



May 1, 2018

## Statement from KSBA Executive Director Kerri Schelling on Jefferson County Schools recommendation

The Kentucky School Boards Association had reviewed the management audit of Jefferson County Schools, and while we do not minimize the challenges the district is tackling, we believe that the overarching facts in the review point toward state assistance and not state takeover of the district.

One of the most important decisions that an elected school board can make in representing its constituents is to hire the right superintendent. All those involved, from community leaders to Interim Education Commissioner Wayne Lewis, have recognized that the board made a wise choice in Dr. Marty Pollio. The interim commissioner's recommendation to keep Dr. Pollio on as the day-to-day operations leader for the district reflects that and acknowledges that the current board both understood the district's need for new, effective leadership and took appropriate steps to ensure it was in place.

The audit report also notes the progress that the district has made over the past 10 months under the current board and superintendent working as a team.

Several of the deficiencies listed in the audit report occurred under a prior board and superintendent; further, some of those issues are management matters that are not legally within the board's purview.

These are among the factors that make it difficult to understand the recommendation that the elected Jefferson County school board be relegated to an advisory role and the district be placed under state management.

KSBA believes this case is different than the few prior cases in which the state education department has taken over management of a school district in several ways, including:

- There is demonstrated forward momentum in Jefferson County Schools, with the board and superintendent making progress and a plan in place for addressing the problems.
- The district is in a financially sound condition. While the audit team initially faulted the school board for not being familiar with its revenue options, the report noted that on following up a year later, that had changed. In the interim, the board proactively reached out to KSBA, which provided training on that specific topic.
- The board and superintendent have developed a culture of shared expectations and are working as a team. There is no reason to think that will not continue.

- State law permits the state takeover of school district management when there is a continuous pattern of inefficiency; in this case, any past pattern has been halted by the current elected board and superintendent.

KSBA believes it is vital to keep all the members of the Jefferson County Schools leadership team playing at full strength. The Kentucky Board of Education has a choice before it: It can make its decision based on the district's past under previous leadership, or it can make a decision based on the current team's more recent record and the future it is planning. If the state board chooses the latter, state assistance is in order, not state management. This will provide the district with additional support, while maintaining enough state oversight to ensure the elected local leaders and superintendent continue their progress. KSBA believes that is the soundest, most democratic course, and most importantly, the best path for the students the district serves.

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*The Kentucky School Boards Association was established in 1936 and represents 863 school board members from across the state to provide training, services and collegiality to aid in the effort of providing the best education possible for public school students across Kentucky.*

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