

Highly Skilled Educator Program

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Foreword

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Director

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Summary

Kentucky's public schools can receive several types of state assistance to help them improve. This includes a highly skilled educator (HSE), Commonwealth School Improvement Fund (CSIF) grant, and a scholastic audit or review. The primary focus of this study is the HSE program, but CSIF and scholastic audits and reviews are also covered because schools frequently receive these types of assistance in conjunction with a highly skilled educator.

Chapter 1

The primary research question in this report is whether schools with HSEs perform significantly better than other schools once other factors are controlled for. The question was addressed through a statistical analysis that examined the effects of several factors in predicting the annual change in a school's accountability index score.

In Kentucky, school accountability is primarily assessed through the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), which combines each school's academic and nonacademic performance into one accountability index score. Scores are based on a 140-point scale. All schools work toward an index score of at least 100 by 2014.

Based on a school's accountability index score and the amount of improvement it makes every two years, schools are classified as Meets Goal, Progressing, or In Need of Assistance. The In Need of Assistance category is divided into thirds. Schools with the lowest one-third of index scores are Assistance Level 3 schools. These schools are required to receive assistance from an HSE and have a scholastic audit. The second third is Assistance Level 2. These schools are not required to accept assistance but must perform a scholastic review. In Need of Assistance schools with the highest one-third of index scores are Assistance Level 1. These schools must conduct a guided self-study or a scholastic review. All three groups of In Need of Assistance schools are eligible for CSIF grants.

Accountability classifications are exclusive: a school cannot be both Progressing and In Need of Assistance at the same time. But schools with the same accountability index score may have different classifications. This is because school classifications are assigned according to how close a school is to meeting its index score goals. Accountability index scores, by themselves, cannot distinguish how close a school is to these goals.

Chapter 2

Highly skilled educators are specially trained teachers and administrators who are assigned to certain schools by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). Highly skilled educators work with school faculty, staff, and students to help improve teaching and learning.

Since the 1999 school year, 45 to 63 HSEs have been assigned each year to schools or school districts. Program Review staff had some difficulty matching HSEs to their correct school assignments because KDE did not maintain an accurate and current database of HSE assignments.

Assistance Level 3 schools are the only schools required by statute or regulation to receive assistance from an HSE. Schools “failing to meet their threshold” may receive an HSE, but staff could not find a definition of “threshold” in statute or regulation. Consequently, KDE does not appear to exclude any school from qualifying for an HSE.

According to KDE, HSE assignments to schools that are not classified as In Need of Assistance follow an approximate “first-come, first-served” process. Consequently, the department appears to lack a defined set of criteria for assigning an HSE to these schools.

In practice, HSEs can work three consecutive years, and most do. HSEs interviewed by Program Review staff, however, were generally unclear about their tenure and the circumstances related to the end of that service. An HSE’s home school district must retain a position for the HSE for at least one year following his or her time as an HSE. There is no guarantee that the HSE will have the same position held prior to becoming an HSE.

Highly skilled educators are paid 135 percent of their district rate, up to \$90,000 per year. The \$90,000 salary cap can be exceeded if an HSE’s home school district awards cost-of-living or merit increases to its employees. The 135 percent rule and \$90,000 cap are not established in current law. The General Assembly’s Government Contract Review Committee reviews all HSE contracts.

HSEs remain employees of their home school districts. As such, KDE has limited methods by which to evaluate HSEs. There is also no formal HSE evaluation process for people outside the department to use.

Program Review staff interviewed seven current HSEs for this report. Each expressed considerable attachment to the HSE program, its mission, and KDE staff who oversee the program. Each praised department staff for their accessibility and assistance. Those HSEs also praised the training they received.

Chapter 3

Schools may receive CSIF grants to help them raise school accountability index scores. As initially implemented, each school classified as In Need of Assistance by its index score was eligible for a CSIF grant. Beginning with the 2005 school year, KDE also allocated CSIF grants to schools not classified as In Need of Assistance.

Since fiscal year 2000, annual state CSIF appropriations have ranged from \$1.5 million to \$2.7 million. The smallest appropriations occurred during the most recent fiscal years. Since FY 2000, 87 percent of CSIF expenditures have been used for grants-in-aid to

schools. The remainder has been used for administration. KDE does not have actual CSIF expenditure data for all school districts that received CSIF grants.

Beginning with the 2005 school year, KDE used a portion of each year's CSIF appropriation for schools that were not classified as In Need of Assistance. These "Targeted Assistance" schools were identified by KDE as having the potential to become In Need of Assistance schools. The Department of Education identified various factors used to determine eligibility for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants but did not explain specifically how those factors were used to make decisions. Consequently, Program Review staff were unable to ascertain how KDE determined eligibility for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants.

Targeted assistance coaches are former HSEs and others who help schools that receive targeted assistance CSIF grants. Schools classified as In Need of Assistance that receive CSIF do not receive similar assistance unless they also have been assigned an HSE. In school year 2006, of the \$590,000 allocated to the targeted assistance CSIF program, \$225,000 was used by KDE to pay stipends to targeted assistance coaches.

Schools that are assigned an HSE or accept CSIF money generally must undergo an evaluation. These are either guided self-studies or scholastic audits or reviews.

Scholastic audits and reviews are comprehensive evaluations of a school's learning environment. KDE forms, trains, and pays teams of five or more specialized people to conduct many of these evaluations. Scholastic audits and reviews are intended, at least indirectly, to help guide the work of HSEs and the expenditure of CSIF grants.

For scholastic audits and reviews, any school may request an evaluation, but limited resources generally restrict the department to conducting them only at schools with low accountability index scores. Eighty-one percent of all schools classified as needing assistance received a scholastic audit or review; 6 percent of all other schools received a review.

Chapter 4

Overall, schools that received assistance through a combination of HSE, CSIF grant, and a scholastic audit or review showed statistically significant improvements in their accountability index scores. Depending on the year, index scores improved by 2.0 or 3.5 points relative to schools that did not receive these three types of assistance. Schools that received both a CSIF grant and an audit or review had scores 2.2 points higher than other schools. Schools that only received assistance from an HSE showed no statistically significant improvement in their accountability index scores compared to other schools.

Recommendations

The report has eight recommendations.

- 2.1 Under the authority established in KRS 158.6455 (4) to promulgate administrative regulations, the Kentucky Department of Education should clearly define “threshold” as it is used in this statutory section. This would clarify the type of schools to which a highly skilled educator may be assigned.
- 2.2 The Kentucky Department of Education should work with the General Assembly to establish definitive policies that specify the amount of HSE compensation and the process for determining such compensation. This could be accomplished through changes in statute or regulation or through budget language.
- 2.3 The Kentucky Board of Education should provide, as directed by KRS 158.782 (1), “guidelines for providing highly skilled education assistance to schools and school districts.”
- 2.4 Because HSEs appear to have an inconsistent understanding of how long they may serve, the Kentucky Department of Education should provide detailed descriptions and/or training to highly skilled educators to clarify the current practice of limiting service to three years.
- 2.5 The Kentucky Department of Education should establish a formal process for school administrators, faculty, parents, and others to comment about the performance of HSEs currently assigned to schools.
- 2.6 The Kentucky Department of Education should provide more on-site HSE reviews and maintain and regularly update a database that includes HSE school assignments, the amount of time HSEs work at each school, HSE compensation, and HSE home school district information.
- 3.1 The Kentucky Department of Education should compile and produce annual school-level reports of Commonwealth School Improvement Fund expenditures. The department should ensure that school districts comply with all financial reporting requirements.
- 3.2 The Kentucky Board of Education and the Kentucky Department of Education should document a formal process, preferably through administrative regulation, that identifies and ranks which schools are eligible for Targeted Assistance Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grants.

Chapter 1

Overview and Background

Introduction

Kentucky schools may qualify for several types of academic assistance, including highly skilled educators (HSE), Commonwealth School Improvement Fund (CSIF) grants, and scholastic audits or reviews.

Based on their performance, schools in Kentucky qualify for academic assistance from the state. One type, the Highly Skilled Educator (HSE) program, is the focus of this report. Two other complementary programs are covered: Commonwealth School Improvement Fund (CSIF) grants and scholastic audits and reviews. Because many schools receive these types of assistance in addition to HSEs, analysis of the effects of HSEs requires consideration of all three programs.

Through the HSE program, certified teachers and administrators are selected, trained, and assigned to schools to help improve teaching and student learning.

Through the HSE program, certified teachers and administrators are selected, trained, and assigned to schools to help improve teaching and student learning (KRS 158.782). One of the primary goals is to improve schools' accountability index scores. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) administers the program.

Based on an assessment of the annual changes in school accountability index scores in recent years and taking other factors into account, it appears that schools that only received assistance from an HSE have generally performed no better than schools without one. Schools that received assistance from an HSE, had a CSIF grant, and had a scholastic audit or review did show statistically significant improvements of up to 3.5 points in their accountability index scores.

Description of This Study

The primary research question in this report is whether schools with HSEs perform significantly better than other schools.

The primary research question in this report is whether schools with HSEs perform significantly better than other schools. The question was addressed through a statistical analysis that examined the effects of several factors in predicting the annual change in a school's accountability index score. Those factors include whether or not a school received assistance from an HSE, a CSIF grant, or a scholastic audit, and educational and demographic characteristics.

How This Study Was Conducted

The Program Review and Investigations Committee voted on November 18, 2005, to have staff study the Highly Skilled Educator program. In conducting the study, Program Review staff reviewed and analyzed documents related to the program, attended a regional meeting of HSEs, and observed part of a scholastic review. Staff interviewed seven current HSEs, eight current school administrators, and KDE staff. The seven HSEs were selected to represent a cross-section of school types (elementary, middle, and high schools), location (urban and rural, different regions), and HSE experience. A statistical analysis was done to evaluate the effectiveness of the HSE program in increasing schools' accountability index scores.

Organization of the Report

This report is divided into four chapters. The remainder of this chapter summarizes the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). Schools' performance on CATS assessments helps determine the type of academic assistance that schools receive.

Chapter 2 describes the HSE program, including how HSEs are selected, assigned, and compensated. The chapter summarizes programs in southeastern states that are similar to Kentucky's HSE program.

Chapter 3 describes the Commonwealth School Improvement Fund and scholastic audits and reviews.

Chapter 4 presents the results of a statistical analysis of the impact of the HSE, CSIF, and scholastic audit and review programs.

Appendix A contains the application form to become an HSE. Appendix B is the form HSEs use to submit monthly reports on their activities. Appendix C lists the schools that have received CSIF grants and the amounts they received. Appendix D provides more detail on the statistical analysis covered in Chapter 4. Appendix E is the Kentucky Department of Education's response to this report.

Major Conclusions

This report has five major conclusions.

1. Schools that received assistance from an HSE, CSIF grant, and a scholastic audit or review showed statistically significant improvements in their accountability index scores of 2.0 to 3.5 points. Schools that received assistance only from an HSE did not show any statistically significant improvement.

2. HSEs interviewed by Program Review staff unanimously praised Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) staff for their accessibility and the training they provided.

3. KDE does not maintain an accurate and current database related to HSE assignments and how schools allocate CSIF grant funds.

4. HSE assignments to schools not classified as In Need of Assistance follow an approximate “first-come, first-served” process.

5. KDE allocates some of its CSIF appropriation to schools not classified as In Need of Assistance. The department identified factors used to determine eligibility for these Targeted Assistance grants, but Program Review staff were unable to determine exactly how KDE determined which schools were eligible.

This report has five major conclusions.

1. Schools that received assistance from an HSE, a Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grant, and a scholastic audit showed, on average, greater annual improvement in their accountability index scores than schools that did not receive this combination of assistance. Based on a statistical analysis, improvement ranged from 2.0 to 3.5 points in the following year. The index scores of schools that received a CSIF grant and an audit or review improved by more than 2 points the next year. Schools that received assistance only from an HSE performed no better or worse than schools without this type of assistance.
2. Program Review staff interviewed seven current HSEs for this report. Each HSE expressed considerable attachment to the HSE program, its mission, and KDE staff who oversee the program. Each HSE commended department staff for their accessibility and assistance. Those HSEs also unanimously praised the training they received.
3. KDE does not maintain an accurate and current database of HSE assignments and information on home school districts of HSEs. KDE also has limited data about which schools received CSIF grants and how schools spent their grant money in previous years.
4. HSE assignments to schools not classified as In Need of Assistance follow an approximate “first-come, first-served” process.
5. Beginning with the 2005 school year, KDE used a portion of each year’s CSIF appropriation for schools that were not classified as In Need of Assistance. “Targeted Assistance” schools identified by the department as having the potential to become In Need of Assistance were eligible for this funding. The Department of Education identified factors used to determine eligibility for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants, but did not explain specifically how those factors were used to make decisions. Consequently, Program Review staff were unable to ascertain exactly how KDE determined eligibility for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants.

Commonwealth Accountability Testing System

The Commonwealth Accountability Testing System combines a school's academic and nonacademic performance into an accountability index score. Scores can range from 0 to 140.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 instituted significant changes to Kentucky's education system. Foremost was an accountability system based on assessments of students' academic achievement and the following nonacademic factors: keeping dropout and retention rates low, maintaining high attendance rates, and helping students make the successful transition to adult life. CATS has been the accountability and testing system since 1998.

An accountability index score combines a school's academic and nonacademic performance into one figure, ranging from 0 to 140. (703 KAR 5:060 sec. 1.1) It is intended to measure a school's progress toward proficiency.

Classification of Schools

Accountability index scores are used to assign a school to one of three classifications, which are determined by calculating the change in a school's accountability index score over the previous two years compared to its base index score. For most schools, the base is the average of the 1998-2000 index scores.

Based on accountability index scores, schools are classified as Meets Goal, Progressing, or In Need of Assistance.

