation to read to address the diverse needs of students."</b></p> <p>Date/Year Passed or Adopted: HB 612 passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate failed to vote on it – not passed. HB 528 did not make it to a vote – not passed.</p>	<p>The suggested information is unnecessary to add and can be viewed by the reader here if necessary.</p>
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158, 160	English Learners	<p>“5.13 Finding: KDE has no staff members fully dedicated to supporting districts with the specific learning needs of EL students.” “5.13.a Recommendation: KDE should establish at least one full- time position within the Department dedicated to improving instruction and academic outcomes of ELs.”</p>	This staff member has been secured and will begin at KDE in July 2025.	The APA is happy to see that KDE is taking seriously Finding 5.13 and Recommendation 5.13.a of the report.
162	Kentucky State Assessments: Overview	<p>Figure 86: Kentucky Annual State Assessments. In the Grades column, Grade 11 is currently listed as a tested grade in reading and mathematics for students in the Alternate Assessment program.</p>	<p>Students in the Alternate Assessment program take one reading and one mathematics assessment during high school, in grade 10. Each single content area test is divided into two parts, one part given during each of two test windows (fall and spring).</p> <p>Grade 11 should be removed from AKSA Reading and Mathematics. Alternative KSA Science, Social studies and Writing tests are administered once per grade band.</p>	<p>KDE currently lists Grade 11 as a tested year for the AKSA on its website. <a href="https://www.education.ky.gov/A/Assessments/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.education.ky.gov/A/Assessments/Pages/default.aspx</a>. But the APA will reflect KDE’s suggested change here upon its representation.</p>
164	Kentucky State Assessments: Federal Requirements	<p>Figure 87: Federal Requirements for Annual State Assessments.  In the Kentucky’s Alignment with Federal Requirements column the table indicates that Kentucky exceeds federal assessment requirements by administering the reading Alternative KSA and mathematics Alternative KSA twice in high school.</p>	<p>The language that the state exceeds federal requirements by administering the Alternate reading and mathematics summative assessments twice in high school is inaccurate. Instead of “Exceeds” for the Alternative KSA, the language should be corrected to “Meets.”</p>	As outlined in the previous comment, KDE should update its website to reflect this information.

164	Kentucky State Assessments: Kentucky Requirements	<p>“KDE is responsible for supporting the implementation of additional assessments that are required under Kentucky law. These assessments include the following: [...]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing KSA and Alternative KSA in grades five, eight, and 11[...]</li> </ul> <p>Alternative KSA – administered one additional time in high school for Reading and Mathematics”</p>	<p>The third bullet should note that writing is comprised of On Demand and Editing and Mechanics, as required by state law. (“KSA/ Alternate KSA Writing (on-demand and editing and mechanics).”</p> <p>The phrase in the 5<sup>th</sup> bullet “-administered one additional time in high school for Reading and Mathematics” should be removed.</p>	<p>The APA has already provided these details earlier in the report in Figure 86 but is happy to do so again here and will update the report accordingly based on the information KDE has now provided.</p>
166	Kentucky State Assessments: Kentucky Requirements	<p>“Kentucky also requires students to take a standalone writing assessment in fifth grade, eighth grade, and eleventh grade. While four out of five of Kentucky’s peer states do not require students to take a writing assessment (in addition to the federally mandated Reading/Language Arts assessment), Florida similarly requires students to complete writing assessments in grades four through ten. Figure 89 below includes the seven states that scored top five in the U.S. on one or both of the fourth and eighth grade NAEP writing assessments in 2024. None of these seven states require a standalone writing assessment. They do, however, incorporate writing into their ELA or reading assessments.”</p>	<p>The paragraph with the description of writing compared to peer states does not mention that writing includes both on-demand and editing and mechanics, as required by state law.</p>	<p>The APA has already provided these details earlier in the report but is happy to do so again here.</p>
167	Kentucky State Assessments: Kentucky Requirements	<p>“Kentucky requires eleventh grade students to take the ACT; students have the option to take it again in twelfth grade/”</p>	<p>The senior retake of the ACT at grade 12 was a temporary opportunity for students. 2024 was the last available option for senior retakes of the ACT.</p>	<p>As outlined earlier, KDE should update its website to reflect this information.</p>

<p>171</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards &amp; State Assessment Passage Rates</p>	<p>“State Assessment Passage Rates”</p>	<p>This section is titled “Analysis of Proficiency Standard and State Assessment Passage Rates.” The description is focused on “Passage Rates” which should be labeled proficiency rates. There is no “passing” of state assessments or NAEP. Proficiency standards set by each state and NAEP report on achievement level standards. While comparisons of state assessment results to NAEP results can be made, states have different curriculum standards and definitions of proficiency, making direct comparisons challenging.</p>	<p>Comparing state assessment and NAEP results, when done in a methodologically sound way, is an appropriate tool for understanding educational progress. The NAEP, also known as the Nation’s Report Card, is specifically designed to allow for comparisons of student achievement between states and other jurisdictions. NAEP results allow for comparisons of what representative students know and can do among states, demographic groups, and over time. APA has added additional language in the report related to proficiency rates for reader clarity.</p>
<p>171</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards &amp; State Assessment Passage Rates</p>	<p>“6.2 Finding: In 2023-24, the proportion of students scoring proficient or higher on the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) is not aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for fourth grade Reading and eighth grade Mathematics.</p> <p>As highlighted in Figure 92, for fourth grade Reading, students performed significantly better on the KSA – there was a 36- percentage point difference between the KSA and NAEP. For eighth grade Mathematics, there was a 13- percentage point gap. This suggests that the proficiency standards for these two areas are less rigorous.”</p>	<p>This finding is based on an inaccurate interpretation/representation of data.</p> <p>6.2 Finding focusing on a 36-point difference in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading between KSA and NAEP is incorrect. The actual difference in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading is 17 points.</p>	<p>KDE’s suggested point difference does not change Finding 6.2 and Recommendation 6.2.a. Either way, KSA proficiency standards are less rigorous than NAEP. In fact, the APA has updated Finding 6.2 to reflect the fact that a significant point gap between the KSA and NAEP also exists for eighth grade reading, along with KDE represented fourth grade reading point difference.</p> <p>Rigorous proficiency standards are an important tool for ensuring that Kentucky’s children receive the education they need to thrive in the world.</p>

<p>172</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards &amp; State Assessment Passage Rates</p>	<p>Figure 92: Percent of Students Identified as Proficient or Advanced / Distinguished on NAEP &amp; KSA, 2023-2024.</p> <p>The 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading KSA bar shows that 50% of students were proficient in reading on the state assessment for the 2023-2024 school year. This inaccurately indicates that 69% of students were Proficient/Distinguished in reading.</p> <p>The 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading KSA bar shows that 11% of students were proficient in reading on the state assessment for the 2023-2024 school year. This inaccurately indicates that 41% of students were Proficient/Distinguished in reading.</p>	<p>The data in Figure 92 is incorrect for KSA 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading.</p> <p>In Figure 92, the 50% proficient for 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading should be 31%, which combined with 19% distinguished equals 50% Proficient/Distinguished combined.</p> <p>The 11% proficient for 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading should be 24%, which combined with 17% distinguished equals 41% Proficient/Distinguished.</p> <p>This incorrect data also impacts Figure 93 on page 173. From Kentucky’s School Report Card (2023-2024)</p>  	<p>As before, KDE’s suggested figure updates do not change Finding 6.2 and Recommendation 6.2.a. KSA proficiency standards remain less rigorous than NAEP. In fact, the APA has updated Finding 6.2 to reflect the fact that a significant point gap between the KSA and NAEP also exists for eighth-grade reading, along with KDE represented fourth-grade reading point difference.</p> <p>Rigorous proficiency standards are an important tool for ensuring that Kentucky’s children receive the education they need to thrive in the world.</p>
<p>172</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards &amp; State Assessment</p>	<p>“Figure 93 depicts the difference in state annual assessment passage rates (students earning either a ‘Proficient’ or ‘Advanced’ score) in Kentucky and peer states compared to the NAEP. The 36-percentage point difference in the</p>	<p>At the bottom of page 172, the statement that Kentucky had the largest difference in passage rate between state assessment and NAEP is incorrect when using accurate data and should be removed.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to modify this statement in light of the information KDE has provided. As before, Finding 6.2 and Recommendation 6.2.a are not affected by these changes.</p>

	Passage Rates	<p>passage rates between the fourth grade Reading KSA and the fourth grade Reading NAEP was the largest difference across all comparison states.</p> <p>Notably, Florida and Tennessee have the most similarities between their state assessment and NAEP passage rates.”</p>		
173	Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards & State Assessment Passage Rates	<p>Figure 93: Difference in Passage Rates Between State Annual Assessments and NAEP.</p> <p>The figure shows a 36% proficiency rate difference between KSA performance and NAEP performance in grade 4 reading.</p> <p>The table shows a -1% proficiency rate difference between KSA performance and NAEP performance in grade 8 reading.</p>	<p>Kentucky data are incorrect in this graphic as a result of incorrect KSA percentages used in Figure 92. The difference in proficiency rate percentage for 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading should be 17% instead of 36%. The difference in proficiency rate for grade 8 reading should be positive 12% instead of -1%.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to modify this statement in light of the information KDE has provided. As before, Finding 6.2 and Recommendation 6.2.a are not affected by these changes.</p>
173	Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards & State Assessment Passage Rates	<p>“6.2.a Recommendation: KDE should examine the proficiency standards for fourth grade Reading and eighth grade Mathematics due to the misalignment with the NAEP proficiency standards.”</p>	<p>The recommendation is based on inaccurate data leading to a flawed conclusion. Kentucky’s differences are closer aligned to NAEP than in the original report and reasonably compared to Florida and Tennessee. The differences are much better than Alabama and Mississippi.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to modify this statement in light of the information KDE has provided. As before, Finding 6.2 and Recommendation 6.2.a are not affected by these changes.</p>



<p>175-176</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Analysis of Proficiency Standards &amp; State Assessment Passage Rates</p>	<p>Figure 96: Count of Schools by Overall Indicator Rating.</p>	<p>Data are incorrect in the Count of Schools and Percentage of Schools columns in every row. Incorrect terms are used to describe schools’/district’s overall performance. Color ratings are used instead.</p> <p>Accurate data are provided in red font on the table below:</p> <p><small>FIGURE 96: COUNT OF SCHOOLS BY OVERALL INDICATOR RATING</small></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Overall Indicator Rating</th> <th>Count of Schools</th> <th>Percentage of Schools</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;"><b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very Low</td> <td>67 59</td> <td>8% 8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>179 145</td> <td>20% 20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium</td> <td>323 242</td> <td>36% 34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>214 174</td> <td>24% 24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very High</td> <td>107 97</td> <td>12% 14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;"><b>MIDDLE SCHOOLS</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very Low</td> <td>22 24</td> <td>6% 8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>80 63</td> <td>20% 20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium</td> <td>161 113</td> <td>41% 35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>93 92</td> <td>23% 25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very High</td> <td>41 27</td> <td>10% 8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;"><b>HIGH SCHOOLS</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Overall Indicator Rating</td> <td>Count of Schools</td> <td>Percentage of Schools</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very Low</td> <td>32 17</td> <td>7% 7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>95 44</td> <td>19% 20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium</td> <td>190 88</td> <td>39% 39%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>138 54</td> <td>28% 24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very High</td> <td>37 25</td> <td>8% 11%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>Source: Data retrieved from Kentucky Department of Education, School Report Card Datasets. "Accountability Profile." <a href="https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24_ACGT_Profile.csv">https://kdeschoolreportcard.blob.core.windows.net/datasets/KYRC24_ACGT_Profile.csv</a>. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.</small></p> <p>Additionally, the terminology of “Very Low” through “Very High” is not used to describe Overall Performance Ratings. Instead, those terms describe Status performance levels on individual indicators. The data in this table are aligned to color ratings in the School Report Card.</p> <p>Very Low should be termed Red; Low should be Orange; Medium should be Yellow; High should be Green; and Very High should be Blue.</p>	Overall Indicator Rating	Count of Schools	Percentage of Schools	<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS</b>			Very Low	67 59	8% 8%	Low	179 145	20% 20%	Medium	323 242	36% 34%	High	214 174	24% 24%	Very High	107 97	12% 14%	<b>MIDDLE SCHOOLS</b>			Very Low	22 24	6% 8%	Low	80 63	20% 20%	Medium	161 113	41% 35%	High	93 92	23% 25%	Very High	41 27	10% 8%	<b>HIGH SCHOOLS</b>			Overall Indicator Rating	Count of Schools	Percentage of Schools	Very Low	32 17	7% 7%	Low	95 44	19% 20%	Medium	190 88	39% 39%	High	138 54	28% 24%	Very High	37 25	8% 11%	<p>We are happy to update the report according to KDE’s preferred terminology and data.</p>
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<p>177</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Other Data Reporting</p>	<p>“6.4 Finding: KDE lacks a comprehensive strategy that shapes its approach to school improvement.”                  “6.4.a Recommendation: KDE should develop a comprehensive strategy to guide school accountability across the Department’s offices.”</p>	<p>KDE’s school improvement model is nationally recognized and is strategic, multi-faceted and evidence based. It is grounded in statutory requirements and a layered system of support tailored to district needs. Those aligned strategies included federal school improvement processes under ESSA, improvement planning, diagnostic reviews, and partnerships with several educational stakeholders. Rather than applying a rigid and top-down model, KDE prioritizes local context, allowing districts and other internal agencies an opportunity to co-design the needed support. Meaningful improvement work fosters local autonomy that drives long-term, systemic and sustainable change.</p>	<p>As indicated by its response, KDE continues to lack a coherent, tangible, and comprehensive strategy for school improvement. The generalities outlined in KDE’s response have not translated into results for Kentucky’s children, as reflected, for example, in Kentucky’s education rankings and student proficiency scores.</p>
<p>179-180, 198</p>	<p>Statewide Accountability System: Other Data Reporting</p>	<p>“6.6 Finding: Over the past decade, KDE commissioners have not leveraged their statutorily granted authority to determine a ‘pattern of significant lack of effectiveness and efficiency’ in LEAs struggling with chronic underperformance.”                  “7.10.a Recommendation: KDE should, when appropriate, utilize its authority to conduct management reviews and audits to improve efficiency and effectiveness in district governance or administration.”</p>	<p>The management improvement program authorized by KRS 157.780 and regulated by 703 KAR 3:205 support districts who have demonstrated a significant lack of effectiveness and efficiency. Pursuant to 703 KAR 3:205, KDE uses a progressive approach to ensure that it is not usurping local authority unnecessarily. This begins with a management review, which may lead to a management audit. Depending on the results of a management audit, a district may be designated state assisted or state managed. While full management may be appropriate at times, this is not always necessary. Many times, KDE is able to collaborate with district directly to improve management of the district without seeking to remove the authority of locally elected officials (as in the case of Jefferson County and Boyd County).</p> <p>On April 16, 2025, KDE indicated that Menifee, Breathitt, and Jefferson Counties all received management audits in the last five years. In addition, Robertson, Fleming, and Caverna received management audits since 2013. Boyd and Nelson also received management reviews, the findings of which were resolved through technical assistance.</p> <p>Page 180 of the report states that “No Kentucky districts in the past ten years have received a designation of state-assisted or state managed.” This is demonstrably false, as a result of the audits mentioned above, five districts have been designated as either state assisted or state managed.</p>	<p>KDE’s response does not change the fact that, in the past five years, commissioners have failed to use the <i>full extent</i> of their authority to help improve chronically underperforming districts.</p> <p>The APA has updated its assertion on page 180 with the information KDE has now provided.</p>

182	United We Learn: Looking Ahead to Implementation	“Across interviews with KDE staff and external stakeholders, there was not a clear, or implementable, definition of vibrant learning.”	In partnership with the Kentucky United We Learn Council, a definition of vibrant learning was developed in 2024 and has been shared widely with the Kentucky Board of Education, Team KDE, schools/districts, and co-operatives. The definition is also available on the KDE webpage. Definition: “In partnership with families and communities, students are agents of their own learning, engaged in relevant, authentic and joyful learning opportunities. Vibrant learning honors students’ cultural wealth, gifts and interests. Vibrant learning culminates in the application of knowledge and skills demonstrated through personalized products.”	KDE’s response confirms that it does not have a way of translating its vision of “vibrant learning” into tangible, actual results. KDE’s response also does not detract from the APA’s point that staff across KDE and external stakeholders are not understanding what KDE’s definition of vibrant learning is and means when it comes to tangible, actual results.
183	United We Learn: Looking Ahead to Implementation	“Based on the team’s review of KUWL meetings, meeting notes, and other documentation, it does not appear that the Council significantly utilized the perspectives of other states. Rather, they have relied heavily on feedback from within the Commonwealth, including superintendents, educators, and community stakeholders.”	This is inaccurate. Not only were other states analyzed, but other countries as well. This link contains the research that was presented to the KBE in 2023: <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZafhqoVxBemhcX2LWwKaIWhRMND_LOyz/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZafhqoVxBemhcX2LWwKaIWhRMND_LOyz/view?usp=sharing</a>	KDE’s response does not actually show that anything about the quoted assertion from the report is inaccurate. There is no support in the quoted link that other states’ perspectives were analyzed. And the only country explored in the report connected to the offered link is Finland. In sum, there is no evidence that “the Council significantly utilized the perspectives of other states.”
184	United We Learn: The Division of Innovation and their Support of United We Learn.	“6.8 Finding: Although the Division of Innovation is effectively partnering with schools and districts to implement vibrant learning, it is not clear how the Division will scale these practices to support the UWL implementation statewide.”  “6.8.a Recommendation: KDE should identify additional resources needed to scale the Division of Innovation’s work. The Division of Innovation and OTL should coordinate to ensure professional development offerings are not duplicative,	The Division of Innovation has developed a phase-in plan to support implementation over a three-year period beginning with a pilot year in 2026-2027. With the support of the Competitive Grant for State Assessment (CGSA), four Regional Innovation Specialists have been hired on MOA contracts to provide on-the- group support to all Kentucky districts. Additionally, the Division of Innovation has developed a draft Local Accountability Design Guide and Toolkit to be published this fall and used in professional learning and coaching supports. A monthly collaborative meeting with the Office of Teaching and Learning has been established.	The APA is happy to see that KDE has taken seriously Finding 6.8 and Recommendation 6.8.a of the report.