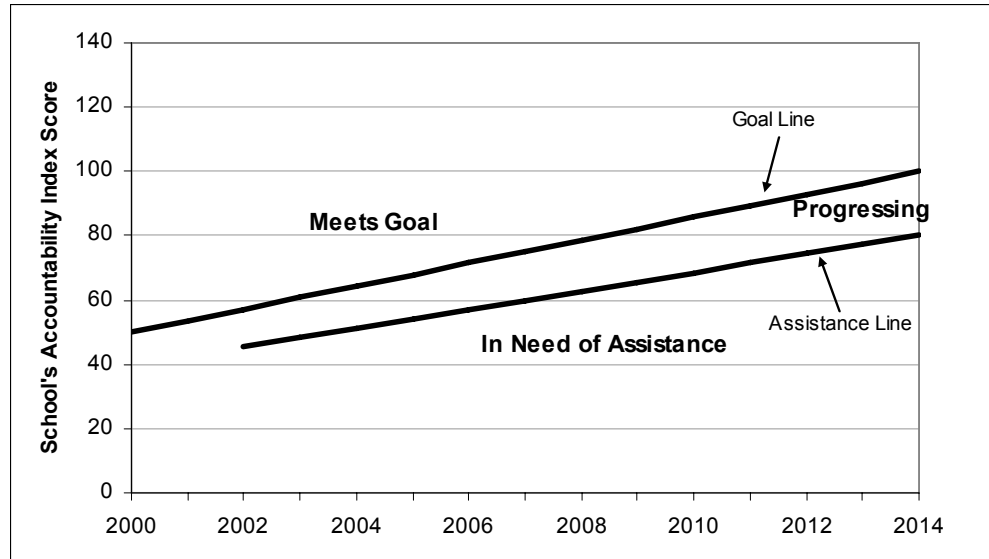
Schools that are on track to achieve an accountability index score of 100 by 2014 are classified as "Meets Goal." Schools that are on track to achieve an index score of 80 are considered "Progressing." Schools with lower index scores are classified as "In Need of Assistance" (703 KAR 5:001 secs. 1.27, 1.32, 1.37).

As a hypothetical example, School A has a base index score of 51, which is the average of its 1998-2000 accountability scores. In order to achieve a score of 100 by 2014, School A has to improve by 49 points in 14 years.

Because school index scores come out every two years, School A has seven chances to raise its score by 49 points. This means that School A has to improve, on average, by 7 points every two years.¹ If School A improves by at least this amount, it will be classified as Meets Goal. If it improves by less than 7 points, but greater than 5.6 points, it will be classified as Progressing. Anything less and the school will be classified as In Need of Assistance. Figure 1.A illustrates the cutoff points for the different classifications over time assuming a base score of 51.

¹ KDE calculates a margin of error for each school, so schools may meet their accountability goals even if their index scores are slightly lower than prescribed.

Figure 1.A
Example of School Classification Goal Lines



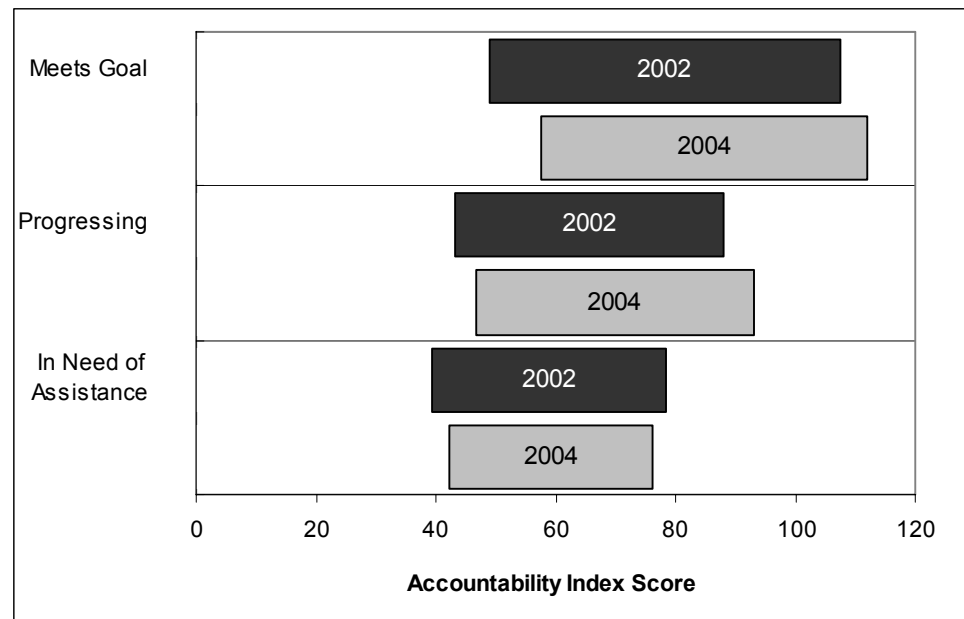
Source: Staff analysis.

Since the 1998-2000 biennium—the base period for most schools—the 2000-2002 and 2002-2004 accountability cycles have been completed. The 2004-2006 cycle ended with the 2006 school year, but all data needed for a complete analysis were unavailable at the time of this report.²

² In this report, school years are identified by the second calendar year included, so 2006 is the school year that begins in 2005 and ends in 2006.

For the 2000-2002 and 2002-2004 cycles, Figure 1.B shows the range of scores for each of the three school classifications. Overall, test scores have been rising. The low scores for each classification category increased. High scores rose in two of three categories.

Figures 1.B
Range of CATS Scores by Accountability Category
(2000-2002 and 2002-2004 Cycles)



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Accountability index scores for the three classification categories overlap. This is because school classifications are not determined by a school's index score alone but by the school's progress relative to its base index score.

Showing the ranges of index scores emphasizes that classification is not determined by a school's index score alone, but it is determined by the school's progress based on its baseline index score. On average, scores for Meets Goal schools are higher than scores for Progressing schools, which in turn are higher than for In Need of Assistance schools. This is only true on average, however; there is an overlap of index scores among the classifications. A relatively low index score does not automatically translate into a school being classified as In Need of Assistance. A high score does not automatically mean a school is classified as Meets Goal. For example, depending on its base score, a school with an index score of 65 in these two accountability cycles could have been classified in any of the three categories.

Schools classified as In Need of Assistance are divided into thirds: Levels 1, 2, and 3. Level 3 schools have the lowest accountability index scores.

Level 3 schools are required to receive assistance from an HSE.

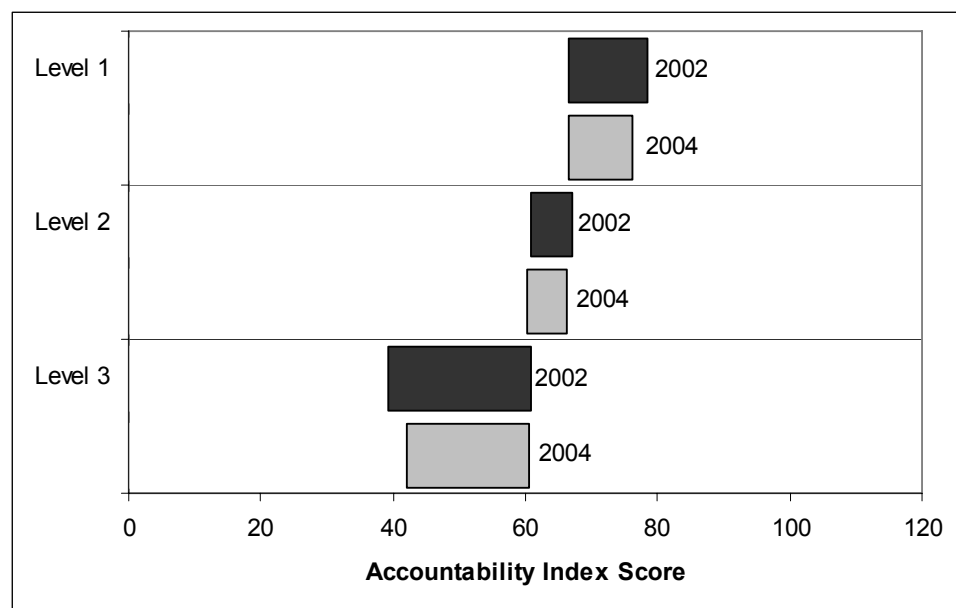
In Need of Assistance schools are divided into thirds, but the overall range of scores tends to cluster near the middle. This generally means that the index scores of schools with the highest Level 3 scores are not very different from the schools in Level 1 with the lowest scores.

Classification of Schools as In Need of Assistance. The group of schools identified as In Need of Assistance is further divided into thirds. Schools with the lowest one-third of scores are classified as Level 3 schools. The middle one-third is Level 2. Schools with the highest one-third of scores within the needs assistance category are Level 1.

Level 3 schools are required to receive an HSE; Level 1 and Level 2 schools are not. However, the differences in scores of schools across the different levels are not necessarily large.

As shown in Figure 1.C, the index scores of In Need of Assistance schools tend to cluster toward the middle range. In 2002, most index scores were between 60 and 70. Each of the bars in the figure represents one-third of the assistance schools' scores for a given accountability cycle. The bars for Level 2 schools, the middle category, are much narrower, indicating that scores are similar among the Level 2 schools. In practice, this pattern of scores means that the scores of most Level 2 schools are similar to those of Level 1 or Level 3 schools. The small range in the middle category also means that the schools with the highest Level 3 scores are not very different from the schools in Level 1 with the lowest scores.

Figures 1.C
Range of CATS Scores by Level for In Need of Assistance Schools (2000-2002 and 2002-2004 Cycles)



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Chapter 2

Overview of the Highly Skilled Educator Program

Through the Highly Skilled Educator program, certified teachers and administrators are selected, trained, and assigned to schools to help improve teaching and learning (KRS 158.782). The precursor to the HSE program was the Distinguished Educator program. In 1998, in addition to the new name, the program was changed in several ways, including limiting an HSE's ability to make school personnel decisions and the amount HSEs were paid.

This report does not analyze the Distinguished Educator program that preceded the HSE program.

This report focuses on the HSE program; it does not include an analysis of the Distinguished Educator (DE) program for several reasons. The first is that there are significant differences in how the Distinguished Educator and HSE programs operate. Although analyzing the DE program would be the only way to learn if there are long-term benefits from having a program of this type, any results would not necessarily apply to the HSE program. Second, in 1998 the General Assembly replaced the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System with CATS. So there is no common means of assessment by which any impact of the two programs can be compared. Finally, Program Review staff discovered several errors in the recent data on assignments of HSEs to schools. Working with KDE staff, any discrepancies that were identified were cleared up. However, there is no reason to assume that information on assignments of DEs to schools in earlier years is 100 percent correct. Given that a relatively small percentage of schools have received a DE or an HSE in any given year, it would not take many errors in assignments to affect an analysis of either program.

This chapter begins with a brief explanation of what HSEs do, how many HSEs there are, and which schools are required to have them. Overviews of HSE program expenditures and compensation follow. The chapter then describes the HSE process: application, selection, training, assignment, evaluation, and post-employment. The conclusion is a brief summary of similar assistance programs in other southeastern states.

What HSEs Do

An HSE's primary focus is "improved teaching and learning" (Commonwealth Department). To achieve this end, HSEs perform a variety of duties, which include

- conducting school needs assessments,
- locating financial and other resources for schools,
- helping to align school curriculum with the state's content guidelines,
- helping prepare students for CATS assessments, and
- identifying and occasionally leading professional development activities for teachers.

Beginning in fall 2006, KRS 160.346 grants HSEs the authority to assume control of poorly performing schools under certain circumstances.

The Number of HSEs

Since 1999, 45 to 63 HSEs have been assigned each year to schools or school districts.

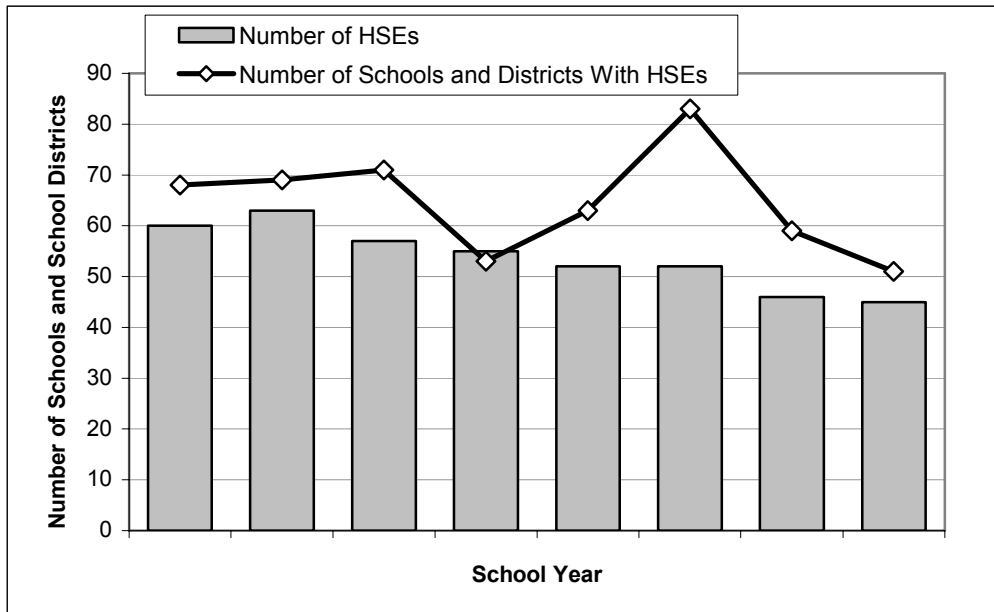
As shown by the bars in Figure 2.A, since the 1999 school year, 45 to 63 HSEs have been assigned each year to schools or school districts.¹ The number of HSEs peaked in 2000.

Eighty-three schools and school districts received HSE assistance during the 2004 school year; 51 received HSE assistance in 2006.

Because an HSE may be assigned to more than one school at a time, there can be more schools or districts with HSEs than there are HSEs. This is indicated by the line in Figure 2.A. Eighty-three schools and school districts received HSE assistance during the 2004 school year; 51 received HSE assistance in 2006.

¹ According to KRS 158.782, HSEs may be assigned to work with school districts. Staff from KDE stated that a district might be assigned an HSE if it had more than one low-performing school. HSE assignments to the Kentucky School for the Deaf and Kentucky School for the Blind and to positions not in school districts are not covered in the analysis described in Chapter 4. To avoid confusion, they are not included here either.

Figure 2.A
Number of Highly Skilled Educators (1999 to 2006)



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Assistance Level 3 schools are the only schools required by statute or regulation to receive assistance from an HSE.

Assistance Level 3 schools are the only schools required by state statute or regulation to receive assistance from an HSE (703 KAR 5:120 Sec. 3).

By statute, schools “failing to meet their threshold” may receive an HSE, but Program Review staff could not find a definition of “threshold” in statute or regulation. In practice, KDE does not appear to exclude any school from qualifying for an HSE.

According to KRS 158.6455 (4), schools “failing to meet their threshold” may receive an HSE. Program Review staff could not find a definition of “threshold” in statute or regulation, so it is unclear whether threshold means assistance level, baseline score, proficiency, or something else.

In practice, KDE does not appear to exclude any school from qualifying for an HSE. This may be appropriate in terms of school improvement, but it should be clearly established in regulation or statute.

Recommendation 2.1

Under the authority established in KRS 158.6455 (4) to promulgate administrative regulations, the Kentucky Department of Education should clearly define “threshold” as it is used in this statutory section. This would clarify the type of schools to which a highly skilled educator may be assigned.

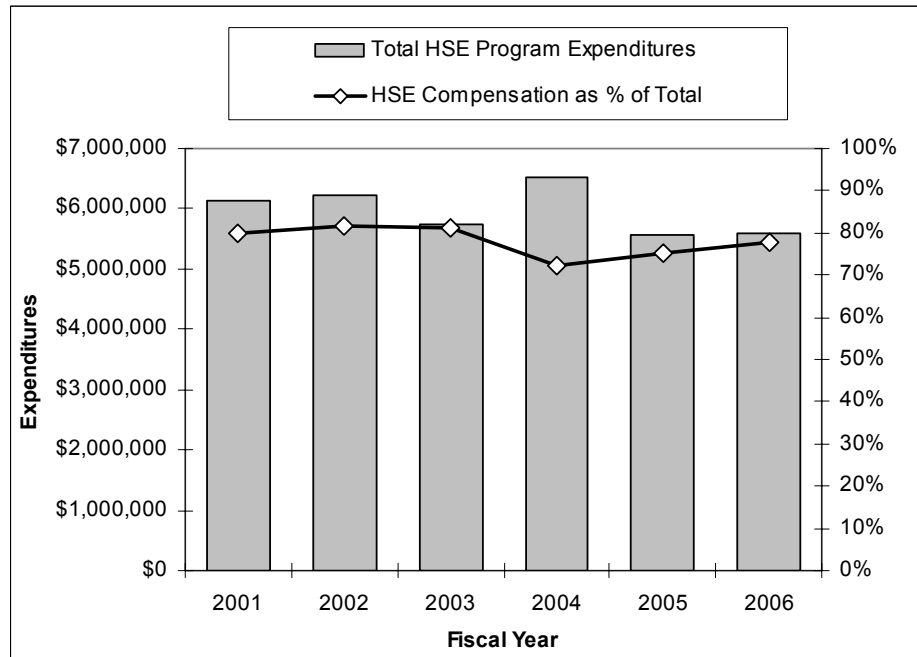
Program Expenditures

Compensation for HSEs represents the largest component of spending in the HSE program.

Highly skilled educators are paid by KDE through their home school districts. Compensation represents the largest component of spending on the program. Of the \$5.6 million spent on the HSE program in fiscal year 2006, approximately 78 percent was used to pay HSEs. Figure 2.B indicates that this pattern has remained relatively consistent since FY 2001. In addition to HSE compensation, the department spends approximately \$585,000 annually in travel reimbursements for HSEs.

As the figure shows, overall HSE program budget appropriations have declined in recent years. For fiscal years 2007 and 2008, appropriations are \$5.6 million. As recently as FY 2004, total appropriations were \$6.4 million.

Figure 2.B
Total HSE Program Expenditures and Percent for Compensation of HSEs (Fiscal Years 2001 to 2006)



Source: Staff analysis of adopted biennial budget documents from various years.

Compensation of HSEs

Highly skilled educators are paid 135 percent of their district rate, up to \$90,000 per year.

Highly skilled educators are paid 135 percent of their district rate, up to \$90,000 per year. The increase is based on how much the HSE earned per day at his or her school district. For example, a teacher who earned \$200 per day would earn \$270 per day as an HSE (135 percent of \$200 is \$270).

To determine total annual compensation, the daily rate is multiplied by the number of HSE contract days. Most HSEs work under a 240-day contract. For the teacher in the example above, this would mean an annual salary of \$64,800 (\$270 per day times 240 days equals \$64,800).

Most teachers work under 185-day contracts in their home school districts. Teachers who become HSEs, therefore, tend to work more days and receive correspondingly higher total pay. Most school administrators work under 240-day contracts in their home districts. For them, the number of contract days tends to remain the same when they become HSEs.

The \$90,000 salary cap can be exceeded if an HSE's home school district awards cost-of-living or merit increases to its employees.

The \$90,000 cap can be exceeded if an HSE's home school district awards cost-of-living or merit increases to its employees. In that event, an HSE's salary would rise by the same rate as if he or she was still working in the district, even if the resulting annual salary exceeds \$90,000.

Background

Under the program that preceded the HSE program, distinguished educators received a 50 percent salary increase. The higher salary amounts were also considered when determining state retirement benefits. Those components changed when the program was reconfigured in 1998.

In the 1998-2000 adopted biennial budget, language limited HSE compensation to 135 percent of the amount earned by the employee in the HSE's home school district. It has no legal obligation to do so, but KDE has continued to restrict HSE compensation to the 135 percent limit. According to KRS 158.782, HSEs cannot count their higher HSE pay in retirement calculations.

The Kentucky Board of Education established the \$90,000 salary cap in 1998. This means that, for example, although a 35 percent raise would have increased the salary of a principal from \$70,000 to \$94,500, he or she would earn \$90,000 as an HSE.

The General Assembly's Government Contract Review Committee reviews all HSE contracts. However, the 135 percent rule and \$90,000 cap are not currently established in law.

The General Assembly's Government Contract Review Committee reviews all HSE contracts. However, given that the 135 percent rule and \$90,000 cap are not currently established in law, if it is the intent of the General Assembly that there should be more definitive salary policies for the HSE program, this could be accomplished by various means.

Recommendation 2.2

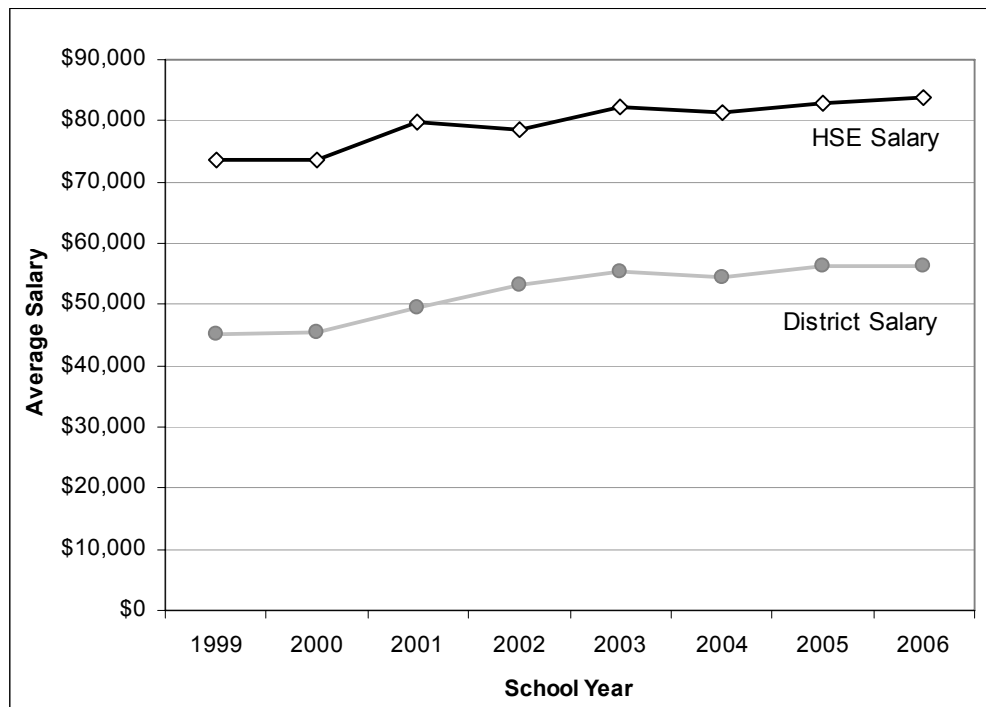
The Kentucky Department of Education should work with the General Assembly to establish definitive policies that specify the amount of HSE compensation and the process for determining such compensation. This could be accomplished through changes in statute or regulation or through budget language.

Analysis

The average HSE salary has steadily risen from \$73,700 in 1999 to \$83,900 in 2006.

The top line in Figure 2.C shows that the average HSE salary has steadily risen from \$73,700 in 1999 to \$83,900 in 2006. The increase is approximately 35 percent higher than what an HSE's district salary would have been, as indicated by the lower line in the figure.

Figure 2.C
Average Salaries of HSEs Compared to Their District Salaries



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Some earned less as HSEs than in their former school district positions.

From 1999 to 2006, five HSEs earned less as HSEs than they would have in their former school district positions. For those individuals, this generally means that they earned more than \$90,000 prior to becoming an HSE, and their HSE salary was constrained by the salary cap. Over the same period, seven HSEs had salaries greater than 135 percent of their former salaries, indicating a merit or cost-of-living increase provided by their home school districts.

Potential Impact of the Salary Cap. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine if the \$90,000 salary cap deterred some people from applying to become an HSE. It is known that some HSEs willingly accepted a reduction in pay when they became HSEs. Another group of HSEs received pay increases below the 135 percent level because of the salary cap.

Selection, Training, and Assignment

Selection Process

Highly skilled educators are selected by KDE after an approximate six-month process that includes written and group performance events.

Highly skilled educators are selected by KDE. The selection process begins each fall when the department requests applications for the program. (Appendix A contains the form.) Someone interested in becoming an HSE submits an application containing general personal and professional information. Each applicant identifies the counties where he or she would be willing to work as an HSE.² Some applicants are willing to travel or live in another part of the state during their time as an HSE. Other applicants prefer to limit their travel range, often due to family considerations. KDE tries to honor these preferences.

Once the applications have been submitted, the department screens applicants according to requirements established in regulation. The applicant must have a minimum of five years' experience as either a teacher or educational administrator, hold a Kentucky educator certificate, and have worked as a teacher or administrator within the previous three years (703 KAR 4:030).

Individuals who meet the requirements take a written test designed to help the department gauge an applicant's knowledge of education issues. Several test sites across the state are used.

² Applicants who work for the Jefferson County Public Schools generally are assigned to schools within that district through an understanding between the superintendent and KDE.

Applicants who pass the written test submit videos of themselves teaching. Then they are evaluated in a group performance event that typically simulates an activity that an HSE would encounter at a school.

The final step in the selection process is a site visit and interview. KDE staff shadow each candidate at his or her workplace for several hours. Department staff also interview at least four individuals who work closely with each candidate to determine his or her potential fit as an HSE.

All applicants who successfully complete each of the steps can become HSEs. The department does not reduce the applicant pool in order to limit the number of new HSEs. The department also does not change its minimum standards in order to hire a minimum number of HSEs.

The number of applications to become an HSE has ranged from 87 to 128 per year.

Who Applies and Who Is Selected. The table below shows that the number of applicants to become an HSE has ranged from 87 to 128 per year. Applications prior to the 2004 school year were requested, but KDE no longer has those documents.

Table 2.1
HSE Applicants by Year

School Year Applied For	Number of Applicants
2004	87
2005	113
2006	128
2007	93

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

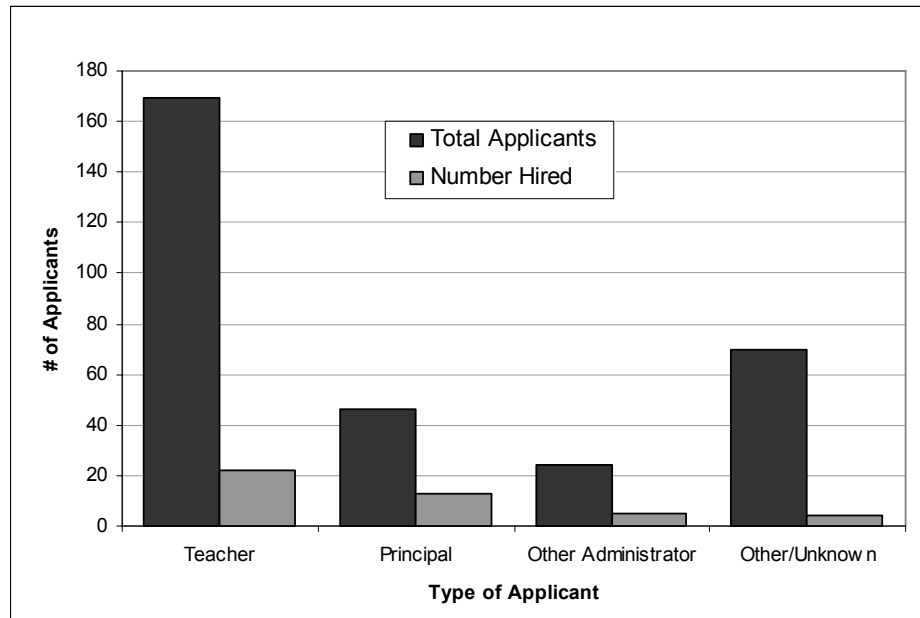
Most applicants identified themselves as teachers. Others identified themselves as principals or other administrators.

As shown in Figure 2.D, most applicants identified themselves as teachers on the application. Many fewer identified themselves as principals or other types of administrators. Some applications listed positions that were not readily identifiable or no title was included. These applications were categorized by Program Review staff as “Other/Unknown.”

More teachers were hired as HSEs than any other position, but a larger percentage of applicants who were principals were hired.

For the 2004, 2006, and 2007 school years, 22 teachers were hired in total. This represents 13 percent of teacher applicants. During the same period, 13 principals were hired as HSEs, comprising 28 percent of applicants who were principals.

Figure 2.D
Number of HSE Applicants and Number Hired
by Type of Applicant (2004, 2006, 2007)*



*Application data provided by KDE did not contain this information for the 2005 school year.