		maximizing KDE’s reach to districts.”		
185	Superintendents’ Perceptions of Monitoring Processes	<p>“Superintendents felt that the district selection process was not grounded in clear data, evidence, or a compelling rationale.”</p> <p>“Superintendents also described examples of times when interactions with KDE, either through support requests or a monitoring visit, led to a subsequent audit.”</p>	<p>KDE uses a risk assessment to select districts for monitoring, as required. Being selected for monitoring after asking for technical support is purely coincidental, not causal. Staff at KDE answer questions from districts daily. The risk assessment tool is discussed in-depth with superintendents that are selected for an audit.</p>	<p>KDE should consult superintendents on this point, as KDE’s response is not reflective of the information relayed to the APA by superintendents.</p>
186-187	Statewide Consolidated Monitoring of Federal & State Programs: Risk Assessment & District Selection	<p>“7.1 Finding: Approximately 43% of districts have not participated in Statewide Consolidated Monitoring (SCM) in the last decade. As a result, KDE has only completed comprehensive, onsite assessments of about half of all districts in the last ten years.”</p> <p>“7.1.a Recommendation: KDE should evaluate the feasibility of more frequent district monitoring, potentially increasing the number of districts monitored annually, depending on staff capacity.”</p>	<p>While currently 10 districts are selected for consolidated monitoring each year, ALL districts receive some type of monitoring at minimum through review of the annual application/plan and the training/technical support KDE provides throughout the year. To ease the burden on districts, KDE works to ensure that multiple types of monitoring are not occurring simultaneously. Districts not selected for consolidated monitoring may be participating in a program monitoring that is not part of consolidated monitoring (e.g., IDEA, migrant, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, etc.).</p> <p>Based on current monitoring selection protocol, KDE can only select the districts with the highest risk scores for monitoring (unless as discussed, they have been monitored recently). While time since the last monitoring is an important risk factor, it is not the only risk factor we consider.</p> <p>The number of districts selected for consolidated monitoring at KDE has been determined by the US Department of Education to be adequate. Comparison of the percentage of districts KDE monitors with other states is misleading in the absence of discussion about other variables (e.g., rigor of the monitoring process in comparison states, number of monitoring staff, etc.). KDE is in compliance with the requirement to conduct adequate federal subrecipient monitoring.</p>	<p>KDE’s response here is reflective of two problems that continue to resonate throughout the agency: 1) that what it is doing is “good enough” and 2) that compliance with the law is its only responsibility. Statewide Consolidated Monitoring is a method of improving district performance, and it is alarming that almost half of Kentucky’s districts have not participated in that monitoring. If KDE conducted more frequent and more detailed Statewide Consolidated Monitoring, like other states do, that could lessen the need for and burden imposed by other kinds of auditing and monitoring that superintendents are feeling. This is another example of KDE’s need to balance its focus on compliance with that of support of Kentucky’s schools and students.</p>

188	Statewide Consolidated Monitoring of Federal & State Programs: Risk Assessment & District Selection	“7.3 Finding: The names of districts selected for SCM are not publicly available until the end of the monitoring process.”	This finding is not based on lack of compliance with any requirement. There is no requirement that KDE publish the names of districts selected for monitoring at any time. KDE believes it is in the best interest of school districts to not publicize monitoring protocols as the routine selection for monitoring may be misconstrued by the public and cause local disruptions.	This is another KDE response reflective of its compliance mindset rather than that of an agency focused on supporting Kentucky's schools and students. KDE's position that “monitoring may be misconstrued by the public and cause local disruptions” disregards the importance of transparency around publicly funded institutions in teaching our Commonwealth's children. KDE and the district can easily clarify for the public what “monitoring” means.
188-189	Statewide Consolidated Monitoring of Federal & State Programs: Reporting and Follow-Up	“7.6 Finding: The consolidated monitoring reports highlight significantly more Effective Practices than Opportunities for Improvement.”	The consolidated reports examine broad themes rather than individual program requirements (which are found on the individual program reports)—so the purpose of these reports is different. The individual program reports typically list more findings than strengths.	The point of Finding 7.6 is that KDE's Consolidated Monitoring Reports are not being utilized in the most effective way if they fail to point out more Opportunities for Improvement for districts. If KDE's response is that it issues two reports with different purposes, then KDE should explore whether utilizing one of those reports to its fullest extent would render the other report duplicative.
189-190	Statewide Consolidated Monitoring of Federal & State Programs: Reporting and Follow-Up	“7.6.a. Recommendation: KDE should offer tailored, constructive feedback to districts to promote continuous improvement in consolidated monitoring reports. Develop reports that prioritize providing applicable, actionable feedback to districts.”	The consolidated monitoring reports already do this. The feedback on the consolidated monitoring reports is tailored to each district based on the on-site visit and documentation reviewed for the monitoring. These reports are not intended to be a compilation of the findings on the individual program reports; rather, they examine the effectiveness of the district's implementation through broad themes across programs. While the recommendations are not required actions, they are actionable in the sense that the reports give the districts sufficient information to implement the recommendations if they choose to do so. Furthermore, because each Opportunity for Improvement is broad, implementing the recommendation would require numerous steps; these recommendations are	KDE's response here is confusing, especially as it relates to its previous response. On one hand, KDE is saying that its Consolidated Monitoring Reports address broad themes and do not get into the finer details about how to address issues with specific actions; rather, those are addressed in individual program reports. On the other hand, KDE is saying that its Consolidated Monitoring Reports do provide the level of

			not quick fixes or a simple change. They require significant time and multiple steps to implement.	detail districts need to implement actionable solutions to identified problems. This posturing is reflective of the evidence uncovered by the APA supporting Finding 7.6 and Recommendation 7.6.a that KDE must improve its Consolidated Monitoring Report process to address all of a district’s specific issues with real, actionable, and tangible solutions in an efficient way that does not overburden districts.
191	Statewide Consolidated Monitoring of Federal & State Programs: Reporting and Follow-Up	<p>“7.7 Finding: The SCM team produces a consolidated report for each district it monitors. However, the recommendations use stock language and are not tailored to districts.”</p> <p>“7.7.a Recommendation: KDE should ensure all recommendations are tailored to the local context of each district. Assess whether using the common document hinders the development of district-specific recommendations.”</p>	The finding is incorrect. The strengths and recommendations noted on the consolidated reports are specific to each district’s monitoring. The reports are crafted through a collaborative process in which staff discuss their observations and interview data from the site visits and documentation reviewed before, during and after the visits, to develop each district’s report.	KDE's response is not reflective of the data collected and reviewed by the APA, which included KDE staff interviews, focus groups, and a review of consolidated monitoring reports from the past three school years (2021-22 to 2023-24).
193	Other Office of Continuous Improvement & Support Monitoring: Overview	<p>“7.8.a Recommendation: OCIS should strategically coordinate district selections to minimize capacity strain. Evaluating the timing and calendar of monitoring activities will ensure site visits are appropriately spaced.”</p>	This recommendation is in conflict with Recommendation 7.1a which suggests that the OCIS is not conducting a sufficient number of audits.	This recommendation is not in conflict with any of the APA’s recommendations. The overall point of the APA’s findings and recommendations regarding district monitoring is that KDE needs to evaluate the totality of its auditing program to determine both 1) where, when, and what it is auditing too much and 2) where, when, and what it is auditing too little. In that way, KDE can evaluate how it can effectively and efficiently use auditing to both 1) improve district

				performance while 2) lessening auditing strain on districts.
194	Other Office of Continuous Improvement & Support Monitoring: Nontraditional Instruction	<p>“Artifacts required include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher assignments and paired completed student work from various core content courses and electives for each grade (K-12)</li> <li>• Teacher participation numbers retrieved from Infinite Campus</li> <li>• Responses to end-of-year monitoring questions”</li> </ul> <p>“House Bill 241 was also introduced to grant additional NTI days to account for weather disruptions during the 2024-2025 school year and it became a law without the governor’s signature.”</p>	<p>Artifacts should also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student participation rate retrieved from Infinite Campus</li> </ul> <p>Up to five “disaster relief student attendance days” were waivable by the commissioner of education for the 2024 – 2025 school year. These were not limited to weather-related disruptions.</p>	The APA is happy to include in the report this new information from KDE.
197	Technical Assistance for Federal & State Programs	<p>“7.9 Finding: KDE manages a Best Practices Database for schools and districts to use as a resource to improve student performance; it is neither actively maintained nor systematically used.”</p> <p>“7.9.a Recommendation: KDE should create a process to collect and share best practices with districts, using them to offer tailored technical assistance.”</p>	<p>The database was mentioned under the heading, “Technical Assistance for Federal and State Programs.” This site does not promote itself as a technical assistance site for federal and state programs. Rather, the purpose and intended use for the site is a voluntary, knowledge sharing resource whose primary purpose is to highlight innovative local practices—not to serve as core mechanisms for technical assistance or program monitoring.</p> <p>KDE’s technical assistance is delivered through direct coaching, programmatic guidance and collaboration with districts—none of which are reliant upon the submissions into the database. This is a peer-to-peer sharing database and winners are selected to present at Kentucky’s annual</p>	KDE’s response confirms a consistent theme throughout this report—that its website is not an effective tool that can be easily used and reached by all relevant stakeholders for the most updated and current best-practices information. KDE’s response does not refute that point, nor the evidence supporting Finding 7.9 and Recommendation 7.9.a as outlined in the report.



			<p>Continuous Improvement Summit. To assert that the site is neither actively maintained nor systemically used is not founded in evidence. In the past year, KDE recognized 16 Best Practice winners at the annual Summit whose submissions were vetted and publicly celebrated. In 2023, KDE recognized nine schools and districts. Most recently, staff have been invited to present on the database in Lexington, KY to a group of teachers and administrators interested in learning more.</p>	
200	Office of Finance & Operations Audits & Monitoring: Nutrition Monitoring	<p>“7.12 Observation: Nutrition monitoring results are not easily accessible to the public.”                  “7.12.a.Recommendation: KDE should add links to the nutrition monitoring manual, online training, technical assistance materials and results search to the KDE school meal programs webpage to enhance accessibility by organizations and to the public.”</p>	<p>Monitoring results are posted on the KDE website under the link to Federal Programs, School Community Nutrition, School Meal Programs, Waivers and USDA Required Reports (<a href="#">USDA Required Reports - Kentucky Department of Education</a>). This is a requirement of 7 CFR 210.18(m). The monitoring results are only applicable to Program Operators of the School Meal Programs. KDE can move the link to the left side of the School Meal Programs page to make it more easily identifiable.</p> <p>Monitoring guidance for all program operators is located on an intranet site, referred to as SponsorNet. Program operators and other partner organizations can request and gain access to SponsorNet. KDE can move the note about SponsorNet to the top of the page to ensure visitors to the page are aware of how to locate and gain access to resources available to program operators.</p>	<p>KDE’s response is reflective of its failure to understand that its nutrition monitoring results are not easily accessible to the public. What KDE perceives about the ease of that accessibility is not reflective of reality.</p>
201	Coordination Across KDE	<p>“7.14 Finding: The team did not observe consistent coordination of monitoring functions between OFO, Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) and OCIS.”                  “7.14.a Recommendation: KDE should create a system to track district engagements and prevent overlapping audit or monitoring activities. When more than one activity needs to occur within the same timeframe, ensure that they are appropriately scheduled.”</p>	<p>Leaders of monitoring programs meet regularly to share their risk assessment findings and discuss the monitoring processes. When possible, overlap is avoided; however, based on the risk assessment processes, it may be necessary for a district to be monitored under multiple programs in the same year to ensure compliance with state and federal law. In these instances, staff at KDE collaborate to create as streamlined a monitoring experience as possible.</p> <p>Additionally, this recommendation is in conflict with other monitoring recommendations in this report. At various points in the report it is suggested that KDE is doing both too little and too much monitoring.</p>	<p>KDE’s perception of its coordination of monitoring functions across offices is not reflective of the evidence the APA uncovered revealing a lack of coordination. In fact, KDE does not even dispute that it lacks a system to prevent monitoring overlap. Moreover, KDE fails to understand the point of the totality of the findings and recommendations in this report about district monitoring: KDE needs to conduct a wholesale review of its monitoring process to</p>

			IDEA fiscal monitoring occurs through close collaboration with the Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) for IDEA’s Maintenance of Effort requirements, district fiscal audits, and excess cost.	understand when it is doing too little and too much. Only then will KDE be able to refine its monitoring process to balance 1) effectively monitoring districts with 2) easing the burden of monitoring on districts.
203	Student Supports: Department Organization	Figure 106: KDE Organization of Complimentary Programs Related to Student Support & Resources. Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Division of Student Success Student Engagement and Support Branch	The figure does not include a description of Alternative Education Programs (AEPs). These are special programs designed to provide remediation, acceleration or unique learning opportunities that would not otherwise be available to students in the traditional school setting. Historically, AEPs have been associated with at- risk students, and while those students often find a home in an AEP, these programs serve a wide variety of students including those identified for special education, those who are gifted and talented, adjudicated, abused, and neglected and differently abled, and other students who can benefit from a non-traditional learning environment.	The APA is happy to include the information relayed here by KDE.
204	Student Supports: Department Organization	“8.1.a Recommendation: KDE should create a Student Support and School Safety strategic plan to guide cross-office collaboration on critical interdisciplinary work and establish structures to sustain these efforts. Collaboration across offices, divisions, and/or branches is needed to align efforts and maximize impact. KDE should examine services, resources, programs, and functions across the agency to establish where additional areas for collaboration exist.”	KDE has a cross-agency team that meets every 2 months to guide cross-office collaboration to identify common goals, available staff and financial resources, timelines, scale of intended use, policy levers, external technical assistance providers, and relevant data. Participating offices/division include Office of Continuous Improvement & Support Division of Student Success, Office of Teaching & Learning MTSS and Comprehensive School Counseling, Office of Special Education & Early Learning Early Learning Unit, and Office of Finance & Operations Division of District Support/School Health Branch. This work is documented in an initiative inventory and updated as needed during regular meetings.	KDE’s response here is another example of its failure to understand that its perception of its cross-office collaboration is not reflective of reality. The collaboration it believes it is doing is not translating into the success that it should.

205-206	Student Support: Comprehensive School Counseling Overview	“The Department must provide a toolkit that includes guidance, strategies, behavioral interventions, practices, and techniques to assist in the development of trauma-informed approaches in schools. The toolkit, The Kentucky Framework of Best Practices for School Counselors, is posted on the KDE website.”	The audit report cites the incorrect toolkit. KDE does maintain the statutorily required toolkit to assist in the development of the trauma informed approaches in schools. It can be found on <a href="https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Trauma-Informed-Care.aspx">https://www.education.ky.gov/school/sdfs/Pages/Trauma-Informed-Care.aspx</a> .  The Kentucky Framework of Best Practices for School Counselors would be more appropriately listed under the 2 <sup>nd</sup> bullet for “Personnel requirements.”	The APA is happy to update the report with the link KDE has provided and in the manner KDE suggests.
215	Student Support: Academic Programs	“KRS 160.348(3) states KDE is required to the AP examination costs for all students enrolled in an AP course. However, per KDE’s website, the General Assembly has not provided an appropriation to fund this statute.”	While funding is not sufficient to pay the costs of all AP exams, HB 6 (2024) allocated \$1,000,000 in each fiscal year to pay the cost of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examinations for those students who meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price meals and \$2,600,000 in each fiscal year to pay the cost of Advanced Placement examinations for students on a first-come, first-served basis.	The APA is happy to update the report to reflect KDE’s admission that the General Assembly has provided appropriate AP course funding, contrary to what KDE publicly conveyed on its website before June 12, 2025.
215	Student Support: Targeted Interventions & Data Tools	“KDE has Early Warning, Insights, and Persistence to Graduation Tools which are managed by a Program Consultant in the Student Engagement and Support Branch.”	As written this statement implies there is only one consultant doing this work where there was a minimum of two consultants supporting this work at the time of the interviews. Currently there are four consultants performing this work. KDE utilizes data in the statewide student information system to train and provide technical assistance to schools, districts, and educational cooperatives on how to do use these various tools themselves.  Rephrase to state, “are supported by Program Consultants...”	The APA is happy to update the report according to KDE’s suggestion.
222	Safe Schools: Resources and Tracking	“8.7.a Recommendation: KDE should develop a standardized process for tracking usage of training, presentations, or other information sharing events from the Safe Schools Branch. This includes tracking the number of events, attendance, and gathering feedback from attendees to inform future events and offerings.”	Note that the correct name of the branch is the Safe and Supportive Schools Branch.  Until recently, all trainings by the Safe and Supportive Schools Branch were tracked in a database created by REACH Evaluation as part of the evaluation work of the School Climate Transformation (SCT) grant the division received in 2019 and closed out in early 2025. Data collection includes attendance and standardized feedback forms, which is used for federal reporting for both KDE and training activities led by the KY Dept. for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities but supported by	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking Recommendation 8.7.a seriously. The APA has updated its report to reflect KDE’s suggested change.