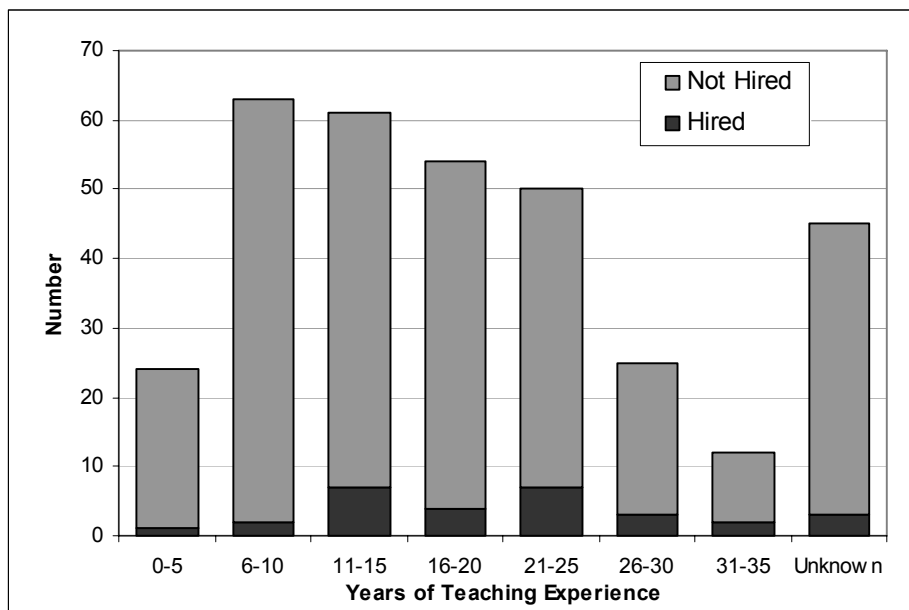
Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Residents from across Kentucky and some residents from other states who meet the requirements apply each year to become highly skilled educators. In 2002, applications came from 42 Kentucky counties; in 2003, applications came from 50 counties; and in 2005, applications came from 40 counties. Jefferson County had the most applications, with approximately 15 each year.

Having more than 10 years of teaching experience is helpful to being selected as an HSE.

Teaching Experience. As Figure 2.E indicates, applicants were diverse in terms of teaching experience, with years of experience ranging from 2 to 35. As shown by the lower sections of the bars in the figure, teaching experience among those hired also varied. Having more than 10 years of teaching experience is helpful to being selected as an HSE. There were more applicants with 6 to 10 years of experience than any other grouping, but more HSEs were hired from among groupings with more experience. The number of applicants hired was highest for those with 11 to 15 and 21 to 25 years of teaching experience.

Figure 2.E
Years of Teaching Experience for HSE Applicants and Hires
(2005 to 2007)



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Training

Intensive training for HSEs begins the summer following selection. New HSEs complete three weeks of training. Returning HSEs complete two weeks of training. Throughout the year, HSEs receive additional training, primarily provided by staff from KDE. Each HSE also attends monthly regional meetings with other HSEs at which information and ideas related to their work are exchanged.

Highly skilled educators interviewed by Program Review staff unanimously praised the training they received.

Highly skilled educators interviewed by Program Review staff unanimously praised the training they received. Most said that it was challenging but very beneficial.

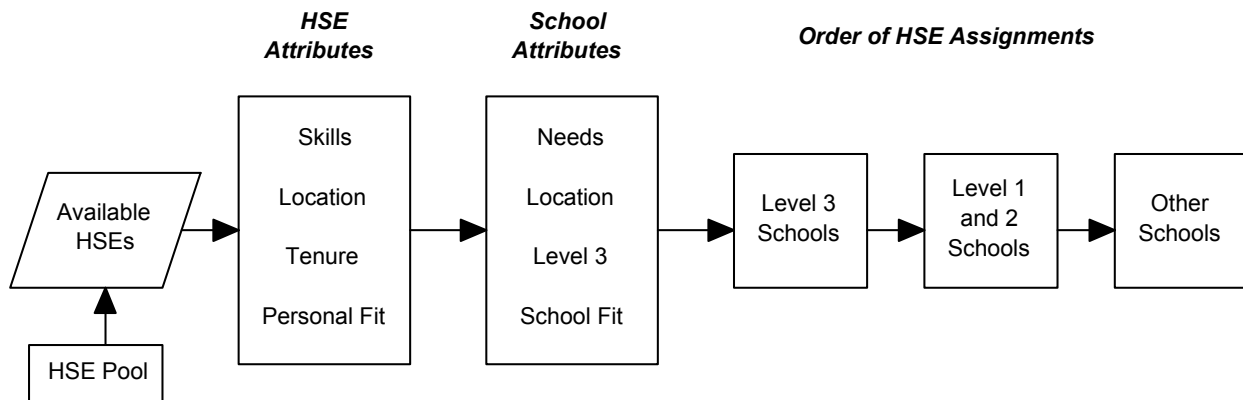
In part due to the intensive training, an HSE may become certified as a principal or superintendent in less time than others (16 KAR 4:010 sec. 24). Experience as an HSE is considered equivalent to administrative experience for purposes of advanced administrative certification.

Assignment

KDE assigns HSEs to schools. The department first assigns HSEs to all Assistance Level 3 schools. The department then assigns

HSEs to all Level 1 and 2 schools that request assistance. The department then assigns remaining HSEs to other schools. Figure 2.F is an overview of the process.

Figure 2.F
Process of Assigning HSEs to Schools



Source: Staff analysis.

According to KDE, HSE assignments to schools that are not classified as In Need of Assistance follow an approximate “first-come, first-served” process.

According to KDE, assignments to schools not classified as In Need of Assistance follows an approximate “first-come, first-served” process. Over a period of weeks following the release of CATS scores, leaders of these schools contact the department and request HSEs. The department reviews each request and promptly decides whether to assign an HSE or not.

Staff from the department explained that the window between when test scores are released and when HSEs are assigned is intentionally short in order to expedite getting HSEs into schools to begin their work. Generally, the longer a school waits to place a request, the less likely that it will receive an HSE because the number of schools that request HSEs exceeds the number available each year.

For schools not classified as In Need of Assistance, the department appears to lack a defined set of criteria for assigning HSEs.

Because the department evaluates requests for HSE assistance at schools not classified as In Need of Assistance as they arrive, the department appears to lack a defined set of criteria for assigning HSEs.

Recommendation 2.3

The Kentucky Board of Education should provide, as directed by KRS 158.782 (1), “guidelines for providing highly skilled education assistance to schools and school districts.”

Assignments in Consecutive Years. All Assistance Level 3 schools receive an HSE for both years of the accountability cycle. KDE encourages other schools that request HSEs voluntarily to also keep them for two years.

Most schools retain HSE assistance for at least two years. All Assistance Level 3 schools are required to have an HSE for both years of the accountability cycle.

Table 2.2 indicates that most schools retain HSE assistance for at least two years. Between 1999 and 2005, schools had an HSE for two consecutive years 115 times. During the same period, schools had an HSE for three successive years 14 times and for four or more consecutive years 13 times.³ Schools received assistance from an HSE for only one year 57 times.

Table 2.2
Number of Times Schools Were Assigned HSEs in Consecutive Years (1999 to 2005)

Consecutive Years With an HSE	Number of Occurrences
One	57
Two	115
Three	14
Four or more	13

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Assigning HSEs to Schools. Highly skilled educators are hired each spring and assigned to work in schools after CATS scores have been released each fall.⁴ This time lag means that KDE does not know each spring exactly how many or which schools will request HSE assistance that fall. According to KDE staff, the number of new HSEs hired each spring depends on both the number of successful HSE applicants and the number of HSEs departing.

If the number of qualified HSE applicants exceeds the number of known HSE vacancies in spring, KDE will place unassigned applicants in an HSE pool. The department will draw applicants

³ These statistics do not reflect the number of schools but represent the number of occurrences that an HSE was assigned. For example, a school may have received an HSE in 2000 and then another HSE from 2002 to 2004. This would be counted as two occurrences.

⁴ The exception is Level 3 schools. These schools are required to have an HSE for two years following the biennial release of school accountability index scores. That is, if a school is identified as an Assistance Level 3 school in October 2004 based on its index score from the previous spring, that school will be assigned an HSE for the 2005 and 2006 school years, even if its 2005 index score improves.

from this pool whenever an HSE vacancy occurs unexpectedly. The department will only fill unexpected HSE vacancies with an applicant from the pool until July. After this time, KDE does not replace departing HSEs with qualified applicants because it would be too late for these HSEs to complete training before the school year starts.

Applicants who successfully complete the selection process but are not assigned to a school prior to July return to their home school districts. They may ask to be considered with the following year’s HSE applicants.

Assignments Per HSE. Table 2.3 shows that since 1999, more than 75 percent of HSEs have been assigned for the year to one school each.⁵ Each of the remaining HSEs worked with two or more schools during the year.⁶

Table 2.3
Number of School Assignments Per HSE by School Year
(1999 to 2006)

School Year	One	Two	Three or Four	Total
1999	50	10	0	60
2000	53	6	4	63
2001	49	4	4	57
2002	52	3	0	55
2003	39	11	2	52
2004	28	17	7	52
2005	27	16	2	45
2006	32	10	3	45
Total	330	77	22	429
Percent	77%	18%	5%	100%

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Highly skilled educators interviewed by Program Review staff did not express concern about multiple school assignments. Most seemed to view it as a challenge. Administrators interviewed by

⁵ The basis for this analysis is information on HSE assignments provided by KDE. Program Review staff discovered that some data were incomplete or inaccurate. In each case, discrepancies that were discovered were resolved. However, it was not possible for staff to verify all the data, so there may be additional inaccuracies.

⁶ Schools that received assistance from more than one HSE over the course of the period examined appear as multiple entries in the table.

staff generally would have preferred not to share the HSE assigned to their school.

Schools With More Than One HSE. Infrequently, schools have more than one HSE at the same time. For example, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, a Level 3 school with more than 1,000 students in Jefferson County, had two HSEs in 2005 working at the same time.

Based on data from KDE, Program Review staff were able to identify other schools that had more than one HSE during a particular school year. Since 2002, on average, seven schools each year had more than one HSE. It was not possible to distinguish between schools that had two HSEs at the same time and those that had two HSEs at different times during the same school year.

The number of schools receiving HSE assistance for the first time each year is declining. For the 2005 school year, more than one-half of schools that received an HSE had been assigned an HSE in the past.

Schools Assigned an HSE for the First Time. Table 2.4 shows the percentage of schools receiving an HSE for the first time each year. It has declined every biennium since the program began. This means that an increasing number of schools that receive an HSE had an HSE sometime in the past. For example, in the 2005 school year, more than one-half of the schools that received an HSE that year had been assigned an HSE previously.

Table 2.4
Percentage of Schools With
an HSE for the First Time

School Year	% of Schools Assigned HSE for First Time
1999	100
2001	77
2003	64
2005	47

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

In practice, HSEs can work three consecutive years and most do. HSEs interviewed by Program Review staff, however, were generally unclear about their tenure and the circumstances related to the end of that service.

Service Time. In practice, HSEs can work three consecutive years and most do. Between 2001 and 2004, approximately two-thirds of HSEs worked three years.⁷ There is no time limit in statute. A school district grants an HSE a leave of absence and that leave may exceed two years if the Kentucky Board of Education deems it necessary (KRS 158.782 (2)).

The seven highly skilled educators interviewed by Program Review staff were generally unclear about how long they could serve. Some also expressed confusion regarding the conditions and circumstances of their return to their former school district positions.

Practical reasons may exist for limiting HSEs to three years of service as is current practice. Serving as an HSE requires long hours and can be stressful. Some HSEs interviewed by staff indicated that after three years, they would reach their physical and mental limits. Considering that some HSEs have different interpretations about the number of years that they may serve, the department should clarify this position.

Recommendation 2.4

Because HSEs appear to have an inconsistent understanding of how long they may serve, the Kentucky Department of Education should provide detailed descriptions and/or training to highly skilled educators to clarify the current practice of limiting service to three years.

Post-HSE Employment

An HSE's home school district must retain a position for the HSE for at least one year following his or her time as an HSE. There is no guarantee that the HSE will have the same position held prior to becoming an HSE.

Once an HSE's term ends, he or she may return to the home school district. Under KRS 161.770, an HSE's home school district must retain a position for the HSE for at least one year following his or her time as an HSE. There is no guarantee that the HSE will have the same position held before becoming an HSE.

Regardless of the position assigned, the HSE is compensated at the same rate as his or her former district position. For example, a principal who becomes an HSE and returns to his or her home district and is assigned a teaching position is paid the principal salary for one year.

⁷ The 2004 school year was the most recent for which it would be possible to determine whether someone worked three consecutive years as an HSE.

Although each HSE is guaranteed a position with the home school district, some HSEs interviewed by Program Review staff expressed concern and anxiety about post-HSE employment. There was uncertainty regarding the type of position an HSE's home district would assign or the time and effort associated with searching for a new job.

Evaluation and Administration

HSEs remain employees of their home school districts. As such, KDE has limited methods to evaluate them.

An HSE's home school district signs a memorandum of agreement with KDE each year that allows the HSE to work outside the district. Because the HSE remains an employee of his or her home school district on a leave of absence, the department has limited methods to evaluate an HSE. One such tool is the HSE's monthly report. (See Appendix B for an example of the form.) Highly skilled educators must submit monthly status reports to the department identifying the tasks they performed. Unsatisfactory work can be remedied primarily through not renewing the annual memorandum of agreement.

There is no formal HSE evaluation process involving people outside the department.

Evaluation by people from outside the department is limited. The department does not maintain a formal process by which educators, staff, parents, or others can submit complaints or commendations about a particular HSE.

Recommendation 2.5

The Kentucky Department of Education should establish a formal process for school administrators, faculty, parents, and others to comment about the performance of HSEs currently assigned to schools.

Partly out of necessity because each school is unique, the HSE program is decentralized. Once trained in the tools and processes required to help schools, HSEs implement strategies designed to help a specific school improve. The department's primary role is assisting, not directing, an HSE.

Despite the decentralized nature of operations, KDE maintains administrative and oversight functions. Some are either not being performed or not performed adequately.

KDE does not maintain an accurate and current database of HSE assignments and home school district information.

KDE does not maintain an accurate and current database of HSE assignments so that it can be determined with certainty where HSEs are assigned and the number of days or hours that an HSE works at a particular school. Because an HSE can divide his or her

time between or among schools, tracking the location and distribution of the HSE's time is important, particularly for evaluating the impact of HSEs on school performance. Also, KDE records HSE compensation separately from its assignment data and that occasionally resulted in the two datasets containing mismatched HSE entries.

In addition to HSE monthly reports, the department monitors HSE performance through phone, e-mail, and online conversations with HSEs as well as annual and periodic training sessions. KDE staff may also conduct school site visits. According to the department, a KDE staff person meets with each HSE assigned to a school every year and meets the principal at those schools at those times. Not all of the seven principals interviewed by Program Review staff recalled having an annual on-site meeting with KDE staff to discuss the school's HSE. Not every HSE interviewed by Program Review staff could remember having an on-site meeting with KDE staff each year.

Recommendation 2.6

The Kentucky Department of Education should provide more on-site HSE reviews and maintain and regularly update a database that includes HSE school assignments, the amount of time HSEs work at each school, HSE compensation, and HSE home school district information.