			DSS staff (such as Sources of Strength). Since the end of the SCT grant, the division has been working with KDE’s Office of Education Technology to replicate and enhance the tracking system to include all training delivered by both branches.	
223	Safe Schools: Resource Gap	“8.8.a Recommendation: KDE should provide resources on how best to prevent, respond to, and support victims of sexual violence for relevant stakeholders including students, school personnel, and families in the Commonwealth.”	Since the auditors completed their review, these items have been posted to the website.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking Recommendation 8.8.a seriously.
225	Safe Schools: Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council	<p>Figure 116: Student Advisory Council A Focus on School Safety Recommendations &amp; Follow-Up</p> <p>“Ensure awareness of the STOP tipline: Addressed - In the April 2023 meeting the Executive Director of Kentucky Center for School Safety suggested the creation of an app for the tipline along with a pamphlet. Based on the KCSS website, it appears that a poster does exist, but an app does not. They do, however, have a texting option for the tipline.”</p> <p>“Provide access to therapy sessions and other mental health professionals: Addressed - Per KRS 158.4416, which was amended in 2024, districts’ trauma-informed education plans must include providing services and programs designed to reduce the negative impact of trauma.”</p>	<p>It is important to note that neither KDE nor KCSS operate the STOP Tipline. In accordance with the School Safety &amp; Resiliency Act, STOP Tipline is currently operated by the KY Office of Homeland Security (KOHS).</p> <p>Additionally, students provided input on the Human Trafficking posters, which includes the STOP Tipline information, and the final posters were shared with the Student Advisory Council on April 15, 2025.</p> <p>Regarding the “access to therapy sessions and other mental health professionals” it would be more accurate to state here, “Per KRS 158.4416, districts are required to increase access to school counselors and school-based mental health services providers with a goal of a 1:250 ration of counselor/provider to students. The availability of limited state funding, which equates to approximately \$43,275 per district, has helped districts make progress toward meeting this goal. However, limited funding and available qualified professionals in Kentucky create an ongoing challenge for schools and districts in meeting this goal.”</p>	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to consult.

225	Safe Schools: Commissioner's Student Advisory Council	Figure 116: Student Advisory Council A Focus on School Safety Recommendations & Follow-Up "KRS 156.095 was amended by SB8 (2020) to require school district employees to have one hour of active shooter training."	Note that KRS 156.095 was amended by HB 48 (2025) to require school district employees to have one hour of active shooter training every four years. New hires must complete the training within 12 months of the initial hire date.	The APA is happy to include KDE's suggested information in the report.
226	Safe Schools: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports	"Fidelity checks are part of the implementation process for all schools. Fidelity checks are completed by the district locally. KDE provides data collection tools through PBISApps. It is not clear whether districts have free access to this tool, if there are associated costs, or if KDE reviews these data for all schools beyond the districts that opt to apply for recognition."	PBIS implementation is voluntary, not required, for Kentucky schools. Fidelity checks are part of the implementation process for those schools that choose to implement PBIS. PBISApps is free for districts to use and KDE program consultants review the data quarterly. They use this data for outreach to schools that are using PBISApps but have not applied for fidelity.	KDE's response here does not detract from its need to stress to districts the importance of implementing PBIS.
227	Safe Schools: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports	"8.10.a Recommendation: KDE should make efforts to support and help increase the number of schools and districts implementing a PBIS framework with fidelity across the state."	KDE has increased the number of schools applying for and being recognized for fidelity recognition each year over the past five school years. There was an increase in 41 submitting data in PBISApps in the most recent school year compared to the prior year.  KDE's "cascade" approach includes building capacity within regional cooperatives to support their member districts in fidelity implementation; in turn, district leaders support their school PBIS teams in implementing with fidelity.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking Finding 8.10 and Recommendation 8.10.a seriously.

<p>230</p>	<p>Safe Schools: School Discipline</p>	<p>“8.11.a Recommendation: KDE should monitor, share, and discuss disaggregated disciplinary data with school leadership and staff, highlighting disparities. KDE should also facilitate professional development for LEAs to understand the root cause of these disparities.”</p>	<p>Both branches of the Division of Student Success actively work to bring awareness to various role groups within schools and districts to disparities through the use of the data tools available within Infinite Campus. The Division of Student Success has also worked with the OSEEL program consultant who leads their Significant Disproportionality and Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS)/Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) work to address disproportionality, particularly through PBIS and trauma-informed discipline strategies.</p> <p>KDE’s role is primarily to support districts and regional cooperatives, with a more limited role with school-level leadership and staff. Likewise, the Safe School Annual Statistical Report is state-level data disseminated by KDE, while the KY Center for School Safety provides district-level analyses of these same data. Both agencies are dedicated to reducing these disparities, however the data show additional supports are needed for these disparities to be eliminated.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking Finding 8.11 and 8.11.a seriously.</p>
<p>232</p>	<p>State Board of Education Resolution</p>	<p>“Action Area 1: There has been no significant reduction in closing the achievement gaps between racial subgroups. KRS 158.649 requires every school in Kentucky to annually develop a comprehensive school improvement plan to address the achievement gap among student subgroups to the extent that such a gap exists. Monitored student subgroups include ‘male and female, students with and without disabilities, students with and without English proficiency, minority and nonminority students, and students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch and those who are not eligible for free and reduced lunch.’ The Comprehensive District Improvement Plan</p>	<p>This action area appears to be incomplete. KDE cannot locate a discussion of the CSIP/CDIP process in the Statewide Accountability &amp; Assessment section.</p>	<p>The APA has removed its reference to the CSIP/CDIP process in the quoted portion of the report here. Note that this removal has no effect on anything in the report, including Action Area 1.</p>

		(CDIP) and Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) address these requirements. OCIS supports the development and professional learning associated with these plans. These plans are discussed in detail in the Statewide Accountability & Assessments section.		
234	State Board of Education Resolution	“The team could not find continued evidence of this specific initiative [KAET] after FY21.”	As is noted in this section, the Kentucky Academy for Equity in Teaching (KAET) was renamed the Kentucky Academy for Excellence in Teaching when the focus of the program shifted from service repayment scholarships to Praxis assessment mentoring, support, and reimbursement. The program continues to operate and is administered by one of the educational cooperatives.	Upon this information from KDE, the APA is happy to update the report accordingly.
245	Exceptional Children: State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report	“Additional factors in LEA determinations are: participation in Kentucky Summative Assessment for fourth and eighth grade Reading and Math.”	The report did not include eighth grade math <i>performance</i> under additional factors in LEA determinations; however, eighth grade math performance, in addition to participation, is included in LEA determinations as an additional factor.	The APA has updated its report upon this additional information from KDE.
248	Exceptional Children: State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report	“These corrective actions are approved within 30 days of the issuance of noncompliance...”	OSEEL approves corrective action plans following the process outlined in the Kentucky Administrative Regulations. Per <a href="#">707 KAR 1:380, Section 1 (5) and (6)</a> , a [corrective action plan] CAP shall be submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education no later than 30 business days after the LEA receives the report of noncompliance. The CAP shall include a statement of the matter to be corrected and the steps the LEA shall take to correct the problem and document compliance. Within 30 business days of receiving the CAP, the Kentucky Department of Education shall notify the LEA of the status of the CAP. If the Kentucky Department of Education rejects the CAP, the LEA shall have 15 business days to submit a new CAP.	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view.



250	Exceptional Children: State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report	Figure 131: OSEEL Differentiated Monitoring and Tiered Engagement	Figure 131 does not include all types of monitoring included in the Office of Special Education and Early Learning's (OSEEL's) Differentiated Monitoring and Tiered Engagement. While comprehensive special education review is discussed on page 251, it is not included in Figure 131 as one of OSEEL's types of monitoring.	As KDE acknowledges, including the suggested addition in the report is not necessary because it already exists on page 251.
250	Exceptional Children: State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report	"In 2023-2024, 15 LEAs were monitored through the RFM process."	All LEAs in the state are monitored annually through the analysis of LEA special education data, which is incorporated into the IDEA Risk Focused Monitoring (RFM) process conducted in the Office of Special Education and Early Learning. In 2023-2024, this data analysis led to 15 LEAs being <i>further</i> monitored through the on-site visit component of the RFM process.	The report already makes it clear that this is the case.
253	Exceptional Children: State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report	"10.1.a Recommendation: KDE should utilize all aspects of State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators 1 through 14, including the results-oriented aspects of those indicators, when establishing annual LEA determination levels. KDE incorporates state assessment participation data as part of its annual process for determining LEA special education performance. It does not, however, use student achievement or proficiency data as part of this process."	The statement in 10.1.a Recommendation, "It does not, however, use student achievement or proficiency data as part of this process," is inaccurate. KDE uses proficiency data when establishing annual LEA determination levels as referenced on page four of the <a href="#">Annual Determinations on the Special Education Performance of Districts</a> .	The point of Recommendation 10.1.a is that KDE's current monitoring and data systems are not facilitating the closure of student performance gaps in special education. KDE's LEA determination process still does not consider the totality of SPP indicator 3, which includes student performance in reading and math at the fourth grade, eighth grade, and high school levels. The APA has modified Recommendation 10.1.a to make the overall point clearer.
256	Exceptional Children: Dispute Resolution	"The agency provides a Quick Guide to Special Education Dispute Resolution Processes for students ages two to 21 in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Swahili."	The cited age range is inaccurate. The agency provides a <a href="#">Quick Guide to Special Education Dispute Resolution Processes</a> for students ages 3 to 21 in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Swahili.	The APA is happy to update the age range in the report upon this information from KDE.

<p>264-65</p>	<p>Exceptional Children: Significant Disproportionality</p>	<p>“10.4 Observation: Large LEAs with more than 5,000 students enrolled may require differentiated support from the Department related to significant disproportionality in special education. [...]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roughly half of LEA special education directors surveyed indicated they did not agree that OSEEL provides high- quality support in reducing disproportionality in special education. LEAs with student enrollment of over 5,000 students expressed this sentiment most prevalently with only 30% of LEA special education directors from large LEAs indicating the state provides high-quality support in this area. LEAs with smaller student enrollments, however, expressed positive sentiment about the support they received from OSEEL to reduce disproportionality. LEAs who have student populations of less than 500 indicated a 67% satisfaction rate.</li> </ul>	<p>Disproportionality refers to an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a particular group in a specific category, while significant disproportionality is a more specific term, defined by federal regulations, that triggers mandatory intervention under the regulation with a requirement to implement Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) under <a href="#">34 CFR 300.646</a> and <a href="#">34 CFR 300.647</a>. All identified districts currently receive support directly related to significant disproportionality and implementation of CCEIS regardless of size. It is possible this mixed messaging of disproportionality as opposed to significant disproportionality led to misunderstanding of the requirements and implementation of programs as well as support offered to districts. Of the 28 districts with enrollment of 5,000 or more students, only three (11%) of those districts have been identified with significant disproportionality and required to implement CCEIS in recent years.</p>	<p>The point of Observation 10.4 is to relay to KDE that large school districts need more help from KDE to reduce disproportionality in special education. KDE may disagree that disproportionality is not “significant,” but even so that disproportionality still exists. KDE should adhere to Recommendations 10.4.a and .b to assist larger school districts in reducing disproportionality.</p>
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<p>266</p>	<p>Exceptional Children: Implementation of Policies and Procedures</p>	<p>“There seems to be little prioritization or guidance around the critical points, intended audience, or use cases for linked external resources across the OSEEL guidance pages. For example, the literacy and Mathematics toolkits provide general best practices and quality rubrics for delivery of instruction, such as the importance of communicating learning goals to the student. Effective communication of a learning goal to a student with a disability varies depending on a learner’s profile and disability-related needs.”</p>	<p>Through its State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), Kentucky employs a linked teaming structure—also known as a cascading logic model—to support the effective implementation of evidence-based practices in classrooms. This model ensures alignment and support at every level: state, regional, and local.</p> <p>Central to this initiative are strategically developed toolkits designed to equip local district leaders with the resources and guidance needed to drive effective, sustainable instructional changes. Their flexible design allows districts to adapt the tools to their unique contexts while maintaining fidelity to evidence-based practices.</p> <p>Unlike short-term program adoption, the toolkits are focused on fostering sustainable instructional change. While the SSIP’s primary focus is mathematics, stakeholders within the transformation zones expressed a strong interest in expanding these practices. In response, a literacy toolkit was developed to support districts seeking to extend their implementation efforts beyond math.</p>	<p>The point of the discussion in the report quoted by KDE here is that the resources provided and strategies employed by KDE “generally lack the specificity needed to implement actionable strategies within a classroom.” To cite a specific data point, only 3% of students with IEPs were proficient in math based on Kentucky’s 2024 NAEP results. KDE should evaluate the resources it discusses here in conjunction with the information provided to it on this point in the report to see how corresponding improvements can be made.</p>
<p>270</p>	<p>Exceptional Children: Implementation of Policies and Procedures</p>	<p>“10.6.b Recommendation: [...] KDE staff should maintain frequent communication with LEA staff about open inquiries that require research and response beyond the expected 24-hour turnaround time until such time as the request for information has been completed and provided to the requestor.”</p>	<p>OSEEL adheres to the agency-wide standard of responding to inquiries within 24 hours. When a response requires more extensive research and cannot be completed within that timeframe, the case is actively tracked by the manager of the Guidance and Support Branch in the Division of IDEA Implementation and Preschool. In such instances, the assigned consultant maintains communication with the requestor, providing updates at least every three business days until the inquiry is resolved.</p> <p>To ensure transparency and continuity, the response tracking system is accessible to the division director and assistant director. This shared access ensures that timely follow-up continues seamlessly, even in the absence of the branch manager. Evidence of this can be found in the DIIP leadership notebook TA log.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to hear that KDE is following this aspect of Recommendation 10.6.b and hopes that KDE adheres to the rest of that recommendation. Qualitative information gathered by the APA on this point suggests that, at the time that information was reviewed, there was a lack of consistent adherence to KDE’s cited practices.</p>

270	Exceptional Children: Implementation of Policies and Procedures	“10.7 Finding: KDE technical assistance and professional development on special education topics do not adequately meet the needs of state stakeholders. KDE’s internal process for developing and publishing new resource materials does not support timely provision of guidance to stakeholders and includes unnecessary procedures and internal controls.”	According to Figure 222: Special Education Director Survey on page 404, 85% of Directors of Special Education agreed that technical assistance and guidance provided by KDE is helpful to their district. 82% indicated they know where to find KDE guidance documents, and 87% found KDE-hosted professional learning opportunities helpful. Finding 10.7 in not supported by this data.	KDE is ignoring the totality of data, observations, evidence, and recommendations outlined within Finding 10.7. For example, the high volume of inquiries from Kentuckians about IDEA requirements indicates that KDE could be providing insufficient guidance on those requirements. Once the totality of the information outlined within Finding 10.7 is taken into account, it becomes clear that KDE must improve its technical assistance and professional development on special education.
272	Exceptional Children: Implementation of Policies and Procedures	“OSEEL continues to receive a high volume of inquiries from stakeholders—almost 70% of which are related to the requirements of the IDEA. Such a high percentage indicates current guidance is insufficient as a means of informing stakeholders about these requirements.”	OSEEL frequently receives inquiries from parents, advocates, and other stakeholders seeking clarity on the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Based on the survey data provided on page 272 of this report, “Overall, 77% of special education directors agree that KDE provide technical assistance and support about special education policies and topics that meet the need of their LEA, and the same number agree that they provide high-quality special education resources.” The mere fact that an agency receives inquiries is not conclusive evidence that it fails to provide sufficient guidance.	As outlined in the report, the high volume of inquiries from Kentuckians about IDEA requirements does <i>indicate</i> that KDE could be providing insufficient guidance on those requirements. KDE should take that data into account instead of dismissing it.
273	Exceptional Children: Implementation of Policies and Procedures	“10.7.a Recommendation: KDE should analyze trends and themes related to special education topics from the Department’s phone and email supports to identify areas that are not clear in the available resource documents and training materials. Revise current guidance related to special education topics as needed.”	As noted on page 270 of the report, “Technical assistance to LEAs is used to determine the need for new statewide guidance documents or materials.”  The OSEEL Guidance and Support Branch produces a monthly impact report that analyzes the department’s phone and email support activities. This report serves multiple purposes, including determining the effectiveness of current guidance, identifying emerging needs for guidance and training in the area of special education. The division director, assistant director, and branch manager convene weekly to review data from the impact report. These meetings are used to explore potential topics for guidance and training. The impact report is triangulated with additional data sources from across the office	If KDE’s process was currently effective in analyzing how it can make better its instructional material to Kentuckians, then the data outlined within Finding 10.7, like the high-volume-of-inquiries fact noted above, would be different. KDE should evaluate the process it has laid out here to determine if it is truly achieving intended results.

			<p>to ensure a comprehensive understanding of current needs.</p> <p>Monthly general supervision team meetings bring together representatives from across OSEEL. During these meetings, data related to statewide training and guidance (such as monitoring outcome reports and feedback from recent trainings) are reviewed. This information is also triangulated with communication logs and the impact report to identify trends and determine whether new or updated guidance and training materials are needed.</p>	
273	Exceptional Children: Implementation of Policies and Procedures	<p>“10.7.b Recommendation: KDE should streamline OSEEL’s internal process for developing special education-related public-facing resources to deliver more timely guidance materials to stakeholders. Reduce the number of review and feedback loops by including key internal stakeholders, such as policy advisors and supervisors, in initial drafting of guidance and/or conduct simultaneous reviews by multiple reviewers and share compiled feedback to the author to minimize the time needed from concept to publication.”</p>	<p>The following recommendation does not consider that the development of guidance documents is managed through SharePoint, enabling real-time collaboration among all internal stakeholders, including the policy advisor and supervisor. This shared platform allows multiple reviewers to simultaneously access, edit, and provide feedback on the document, ensuring a transparent and efficient review process. Timelines are also impacted by review through KDE’s Division of Communications to ensure consistent department messaging. See 1.5.a Recommendation.</p> <p>To support effective project planning, review timelines are established to guide the development process and set realistic publication goals. However, the process remains flexible—internal stakeholders can contribute feedback or edits at any stage, promoting continuous improvement and responsiveness throughout the development cycle.</p>	<p>KDE’s response here does not reflect the evidence the APA gathered on this point. But the APA is happy to hear that KDE appears to understand the importance of adhering to Recommendation 10.7.b.</p>
281	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	<p>“The KSB Advisory Board has no membership requirements.”</p>	<p>This is a matter prescribed by statute in <a href="#">KRS 167.035</a>. As such, a change requires action by the Kentucky General Assembly, not the KDE/KBE. The statement does not consider <a href="#">KSB Advisory Board Bylaws</a> which state:</p> <p>Eligibility: In an effort to include relevant communities on the advisory board, members may be representative of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parent of a currently enrolled student;</li> <li>● A representative of a community business partner engaged with the KSB;</li> <li>● An alumnus;</li> </ul>	<p>KDE’s response indicates it understands the importance of possessing a KSB Advisory Board reflective of the community it serves. The APA encourages KDE to ensure that the KSB Advisory Board adheres to that principle.</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A local school district or representative from a Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Regional Special Education Cooperative; and</li> <li>• An At-large member from a group or agency that has a service mission and interest in the education of students who are blind or visually impaired.</li> </ul>	
282	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	“Members from both the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards suggested improvements that could be made to both advisory boards from their perspective and the perspectives of the communities they serve. More importantly, members provided detailed suggestions to improve the performance of KSB and KSD.”	The purpose of both the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards, as outlined in statute and their bylaws, is to provide recommendations to the Commissioner of Education. While the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards are authorized by their bylaws to submit recommendations in writing to the Commissioner of Education, in practice they have not routinely exercised this function. For example, over the past two school years, the KSB Advisory Board submitted only one formal recommendation.	KDE’s response confirms that it has failed to meaningfully engage with the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards. If it had, it would have received the same detailed survey responses that the APA has.
283	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Teachers & Staff	“As set by the Office of State Budget Director, KSB is subject to a personnel cap of 96. As of October 1, 2024, KSB employs 79 employees, 41 of whom are teachers.”	<p>This statement is inaccurate. KSB does not have a specific personnel cap. KDE as a department is assigned a “personnel cap.”</p> <p>The cap numbers reflected in this statement do not align with the survey invitations noted within the report. On page 17, Figure 2, Complete Survey Response Totals, indicates 57 KSB teachers, and 48 KSB staff were invited to participate in the survey.</p> <p>The numbers reflected in this statement do not align with the staff breakdowns noted within the report. On page 46, Figure 11, KDE Staff Counts by Office, indicates 103 KSB staff.</p>	The information KDE relays here now is inconsistent with the information it provided to the APA when the APA was examining this point. It also appears that KDE’s figures here have changed over time. The APA has updated its report on this point when deemed appropriate.

283	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Teachers & Staff	“KSD is subject to a personnel cap of 127, as set by the Office of State Budget Director. For the exam period, KSD employed 84 employees, 30 of whom were teachers.”	<p>This statement is inaccurate. KSD does not have a specific personnel cap. KDE as a department is assigned a “personnel cap.”</p> <p>The numbers reflected in this statement do not align with the survey invitations noted within the report. On page 17, Figure 2, Complete Survey Response Totals, indicates 57 KSD teachers and 68 KSD staff were invited to participate in the survey.</p> <p>The numbers reflected in this statement do not align with the staff breakdowns noted within the report. On page 46, Figure 11, KDE Staff Counts By Office, indicates 124 KSD staff.</p>	The information KDE relays here now is inconsistent with the information it provided to the APA when the APA was examining this point. It also appears that KDE’s figures here have changed over time. The APA has updated its report on this point when deemed appropriate.
284	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Teachers & Staff	Figure 151: KSB and KSD Staff Positions	<p>The data in Figure 151, KSB and KSD Staff Positions, is inaccurate. Figure 151 indicates KSB staff totals as 38, and KSD staff totals as 54.</p> <p>The data reflected in this table does not align with the survey invitations noted within this report. Figure 2, Complete Survey Response Totals, Page 17 indicates 48 KSB staff and 68 KSD staff were invited to participate in the survey.</p> <p>The data reflected in this table does not align with KSB and KSD Organizational Charts submitted during the data collection phase.</p>	The information KDE relays here now is inconsistent with the information it provided to the APA when the APA was examining this point. It also appears that KDE’s figures here have changed over time. The APA has updated its report on this point when deemed appropriate.
284-285	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Teachers & Staff	“The KSB teacher survey responses highlighted several key concerns, including, but not limited to, staffing levels and retention. Many teachers felt that current staffing levels were insufficient to meet the diverse needs of visually impaired students. Some noted that high student-to-teacher ratios made it difficult to provide individualized instruction. There were concerns regarding overburdened support staff, including para-educators. More trained para-educators were requested to assist in the	<p>Regarding teacher retention, page 23 of the report states, “The largest portion of KSB teacher respondents worked at KSB for over ten years.”</p> <p>Regarding student-teacher ratios, KSB operates in alignment with the requirements of <a href="#">707 KAR 1:350</a>. The 24-25 KSB Master Schedule shows the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data for KSB Moderate to Severe Disability (MSD) classes indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Elementary MSD class has 8 students, 1 teacher, 3 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); One Middle/High MSD Class has 5 students, 1 teacher, 2 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;2); the second Middle/High MSD Class has 7 students, 1 teacher and 1 paraeducator (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;4).</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Data for KSB Elementary School teachers indicate that</li> </ul>	KSB, of course, has <i>some</i> teachers that have worked at KSB for over ten years. But that does not mean that KSB does not have a retention issue. The totality of KSB survey responses, as outlined in Figures 226 to 253 and 283 to 304 in Appendix C indicate that KSB’s environment is not one in which newer employees may continue to stick around. And KDE’s assertion about student-teacher ratios being legally sufficient highlights its continued failure to engage directly with KSB teachers and staff and its continued problematic focus on compliance versus



		<p>classrooms, particularly for students with multiple disabilities. All the KSB teacher survey responses can be found in Appendix C: Survey Results.”</p>	<p>the smallest class considering adult student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher, 1 paraeducator (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;3); the largest class considering adult student ratio includes 7 students, 1 teacher, and 2 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data for KSB Middle School core academic subject teachers are as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ English/Language Arts: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 1 paraeducator (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3).</li> <li>○ Science: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 2 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 6 students, 1 teacher and 1 paraeducator (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3).</li> <li>○ Math: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 2 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 4 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:4).</li> <li>○ Social Studies: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering adult student ratio includes 4 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:4).</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Data for KSB High School core academic subject teachers are as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● English/Language Arts: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 6 students, 1 teacher and 0</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>student and teacher success.</p>
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			<p>paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:6).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 2 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 6 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:6).</li> <li>• Math: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 2 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult- Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult student ratio includes 4 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:4).</li> <li>• Social Studies: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 4 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:4); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:5).</li> </ul>	
<p>285</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf: Teachers &amp; Staff</p>	<p>“Additionally, the need for competitive salaries and better incentives to attract and retain qualified special education teachers was noted.”</p>	<p>The KSB teacher salary schedule is governed by <a href="#">KRS 163.032</a>. As such, any change requires action by the Kentucky General Assembly, not the KDE/KBE.</p> <p>The Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) follow the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) salary schedule for certified teaching staff as required by KRS 163.032. In accordance with the JCPS salary schedule, certified teachers receive annual salary increases as established by the JCPS Board and set forth in the adopted salary schedule for each fiscal year. In most respects, the JCPS certified salary schedule provides the highest salary for teachers in the Commonwealth.</p>	<p>KDE and KBE still maintain responsibility for working with the General Assembly to convey the needs of KSB and KSD, including the need to increase teacher salaries.</p>

<p>285</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf: Teachers &amp; Staff</p>	<p>“The responses to the KSD teacher survey also highlighted significant concerns regarding staffing shortages and retention at KSD. Like KSB, the majority of KSD teachers felt that staffing levels were insufficient to meet the diverse needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Teacher shortages were noted as a major challenge, especially in specialized subjects and support services, as well as para-educator shortages. All the KSD teacher survey responses can be found in Appendix C: Survey Results.”</p>	<p>Regarding teacher retention, page 23 of the report states, “The largest representation of KSD teacher respondents worked at KSD for over 10 years.”</p> <p>Regarding student-teacher ratios, KSD operates in alignment with the requirements of <a href="#">707 KAR 1:350</a>. The 24-25 KSD Master Schedule shows the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data for KSD Moderate to Severe Disability (MSD) classes indicate:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Middle School MSD class has 5 students, 1 teacher, 3 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;2); High School MSD Class has 2 students, 1 teacher, 1 paraeducator (Adult-Student ratio of 1:1).</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Data for KSD Elementary School teachers indicate that the smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 4 students, 1 teacher, and 1 paraeducator (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 7 students, 2 teachers, and 0 paraeducators (Adult- Student ratio of 1:&lt;4).</li> <li>● Data for KSD Middle School core academic subject teachers are as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English/Language Arts: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students and 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:5).</li> <li>○ Science: The smallest class considering the adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering the adult to student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators. (Adult-Student ratio of 1:5).</li> <li>○ Math: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher and 0</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>KSD, of course, has <i>some</i> teachers that have worked at KSD for over ten years. But that does not mean that KSD does not have a retention issue. The totality of KSD survey responses, as outlined in Figures 254 to 282 and 305 to 326 in Appendix C indicate that KSD’s environment is not one in which newer employees may continue to stick around. And KDE’s assertion about student-teacher ratios being legally sufficient highlights its continued failure to engage directly with KSD teachers and staff and its continued problematic focus on compliance versus student and teacher success.</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:5).</li> <li>○ Social Studies: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:5).</li> <li>● Data for KSD High School core academic subject teachers are as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ English/Language Arts: The smallest class considering adult to student ratio includes 2 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 7 students, 2 teachers and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;4).</li> <li>○ Science: The smallest class considering the adult to student ratio includes 1 student, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:1); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 5 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:5).</li> <li>○ Math: The smallest class considering the adult to student ratio includes 3 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:3); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 7 students, 2 teachers and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:&lt;4).</li> <li>○ Social Studies: The smallest class considering the adult to student ratio includes 2 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:2); the largest class considering adult to student ratio includes 6 students, 1 teacher and 0 paraeducators (Adult-Student ratio of 1:6).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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286	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Financial Information	“ARP funds were used by KSB for payroll and for student equipment and devices to address learning loss from COVID closures. The money also: (1) funded payroll and expenses for the KSB Summer Program for three-years; (2) provided furniture and equipment for the afterschool program in the dorms, recreation center, and gym; and (3) funded facility improvements to mitigate the spread of COVID in both the exterior and interior.”	This statement does not fully capture the extent to which ARP funds were used to enhance student programming. KSB also utilized ARP funding to fund National Braille Press Library Books, equipment for the student music program, job/life readiness curriculum, materials and equipment for the student makerspace, and American Printing House (APH) Monarch Tablets. APH Monarch Tablets were not only purchased for students enrolled at KSB, but also for their outreach program to provide resources statewide. APH Envision Kits were also purchased for the outreach program to provide resources statewide.	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view.
286	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Financial Information	KSD used ARP funds for education technology, instruction, transition- related support, campus wide facility upgrades, facility sanitation, and maintenance.	This statement does not fully capture the extent to which ARP funds were used to enhance student programming. ARP funds were instrumental in developing a media center designed specifically to support students’ postsecondary transition skills. This space not only provides access to advanced technology but also serves as a platform for students to conduct interviews, produce digital content, and increase communication within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) community. In addition, ARP funds supported the implementation of a reading curriculum tailored to the unique language and learning needs of DHH students. The funding also played a pivotal role in expanding and creating career pathways aligned with student interests and future employment opportunities.	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view.
288	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Community Outreach	“Services are dependent on the availability of funding and may include, but are not limited to, assessments; consultations on curriculum; language and communication; orientation and mobility; classroom devices, including telecommunication devices for the deaf and hard of hearing and Braille for the blind and visually impaired; assistive technology; professional	As written, the statement suggests that outreach services change from year to year depending on funding. While KSB and KSD are dependent on line item appropriations from the General Assembly, the outreach services provided by KSD and KSB are comprehensive and ongoing. These services are a core component of statewide support offered at no cost to local school districts through the Kentucky Department of Education in alignment with <a href="#">KRS 167.015</a> .  KSD Outreach offers statewide support through regional consultants who provide assessments, consultation, transition support, professional development, and family engagement	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view. The statement the APA makes about the services that KSD and KSB provide here comes directly from KRS 167.015.

		development; and program development and implementation.”	<p>services. Additionally, KSD operates a lending library that offers materials and equipment to educators and families across the state. KSB Outreach also provides services through regional consultants. These consultants support local districts through functional vision assessments, orientation and mobility training, assistive technology guidance, professional development, and access to braille and tactile instructional materials. KSB also manages the Kentucky Instructional Materials Resource Center (KIMRC) and offers short-term on-campus programming, mentoring for Teachers of the Visually Impaired, and low vision clinics held throughout the state.</p> <p>In both cases, outreach services are comprehensive and ongoing. They are designed to ensure that students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Blind/Visually Impaired receive equitable educational support regardless of geographic location or local resources.</p>	
288	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Community Outreach	“The KSB Outreach Department consists of the Kentucky Instructional Materials and Resource Center (KIMRC), statewide regionally based outreach consultants providing services to local school districts, students, and families, and a Short-Term/Course program at KSB.”	The statement does not fully capture the comprehensive and statewide scope of the KSB Outreach Program. While it notes the inclusion of KIMRC, regionally based consultants, and the Short-Term/Course program, it significantly understates the program’s partnerships and statewide impact. The program also partners with Morehead State and Murray State Universities for the INSIGHT and WINSIGHT post-secondary preparation programs; The University of Kentucky’s TVI and O&M programs for educator training, student and family events, and statewide support; and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to support transition planning and career readiness. This collaborative approach reflects a coordinated, statewide system of support that extends for students and families.	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view.
289	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf: Community Outreach	“KSD Outreach supports Kentucky students ages three to 21 at KSD and across the state who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Like KSB, KSD Outreach has Educational Consultants across Kentucky who provide technical assistance to families and districts of students with hearing loss.	The statement does not fully capture the comprehensive and statewide scope of the KSD Outreach Program. In addition to direct services and technical assistance, KSD Outreach plays a vital role in supporting the social-emotional well-being of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students by hosting regional and statewide events that foster peer connection and reduce isolation. Programs such as the Vocabulary Bowl and LINK, focused on transition readiness, offer students meaningful opportunities to engage, collaborate, and grow.	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view.