Similar Programs in Other States

Other states operate programs similar to Kentucky's highly skilled educator program. For this report, six southeastern states were examined.

Other states operate programs similar to Kentucky's highly skilled educator program. For this report, six southeastern states were examined: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Each state has implemented a specialized school assistance program that involves sending teachers or other trained persons into low-performing schools to help schools and their students improve test scores.

Alabama

The Alabama State Department of Education assigns one full-time special service teacher to certain poorly performing schools. These teachers collaborate with a regional state team leader to find help for these schools. The department also contracts with mentors to principals who regularly visit a selected set of schools. The department also assigns a full-time chief academic officer and a

full-time chief administrative officer to help low-performing schools improve (SERVE).

Georgia

Failing schools in Georgia receive assistance from an Instructional Care Team provided by a regional educational service agency. Each instructional team includes up to five experienced teachers, one experienced principal, and one reading specialist. A more intensive and directed level of assistance is provided through state-mandated School Improvement Intervention Teams, which consist of team leaders who work in the assigned school every day (SERVE).

Louisiana

Poorly performing schools are required to receive on-site technical assistance from the state through its Distinguished Educator Program—which was modeled after Kentucky’s program of the same name. Distinguished educators are trained and assigned to a particular school for two years. Their responsibilities include assisting schools in developing improvement plans, helping to develop a school curriculum aligned with state tests, working with the school to involve parents and community members, and assisting with professional development (Council).

North Carolina

Low-performing schools in North Carolina receive on-site technical assistance from Assistance Teams. These teams conduct needs assessments, evaluate the teaching and learning environment, evaluate the school staff, develop improvement plans, and assist the school for one academic year. Priority goes to schools that fail to achieve their expected growth and have less than 60 percent of students at the proficient level. Other low-performing schools may request assistance (State of North Carolina).

South Carolina

In 1998, South Carolina created a Teacher Specialist On-Site program. Among other tasks, teacher specialists present best practices for teaching and learning, demonstrate effective teaching, identify needed changes in classroom instructional strategies, and support teachers in acquiring new skills (SERVE). Schools receive assistance based on student test scores.

Tennessee

The Tennessee Department of Education provides assistance to high-priority schools through its Exemplary Educator Program. Exemplary educators are veteran teachers, principals, or superintendents selected and trained by the department. They work with schools to help improve student achievement (State of Tennessee). The program is administered by a nonprofit organization.

Chapter 3

Other Forms of State Assistance: Commonwealth School Improvement Fund and Scholastic Audits and Reviews

This chapter describes two state assistance programs complementary to the HSE program: Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grants and scholastic audits and reviews. Schools that receive assistance from an HSE are likely to receive a CSIF grant, a scholastic audit or review, or both.

The first section begins by explaining what the CSIF program is and what types and amounts of funding are provided to schools. The section concludes with a discussion of the appropriateness and process of awarding certain CSIF grants. The second section defines and analyzes scholastic audits and reviews, including the process for these evaluations and how much they typically cost.

Commonwealth School Improvement Funds

CSIF grants go to certain schools to help them pursue new and innovative strategies to raise school performance and meet the educational needs of students.

Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grants go to certain schools to help them “pursue new and innovative strategies to meet the educational needs of the school’s students and raise the school’s performance level” (KRS 158.805 (1)). Originally enacted in 1985, CSIF has gone through several iterations, most recently in 2002. At that time, statutory language required CSIF grants for the 2003 and 2004 school years to be used solely to reduce achievement gaps in schools. Achievement gaps are measurable differences in performance on CATS assessments between males and females, students with and without disabilities, students of different ethnicities, students proficient in English and those who are not, and students who receive free or reduced-price school lunches and those who do not.

Schools can use CSIF grants to pay for professional development, consultants, reading materials, assessment materials, software, or certain travel expenses, among other things.

KDE calculates an achievement gap score of 0 to 4 for each school. A score of 0 represents no statistically significant achievement gaps at a school; a score of 4 indicates achievement gaps in each category of students.

Prior to 2003 and then beginning again with the 2005 school year, CSIF grants could be used for a broader range of purposes. Among other things, schools can currently use CSIF grants to pay for

professional development, consultants, reading materials, assessment materials, software, and certain travel expenses. The funds cannot supplant existing expenditures. A school may not use CSIF funds, for example, to pay the salary of an existing teacher. Further, CSIF grants can pay for no more than 20 percent of equipment costs, such as computers (KRS 158.805 (4)).

Beginning with the 2005 school year, the CSIF appropriation was divided between schools classified as In Need of Assistance and Targeted Assistance schools identified as having the potential to become In Need of Assistance schools.

For at least the 2003 and 2004 school years, only schools classified as In Need of Assistance received CSIF grants. Beginning with the 2005 school year, the CSIF appropriation was divided between schools classified as In Need of Assistance and those that were not. The department refers to the latter group as Targeted Assistance schools. Some important differences between the two types of allocations exist.

Overview

A total of 88 schools received CSIF grants in the 2004 to 2006 school years—46 to In Need of Assistance schools and 42 to Targeted Assistance schools.

A total of 88 schools received CSIF grants in the 2004 to 2006 school years. Table 3.1 shows that 46 schools received CSIF grants; 42 schools received Targeted Assistance.

Table 3.1
School Characteristics by Type of Commonwealth
School Improvement Fund Grant (2004 to 2006)

	Assistance	Target	Total
Number of Schools	46	42	88
Number of Districts	31	31	53
Average Attendance	417	476	445
Average Achievement Gap Score	0.8	1.5	1.1
Average Accountability Index Score	53.0	62.7	57.7
Average Grant	\$25,500	\$9,100	\$17,500

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

CSIF grant amounts to Targeted Assistance schools are determined by the number of achievement gaps among selected groups of students and average daily attendance at recipient schools.

CSIF grants to Targeted Assistance schools are determined by the number of achievement gaps and average daily attendance at the schools. The number of achievement gaps is used to determine the base funding amount. This amount increases with the number of achievement gaps and ranges from \$10,000 to \$25,000. For the balance of the grant, the grant amount increases along with school attendance.

Overall, average daily attendance and average achievement gap scores were higher for schools that received Targeted Assistance CSIF grants than they were for CSIF In Need of Assistance schools. The average accountability index score for Targeted

Assistance schools was similar to that of recipient In Need of Assistance schools. Average grant amounts for the Targeted Assistance CSIF program were smaller because its budget appropriation was smaller and because it provided grants to a similar number of schools (42 versus 46). Targeted assistance CSIF appropriations were also used to pay for Targeted Assistance coaches, which effectively reduced the amount of grant funding available to schools.

Appropriations

Since fiscal year 2000, annual state CSIF appropriations have ranged from \$1.5 million to \$2.7 million. The smallest appropriations occurred during the most recent fiscal years.

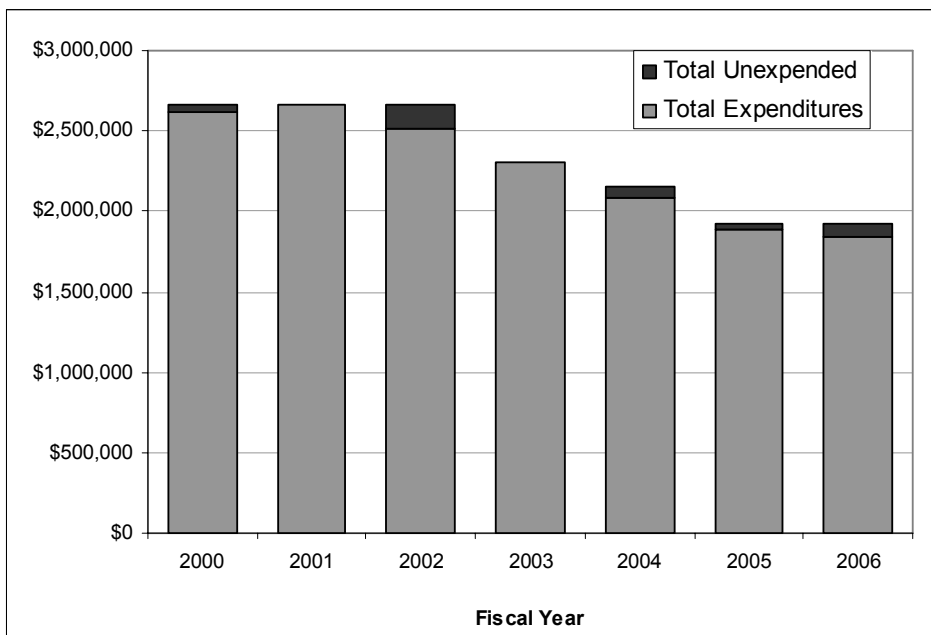
Since FY 2000, annual total state CSIF appropriations have ranged from \$1.5 million to \$2.7 million. The highest appropriations occurred in fiscal years 2000, 2001, and 2002. The smallest appropriations occurred during the most recent fiscal years.

Expenditures

Using information from the state's accounting system, staff determined total CSIF expenditures per year. Figure 3.A shows that total CSIF expenditures were always less than the appropriated amount, with the exception of FY 2003. The unspent amount ranged from \$295 in FY 2001 to \$145,000 in FY 2002. Since FY 2000, 2.4 percent of CSIF appropriations, or roughly \$380,000, has not been spent. Unspent funds are to be returned to the state's General Fund.¹

¹ Schools generally have one fiscal year to spend each year's CSIF grant award. On occasion, schools request that KDE allow them to carry over funds from one fiscal year to the next, which the department decides on a case-by-case basis.

Figure 3.A
Commonwealth School Improvement Fund
Expenditures by Fiscal Year



Source: Staff analysis of Management Administrative and Reporting System data (as of Aug. 25, 2006).

CSIF expenditures consist of grants-in-aid to schools and administrative spending. Grants-in-aid account for 87 percent of total CSIF expenditures since FY 2000.

Grants-in-Aid and Administrative Expenditures. CSIF expenditures can be divided into two components: grants-in-aid and administration. Grants-in-aid are the funds provided to individual schools to pay for professional development, equipment, and other goods and services. Grants-in-aid have accounted for 87 percent of total CSIF expenditures since FY 2000. Administrative expenditures are used to pay costs incurred by KDE associated with operating the CSIF program.

Records of School-level Expenditures Are Incomplete. As noted previously, CSIF agreements are signed between the school district and KDE. All CSIF funds are disbursed to school districts, which in turn distribute the funds to schools.

KDE has data on actual CSIF expenditures for some, but not all, school districts that received CSIF grants from FY 2001 to FY 2004.

Data on CSIF expenditures are incomplete. KDE has actual CSIF expenditures for some school districts that received CSIF grants from FY 2001 to FY 2004, but these records are incomplete or do not include school-level expenditures.

Recommendation 3.1

The Kentucky Department of Education should compile and produce annual school-level reports of CSIF expenditures. The department should ensure that school districts comply with all financial reporting requirements.

Based on an analysis of available data, Program Review staff grouped expenditures into six categories. Most spending occurred in three of those categories. Table 3.2 shows that schools spent three-fourths of their CSIF grants on supplies, salaries and benefits, and books and periodicals.

**Table 3.2
 Summary of Commonwealth School Improvement
 Fund Expenditures (FY 2001 to FY 2004)**

Category	Expenditure	% of Total
Supplies	\$1,646,451	28%
Salaries and benefits	\$1,491,275	26%
Books and periodicals	\$1,353,520	23%
Contracted and professional services	\$570,634	10%
Travel and other expenses	\$587,991	10%
Equipment	\$148,113	3%
Total	\$5,797,985	100%

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

In Need of Assistance Schools

Schools classified as In Need of Assistance may receive CSIF grants. Most eligible schools accept CSIF grants but some decline them.

Schools classified by their biennial accountability index scores as In Need of Assistance are eligible for CSIF grants (KRS 158.805 (2)). For the 2003 and 2004 school years, 88 schools were eligible and 84 accepted CSIF funds. For the 2005 and 2006 school years, all 46 eligible schools accepted CSIF grants.

Eligibility

After learning which schools are classified as In Need of Assistance, the commissioner of education notifies each of these schools via e-mail about their eligibility for CSIF grants. Individual school councils then decide whether or not to apply for those funds.

No school is required to apply for a CSIF grant (KRS 158.805 (2)). School councils for Level 1, 2, and 3 schools decide whether to accept a CSIF grant or not (703 KAR 5:120). For eligible schools that want a CSIF grant, KDE signs an agreement with the school's district. If a school council declines a CSIF grant, the school's principal must notify the local board of education of that decision.

According to KDE staff, schools that decline a CSIF grant may do so because they are concerned about the costs associated with tracking and reporting CSIF expenditures. Others apparently decline the grant to avoid being subjected to a school evaluation.

Funding

Language in the 2002-2004 adopted biennial budget required that CSIF grants be allocated according to a school's average daily attendance and its number of achievement gaps. The state board of education has since provided CSIF grants according to those two factors.

The minimum CSIF grant amount for the 2004 to 2006 school years was \$10,000, plus an amount per student that varied from \$19 to \$27 depending on the school year.

The minimum amount for the 2004 to 2006 school years was \$10,000, plus an amount per student. Table 3.3 shows that schools with more achievement gaps received more funding. The amount per student varied from \$19 to \$27 depending on the school year.

Table 3.3
Commonwealth School Improvement
Fund Base Award by Achievement
Gap Score, 2004 to 2006

Gap Score	CSIF Base Award
0	\$10,000
1	\$15,000
2	\$20,000
3	\$25,000
4	\$25,000

Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

Table 3.4 summarizes information for schools classified as In Need of Assistance that accepted CSIF grants. The grant amounts received ranged from approximately \$12,000 to \$69,000 in each of the 2005 and 2006 school years. The smallest grant award went to a school with no achievement gaps and an average daily attendance of 72. The largest amount went to a school with an achievement gap score of 2 and combined middle and high school attendance of nearly 1,800. The average grant award was \$25,500.

Table 3.4
Summary of Commonwealth School Improvement
Fund Grants to In Need of Assistance Schools

	School Year			
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of schools	90	90	46	46
Total allocation	\$1,908,700	\$2,054,200	\$1,173,000	\$1,173,000
Average award	\$21,208	\$22,824	\$25,500	\$25,500
Highest award	\$48,688	\$53,380	\$68,644	\$68,644
Lowest award	\$11,961	\$7,763	\$11,960	\$11,960

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

For the 2003 and 2004 school years, allocations ranged from \$12,000 to \$49,000 and from \$7,700 to \$53,000, respectively. The average CSIF award was about \$22,000.