		<p>Technical assistance is available for evaluations, educational programming, classroom adaptations, interpreting, communication, hearing technology supports, and meaningful inclusionary practices. Services are provided through KDE at no cost to districts. KSD also offers services and provides resources directly to families. Opportunities for family support each year have included the Family Learning Vacation weekend event, online sign language classes, parent information sessions at regional student events, and resources available to parents through the lending library.”</p>	<p>KSD Outreach staff also bring specialized expertise in language and communication needs, including targeted services through the Language Deprivation Intervention Project. These services help address language delays and support individualized communication development.</p> <p>Through these efforts, KSD Outreach continues to enhance access, connection, and outcomes for DHH students and their families across the Commonwealth.</p>	
<p>290</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p><i>“Attentiveness to the thoughts of all KSB and KSD employees and personnel would help shed light on what KBE and KDE need to do.</i></p> <p>One mechanism that KBE and KDE can use to understand the needs of KSB and KSD better is what the team did here—circulating detailed surveys to KSB and KSD administrators and personnel on a consistent basis, allowing for the free expression of thoughts, concerns, and solutions to identified problems. As evidenced by the responses the team received, KBE and KDE can learn a great deal about what should be done to better serve the KSB and KSD</p>	<p>KDE maintains a consistent presence by regularly communicating with school leaders, attending events, participating in advisory board meetings, and engaging directly with students, families, and staff. Input is gathered through formal tools annually such as the Parent Engagement (Indicator 8) Survey and bi-annually through the Impact Kentucky Working Conditions Survey. During the most recent principal search at KSD, KDE actively sought broad stakeholder input to help guide the decision.</p> <p>KDE must also uphold the organizational structure that supports school-level leadership. Principals at KSB and KSD are responsible for the direct management of their schools, and KDE remains committed to respecting their authority and expertise in overseeing day-to-day operations.</p>	<p>KDE’s response here is belied by the direct feedback from KSB and KSD teachers and staff about KDE that the APA obtained. The APA encourages KDE to take this direct feedback seriously.</p>



		communities by directly engaging with those communities on a more regular basis and at a more granular level.”		
290	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	“KSB and KSD teachers and staff were also asked about the quality of communication between each school and KDE and KBE. Over 70% of all respondents indicated that the quality of communication with KDE is very low, and only 15.1% responded that it is very high.”	<p>The statement inaccurately reports the data collected. Survey results indicate the following ratings of “very low” when questioned about the quality of communication with KDE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 out of 20 responses from KSB teachers (Figure 236, KSB Teacher Quality of Communication – KSB &amp; KDE, Page 418);</li> <li>• 1 out of 31 responses from KSB staff (Figure 292, KSB Staff Communication Between KSB &amp; KDE, Page 445);</li> <li>• 10 out of 28 responses from KSD teachers (Figure 264, KSD Teacher – Communication Between KSD &amp; KDE, Page 431); and</li> <li>• 10 out of 40 responses from KSD staff (Figure 314, KSD Staff – Communication Between KSD &amp; KDE, Page 465).</li> </ul> <p>In total, 23 of 119 respondents rated the quality of communication as “very low.” This represents 19.3% of respondents, not 70% as indicated in the report.</p>	The APA has modified this statement to more clearly reflect to the reader KSB and KSD teacher and staff perceptions about communication between KSB/KSD and KDE/KBE. Any updates to the way the data is conveyed does not change the conclusions expressed within Finding 11.1.
290	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	“Beyond surveys, interviews conducted by the team also revealed a sentiment that KBE is concerned only with ‘highlight reels’ rather than the substantive needs of KSB and KSD. Indeed, KBE board minutes reviewed by the team revealed little to no substantive KSB and KSD matters acted upon by KBE during the examination period.	<p>Since the creation of the State Schools Committee by KBE during the 2023-2024 school year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KDE’s Division of State Schools (DoSS) presented an overview of each school to KBE during the October 2023 meeting.</li> <li>• KDE’s Division of Budget and Financial Management (DBFM) presented a KSB/KSD Fiscal Overview to KBE during the December 2023 meeting.</li> <li>• KSB and KSD principals presented a year in review to KBE during the April 2024 meeting.</li> <li>• KDE’s DoSS presented KSD Accreditation Results to KBE during the June 2024 meeting.</li> <li>• KDE’s DoSS presented KSB Accreditation Results to KBE during the December 2024 meeting.</li> </ul>	KDE’s response confirms that KBE takes little to no substantive action on KSB and KSD matters. Listening to general presentations, conducting annual policy approvals, and appointing KSB and KSD Advisory Board members as needed is not the kind of granular, in-depth support that KSB and KSD need from what is its school-district-board equivalent.

			KBE approves KSB/KSD policies annually in August. KBE appoints KSB and KSD Advisory Board Members as needed.	
290	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	“Unlike the KSD Advisory Board, which requires that the majority of the board be deaf or hard of hearing, the KSB Advisory Board has no membership requirements whatsoever, let alone requirements that at least some members reflect the community the board serves.”	<p>This is a matter prescribed by statute in <a href="#">KRS 167.035</a>. As such, a change requires action by the Kentucky General Assembly, not the KDE/KBE. The statement does not consider <a href="#">KSB Advisory Board Bylaws</a> which state:</p> <p>Eligibility: In an effort to include relevant communities on the advisory board, members may be representative of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parent of a currently enrolled student;</li> <li>● A representative of a community business partner engaged with the KSB;</li> <li>● An alumnus;</li> <li>● A local school district or representative from a Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Regional Special Education Cooperative; and</li> <li>● An At-large member from a group or agency that has a service mission and interest in the education of students who are blind or visually impaired.</li> </ul> <p>Membership eligibility requirements were included in <a href="#">KDE’s media advisory</a> to fill a recent vacancy.</p>	KDE’s response indicates it understands the importance of possessing a KSB Advisory Board reflective of the community it serves. The APA encourages KDE to ensure that the KSB Advisory Board adheres to that principle.
290	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	“While teacher recruitment and retention are national issues, KDE must take steps to address this issue where possible. For example, teacher candidates (or others) may not seek KSD out as an employer due to a lack of knowledge about the school or the requirements to work in a facility with deaf or hard of hearing children. KDE could attempt to address this knowledge gap by increasing outreach to teachers and those pursuing an education profession. Outreach efforts	<p>As written, the report completely ignores existing collaborative partnerships to support the development of a qualified, representative educator workforce across the Commonwealth, not solely for KSD or KSB, but for all school districts that serve these student populations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● KSD and Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) collaborate under a Memorandum of Understanding to provide students in EKU’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing program with on-site observations and practical experiences at KSD. EKU operates the only DHH teacher preparation program in Kentucky.</li> </ul> <p>KDE’s Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) partners with the University of Kentucky’s Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation &amp; Mobility (O&amp;M) Programs through a predominantly OSEEL-funded contract. This collaboration supports the</p>	The report does not ignore what steps KDE has taken to attempt to address teacher recruitment and retention. Rather, the report notes that these steps are not solving the teacher-recruitment-and-retention problems here, as revealed by direct feedback from KSD and KSB teachers and staff.

		<p>should convey to the public the importance of KSD to the Commonwealth, the benefits of working at such an institution, and the support necessary to obtain employment. The same goes for KSB.”</p>	<p>preparation of educators statewide to serve students who are blind or visually impaired, with active involvement from KSB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KSB works directly with UK’s TVI and O&amp;M programs to provide field-based experiences for students pursuing careers in these specialties.</li> <li>• KSB also partners with Western Michigan University through an Affiliation Agreement that allows O&amp;M students to complete field experiences at KSB, supporting the development of O&amp;M professionals across the Commonwealth.</li> <li>• KDE also engages in strategic outreach and recruitment efforts, including collaboration with KSD during recent principal hiring processes. The job posting was shared nationally through KDE and KSD’s connections with other state schools for the Deaf as well as related agencies.</li> </ul> <p>KDE’s Division of Resource Management KSD Human Resources Administrator recently participated in a recruitment event at Gallaudet University, a premier institution serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing students (April, 2025). She was joined by a KSD staff member/alumnus to represent the school and strengthen ties with the Deaf community.</p>	
<p>291</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p>“11.1.a Recommendation: KDE should collect survey data (anonymously, if necessary, to encourage better quantitative and qualitative responses) regarding detailed concerns, thoughts, and proposed solutions for identified problems on a regular basis from KSB and KSD administrators, personnel, parents, and students.”</p>	<p>KDE collects regular stakeholder input to guide decision-making at KSB and KSD. KDE administers the annual Parent Engagement Survey (Indicator 8), open from January 15 to June 30, and promoted through multiple platforms to encourage family participation. KDE conducts the biennial Impact Kentucky Working Conditions Survey for certified educators, including KSB and KSD staff. The six-week survey gathers data from educators on the following topics: Educating All Students; Emotional Well-Being and Belonging; Feedback and Coaching; Managing Student Behavior; Professional Learning; Resources; School Climate; School Leadership; and Staff-Leadership Relationships. The most recent survey was completed during the 2023–2024 school year.</p> <p>KSB Impact Survey Data; KSD Impact Survey Data KDE led a statewide needs assessment in 2021, sending five</p>	<p>KDE’s response here confirms that its data collection efforts are not working. If they were, KDE would have obtained the same feedback the APA did—feedback revealing that, in many ways, KSB and KSD are not being given the support they need from KDE.</p>

			<p>surveys to outreach personnel, school districts, families, and partner agencies to evaluate services provided by the KSB and KSD Outreach Programs. During the KSD Principal and Assistant Principal hiring process, KDE gathered staff and family input through surveys and shared the results with the KSD Advisory Board and broader stakeholder groups via email.</p>	
<p>291</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p>“11.1.b Recommendation: KDE should establish more consistent interaction with KSB and KSD to better understand the needs of the state schools and the communities they serve. This additional interaction should involve not only the administration of KSB and KSD but also include teachers, staff, and students, as well as a greater presence on each campus.”</p>	<p>KDE maintains involvement through consistent engagement, on- site support and collaboration as outlined below.</p> <p>KDE On-Site and Ongoing Support for KSB and KSD Regular On-Site Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Director of the Division of State Schools: Works on-site at KSB and KSD weekly.</li> <li>● Assistant Director of the Division of State Schools: Works on-site at KSD weekly; visits KSB as applicable.</li> <li>● Director of Special Education within the Division of State Schools: Works on-site at KSB and KSD weekly.</li> <li>● Food Service Evaluator within the Division of State Schools: Works on-site at KSB and KSD weekly.</li> <li>● Director of the Division of Budgets and Financial Management:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facilitated on-site training at KSD during the 2023–24 school year.</li> <li>○ Offered on-site training to KSB.</li> <li>○ On-site monthly at both campuses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● School Health Branch Manager within the Division of District Support:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Facilitated on-site health services training at KSB and KSD during the 2024–25 school year.</li> <li>○ Held virtual follow-up meetings with each school's health department.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Human Resources Administrators within the Division of Resource Management: Assigned to each campus as their primary work location,</li> </ul>	<p>As previously indicated, KDE’s response here confirms that its efforts here are not enough to meet the needs of KSB and KSD. If they were, the APA would not have received the feedback it did from KSD and KSB teachers and staff.</p>

			<p>providing on-site support.</p> <p>Emergency and Operational Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 24/7 Emergency Support: KSB and KSD offer residential programming for eligible students. The Director of the Division of State Schools and the Associate Commissioner of the Office of Special Education and Early Learning provide on-call support for school-level emergencies, in addition to other KDE leaders who are needed to respond to emergency issues.</li> <li>● Monthly Division Meetings: The Division of State Schools holds monthly meetings to provide guidance on school- level initiatives and operations.</li> <li>● Disciplinary Training: The Division of Resource Management provided on-site training to KSB and KSD staff supervisors during the 2023–24 school year.</li> <li>● Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) (also known as IEP Team Meetings): The Director of Special Education within the Division of State Schools chairs ARC meetings.</li> </ul> <p>Direct Report Meetings with the Director of the Division of State Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assistant Director – 2x per month</li> <li>● Director of Special Education – 1x per month</li> <li>● Food Service Evaluator – 1x per month</li> <li>● KSB Principal – 2x per month</li> <li>● KSD Principal – 2x per month</li> <li>● KSB Fiscal Manager – 1x per month</li> <li>● KSD Fiscal Manager – 1x per month</li> <li>● Administrative Assistant – 2x per month</li> </ul> <p>Financial Oversight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meetings with the Division of Budgets and Financial Management:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ KSD – Monthly</li> <li>○ KSB – Every other month</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Campus Engagement &amp; Events</p>	
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attended by: Associate Commissioner of the Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Office of Special Education and Early Learning staff, Director of the Division of State Schools, Assistant Director, and Director of Special Education.</li> <li>● Events include: Langley Award Ceremony, Fall Recital, Staff Luncheon, Bill Robey Games, and Holiday Concert.</li> </ul> <p>Policy and Legal Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Policy Advisor from the Office of Special Education and Early Learning:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Meets monthly with the Director of the Division of State Schools.</li> <li>○ Seeks feedback from KSB and KSD principals, advisory boards, and human resources administrators at least annually.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Office of Legal Services:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Toured both campuses and met with KSB and KSD principals and the Director of the Division of State Schools in spring 2025.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The Kentucky Department of Education’s Division of State Schools (DoSS) has a clearly structured and ongoing system of communication and accountability in place. DoSS staff utilize a comprehensive Weekly Reports and Communication System to ensure alignment, transparency, and continuous support for both schools.</p> <p>The system includes the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Priorities Section:</b> Every other week, each division staff member outlines key priorities for the upcoming two weeks. This section also identifies any support needed from DoSS leadership and KDE as a whole, ensuring proactive coordination and responsiveness.</li> <li>● <b>Director/Commissioner Information Section:</b> Staff submit updates every other week, identifying items for discussion with the Division Director and Associate Commissioner, topics requiring attention from the Commissioner, and</li> </ul>	
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			<p>any time-sensitive action items with due dates. The Associate Commissioner meets with the Commissioner every other week for a direct report and brings forward items for discussion with the Commissioner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategic/Improvement Plan Linkage:</b> The Division’s Strategic and Improvement Plan is embedded within the notebook. Staff are assigned as leads for specific goals across seven focus areas: Educational Programming; Student Life; Outreach &amp; Community Engagement; Comprehensive Team Building, Staff Development &amp; Employee Retention; Campus Management &amp; Operations; Strategic Leadership; and Fiscal Administration and Oversight. Staff are expected to regularly update progress in their respective areas.</li> <li>• <b>Individual Direct Report Documentation:</b> Each team member maintains a dedicated section for their direct report, which is reviewed and discussed in regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with the Division Director.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, the OSEEL Associate Commissioner, DoSS Director, Assistant Director, Director of Special Education and multiple other OSEEL staff regularly attend KSB and KSD Advisory Board meetings and provide updates.</p> <p>KDE values the perspectives of KSB and KSD staff and acknowledges the importance of engaging stakeholders to inform continuous improvement efforts as previously noted. KDE must also uphold the organizational structure that supports school-level leadership. Principals at KSB and KSD are responsible for the direct management of their schools, and KDE remains committed to respecting their authority and expertise in overseeing day-to-day operations.</p>	
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<p>291</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p>“11.1.c Recommendation: KDE should establish more consistent interaction with the KSB and KSD advisory boards to assist them in meeting the needs of KSB and KSD, as well as the communities they serve. This should include attending KSB and KSD advisory board meetings and ensuring each advisory board has the required number of members to have a quorum for meeting.”</p>	<p>KDE maintains consistent engagement with both the KSB and KSD Advisory Boards. The Associate Commissioner of the Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL), along with the Director, Assistant Director, and Director of Special Education from the Division of State Schools (DoSS), regularly attend advisory board meetings for both schools and provide KDE updates.</p> <p>KDE also supports the boards through training and technical assistance. During the 2023–24 school year, the OSEEL Policy Advisor collaborated with DoSS Leadership and the KSD Principal to provide orientation training for new KSD Advisory Board members, and in 2024–25, the Office of Legal Services provided training to the KSB Advisory Board.</p> <p>While KDE actively participates and provides support, it does not have authority over board membership. Quorum requirements are governed by each board's bylaws, and KDE does not appoint members or control attendance. KDE remains committed to supporting the boards in fulfilling their purpose and ensuring alignment with the needs of students, staff, and families.</p>	<p>As previously indicated, KDE’s response here confirms that its efforts here are not enough to meet the needs of KSB and KSD. If they were, the APA would not have received the feedback it did from KSD and KSB teachers and staff.</p>
<p>292</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p>“11.1.d Recommendation: KDE should ensure the KSB Advisory Board is comprised of at least some individuals who are blind or visually impaired, reflecting the community the board serves, and seek a statutory change that provides for such representation.”</p>	<p>This is a matter prescribed by statute in <a href="#">KRS 167.035</a>. As such, a change requires action by the Kentucky General Assembly, not the KDE/KBE. The Recommendation fails to consider <a href="#">KSB Advisory Board Bylaws</a> which state:</p> <p>Eligibility: In an effort to include relevant communities on the advisory board, members may be representative of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parent of a currently enrolled student;</li> <li>● A representative of a community business partner engaged with the KSB;</li> <li>● An alumnus;</li> <li>● A local school district or representative from a Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Regional Special Education Cooperative; and</li> <li>● An At-large member from a group or agency that has a</li> </ul>	<p>KDE’s response indicates it understands the importance of possessing a KSB Advisory Board reflective of the community it serves. The APA encourages KDE to ensure that the KSB Advisory Board adheres to that principle.</p>

			service mission and interest in the education of students who are blind or visually impaired.	
292	Exceptional Children: KSB & KSD	“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.”	<p>The recommendation implies that the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) is not consistently informed about the conditions and needs of KSB and KSD; however, this is not accurate. Since the creation of the State Schools Committee by KBE during the 2023-2024 school year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KDE’s Division of State Schools (DoSS) presented an overview of each school to KBE during the October 2023 meeting.</li> <li>• KDE’s Division of Budget and Financial Management (DBFM) presented KSB/KSD Fiscal Overview to KBE during the December 2023 meeting.</li> <li>• KSB and KSD principals presented a year in review to KBE during the April 2024 meeting.</li> <li>• KDE’s DoSS presented KSD Accreditation Results to KBE during the June 2024 meeting.</li> <li>• KDE’s DoSS presented KSB Accreditation Results to KBE during the December 2024 meeting.</li> </ul> <p>The Commissioner’s Report to KBE includes KSB and KSD information shared directly from school leadership.</p>	As previously discussed, KBE is not as informed as it needs to be to properly serve the needs of KSD and KSB. If it were, the APA would not have received the direct feedback it obtained from KSD and KSB teachers and staff.
292	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	“11.1.g Recommendation: KDE should work with the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet to review the job specifications and pay scales for 18A classified employee positions.”	<p>Historically, disparities in job classifications and compensation existed between KSB and KSD. While both schools employed staff in residential and student support roles, KSD used the classifications <i>Student Development Associate</i> and <i>Student Development Assistant</i>, whereas KSB relied on <i>Houseparent I</i> and <i>Houseparent II</i>. These roles differed not only in title but also in pay grade, with the primary rationale for the discrepancy being the prevalent use of American Sign Language (ASL) among KSD staff.</p> <p>To address these inequities, KDE’s Division of Resource Management initiated a comprehensive classification review in close partnership with the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet. The goals of this collaborative, data-driven effort were to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure classification consistency across both schools</li> <li>2. Align minimum qualifications to attract and retain competent, capable staff</li> <li>3. Avoid excessive qualification requirements that might</li> </ol>	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is committed to adhering to Recommendation 11.1.g.

		<p>limit the applicant pool</p> <p>4. Reassess pay grades for equitable and competitive compensation</p> <p>This work culminated in several job classification revisions and employee reallocations, all of which took effect on March 16, 2024. Highlights include:</p>																																									
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Position Title</th> <th>Prior Pay Grade</th> <th>New Pay Grade</th> <th>Notes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Houseparent I</td> <td>07</td> <td>08</td> <td>Revisions to job characteristics, duties, and requirements</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Houseparent II</td> <td>08</td> <td>09</td> <td>Full content updates</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residential Program Coordinator (formerly Houseparent Coordinator)</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>Title and structural revision</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Student Development Associate</td> <td>08</td> <td>09</td> <td>Minimum qualifications and duties updated</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Student Development Assistant</td> <td>09</td> <td>10</td> <td>Reclassification with revised responsibilities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Student Development Supervisor (formerly Specialist)</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>Title and scope of work adjusted</td> </tr> <tr> <td>KSB/KSD Instructional Assistant</td> <td>Various</td> <td>Various</td> <td>Enhanced job specifications</td> </tr> <tr> <td>KSB/KSD Operations Supervisor</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>Expanded job scope and detail</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dorm Program Supervisor for People with Disabilities</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>Classification abolished</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Position Title	Prior Pay Grade	New Pay Grade	Notes	Houseparent I	07	08	Revisions to job characteristics, duties, and requirements	Houseparent II	08	09	Full content updates	Residential Program Coordinator (formerly Houseparent Coordinator)	10	11	Title and structural revision	Student Development Associate	08	09	Minimum qualifications and duties updated	Student Development Assistant	09	10	Reclassification with revised responsibilities	Student Development Supervisor (formerly Specialist)	-	-	Title and scope of work adjusted	KSB/KSD Instructional Assistant	Various	Various	Enhanced job specifications	KSB/KSD Operations Supervisor	-	-	Expanded job scope and detail	Dorm Program Supervisor for People with Disabilities	-	-	Classification abolished	
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		<p>For full specifications: <a href="#">Job Specification Search (ky.gov)</a></p> <p><b>Multilingual Pay Premium and Shift Differentials</b></p> <p>To further support equity and retention, KDE partnered with</p>																																									

			<p>the Personnel Cabinet to implement a multilingual pay premium at KSD, effective January 1, 2018. This program compensates staff for ASL usage based on their Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) rating and the percentage of time ASL is used on the job: <b>ASL Usage %      Hourly Premium</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>0–24%</td> <td>\$0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25–49%</td> <td>\$0.30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50–100%</td> <td>\$0.60</td> </tr> </table> <p>Eligible employees must demonstrate a SLPI rating of Intermediate or higher. This initiative rewards language proficiency, encourages skill development, and strengthens communication between staff and students.</p> <p>In addition, KDE offers shift differentials to support recruitment for non-traditional working hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Shift: 10% premium</li> <li>• Third Shift: 15% premium</li> </ul> <p>KDE is also participating in the Personnel Cabinet’s current statewide classification review, which may further inform refinements to staffing structures and compensation models.</p> <p>These compensation strategies reflect KDE’s commitment to creating equitable and supportive work environments across both schools.</p>	0–24%	\$0.00	25–49%	\$0.30	50–100%	\$0.60	
0–24%	\$0.00									
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<p>292, 296</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p>“11.2 Finding: Improvements can be made to the procurement process for state schools.”          “11.2.a Recommendation: KDE should foster greater communication related to procurement with KSB and KSD, ensuring that any necessary immediacy for approval is clearly communicated to the appropriate personnel at KDE.”</p>	<p>Consistent and ongoing communication is a core component of KDE’s Division of State Schools (DoSS) current process. The Division of State Schools (DoSS) includes KSB and KSD Fiscal Manager positions that work closely with KDE’s Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) and Office of Finance and Operations (OFO) to ensure school-level staff follow procurement procedures aligned with KDE policy, state and federal regulations. These Fiscal Managers regularly communicate with DoSS, OSEEL, and OFO staff regarding the urgency of approvals and procurement needs.</p> <p>KDE’s DoSS maintains a Weekly Reports/Communication System housed on the DoSS SharePoint, which includes input from both schools’ Principals and Fiscal Managers. This</p>	<p>The APA is happy to hear that KDE is committed to resolving Finding 11.2 by adhering to Recommendation 11.2.a.</p>						

			<p>platform allows all direct report staff to identify priorities, request support, and track action items.</p> <p>In addition to this structured system, KDE DoSS staff are on-site weekly at both campuses and are accessible through multiple channels—including phone, Microsoft Teams, and email with school leaders having direct access to the Division Director for urgent needs.</p>	
296	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	<p>“11.2.c Recommendation: The schools' fiscal managers should hold an annual information session at the beginning of each academic year to ensure a clear understanding of the procurement process among staff. A KDE representative should attend these sessions to speak to KDE's role in the process. Clarity and transparency during this session is key to fostering trust and communication regarding any future issues.”</p>	<p>KDE's Division of Budget and Financial Management (DBFM) offered training to both KSB and KSD staff on procurement and travel processes, with KSD teachers required to attend per the principal's direction. This training took place during the 23–24 school year to improve understanding and compliance with fiscal procedures.</p> <p>To further support schools, the DBFM Director provides monthly on-site assistance at both KSB and KSD. KSB and KSD's Beginning of Year (BOY) training, under development, includes representation from KDE as previously determined through a collaborative working session.</p>	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is committed to carrying out Recommendation 11.2.c.
296, 297	Kentucky School for the Blind & Kentucky School for the Deaf	<p>“11.3 Finding: Teachers utilize personal funds to purchase essential classroom items.”</p> <p>“11.3.a Recommendation: With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should review their respective process for budgeting to determine whether additional funding is available to assist teachers and staff with the purchase of essential items. Methods of assistance could include designated classroom stipends and/or a reimbursement process</p>	<p>Teachers and staff at KSB and KSD are not expected or required to use personal funds for essential classroom items. Funding exists and is accessible through school-managed budgets, separate from any charitable foundation support. Staff are expected to use formal processes under the direction of their school leadership to request needed items.</p> <p>KDE, through the Division of Budget and Financial Management and the Division of State Schools, has provided training and ongoing on-site support to ensure staff understand how to access available resources. Funding is available through general funds and IDEA, and each school has established procedures for requesting materials. In recent years, additional COVID relief funding was also available. For the 2024–25 school year, with federal relief funds no longer available, school and fiscal leadership designated the year as a</p>	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is committed to resolving Finding 11.3 and adhering to Recommendation 11.3.a.

		<p>(separate from the processes associated with the schools' charitable foundations)."</p> <p>"11.3.b Recommendation: With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should make efforts to inform their employees of their respective schools' budgets on an annual basis via informational sessions, regardless of whether either of the above suggestions is possible. Employee awareness of the fiscal budget (and its constraints) should promote transparency and informed purchasing, as well as help alleviate any misconception that money is being withheld for arbitrary or unexplained reasons."</p>	<p>planning and observation period to assess future classroom budget needs. While individual classroom budgets were not assigned during this period, department budgets remained available, and funding was accessible for any essential classroom items through established request processes. Department supervisors were provided with budget information responsible for managing resources. This approach allows for intentional planning and equitable resource distribution moving forward.</p>	
<p>297, 298</p>	<p>Kentucky School for the Blind &amp; Kentucky School for the Deaf</p>	<p>"11.4 Finding: KSB and KSD have informal complaint processes."</p> <p>"11.4.a Recommendation: With support and oversight from KDE, KSB and KSD should formulate and formalize a written complaint process similar to those established in other school districts. The process should provide detailed information and guidance on the types of complaints that can be handled by the respective schools and specify which types of complaints should be submitted to KDE."</p> <p>"11.4.c Recommendation: Maintain and update the</p>	<p>The finding and recommendations are not supported by the evidence. As written, the report ignores the formal grievance policies adopted by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) for KSB and KSD. The full policy manual adopted by KBE can be found here: <a href="https://policy.ksba.org/Chapter.aspx?distid=177">https://policy.ksba.org/Chapter.aspx?distid=177</a>. This is the same policy service utilized by 171 public school districts throughout Kentucky. Specifically, the KBE adopted formal grievance policies for both staff (policy 03.16) and students/parents (policy 09.4281). The KBE reviews and updates KSB and KSD policies, including any necessary updates to the grievance policies, annually. See <a href="#">KBE August 8, 2024 agenda</a>.</p> <p>Furthermore, a formal grievance process exists for all KRS Chapter 18A employees, including those at KSB/KSD. Grievances filed by these staff members follow the formal process outlined by the KDE's Division of Resource Management, not an internal school-based process. KSB and KSD each have an on-site KDE Human Resources</p>	<p>KDE never provided the APA with this requested information. Even upon inquiry to KSB and KSD administrators, these policies were not described. At the very least, this suggests that KDE has failed to ensure that KSB and KSD are aware of these policies and properly trained on them.</p>

		complaint process as necessary.”	<p>Administrator who provides personnel support and guidance to staff.</p> <p>In addition to policy 09.4281 described above, parents have multiple formal avenues to raise concerns. As members of their child’s Admission and Release Committee (ARC), they are invited to share concerns at each meeting, which occur at least annually, and often more frequently at KSB and KSD than in traditional districts. Parents are reminded of their procedural safeguards, including the right to call an ARC meeting at any time. Formal complaints, such as those involving the implementation of a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), are processed through the KDE’s Office of Special Education and Early Learning’s (OSEEL) Dispute Resolution process. This process is prescribed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations. It includes federally mandated timelines and procedures to ensure compliance and protect student rights.</p> <p>Formal, regulated systems are in place at KSB and KSD for both staff and parents to address concerns. These processes are neither informal nor subjective and are guided by state and federal policy. Finding 11.4, Recommendation 11.4.a, and Recommendation 11.4.c should be updated to accordingly.</p>	
307	Preschool	Figure 170: SPP Indicator 7 Preschool Outcomes Results.	Using “FY” in the figure to describe the year is inaccurate. FY stands for Fiscal Year and FFY stands for Federal Fiscal Year. FY and FFY describe different periods of time. The outcome results are labeled in the report as FY 2017 through FY 2022 but should be labeled as FFY 2017 through FFY 2022. The results listed are for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). State (FY) and federal (FFY) timelines span different months.	The APA was aware of the alignment of SPP indicator reporting to the federal fiscal year and has made that clear to the reader in the report.
308	Preschool	Figure 171: Peer State Comparison of SPP 7 Outcomes Targets.	Using “FY” to describe the year is inaccurate. Figure 171 states it refers to targets for FY 2022; however, the targets for Kentucky are for FFY 2022. State (FY) and federal (FFY) timelines span different months.	As before, the APA was aware of this and has made that clear to the reader in the report.



309	Preschool	“12.3 Observation: While Kentucky preschool students outperform the established state outcomes targets in State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator 7, the state targets are set lower than all comparison states across areas of SPP Indicator 7.”	This observation fails to consider Kentucky’s targets are set and publicly reported for FFY 2023. Kentucky reset baselines based on FFY 2023 data and updated targets for FFY 2023 through FFY 2025. The targets are now aligned with the state’s data for Indicator 7.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE has taken steps to address Observation 12.3. That being said, KDE’s targets generally remain lower than historical targets set by peer states in most areas measured by Indicator 7.
315	Career & Technical Education: Professional Learning	“ATC teachers expressed the need for pathway-specific professional learning communities, regional engagement opportunities, and access to veteran CTE teachers for mentoring and guidance. KDE should build cost-free professional networks for CTE pathways statewide to increase professional engagement, mentoring, and training opportunities.”	On-demand professional learning modules are being created to support new educators to enhance the support already provided by the New Teacher Institute. These will be available to all educators to access at any time on the KY Learning Hub website.  OCTE offers annual summer technical update trainings geared to each specific program area. Program-specific statewide PLCs are offered virtually on a regular basis and facilitated by veteran program teachers. The OCTE is considering staffing options to ensure all professional learning opportunities are shared and communicated.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously the concerns of ATC teachers.
321	Career & Technical Education in Kentucky: Pathways	“Once a student passes the requisite course, they can pursue either an industry certification in their chosen field or take a state-developed End-of-Program (EOP) assessment.”	Students may pursue either an industry certification in their chosen field and/or take a state-developed End-of-Program (EOP) assessment, as applicable.	The APA is happy to reflect KDE’s suggestion here in its report.
322	Career & Technical Education in Kentucky: Outcomes and Accountability	Figure 179: State Accountability Career Readiness Indicators  “State-developed assessments that pertain to pathways without associated industry certifications. Students who pass these assessments earn college credit at state institutions.”	Career and Technical Education End-of-Program (CTE EOP) Assessment for Articulated Credit is one measure of career readiness as a postsecondary readiness indicator for Kentucky’s accountability system. CTE EOP Assessments are state developed assessments based upon clear and concise standards identified by Kentucky employers, aligned with CTE career pathways and associated with statewide articulation agreements with postsecondary partners.	The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader.

323	Career & Technical Education in Kentucky: Outcomes and Accountability	Figure 181: Kentucky Perkins Indicator Goals and Outcomes (2022-2023)	<p>The 2024-2027 Kentucky Perkins V State Plan reflects higher, more ambitious state-determined goals than the 22-23 goals provided in the report. The 2024-2027 goals are as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>24-25</th> <th>25-26</th> <th>26-27</th> <th>27-28</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1S1</td> <td>98.77%</td> <td>98.80%</td> <td>98.85%</td> <td>98.90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2S1</td> <td>43.34%</td> <td>43.75%</td> <td>44.25%</td> <td>44.75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2S2</td> <td>30.65%</td> <td>31.00%</td> <td>31.50%</td> <td>32.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2S3</td> <td>22.67%</td> <td>23.00%</td> <td>23.50%</td> <td>24.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3S1</td> <td>86.75%</td> <td>87.00%</td> <td>87.25%</td> <td>87.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4S1</td> <td>23.68%</td> <td>23.80%</td> <td>23.90%</td> <td>24.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5S1</td> <td>59.35%</td> <td>60.00%</td> <td>61.00%</td> <td>62.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	1S1	98.77%	98.80%	98.85%	98.90%	2S1	43.34%	43.75%	44.25%	44.75%	2S2	30.65%	31.00%	31.50%	32.00%	2S3	22.67%	23.00%	23.50%	24.00%	3S1	86.75%	87.00%	87.25%	87.50%	4S1	23.68%	23.80%	23.90%	24.00%	5S1	59.35%	60.00%	61.00%	62.00%	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Observation 13.4 and Recommendation 13.4.a in the report.
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325	Career & Technical Education in Kentucky: Outcomes and Accountability	“13.4.a Recommendation: KDE should review Kentucky and comparison state data and explore setting more ambitious Perkins goals as applicable to Kentucky’s CTE strategy.”	The data utilized to form this recommendation was 2022-2023 data. More ambitious Perkins goals were established with the Perkins V State Plan approved by the KBE in March 2025. The Kentucky Perkins Performance Model includes a baseline for each required indicator derived from the average of the actual performance data from the two most recently completed program years. Goals for each subsequent year of the model, per Perkins V Section 113, were set to increase from the baseline to continually make meaningful progress toward improving performance.	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Observation 13.4 and Recommendation 13.4.a in the report.																																								
325	Career & Technical Education in Kentucky: Promoting CTE Programs & Resources	“13.5.a Recommendation: KDE should launch public information resources and campaigns to increase awareness and promote CTE programs statewide among non- educator audiences.”	<p>KDE is actively engaged in raising awareness about CTE through ongoing campaigns aimed at a broad audience, including those outside the education sector. In March 2025, KDE hired a Marketing Consultant to support statewide CTE promotion efforts.</p> <p>This consultant leverages a variety of platforms to reach diverse audiences. OCTE also collaborates closely with the KDE Division of Communications to ensure consistent messaging across both internal and external channels.</p> <p>To further support understanding of CTE pathways, OCTE’s Career Counseling Consultant developed a guidance document that outlines career options, skills development and postsecondary opportunities available through Kentucky’s CTE programs. This resource is especially helpful for school schedulers and parents who may not be familiar with the full range of CTE offerings. While promotional funding is limited</p>	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Finding 13.5 and Recommendations 13.5.a and 13.5.b in the report.																																								