Appendix C contains a list of In Need of Assistance schools that received CSIF grants and their grant amounts.

Targeted Assistance Schools

Beginning with the 2005 school year, KDE used a portion of each year’s CSIF appropriation for schools that were not classified as In Need of Assistance. Targeted Assistance schools identified by the department as having the potential to become In Need of Assistance schools were eligible for this money.²

Language included in House Bill 380, the 2007-2009 adopted biennial budget, gives KDE the authority to award CSIF grants “to provide support services to schools needing assistance under KRS 158.6455 or in order to meet the requirement of No Child Left Behind.” According to KDE, this budget language provides the authority for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants to schools that fail to meet all the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

² The Kentucky Board of Education at its December 8-9, 2004, meeting expressed concern that some schools not classified as In Need of Assistance were “in danger of not reaching proficiency.” The board asked KDE for further information about the number of such schools. At its February 2005 meeting, the board approved the allocation of a portion of that biennium’s CSIF appropriation to Targeted Assistance schools. An additional allocation was made for the 2006 school year.

Eligibility

According to KDE, schools eligible for Targeted Assistance are identified by various school factors. The commissioner of education then notifies each superintendent with an eligible school and principals of those schools about the availability of these funds.

KDE did not provide specific scoring or weighting methods used to determine which schools are eligible for targeted assistance CSIF grants but did identify the factors considered in the process.

The department did not provide specific scoring or weighting methods used to determine which schools are eligible for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants but did identify the following factors as being important to this process. These include schools that

- are progressing but have declining accountability scores;
- have accountability scores generally in the 50 to 60 range;
- have a high number of achievement gaps;
- have high dropout rates (which only applies to high schools);
- have high novice rates; and
- have inadequate yearly progress in multiple areas.

According to the department, 56 schools were eligible for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants in the 2004-2006 biennium. Of those, 42 accepted the funds.

Table 3.5 shows a selected list of schools that received a targeted CSIF offer compared to a selected list of schools that did not. Each of the factors identified by KDE for determining which schools are eligible for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants is identified. As shown, both groups appear similar. Program Review staff were unable to determine why some schools were offered Targeted Assistance CSIF grants and some were not.

Table 3.5
Selected Schools Offered or Not Offered Targeted Commonwealth School Improvement Fund Assistance (2005 and 2006 School Years)

Offered Targeted Assistance				Not Offered Targeted Assistance			
2003-2004 Index Score	Gap Score	Inadequate Yearly Progress in Multiple Areas?	HSE in 2004 or 2005?	2003-2004 Index Score	Gap Score	Inadequate Yearly Progress in Multiple Areas?	HSE in 2004 or 2005?
61.0	2	Yes	No	56.2	2	Yes	No
61.7	1	No	No	58.9	1	Yes	Yes
67.2	0	No	No	61.7	0	No	No
68.0	1	No	No	61.8	1	No	No

Note: All schools were classified as Progressing but had declining scores and high novice rates.
 Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

It would be helpful if there was clear documentation of a specific, formal method used by KDE to rank schools eligible for Targeted Assistance CSIF grants.

Recommendation 3.2

The Kentucky Board of Education and the Kentucky Department of Education should document a formal process, preferably through administrative regulation, that identifies and ranks which schools are eligible for Targeted Assistance Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grants.

Funding

KDE awarded 42 Targeted Assistance CSIF grants in the 2005 and 2006 school years. Table 3.6 summarizes the grants. The average grant amounts were \$14,000 in 2005 and \$4,000 in 2006. Average grant amounts declined because the department used at least \$225,000 of its FY 2006 appropriation to contract with Targeted Assistance coaches. Similar contracts were not awarded for the 2005 school year because Targeted Assistance CSIF grants were not awarded until near the end of the school year.

Table 3.6
Summary of Commonwealth School Improvement
Fund Grants to Targeted Assistance Schools

	2005	2006
Number of Schools	42	42
Total Allocation	\$591,000	\$170,200
Average Award	\$14,071	\$4,052
Highest Award	\$24,921	\$10,340
Lowest Award	\$5,332	\$698

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Targeted Assistance Coaches

Targeted assistance coaches are former HSEs and others who help schools that receive Targeted Assistance CSIF grants.

Targeted assistance coaches, which include former HSEs, help schools that receive Targeted Assistance CSIF grants. The coaches may work with principals and perform other duties assigned by KDE. Similar coaches are not used to monitor or assist schools classified as In Need of Assistance that receive CSIF funds.

In 2006, of the \$590,000 allocated to the Targeted Assistance CSIF program, \$225,000 was used by KDE to pay stipends to Targeted Assistance coaches.

In 2006, of the \$590,000 allocated to the Targeted Assistance CSIF program, \$225,000 was used by KDE to pay stipends under personal services contracts to eight Targeted Assistance coaches. According to KDE staff, one of the eight resigned prior to the end of her contract and was replaced by another coach.

According to KDE staff, Targeted Assistance coaches work up to 100 days per year. They generally receive a base rate of \$350 per day, plus state retirement contributions. Job-related expenses such as travel, phone calls, and office supplies are reimbursed.

Scholastic Audits and Reviews

Schools that are assigned an HSE or accept CSIF money must undergo an evaluation. These are called either guided self-studies or scholastic audits or reviews. These evaluations provide a detailed description of a school's strengths and weaknesses and may guide how an HSE allocates his or her time and how CSIF grants are spent.

Most schools that are assigned an HSE or accept CSIF money must undergo an evaluation.³ Schools classified by their accountability index score as Progressing or Meets Goal that receive assistance from an HSE are exempt. The evaluations are a scholastic audit or a scholastic review conducted by KDE or a guided self-study conducted by the school. The product of either evaluation is a detailed description of a school's strengths and weaknesses

³ Administrative regulation requires that all Level 1, 2, and 3 schools undergo an evaluation (703 KAR 5:120). Level 3 schools must undergo a scholastic audit. Level 1 and 2 schools receive a scholastic review or conduct a guided self-study. KDE also requires all schools that receive Targeted Assistance CSIF money to have an evaluation.

designed to help guide how an HSE allocates his or her time and how CSIF grants are spent.

School districts may also receive a scholastic audit or review. Most are conducted at districts that have multiple schools classified as In Need of Assistance. District audits typically examine how well districts are supporting schools, particularly low-performing ones.

Types of Evaluation

Level 3 schools must undergo a scholastic audit, which is a “comprehensive review of a school’s learning environment, efficiency, and academic performance of students to determine the level of support necessary to continuously improve student academic performance” (703 KAR 5:001 sec. 1 (41)). This includes evaluating school-based decision-making councils’ decisions, effectiveness of the principal, and adequacy of resources (703 KAR 5:120 sec. 7).

Scholastic reviews are not defined in administrative regulation, but KDE appears to conduct these evaluations in a manner similar to scholastic audits.

Scholastic reviews are not defined in administrative regulation, but KDE appears to conduct these evaluations in a manner similar to scholastic audits.

Guided self-studies differ from audits and reviews in implementation. Scholastic audits and reviews consist of various professionals who have no affiliation with the school or district being evaluated. The composition of guided self-study teams frequently includes faculty, staff, and others from the evaluated school’s community.

According to KDE staff, guided self-studies can be less objective and, therefore, less likely to accurately describe the problems at a school. This is because members of guided self-study teams may be familiar with the evaluated school’s staff and faculty or have children who attend the school.

Cost

KDE generally budgets \$14,000 to \$20,000 for each scholastic audit or review.

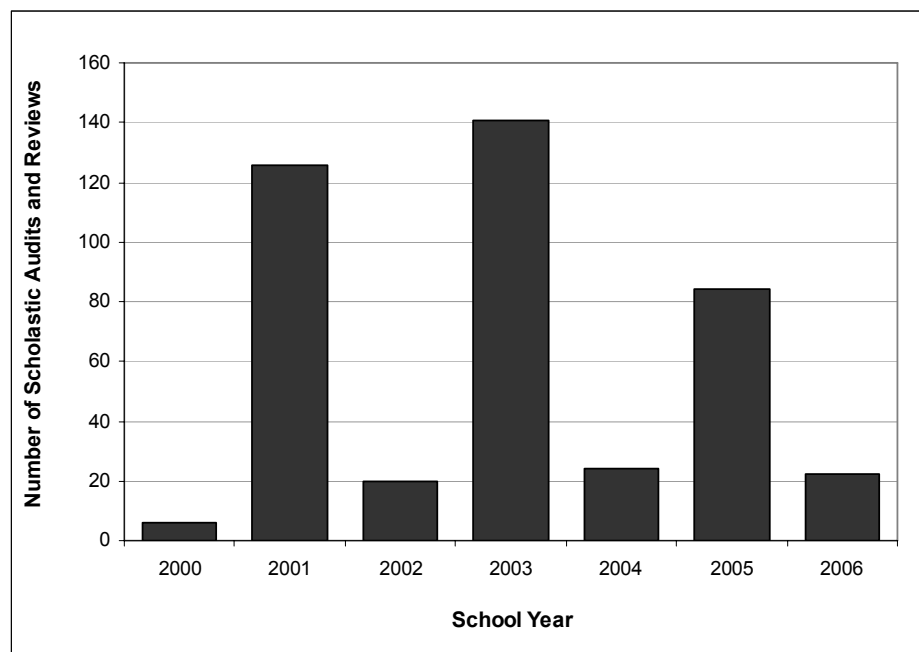
KDE generally budgets \$14,000 to \$20,000 for each scholastic audit or review. Schools with more students usually have more team members, which raises the total cost. For the 2006 school year, the department budgeted \$350,000 to conduct 21 scholastic audits and reviews. Costs of conducting guided self-studies are borne by schools and school districts.

Frequency of Scholastic Audits and Reviews

School years coinciding with the release of biennial Commonwealth Accountability Testing System scores have many more evaluations because all Assistance Level 3 schools are required to have a scholastic audit.

Scholastic audits and reviews are performed each school year. Figure 3.B shows the number of scholastic audits and reviews performed from the 2000 through 2006 school years. School years coinciding with the release of biennial CATS scores have many more evaluations because all Assistance Level 3 schools are required to have a scholastic audit and most are completed that year. According to KDE, the department does not keep records on the number and location of guided self-studies.

Figure 3.B
Scholastic Audits and Reviews by School Year



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Based on an analysis of data from KDE, most scholastic audits and reviews were conducted at schools that were not classified as In Need of Assistance. Seventy-seven percent of all audits and reviews occurred at schools that were classified as Meets Goal or Progressing. Sixteen percent of audits and reviews conducted with the support of KDE since the 2000 school year were at schools classified as In Need of Assistance. The remaining 7 percent occurred at schools or districts that were not classified in the data provided by KDE.

Eighty-one percent of all schools classified as In Need of Assistance have received a scholastic audit or review; 6 percent of all other schools have received either an audit or review.

It might appear that In Need of Assistance schools are being passed over in favor of other schools, but since the 2003 school year, 81 percent of all schools classified as In Need of Assistance received a scholastic audit or review. This compares to 6 percent of all other schools.

Between 1999 and 2006, 53 different schools have had more than one scholastic audit or review, including three that had three evaluations. Generally, these evaluations occurred at least two years apart.

The Process for Scholastic Audits and Reviews

Scholastic audits and reviews generally begin late Sunday afternoon and end Friday afternoon of the same week. The audit or review team begins by reviewing materials such as the school improvement plan and lesson plans submitted by the school or district being evaluated. Initial interviews and introductions usually occur Monday. The audit or review team may conduct more interviews and observations on Tuesday and Wednesday.

By Friday the audit or review team completes its report, which includes findings and recommendations. The team shares a draft of the evaluation with school faculty and school council members (703 KAR 5:120 sec. 7 (6b)). A draft report is then sent to KDE. Over the next several weeks, the department reviews and edits the report. Once completed, the report is formally presented to the evaluated school or district. The entire process, beginning with the week the audit or review is performed, usually lasts five to eight weeks.

Scholastic audits and reviews and at least some guided self-studies use a standard evaluation form. The Standards and Indicators of School Improvement (SISI) is an evaluation tool developed by KDE so that schools can be compared on similar academic, environmental, and efficiency measures. The SISI is used to identify strengths and weaknesses in administration, teaching practices, school culture, and other education aspects.

Highly skilled educators may use the report developed from the SISI to determine the most critical school improvement areas and allocate their time and efforts accordingly. Schools without an HSE and those that perform a guided self-study may use the SISI evaluation in a similar manner.

The composition of scholastic audit teams is defined by administrative regulation.

Composition of Audit and Review Teams. According to 703 KAR 5:120 sec. 7(2), scholastic audit teams must include

- a highly skilled educator,
- an active or retired teacher who had not worked for the district in which the evaluated school is located,
- an active or retired principal or other school-level administrator who had not worked for the district in which the evaluated school is located,
- an active or retired district-level administrator who had not worked for the district where the evaluated school is located,
- a parent or legal guardian who has or had school-aged children and lives outside the district being evaluated, and
- an active or retired university faculty member.

Although statute and administrative regulation do not identify or require certain persons to be part of a scholastic review team, KDE appears to include the same types of people for its review teams as it does its scholastic audit teams.

The size of the scholastic audit or review team is typically 6 to 12 members. Schools with smaller student populations and better-performing schools generally have the smallest audit or review teams. Typically, there are more team members for audits of districts or of schools with large student populations or low index scores.

Scholastic audit and review team members are trained by KDE. They are paid a daily per diem of \$350 or \$400.

Training and Compensation. Members of scholastic audit and review teams are trained by KDE. According to 703 KAR 5:120 sec. 7, training should cover consolidated school improvement plans, building leadership capacity, organizing the school, professional development, and relationships and collaborative networks. Again, the regulatory requirements are specific to scholastic audit teams, but the department appears to require the same training for members of its scholastic review teams.

According to KDE, scholastic audit and review team members are paid a daily per diem of \$350 and are reimbursed for travel expenses. The team leader is paid \$400 per day.

Long and varied hours make it difficult to determine an hourly wage rate. The scholastic review team observed by Program Review staff reported that they regularly started their day at 8 a.m. and worked until 11 p.m.

Chapter 4

A Statistical Analysis of the Impact of HSEs on School Performance

A statistical model was used to analyze the effect of highly skilled educators on schools' accountability index scores.

A statistical model was used to analyze the effect of highly skilled educators on schools' accountability index scores. This chapter begins with a summary of the results of the analysis and a brief discussion of previous research. The next sections detail the model and results, followed by a discussion of other potential benefits of the HSE program. The report concludes with a discussion of the context of the analysis.

Analysis of the impact of the HSE program is complicated by the fact that schools that receive HSEs also frequently receive other types of assistance. Based on a statistical analysis that took other factors into account, schools that received assistance from an HSE, a Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grant, and a scholastic audit had, on average, greater increases in accountability index scores the next year than schools that did not receive this combination of assistance. The only schools to have received this type of assistance between 2002 and 2006 were schools classified as In Need of Assistance. Schools that received assistance only from an HSE performed no better or worse the next year than schools without this type of assistance. These schools were identified by their accountability index score as Progressing or Meets Goal.

Previous Research

Other studies reported that schools with HSEs showed greater improvement in accountability index scores than schools without HSEs. Those results are not fully justified.

Since 1998, there have been at least six evaluations of the HSE or Distinguished Educator programs (Commonwealth. Department; David. *The Influence*; David. *Improving*; Davis. *A Preliminary*; Davis. *A Study*; and Wakelyn). Conclusions from each of these reviews were similar: schools with HSEs showed greater improvement than schools without HSEs.

It is a fact that the index scores of schools with HSEs have increased more than those of other schools. Table 4.1 shows the comparisons for seven school years. In every year, scores of schools with HSEs increased more than scores of other schools, sometimes much more so. It is not correct, however, to automatically connect the intervention of an HSE with these higher index scores. Other factors that could explain the change must also

be considered. For that reason, the conclusions from previous studies are not fully justified.

Table 4.1
Average Changes in School Accountability Index Scores
for Schools With and Without HSEs (2000 to 2006)

School Year	HSE?	
	Yes	No
2000	2.5	1.8
2001	4.8	2.3
2002	3.3	1.7
2003	6.0	2.6
2004	5.4	4.8
2005	3.3	0.6
2006	3.6	2.3

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Limitations of Previous Research

One particularly important omission from previous research was the effect a school's previous year index score has on the likelihood that its index score will increase. Overall, schools with low accountability index scores are more likely to have increases than schools with high index scores. And schools with low index scores are more likely to receive assistance, including an HSE.

A school's prior year index score is an important determinant for how much improvement a school will make. Schools with lower accountability index scores improve, on average, more than schools with higher index scores.

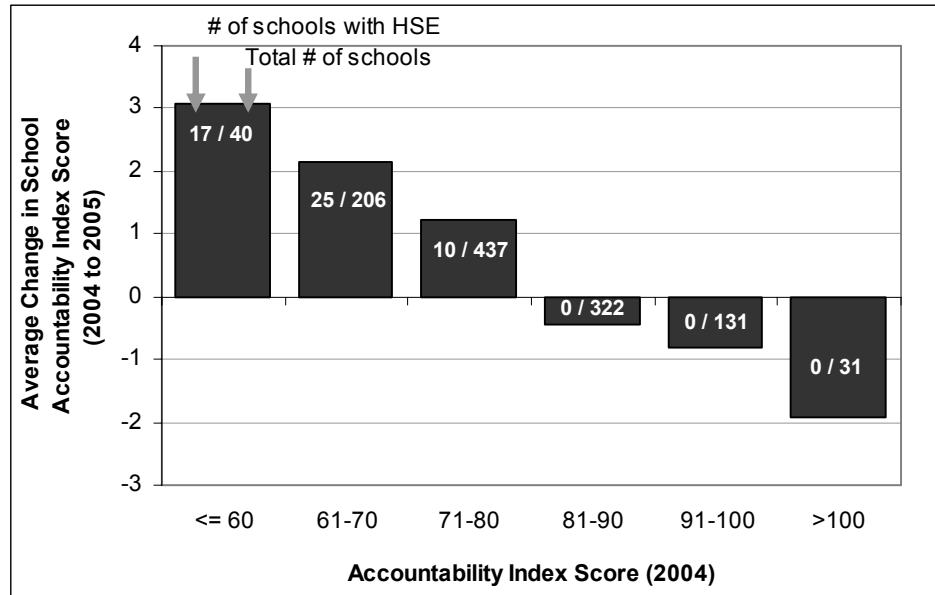
For Figure 4.A, schools were divided into six groups based on their 2004 accountability index scores. The bars in the figure show the average difference in index scores the next year for each group of schools. There is a clear pattern. The lower the average index score for a grouping in 2004, the larger the increase the next year. For example, schools with index scores at or below 60 in 2004 had index scores in 2005 that were higher, on average, by more than 3 points. Schools with index scores greater than 100 in 2004 had scores that were nearly 2 points lower, on average, the next year.¹

One explanation for why schools with low accountability index scores improve more than schools with high scores is mathematical. Schools with high accountability index scores have less room to improve. A school with an index score of 90, for example, has only 10 points to go to reach proficiency, but it is

¹ The results were similar when other years were analyzed. The same pattern of results held when schools with HSEs were excluded: on average, a lower score on the index in one year is associated with an increase the next year.

relatively close to the highest accountability index scores achieved to date. A school with an index score of 60, on the other hand, has room to improve by 40 points to get to 100.

Figure 4.A
Change in Schools' Annual Accountability Index Scores
(2004 to 2005) Compared to Prior Year Index Scores (2004)



Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Another possible reason is that any institution seeking to improve will first adopt the easier, less expensive, shorter-term, and/or consensus changes first. Achieving improvement may become more difficult after this initial stage. Schools with high index scores may have already implemented the first-stage changes.

All else equal, schools with index scores below 80 showed greater annual improvement than schools with higher index scores. Schools that receive assistance from HSEs have index scores below 80. So simply comparing scores of schools with and without HSEs could mean that HSEs are beneficial. Or it could mean that the kind of schools that receive HSEs would have improved anyway.²

² A school's prior year index score was also a consistent factor that explained whether a school received assistance from an HSE. Controlling for other factors, the lower a school's accountability index score the more likely it was to request and receive an HSE. These results are based on a regression analysis of data from 2003 through 2005.

The statistical model used in this report considers more than 20 factors, including a school's prior year index score.

The statistical model used in this report considers more than 20 factors, including a school's prior year index score, various student and school characteristics, parental involvement, and teacher qualifications.

Finally, most schools classified as In Need of Assistance receive an HSE, CSIF funding, and/or an audit or review. Apart from the value of the assistance received, it is possible that just being classified as an assistance school provides an important incentive to innovate and increase effort in order to improve index scores. Administrators and HSEs interviewed by Program Review staff at schools classified as In Need of Assistance frequently volunteered that they were on a mission to improve scores and move their schools out of assistance.

Statistical Analysis

The primary research question in this report is whether schools with HSEs perform significantly better than other schools once other factors are controlled for.

The primary research question in this report is whether schools with HSEs perform significantly better than other schools once other factors are controlled for. The question was addressed through a regression model that examined the effects of several factors in predicting the annual change in a school's accountability index score. Those factors include whether or not a school received assistance from an HSE, a CSIF grant, or a scholastic audit, as well as educational and demographic characteristics. (See Appendix D for a list of all the variables included in the statistical model.)

Public school data from the 2003 to 2006 school years were analyzed. Approximately 1,100 out of 1,250 public schools in Kentucky were included in the analysis for each year. Certain reconfigured schools and schools without index scores were excluded.

The statistical analysis was performed with and without Assistance Level 3 schools. The results were similar, so the findings presented here include Level 3 schools.

Level 3 schools are required to receive assistance from an HSE. All other schools voluntarily accept an HSE. The statistical analysis was performed with and without Level 3 schools. The results were similar whether Level 3 schools were included or not so the findings presented here include them.

Schools were classified and analyzed according to the type of assistance they received.

Schools were classified by the type of assistance they received:

- HSE only;
- CSIF only;
- scholastic audit/review only;
- HSE and CSIF;
- HSE and audit/review;

- CSIF and audit/review;
- HSE, CSIF, and audit/review; or
- none of the above.

This allowed for evaluation of the effectiveness of different combinations of state assistance for each year examined.

Statistical Results

Table 4.2 shows the number of schools with each type of assistance and the statistically significant effects from each type or combination on a school’s accountability index. Each effect discussed below is based on taking into account other factors that could affect school’s index scores. Complete results with the other factors included in the statistical models are on page 64 in Appendix D.

**Table 4.2
 Statistical Results for Annual Improvement in School
 Accountability Index Scores by Type of Assistance Received**

	2003		2004		2005		2006*	
	Number of Schools	Change in Index Score	Number of Schools	Change in Index Score	Number of Schools	Change in Index Score	Number of Schools	Change in Index Score
HSE only	15	–	20	–	11	–	12	–
CSIF only	8	–	28	1.8	26	–	51	–
Audit only	51	–	20	–	23	–	10	–
HSE and CSIF	1	–	52	–	8	–	34	1.9
HSE and Audit	3	–	0	–	1	–	1	–
CSIF and Audit	33	2.2	0	–	20	2.2	1	–
HSE, CSIF, and Audit	34	3.5	0	–	31	2.0	0	–
No assistance	951		979		973		1,018	

* Results for 2006 do not include the same control factors as other years. Data related to various school, teacher, and student factors will not be released until 2007.

“–” indicates that the factor was not statistically significant at the 0.05 confidence level.

Complete results with the other factors included in the statistical models are on page 64 in Appendix D.

Source: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Schools that received assistance from a combination of an HSE, a CSIF grant, and a scholastic audit improved, on average, by 3.5 points more than other schools in 2003 and 2.0 points more in 2005.

Index scores of schools that received assistance from the combination of an HSE, a CSIF grant, and a scholastic audit/review improved, on average, by 3.5 points more than other schools in 2003 and 2.0 points more in 2005. Only schools classified by their accountability index score as In Need of Assistance received this combination of assistance. No school

received the combination of an HSE, a CSIF grant, and a scholastic audit in 2004 or 2006.³

Schools that received assistance from a CSIF grant and a scholastic audit/review also showed statistically significant improvement.

Schools that received assistance from a CSIF grant and a scholastic audit or review showed similar improvements in their index scores. Those schools' scores improved by approximately 2.2 points more than other schools in 2003 and in 2005.

Schools that received CSIF assistance but did not receive either an HSE or a scholastic audit improved by 1.8 points more than other schools in 2004. Schools that only received a CSIF grant in 2005 and 2006 showed similar improvements, but those results were just outside the confidence interval used in this analysis.

Schools that received assistance only from an HSE showed no statistically significant improvement compared to other schools.

For none of the years examined did the results indicate that schools with only an HSE did significantly better or worse than other schools. Each school that received assistance from only an HSE was classified as Progressing or Meets Goal.

Schools with scholastic audits or reviews only did not have larger increases in accountability index scores than other schools. Combined with a CSIF grant or an HSE and CSIF grant, scholastic audits or reviews did positively affect these scores.

One possible reason for the different outcomes is that schools that received a scholastic review but no other type of assistance were all classified as either Progressing or Meets Goal.⁴ Schools that received both a scholastic audit and assistance from a CSIF grant or an HSE were almost exclusively at schools classified as In Need of Assistance.

Two other factors significantly affected the change in a school's accountability index score each year: a school's prior year index score and whether a school's index score declined the previous year.

As shown in the complete results on page 64, only two factors had statistically significant effects on the change in a school's accountability index score each year: a school's prior year index score and whether a school's index score declined the previous year.

On average, schools with lower accountability index scores the previous year improved more than schools with higher scores. The results varied by year; however, from 2003 to 2006, for every 10 points higher a school's index score was in one year, its score declined by 0.4 to 1.1 points the next year.

³ This is because schools receive, at most, one scholastic audit each biennium.

⁴ KRS 158.6455 and 703 KAR 5:120 sec. 9 require that the Kentucky Department of Education conduct scholastic audits at a random sample of successful schools.

Schools that had declining accountability index scores the previous period were significantly more likely than other schools to show improvement. From 2003 to 2006, a school that had a declining index score over the previous two-year period improved by 0.8 to 2.2 points the next period.

Limitations of This Research

Other factors may help explain change in school accountability index scores.

While the regression model included the feasible factors that could be identified by staff for which data were available, other explanatory factors exist. For example, administrators and HSEs told Program Review staff that leadership was critical to a school's ability to improve. Given current data, however, staff could not measure degrees of effectiveness of leadership for each school.

It was previously noted that just being labeled a school In Need of Assistance may be sufficient to spur improvement in a school's index score. Because most schools classified as In Need of Assistance receive an HSE, CSIF grant, audit or review, or some combination, it was not feasible to determine how much the assistance label might have motivated school personnel to improve school performance and how much was related to one of the three types of assistance discussed in this report.

KDE lost all CSIF data prior to 2003. Consequently, only data from the 2003 to 2006 school years were analyzed.

Other limitations also exist. According to KDE staff, the department lost all CSIF data prior to the 2003 school year. Because schools that receive assistance from an HSE generally also receive a CSIF grant, it is important that both factors be part of any analysis. For that reason, analysis was limited to the 2003 through 2006 school years. A longer-term analysis would help determine whether the results reported in this study are part of a pattern or not. Because the HSE program has existed only since 1998, it was not possible to determine whether HSEs have any long-term effect on school performance.

Another potential limitation is the accuracy and completeness of data provided by KDE. During the course of this study, Program Review staff identified errors in the list of HSE assignments and school classifications that were provided by the department. Once notified, KDE staff promptly corrected the information. However, it is unknown how many other errors may still exist.

Potential Unmeasured Benefits of HSEs

HSEs may provide other benefits not accounted for in the statistical analysis.

Although schools that receive assistance from only HSEs made the same statistical improvement to their accountability index scores as those without this type of assistance, the HSE program may provide other benefits. These benefits may accrue to the HSE or the school. Although statistical evidence is lacking, the following benefits were identified from interviews conducted by Program Review staff and from other publicly available information.

First, HSEs appear to benefit from the training provided by KDE. According to the seven HSEs interviewed by Program Review staff, this training is intensive and helped HSEs improve their teaching and leadership skills. It was not known where all HSEs work after they leave the program, however, so the impact these acquired skills may have in subsequent jobs could not be measured.

Second, the training provided by the program may provide HSEs an advantage in pursuing certification as a principal or superintendent. Certification programs may recognize the depth of HSE training and consider that training a partial fulfillment of the certification requirements. This can allow HSEs to complete fewer certification classes compared to those who have not received HSE training. This report did not measure the corresponding benefit of a shorter course load to either the HSE or the school district in which they later worked.

Third, HSEs may help individual students or classes improve their performance on the CATS assessments, but those impacts are not measurable. Although KDE has individual- and grade-level assessment data, there is no way to match that data with the individual efforts of HSEs.