			<p>due to OCTE’s focus on directing resources toward student learning and program improvement, OCTE continues to find innovative ways to spotlight CTE. In 2025, OCTE supported the “All in for Ag” campaign, which featured events across the state to promote agricultural education. As part of this initiative, two students testified before the Kentucky Senate and House Education Committees, sharing how CTE has shaped their educational and career journeys. OCTE is exploring similar promotional strategies for other CTE programs.</p> <p>Each February, Kentucky observes Career and Technical Education Month to celebrate the impact of CTE in preparing students for high-demand careers and strengthening the state’s workforce. During this month, schools, educators, students, and industry partners host events, showcase student projects, and engage in career exploration activities. To formally recognize the importance of CTE. The Governor, alongside OCTE, at times issues a proclamation declaring February as CTE Month. The Governor also participates in public events and media outreach to highlight student achievements and reinforce the state’s commitment to high-quality CTE.</p> <p>OCTE also partnered with the Kentucky Community and College System (KCTCS) for the “Going Pro” campaign, which celebrated students who secured employment with Kentucky-based companies. A public signing ceremony was held in the Capitol rotunda to honor these students and their employers.</p> <p>To keep the public informed, OCTE publishes a monthly CTE newsletter featuring updates and highlights from across the state. Additionally, OCTE collaborated with the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) to launch <i>Futuriti</i>, an application designed to help students of all ages explore career pathways and related education and training opportunities. The OCTE continues to seek new ways to promote CTE.</p>	
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325	Career & Technical Education in Kentucky: Promoting CTE Programs & Resources	“13.5.b Recommendation: KDE should build strategic connections between secondary school counselors, CTE program directors, ATCs, and workforce industries to increase co-op and apprenticeship opportunities statewide.”	<p>KDE is dedicated to building strategic connections between secondary school counselors, CTE program directors, Area Technology Centers (ATCs), and workforce industry partners to expand meaningful career pathways for students. By fostering collaboration among these key stakeholders, KDE aims to increase access to cooperative education and apprenticeship opportunities across the state. This coordinated effort ensures that students are better prepared for the demands of the modern workforce while supporting the economic development needs of local communities and industries.</p> <p>Efforts also include grants funding attendance for school counselors to attend the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education summer conference. Collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning is helping to expand and enhance communication with school counselors.</p>	The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Finding 13.5 and Recommendations 13.5.a and 13.5.b in the report.
326	Collaboration With Other State Entities: Overview	“13.6 Observation: For some Kentucky statewide workforce advisory and resource groups and boards, connection with KDE is high level and infrequent. Examples of these groups include Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), Business and Education Alignment Taskforce (BEAT), and State Workforce Advisory Technical Team (SWATT) among others.”	The frequency of meetings is determined by each committee. KDE personnel attend meetings and engage in detailed discussions per each committees’ charge. KDE does not limit discussion to scheduled meetings and reaches out for guidance and input, as needed.	KDE’s response here confirms the need for more formal and regular communication and collaboration.
330	Collaboration With Other State Entities: Data Collection	“The team requested an overall summary of CTE program statistics or annual report and none were provided.”	<p>The only reference to a requested annual report is the following question of the audit team supplied through email: “Do you have an annual report that’s delivered to the General Assembly that gives an overall view of the investments and/or outcomes of Kentucky’s CTE portfolio? Or a statewide menu of services that describes the pathways across geographies and delivery modes (ATC, comprehensive HS, etc.), and options such as co-ops and apprenticeships?”</p> <p>KDE responded: “The OCTE does not have a legislated annual report delivered to the General Assembly. However, we meet with various Interim Joint Committees providing an</p>	KDE’s response confirms that it does not produce an annual report, nor does it have a summary of CTE program statistics. While it may provide other information and resources, KDE does not provide those two items.

			overview of relevant and current CTE items. Regarding return on investment for the Supplemental CTE Funds, the OCTE explained to the General Assembly that it would take a few years for reliable data to be available. The OCTE expects to see increased student benchmarks including work-based learning, dual credit, technical skill attainment and progression through the pathways. The Program of Studies provided on KDE’s website and communications to districts via multiple platforms including program consultants and professional trainings provides additional information. Likewise, the program of studies and various tabs provide information regarding pathways. State approved pathways are available for district implementation across the state. The OCTE has a Work-Based Learning Manual and web page available to guide districts on implementation. KDE’s website contains a menu of services with links to respective areas of needs and multiple Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) documents.”	
331	Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Overview	“Students are enrolled in their home district and typically attend their home high school for half a day and the ATC for the other half day.”	Students are enrolled in their home district and typically attend their home high school and ATC according to their individual schedules and availability. Attendance options include single periods, period blocks, half days, or full days.	The APA is happy to update its report with this information.
334	Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Enrollment and Demographics	“In the 2023-2024 school year, ATCs served 20,082 students[.]”	In the 2023-2024 school year, ATCs served 20,833 students.	Although this data is inconsistent with previous data KDE provided to the APA on this point, the APA is happy to update its report with this information based on KDE’s representation here.

<p>337</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: ATC Operations and Staffing</p>	<p>Figure 191: ATCs Visited by the Auditing Team.</p> <p>Bullitt Co ATC: Enrollment 584</p> <p>Bullitt Co ATC Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Aviation</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance</li> <li>• Masonry</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>	<p>The actual enrollment at the Bullitt County ATC is: 23-24 Enrollment - 647 24-25 Enrollment – 680</p> <p>The Bullitt County ATC also offers the following programs not included in figure 191:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• HVAC</li> </ul>	<p>The enrollment for the ATCs listed in Figure 191 was retrieved from the KY School Report Card (<a href="https://www.education.ky.gov/Open-House/data/HistoricalDatasets/cte_by_student_group_2023.csv">https://www.education.ky.gov/Open-House/data/HistoricalDatasets/cte_by_student_group_2023.csv</a>) in the CTE Participants column. This data was used instead of the numbers provided in KDE's response, as the auditing team was instructed that these totals double-counted students that were enrolled in multiple programs (see the '#42-ATCs Students Enrollment by Program' file provided by KDE).</p> <p>Additionally, the APA also only listed the programs that each ATC reported providing, as ATC staff reported that the lists provided by KDE were out-of-date.</p>
<p>337</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: ATC Operations and Staffing</p>	<p>Figure 191: ATCs Visited by the Auditing Team.</p> <p>Campbell Co ATC: Enrollment</p> <p>333 Campbell Co ATC</p> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Auto Body Repair</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Health Sciences</li> <li>• Masonry</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>	<p>The actual enrollment at the Campbell County ATC is: 23-24 Enrollment - 373 24-25 Enrollment – 374</p> <p>The correct list of programs offered at the Campbell County ATC is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive Education</li> <li>• Collision Repair Technology</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical Technology</li> <li>• Fire Science</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• HVAC</li> <li>• Welding Technology</li> </ul>	<p>The APA's reply in the previous comment applies here, as well.</p>

<p>337</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: ATC Operations and Staffing</p>	<p>Figure 191: ATCs Visited by the Auditing Team.</p> <p>Clark Co ATC: Enrollment 471</p> <p>Clark Co ATC Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auto Body Repair</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>	<p>The actual enrollment at the Clark County ATC is: 23-24 Enrollment - 620 24-25 Enrollment – 555</p> <p>The correct list of programs offered at the Clark County ATC is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive Technology</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance Technology</li> <li>• Welding Technology</li> </ul>	<p>The APA’s reply in the previous comment applies here, as well.</p>
<p>337</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: ATC Operations and Staffing</p>	<p>Figure 191: ATCs Visited by the Auditing Team.</p> <p>Corbin Co. ATC: Enrollment 90</p> <p>Corbin Co. ATC Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Manufacturing</li> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Emergency Medical Technician/First Responder</li> <li>• Engineering &amp; Aerospace</li> <li>• Environmental Control System Technician</li> <li>• Law Enforcement &amp; Criminal Justice</li> <li>• Pre-Nursing</li> <li>• Residential Carpenter</li> <li>• Assistant Welding</li> </ul>	<p>The correct name is Corbin ATC.</p> <p>The actual enrollment at the Corbin ATC is: 23-24 Enrollment - 609 24-25 Enrollment – 485</p> <p>The correct list of programs offered at the Corbin ATC is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Manufacturing</li> <li>• Automotive Technology</li> <li>• Electrical Technology</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Law Enforcement Services</li> <li>• Welding Technology</li> </ul>	<p>The APA’s reply in the previous comment applies here, as well. Upon further review, however, Corbin ATC’s enrollment count has been updated accordingly.</p>



<p>338</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: ATC Operations and Staffing</p>	<p>Figure 191: ATCs Visited by the Auditing Team.</p> <p>Lee County ATC: Enrollment 222</p> <p>Lee County ATC Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Construction Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Office Technology</li> <li>• Welding</li> </ul>	<p>The actual enrollment at the Lee County ATC is: 23-24 Enrollment - 265 24-25 Enrollment – 242</p> <p>The correct list of programs offered at the Lee County ATC is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive Technology</li> <li>• Business Education</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical Technology</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Welding Technology</li> </ul>	<p>The APA’s reply in the previous comment applies here, as well.</p>
<p>338</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: ATC Operations and Staffing</p>	<p>Figure 191: ATCs Visited by the Auditing Team.</p> <p>Marion Co ATC: Enrollment 690</p> <p>Marion Co ATC Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Electrical</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>Welding</li> </ul>	<p>The actual enrollment at the Marion County ATC is: 23-24 Enrollment - 1150 24-25 Enrollment – 1177</p> <p>The correct list of programs offered at the Marion County ATC is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automotive Technology</li> <li>• Computer Aided Design (CAD)</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Computerized Manufacturing and Machining (CMM)</li> <li>• Health Science</li> <li>• Industrial Maintenance Technology</li> <li>• Welding Technology</li> </ul>	<p>The APA’s reply in the previous comment applies here, as well.</p>
<p>339</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Limitations on ATCs as State Agency Components</p>	<p>“14.1 Finding: Administering ATCs as state agency entities, rather than schools, reduces their potential efficiency and effectiveness.”</p>	<p>Although the ATCs operate under a state agency, they follow many of the same policies and procedures as local school districts. This finding pertains to the previously mentioned procurement issue. See Recommendation 1.12.b and KDE’s response to that recommendation above.</p> <p>KDE will discuss with the legislature the option for procurement flexibility similar to that of a local school district.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Finding 14.1 to give ATCs the flexibility they need to operate in the most efficient and effective way for their students.</p>

<p>340</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Limitations on ATCs as State Agency Components</p>	<p>“14.1.a Recommendation: KDE should assess whether allowing ATCs to operate under the procedures of the host districts would bring procedural and fiscal efficiencies to school operations.”          “While additional methods to accomplish this goal are discussed below, the most recommended option is for KDE to consider transferring ATC operations, including facilities, equipment and other physical assets, staff, and all associated funding (not just the 75% provided for by KRS 157.069) to local district control. This is the recommended option because it would solve many of the problems highlighted by the following recommendations and observations, including some in the Salary, Funding, and Resource Differences section.”</p>	<p>First, KDE does not have the authority to transfer ATCs to local district control as anticipated in the report. Such a transfer, under the terms stated in the report, require legislative action.</p> <p>Furthermore, the report does not address disparities in access and opportunity for students, particularly in underserved or rural areas where resources and program availability may become limited, if operation of ATCs is transferred to local districts. Transferring ATC operations, including facilities, equipment, and other physical assets, staff and all associated funding to a local district may negatively impact numerous feeder districts and students by reducing and/or eliminating their access to CTE programs and pathways, especially in rural and Appalachian areas.</p> <p>As stated in the KDE Audit Report page 320, “ATCs generally offer students the opportunity to pursue pathways that would otherwise be prohibitively costly or resource-intensive for local district schools to offer[.]” On page 331 the report states, “ATCs serve students in 115 of Kentucky’s 171 county and independent school districts, as well as several private schools.” On page 334, “ATC’s served 20,082 students – ten percent of the statewide high school population...this would make the network of ATCs equivalent to the fifth largest district in the state.”</p> <p>Currently, KRS 157.069 does not allow for any funding to remain with an ATC that is transferred to local district control. This is logical as locally operated centers are funded through SEEK and CTE Supplemental Funding models. To also provide state ATC funding to districts that assume local control over an ATC would create an unfair funding advantage – ATCs assumed by a district would be funded at much higher rates than locally operated centers that were not previously ATCs.</p> <p>Maintaining the state operated ATC structure is a more fiscally responsible approach allowing KDE to provide regional high-demand programming rather than local districts duplicating services as stand-alone CTE providers. This also helps ensure opportunity and access for all students.</p>	<p>Recommendation 14.1.a simply suggests that, for all the reasons outlined within Finding 14.1 and throughout the report, KDE explore providing ATCs flexibility to operate more like local school districts instead of as state entities. If KDE is unwilling to do that, then it should explore other avenues for addressing all of the issues outlined in Finding 14.1 and throughout the ATC section of the report.</p>
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<p>342</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Salary, Funding, &amp; Resource Differences</p>	<p>“14.3 Finding: ATC staff have less earning potential when compared to teachers at comprehensive schools.”</p>	<p>780 KAR 3:020 guides annual adjustments to the Chapter 156 salary schedule for ATC certified staff. There are multiple variables impacting step and rank changes for ATC certified staff, including occupation-based instructors.</p> <p>KDE acknowledges that the identified scenario—where some ATC staff have less earning potential when compared to teachers at the comprehensive high schools—is both possible and does occur in certain cases. However, this is not universally applicable to all teachers across the state. The Chapter 156 salary schedule, which considers statewide salary schedules, does not accurately reflect the specific salary conditions and variables in each district or location. Some districts maintain salary schedules that consistently fall below the Chapter 156 salary schedule, while others exceed it. Any concerns regarding teacher compensation should be evaluated individually, taking into account the specific district and its corresponding salary schedule compared to the ATC.</p> <p>The finding explanation also states, “the minimum education required of ATC instructors is an associate’s degree. ATC instructors may teach for one year while they work toward their associate’s degree.” There is no current requirement that occupation-based instructors have an associate’s degree upon employment. Rather, instructors have six (6) years to obtain the associate’s degree with hours from the New Teacher Institute counting toward the overall hours required for the associate’s degree.</p> <p>KDE is currently working to amend the occupation-based instructor certification regulation to utilize certain master’s level licensures in lieu of an associate’s degree.</p>	<p>It appears that KDE recognizes the issues identified in Finding 14.3, and the APA encourages KDE to follow Recommendation 14.3.a.</p> <p>Moreover, regardless of whether KDE provides flexibility for when an ATC instructor must obtain an associate’s degree, the fact remains that KDE still requires ATC instructors to obtain one.</p>
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344	Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Salary, Funding, & Resource Differences	<p>“The state counts years of experience only as those in which an employee paid into the Kentucky Teacher Retirement System. Given that many ATC instructors came to education from the trades, they do not receive credit for their years of professional experience. Combined with their diminished earning potential over time, this resulted in ATC instructors earning over \$5,000 less than teachers at local districts in 2023-2024 (Figure 196).”</p>	<p>Figure 196 appears to represent the overall average teacher salaries without taking into account fluctuations associated with new hires who may have fewer years of experience rather than decreased earnings.</p> <p>KDE is investigating options to provide credit for years of experience as part of the effort to better equalize CTE instructor pay. Changes to the OCTE Salary Schedule step and rank require legislative action.</p>	<p>It appears that KDE understands the issues outlined within Finding 14.3, and the APA encourages KDE to follow Recommendation 14.3.a.</p>
346	Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Staff Recruitment and Vacancies	<p>“14.6 Finding: ATCs struggle to find and retain teacher candidates because their career pathway requirements closely resemble those of traditional teaching roles.”</p> <p>“The requirement for CTE instructors to hold an associate’s degree can discourage or price professionals out of the applicant pool.”</p>	<p>An associate degree or higher is not required for entry into the CTE teacher profession. 16 KAR 2:020 applies to all Kentucky occupation-based instructors and provides that if a candidate does not have at least an associate degree in the technical area of the program they will be teaching (or Career and Technical Education), they will have six (6) years to obtain this degree.</p> <p>Scholarships and other tuition assistance are available for professionals seeking to earn occupation-based certification. The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) administers scholarships and assists Kentuckians with financial aid: <a href="#">KHEAA</a>.</p>	<p>KDE does not dispute the bulk of Finding 14.6. Moreover, regardless of whether KDE provides flexibility for when a CTE instructor must obtain an associate’s degree, the fact remains that KDE still requires ATC instructors to obtain one.</p>
347	Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Dual Credit Opportunities	<p>“14.7.a Recommendation: KDE should expand dual credit opportunities for students across all ATCs.”</p>	<p>The 50 state-operated Area Technology Centers partner with numerous postsecondary institutions to offer dual credit. Post-secondary institutions must meet the requirements for SACSCOC accreditation which includes faculty qualifications for teaching dual credit. Faculty qualifications for dual credit vary across our partnering postsecondary institutions. The OCTE cannot dictate the institution’s minimum faculty qualifications.</p> <p>The OCTE works closely with KCTCS to assist all eligible students pursuing dual credit opportunities and has a statewide dual credit agreement in place. The OCTE also has a staff person dedicated to dual credit enhancement. This staff person</p>	<p>With this response, it appears that KDE recognizes the need to expand dual credit opportunities for students across all ATCs. While it may be taking some measures at the moment, Finding 14.7 outlines that those measures are not enough.</p>

			<p>serves on the Dual Credit Advisory committee to further support and encourage intentional dual credit attainment leading to both pathway completion and early postsecondary opportunities.</p>	
347	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Data Collection and Reporting</p>	<p>Figure 200: State Accountability Career Readiness Indicators</p> <p>End-of-Program (EOP) Assessment: “State-developed assessments that pertain to pathways without associated industry certifications. Students who pass these assessments earn college credit at state institutions.”</p>	<p>Career and Technical Education End-of-Program (CTE EOP) Assessment for Articulated Credit is one measure of career readiness as a postsecondary readiness indicator for Kentucky’s accountability system. CTE EOP Assessments are state developed assessments based upon clear and concise standards identified by Kentucky employers, aligned with CTE career pathways and associated with statewide articulation agreements with postsecondary partners.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to leave this information here for the reader to view.</p>
349	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Data Collection and Reporting</p>	<p>“14.8.a Recommendation: KDE should publish data on ATC students’ career readiness opportunities on the SRC.”</p>	<p>The career readiness measures earned at ATCs contribute to the overall postsecondary readiness measures of the home high school. Accountability is based on primary enrollment (home district). ATCs are secondary enrollments. The OCTE is currently working with the Office of Education Technology to ensure relevant CTE data is readily available.</p>	<p>KDE cannot measure the effectiveness of its ATC program if it does not have ATC-specific career-readiness numbers. KDE should adhere to Recommendation 14.8.a., and its response indicates it will.</p>
349	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System: Facilities Condition</p>	<p>“14.9.a Recommendation: KDE should ensure that 20% SEEK funds for ATC facilities are used for the benefit of the ATCs.”</p>	<p>The referenced funds are no longer a SEEK line item. OCTE currently receives MUNIS reports indicating the use of the 20% facilities funds provided to districts. OCTE is developing a MUNIS monitoring checks and balances system to ensure the 20% facilities funds are spent following the intent of funding purposes.</p>	<p>The APA is happy to hear that KDE is taking seriously Finding 14.9 and Recommendation 14.9.a of the report.</p>

<p>350</p>	<p>Area Technology Centers, The Kentucky Tech System, Laws and Regulations</p>	<p>“14.11.a Recommendation: KDE should assess whether efficiencies in state administrative oversight could be gained by allowing ATCs to operate under the procedures of their home districts.”</p>	<p>See response to 14.1.a Recommendation on page 340 of the report, detailed above.</p>	<p>Recommendation 14.11.a simply suggests that, because of everything outlined in Findings 14.1 and 14.4 and throughout the rest of the report, KDE explore providing ATCs flexibility to operate more like local school districts instead of as state entities. If KDE is unwilling to do this, then it should explore other avenues for addressing all of the issues outlined in Finding 14.11 and throughout the ATC section of the report.</p>
<p>357-358</p>	<p>Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Evaluation</p>	<p>Figure 205: District Responses Received by KDE.</p> <p><u>“Ten or Less</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allen County (3)</li> <li>• Ashland independent (2)</li> <li>• Ballard County (1)</li> <li>• Bardstown Independent (9)</li> <li>• Barren County (6)</li> <li>• Bath County (5)</li> <li>• Bellevue Independent (9)</li> <li>• Berea Independent (3)</li> <li>• Boyd County (5)</li> <li>• Boyle County (1)</li> <li>• Bracken County (6)</li> <li>• Breathitt County (5)</li> <li>• Breckinridge County (1)</li> <li>• Butler County (5)</li> <li>• Caldwell County (3)</li> <li>• Campbellsville independent (7)</li> <li>• Carroll County (5)</li> <li>• Casey County (8)</li> <li>• Clark County (5)</li> </ul>	<p>The correct numbers and districts that should appear in Figure 205 are as follows:</p> <p><u>Ten or Less</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allen County (3)</li> <li>• Ashland independent (2)</li> <li>• Ballard County (1)</li> <li>• Bardstown Independent (9)</li> <li>• Barren County (6)</li> <li>• Bath County (5)</li> <li>• Bellevue Independent (9)</li> <li>• Berea Independent (3)</li> <li>• Boyd County (5)</li> <li>• Boyle County (1)</li> <li>• Bracken County (6)</li> <li>• Breathitt County (5)</li> <li>• Breckinridge County (1)</li> <li>• Butler County (5)</li> <li>• Caldwell County (3)</li> <li>• Campbellsville independent (7)</li> <li>• Carroll County (5)</li> <li>• Casey County (8)</li> <li>• Clark County (5)</li> <li>• Crittenden County (4)</li> <li>• Daviess County (5)</li> <li>• Edmonson County (8)</li> </ul>	<p>The data the APA originally relayed in the report was reflective of the responses KDE received at that time. The APA is happy to update its figures with this more-recent data that KDE has provided.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crittenden County (4)</li> <li>• Daviess County (5)</li> <li>• Edmonson County (8)</li> <li>• Elizabethtown Independent (3)</li> <li>• Erlanger Independent (3)</li> <li>• Fairview Independent (1)</li> <li>• Floyd County (1)</li> <li>• Fulton Independent (4)</li> <li>• Glasgow Independent (8)</li> <li>• Hancock County (1)</li> <li>• Hardin County (3)</li> <li>• Harlan County (6)</li> <li>• Henderson County (2)</li> <li>• Henry County (2)</li> <li>• Hickman County (6)</li> <li>• Jackson County (2)</li> <li>• Knott County (1)</li> <li>• Larue County (3)</li> <li>• Leslie County (3)</li> <li>• Lincoln County (4)</li> <li>• Ludlow Independent (3)</li> <li>• Madison County (2)</li> <li>• Mayfield Independent (1)</li> <li>• McCreary County (6)</li> <li>• Meade County (1)</li> <li>• Menifee County (1)</li> <li>• Mercer County (6)</li> <li>• Monroe County (1)</li> <li>• Morgan County (2)</li> <li>• Muhlenberg County (7)</li> <li>• Murray Independent (1)</li> <li>• Nicholas County (1)</li> <li>• Ohio County (1)</li> <li>• Owen County (3)</li> <li>• Owensboro Independent (8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elizabethtown Independent (3)</li> <li>• Erlanger Independent (3)</li> <li>• Fairview Independent (1)</li> <li>• Floyd County (1)</li> <li>• <b>Frankfort Independent (10)</b></li> <li>• Fulton Independent (4)</li> <li>• Glasgow Independent (8)</li> <li>• <b>Green County (10)</b></li> <li>• Hancock County (1)</li> <li>• Hardin County (3)</li> <li>• Harlan County (6)</li> <li>• Henderson County (2)</li> <li>• Henry County (2)</li> <li>• Hickman County (6)</li> <li>• Jackson County (2)</li> <li>• Knott County (1)</li> <li>• Larue County (3)</li> <li>• Leslie County (3)</li> <li>• Lincoln County (4)</li> <li>• Ludlow Independent (3)</li> <li>• Madison County (2)</li> <li>• <b>Marshall County (10)</b></li> <li>• Mayfield Independent (1)</li> <li>• McCreary County (6)</li> <li>• Meade County (1)</li> <li>• Menifee County (1)</li> <li>• <b>Mercer County (5)</b></li> <li>• Monroe County (1)</li> <li>• Morgan County (2)</li> <li>• Muhlenberg County (7)</li> <li>• Murray Independent (1)</li> <li>• Nicholas County (1)</li> <li>• Ohio County (1)</li> <li>• Owen County (3)</li> <li>• Owensboro Independent (8)</li> <li>• Paris Independent (4)</li> <li>• Pendleton County (4)</li> <li>• Powell County (3)</li> <li>• Simpson County (3)</li> <li>• Trigg County (1)</li> <li>• Union County (1)</li> </ul>	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paris Independent (4)</li> <li>• Pendleton County (4)</li> <li>• Powell County (3)</li> <li>• Simpson County (3)</li> <li>• Trigg County (1)</li> <li>• Union County (1)</li> <li>• Walton-Verona Independent (1)</li> <li>• Washington County (4)</li> <li>• Wayne County (3)</li> <li>• Wolfe County (1)”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walton-Verona Independent (1)</li> <li>• Washington County (4)</li> <li>• Wayne County (3)</li> <li>• Wolfe County (1)</li> <li>• <b>Woodford County (6)</b></li> </ul>	
358	Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Evaluation	<p>Figure 205: District Responses Received by KDE.</p> <p><u>11 or More</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anderson County (14)</li> <li>• Boone County (68)</li> <li>• Bowling Green Independent (43)</li> <li>• Bullitt County (59)</li> <li>• Campbell County (27)</li> <li>• Caverna Independent (11)</li> <li>• Covington Independent (17)</li> <li>• Eminence Independent (12)</li> <li>• Fayette County (188)</li> <li>• Fleming County (11)</li> <li>• Franklin County (15)</li> <li>• Graves County (25)</li> <li>• Grayson County (16)</li> <li>• Graves County (25)</li> <li>• Grayson County (16)</li> <li>• Hart County (22)</li> <li>• Hopkins County (21)</li> <li>• Jefferson County (50)</li> <li>• Jessamine County (20)</li> <li>• Kenton County (32)</li> <li>• Knox County (11)</li> </ul>	<p>The correct numbers and districts that should appear in Figure 205 are as follows:</p> <p><u>11 or More</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anderson County (14)</li> <li>• Boone County (68)</li> <li>• Bowling Green Independent (43)</li> <li>• Bullitt County (59)</li> <li>• Campbell County (27)</li> <li>• Caverna Independent (11)</li> <li>• Covington Independent (17)</li> <li>• Eminence Independent (12)</li> <li>• Fayette County (188)</li> <li>• Fleming County (11)</li> <li>• Franklin County (15)</li> <li>• Graves County (25)</li> <li>• Grayson County (16)</li> <li>• Hart County (22)</li> <li>• Hopkins County (21)</li> <li>• Jefferson County (50)</li> <li>• Jessamine County (20)</li> <li>• Kenton County (32)</li> <li>• Knox County (11)</li> <li>• Logan County (15)</li> <li>• Marion County (18)</li> </ul>	The APA’s previous reply applies here, as well.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logan County (15)</li> <li>• Marion County (18)</li> <li>• McLean County (13)</li> <li>• Newport Independent (12)</li> <li>• Oldham County (28)</li> <li>• Shelby County (13)</li> <li>• Spencer County (11)</li> <li>• Warren County (50)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McLean County (13)</li> <li>• Newport Independent (12)</li> <li>• Oldham County (28)</li> <li>• Shelby County (13)</li> <li>• Spencer County (11)</li> <li>• Warren County (50)</li> </ul>	
359	Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Evaluation	“15.2 Observation: The Teacher Pipeline Dashboard is not maintained with current teacher recruitment tracking data.”	<p>KYSTATS collaborates with the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness to produce the data featured in the Teacher Equity Report, including the Teacher Pipeline Overview. However, the pipeline overview is not updated annually because it tracks a specific cohort—students from a single high school graduating class—through the entire educator pipeline, from high school graduation to eventual employment. The most recent update to the report reflects outcomes for the high school graduating class of 2016:  <a href="https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/TeacherEquity">https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/TeacherEquity</a>.</p>	KDE does not dispute the accuracy of Observation 15.2 or its need to adhere to Recommendation 15.2.a.
361	Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Evaluation	“15.3 Observation: KDE’s efforts to address statewide teacher recruitment and retention are focused primarily on the launch and maintenance of the GoTeachKY campaign website which limits the ability to measure the success of implementation.”	<p>The GoTeachKY website is not a campaign site. While it includes content relevant to future educators—such as the "Find Your Path" page—its primary purpose is to serve as a central hub for resources created by the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness (OELE) to support Kentucky’s educator workforce.</p> <p>KDE uses website traffic as the main metric to assess the impact of promotional efforts like billboards and commercials, which direct viewers to the GoTeachKY website. Google Analytics allows KDE to track how visitors arrive—whether by directly entering the URL, using a search engine, or being referred from another site. KDE is also able to monitor bounce rate which provides information on user activity and engagement on specific webpages.</p> <p>In addition to web traffic, OELE continues to monitor longer-term indicators such as enrollment in and completion of educator preparation programs, participation in the Teaching and Learning career pathway, and applications for educator certification.</p>	KDE’s response indicates that it does not dispute that it is lacking the necessary effort to address statewide teacher recruitment and retention. If the GoTeachKY website is simply an informative website, and the only other actions KDE is taking is to monitor data, then KDE is not doing what is needed to address this systemic issue in Kentucky. As Observation 15.3 also points out, KDE needs to establish a clear metric of success for GoTeachKY to determine if Kentucky is addressing this issue.

<p>363</p>	<p>Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Evaluation</p>	<p>“KDE developed the Kentucky Framework for Teaching (KyFFT) as the statewide teacher evaluation rubric in 2017. Districts can opt to use the KyFFT to clarify how teachers are to be evaluated through the local CEP across four domains: Planning &amp; Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.”</p>	<p>The Kentucky Framework for Teaching (KyFFT) was adopted as the statewide rubric in 2014. KRS 156.557 and 704 KAR 3:370 outline the requirements for certified evaluations. Alignment to the KyFFT is not optional.</p>	<p>The current, published version of the Kentucky Framework for Teaching (KyFFT) is dated November 2017. The APA is happy to clarify that the KyFFT was first adopted in 2014 and that alignment to KyFFT is not optional. Moreover, KDE does not dispute that it needs to update this rubric according to more modern standards.</p>
<p>372</p>	<p>Community Education Programs &amp; Services</p>	<p>“17.1.b Recommendation: KDE should review the community education grant program requirements and ensure all supporting documentation for the requirements is met.”                  “17.1.d Recommendation: KDE should provide sufficient oversight to ensure districts are adhering to their community education grant program plans and making progress in the right direction with the funding provided.”                   “The team selected 60 districts, 15 in each fiscal year of the exam period, to review for compliance. KDE provided an Excel spreadsheet pulled from a survey service that collected answers for the data required for the evaluation portion of the Continuation and Annual report. However, only seven MUNIS reports were provided from the 60 districts selected. KDE did not, however, terminate any grants for non-compliance during</p>	<p>Please note that KDE collected each grantee’s MUNIS report; however, staff explained to the audit team on multiple occasions that besides the initial application, KDE is not required by statute to collect MUNIS reports showing the match. KDE collects the MUNIS report to ensure the funds are expended on the community education director’s salary.                   KDE did not terminate any grants because all were in compliance. To receive funds and in accordance with KRS 160.157, grantees must submit an annual report to KDE and the report must include an evaluation of the program, as well as a financial statement.                  While grantees do upload a MUNIS report to their reports, this does not guarantee that the \$5,000 match is reflected in the report.                   Each grantee completed the form and provided all necessary information, including a financial statement.</p>	<p>While the providing of MUNIS reports may not be required by statute, it is required by the initial RFA as described in Finding 17.1. Moreover, KDE staff told the APA that they would require MUNIS reports to be submitted to verify grant compliance. Regarding the rest of KDE’s response, KDE did not possess sufficient documentation for the APA to confirm the accuracy of these assertions.</p>

		the exam period.”		
384	Appendix B, Human Trafficking	“KRS 156.095: Amended by House Bill 524 (2017) to require schools to display the national human trafficking hotline. See School Safety and Resiliency Act and Suicide Prevention and Awareness for additional information. <i>Reporting Required.</i> ”	HB 48 (2025) moved this language from KRS 156.095 to KRS 158.041. There are no reporting requirements included.	This amendment was not in place at the time of the auditing period.
387	Appendix B, Suicide Prevention & Awareness	“KRS 156.095: Requires all students in grades six through twelve receive suicide prevention information twice per year. See Human Trafficking and School Safety and Resiliency Act for additional information. <i>Reporting Required.</i> ”	HB 48 (2025) moved this language from KRS 156.095 to KRS 158.039. There are no reporting requirements included.  Addition: KRS 156.095 was amended by HB 48 (2025) to require school district employees to have one hour of high-quality, evidence-based suicide prevention training every four years. New hires must complete the training within 12 months of the initial hire date. No reporting requirements included.	These amendments were not in place at the time of the auditing period.
405	District Special Education Directors Survey Responses	The Special Education Director Survey chart shows that 50% of respondents agree/strongly agree that “KDE’s dispute resolution processes are objective and fair.”  The chart also shows that 52% of respondents agree/strongly agree that “KDE’s dispute resolution processes support positive outcomes for students and families served by special education in my LEA.”	These two items fail to mention that 35% of respondents stated “N/A - I have no direct experience with KDE’s dispute resolution process” as stated on page 260 of the report. By failing to include this information with the survey results, it may mislead readers to assume about 50% of respondents responded unfavorably, which is inaccurate.	The APA is happy to leave this information here if KDE believes the reader will benefit from it.