Fourth, HSEs have been reported to help improve school curriculum, instructional coordination, school leadership, and professional development and raise morale (David. *Improving*). Measuring these factors was beyond the scope of this report.

Conclusions

As part of a package of assistance programs, HSEs seem to have some effect, taking other factors into account. Schools that received assistance from an HSE, a CSIF grant, and a scholastic audit or review had greater improvements in their accountability index scores than other schools. Alone, schools with HSEs did not seem to fare better than schools without HSEs, but this might be due to the effectiveness of other types of assistance at schools without an HSE.

The long-term effects of HSEs for schools are uncertain.

The long-term effects of HSEs in schools are uncertain. It was not possible to determine whether schools with HSEs received any lasting benefits, primarily because the relevant data were limited to the past four school years.

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Appendix A

Highly Skilled Educator Application Form

**Kentucky Department of Education
Highly Skilled Educators Program
Deadline for Submission: October 31, 2005**

Personal Information:

Mr. ____ Mrs. ____ Ms. ____ Name (First, Middle, Last):

Name preferred to be called by:

Home Address:

City, State, Zip:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone (Optional):

Home E-mail Address:

Ethnicity (Optional):

Social Security Number:

Date of Birth:

Present Employment:

School District:

School/Worksite:

Title:

Work Phone:

Work E-mail Address:

Grades that you have taught:

Are you currently teaching and what grade(s):

If not currently teaching, what year and grade(s) did you teach in last:

Tenure in current district: Yes ____ No ____

Years of teaching experience in Kentucky:

Are you a member of a local school board, Educational Standards Board, or other official educational governing board? Yes ____ No ____

If so, please state what: _____

Do you hold a political office? Yes ____ No ____

If so, please state what: _____

Appendix B

Highly Skilled Educator Monthly Report Form

[Reproduction of page 1 of the form]

HSE Monthly Report _____

Name

School

Date

Standards	Goals/Objectives	Activities/Strategies	Impact
Academic Performance			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Curriculum			
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Instruction			
Learning Environment			
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. School Culture			
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Support Programs/Services			
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. PD			
Efficiency			
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Leadership			
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. School Organization/Resources			
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Comprehensive Planning			
Challenges/Concerns			

NOTES: 1) Goals & objectives should relate to the SISI as suggested by the Scholastic Audit Report for your school. 2) Briefly explain the activities you will lead in order to address your objectives. 3) In the impact section, briefly discuss what went well and next steps.

[Reproduction of page 2 of the form]

HSE Monthly Report _____

Name

School

Date

Directions: Please indicate standard and indicator addressed in goal by placing standard letter and indicator number in the standard column.

A. Academic Performance

- 1. Curriculum
- 2. Assessment
- 3. Instruction

B. Learning Environment

- 4. School Culture
- 5. Support Programs/Services
- 6. PD

C. Efficiency

- 7. Leadership
- 8. School Organization/Resources
- 9. Comprehensive Planning

Standards	Goals/Objectives (What do you want to achieve?)	Activities/Strategies	Impact

Appendix C

Commonwealth School Improvement Fund Grants

CSIF Grants to Schools In Need of Assistance (2005 and 2006 School Years)

District	School	2005	2006
Augusta Independent	Augusta Elementary School	\$13,521	\$13,521
	Augusta High School	\$13,137	\$13,137
Bellevue Independent	Bellevue High School	\$20,335	\$20,335
Berea Independent	Berea Community High School	\$18,095	\$18,095
Boyd County	Catlettsburg Elementary School	\$17,536	\$17,536
Boyle County	Junction City Elementary School	\$17,553	\$17,553
Breckinridge County	Breckinridge County Middle School	\$31,201	\$31,201
Bullitt County	Hebron Middle School	\$40,839	\$40,839
	Mount Washington Elementary School	\$31,742	\$31,742
Christian County	North Drive Middle School	\$39,098	\$39,098
	Highland Elementary School	\$15,418	\$15,418
Cloverport Independent	Frederick Fraize High School	\$11,960	\$11,960
	William H. Natcher Elementary School	\$13,735	\$13,735
Covington Independent	Latonía Elementary School	\$20,398	\$20,398
	Covington Independent School	\$68,644	\$68,644
Crittenden County	Crittenden County Middle School	\$28,853	\$28,853
Danville Independent	Danville High School	\$37,240	\$37,240
Fayette County	Arlington Elementary School	\$16,578	\$16,578
	Dixie Elementary Magnet School	\$32,886	\$32,886
	Madeline M. Breckinridge Elementary School	\$28,269	\$28,269
	Fulton County	Fulton County Elementary School	\$16,390
Fulton Independent	Fulton City High School	\$25,338	\$25,338
Harrodsburg Independent	Harrodsburg Middle School	\$20,219	\$20,219
	Harrodsburg High School	\$15,713	\$15,713
Jackson County	Jackson County High School	\$40,644	\$40,644
Jefferson County	Robert Frost Middle School	\$26,411	\$26,411
	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$53,729	\$53,729
	Lassiter Middle School	\$38,551	\$38,551
	Central High School	\$40,366	\$40,366
	Semple Elementary School	\$22,266	\$22,266
	Southern Leadership Academy Middle School	\$32,771	\$32,771
Laurel County	Iroquois Middle School	\$39,431	\$39,431
	London Elementary School	\$26,563	\$26,563
Leslie County	Hayes Lewis Elementary School	\$14,080	\$14,080
Ludlow Independent	Ludlow High School	\$17,439	\$17,439
Madison County	Mayfield Elementary School	\$17,584	\$17,584
Magoffin County	Millard Hensley Elementary School	\$14,960	\$14,960
	Prater Borders Elementary School	\$12,698	\$12,698
Martin County	Warfield Middle School	\$15,890	\$15,890
Menifee County	Botts Elementary School	\$15,440	\$15,440
Owen County	Bowling Middle School	\$32,344	\$32,344
Owsley County	Owsley County High School	\$19,076	\$19,076
Perry County	Perry County Central High School	\$44,546	\$44,546
Pike County	Blackberry Elementary School	\$14,677	\$14,677
Providence Independent	Providence High School	\$12,953	\$12,953
Union County	Morganfield Elementary School	\$25,886	\$25,886
Total		\$1,173,000	\$1,173,000

CSIF Grants to Schools In Need of Assistance (2003 and 2004 School Years)

District	School	2003	2004
Anderson County	Emma B. Ward Elementary School	\$31,786	\$31,608
Ashland Independent	George M. Verity Middle School	\$29,786	\$28,790
Barbourville Independent	Barbourville Elementary School	\$16,368	\$13,974
Barren County	Barren County Middle School	\$31,242	\$30,842
	Temple Hill Elementary School	\$14,893	\$11,895
Bourbon County	Millersburg Elementary School	\$12,427	\$8,420
Bowling Green Independent	Dishman McGinnis Elementary School	\$14,388	\$11,183
	L.C. Curry Elementary School	\$14,116	\$10,800
Boyd County	Boyd County High School	\$34,873	\$35,958
Breckinridge County	Custer Elementary School	\$13,165	\$9,460
	Breckinridge County Middle School	\$31,902	\$31,772
Caldwell County	Caldwell County Elementary School	\$40,688	\$42,107
Campbell County	Donald E. Cline Elementary School	\$18,698	\$17,257
Campbellsville Independent	Campbellsville Elementary School	\$22,902	\$21,136
	Campbellsville High School	\$21,893	\$19,713
	Campbellsville Middle School	\$27,300	\$25,288
Carlisle County	Carlisle County Middle School	\$13,708	\$10,226
Casey County	Liberty Elementary School	\$16,271	\$13,837
Christian County	Pembroke Elementary School	\$21,524	\$19,193
Clark County	Hannah McClure Elementary School	\$14,757	\$11,703
Covington Independent	Latonia Elementary School	\$28,951	\$27,613
Danville Independent	Jennie Rogers Elementary School	\$14,990	\$12,032
Dawson Springs Independent	Dawson Springs High School	\$13,844	\$10,417
Fayette County	Dixie Elementary Magnet School	\$19,048	\$17,750
	Madeline M. Breckinridge Elementary School	\$18,931	\$17,586
	Tates Creek Elementary School	\$19,009	\$17,695
	Tates Creek Middle School	\$39,737	\$40,767
	Yates Elementary School	\$16,873	\$14,686
	Cardinal Valley Elementary School	\$20,951	\$20,431
Fleming County	Ewing Elementary School	\$15,145	\$12,251
Frankfort Independent	Frankfort High School	\$20,922	\$18,345
Franklin County	Bondurant Middle School	\$31,223	\$30,814
	Elkhorn Middle School	\$37,931	\$38,222
	Elkhorn Elementary School	\$25,446	\$24,720
Fulton County	Fulton County High School	\$19,466	\$16,293
	Fulton County Elementary School	\$20,844	\$18,236
Fulton Independent	Fulton City High School	\$14,369	\$11,156
Garrard County	Camp Dick Robinson Elementary School	\$22,922	\$21,163
Green County	Green County High School	\$20,213	\$19,392
Hardin County	Bluegrass Middle School	\$32,582	\$32,730
	Parkway Elementary School	\$25,892	\$25,349
Harrodsburg Independent	Harrodsburg Middle School	\$19,136	\$15,828
Hart County	Munfordville Elementary School	\$18,019	\$16,300
Henry County	New Castle Elementary School	\$21,990	\$19,850
Hickman County	Hickman County Elementary School	\$17,572	\$15,671

Table continued on next page

Table continued from previous page

District	School	2003	2004
Hopkins County	Madisonville North Hopkins High School	\$44,338	\$47,251
Jackson County	Jackson County High School	\$27,310	\$27,347
Jefferson County	Atherton High School	\$43,931	\$46,676
	Okolona Elementary School	\$18,019	\$16,300
	Chenoweth Elementary School	\$29,825	\$28,844
	Hawthorne Elementary School	\$26,893	\$24,713
	Bates Elementary School	\$22,980	\$21,245
	Stonestreet Elementary School	\$27,980	\$26,245
	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$46,086	\$49,713
	Hazelwood Elementary School	\$16,834	\$14,631
	Southern Leadership Academy Middle School	\$29,523	\$30,466
Jessamine County	Hattie C. Warner Elementary School	\$23,893	\$22,531
	East Jessamine High School	\$36,776	\$38,639
Kenton County	James A. Caywood Elementary School	\$17,009	\$14,877
	Simon Kenton High School	\$48,688	\$53,380
	Taylor Mill Elementary School	\$20,465	\$19,747
Knott County	Cordia High School	\$13,359	\$9,733
Lee County	Lee County Middle School	\$16,116	\$13,619
Leslie County	Hayes Lewis Elementary School	\$13,029	\$9,268
Lincoln County	Kings Mountain Elementary School	\$12,912	\$9,104
Livingston County	Livingston Central High School	\$17,553	\$15,643
Magoffin County	John T. Arnett Elementary School	\$11,961	\$7,763
	Millard Hensley Elementary School	\$14,136	\$10,828
	Prater Borders Elementary School	\$12,155	\$8,037
Marshall County	Benton Elementary School	\$23,640	\$22,175
Martin County	Inez Middle School	\$21,563	\$19,248
Metcalfe County	North Metcalfe Elementary School	\$13,184	\$9,487
	Summer Shade Elementary School	\$13,029	\$9,268
Muhlenberg County	Bremen Elementary School	\$17,766	\$15,944
	Greenville Elementary School	\$21,427	\$19,056
Owen County	Bowling Middle School	\$24,009	\$22,695
Perry County	Buckhorn Elementary School	\$14,233	\$10,965
	Lost Creek Elementary School	\$12,505	\$8,530
	A.B. Combs Elementary School	\$19,475	\$18,352
Pike County	Majestic Knox Creek Elementary School	\$13,631	\$10,116
Providence Independent	Broadway Elementary School	\$15,145	\$12,251
Pulaski County	Northern Middle School	\$34,601	\$35,575
Russellville Independent	R.E. Stevenson Elementary School	\$29,145	\$27,887
	Russellville Middle School	\$31,951	\$29,795
Shelby County	Wright Elementary School	\$25,426	\$24,693
Trigg County	Trigg County Elementary School	\$38,222	\$38,632
	Trigg County Middle School	\$38,164	\$38,550
Union County	Morganfield Elementary School	\$27,359	\$25,370
	Uniontown Elementary School	\$13,767	\$10,308
Webster County	Sebree Elementary School	\$15,495	\$12,743
Total		\$2,054,200	\$1,908,700

CSIF Grants to Targeted Assistance Schools (2005 and 2006 School Years)

District	School	2005	2006
Ballard County	Ballard Memorial High School	\$11,624	\$3,413
Bell County	Yellow Creek School Center	\$6,434	\$3,013
Breathitt County	Sebastian Middle School	\$21,328	\$2,791
Bullitt County	Bernheim Middle School	\$17,098	\$4,408
	Lebanon Junction Elementary School	\$11,207	\$2,536
Carroll County	Carroll County High School	\$21,835	\$3,855
Carter County	East Carter Middle School	\$17,430	\$5,106
	Olive Hill Elementary School	\$12,390	\$5,021
	West Carter Middle School	\$17,211	\$4,646
Christian County	Crofton Elementary School	\$6,008	\$2,119
Covington Independent	John G. Carlisle Elementary School	\$6,183	\$2,485
Cumberland County	Cumberland County High School	\$6,134	\$2,383
Fayette County	Crawford Middle School	\$18,503	\$7,361
	Johnson Elementary School	\$5,830	\$1,745
Floyd County	Allen Central High School	\$11,434	\$3,013
	Betsy Layne Elementary School	\$12,677	\$5,625
	South Floyd High School	\$11,401	\$2,944
	Prestonsburg High School	\$22,272	\$4,774
Franklin County	Elkhorn Middle School	\$17,831	\$5,948
Fulton County	Fulton County High School	\$15,907	\$1,906
Grayson County	Grayson County Middle School	\$23,848	\$8,085
Green County	Green County High School	\$16,989	\$4,178
Hardin County	Radcliff Middle School	\$17,037	\$4,281
Harlan County	Evarts High School	\$6,442	\$3,030
	Hall Elementary School	\$6,652	\$3,472
Jefferson County	Western High School	\$12,673	\$5,617
	Stuart Middle School	\$24,921	\$10,340
Knott County	Knott County Central High School	\$17,365	\$4,970
Knox County	Flat Lick Elementary School	\$5,806	\$1,693
	Knox Central High School	\$18,139	\$6,595
Lawrence County	Louisa Middle School	\$22,037	\$4,281
Leslie County	Big Creek Elementary School	\$5,332	\$698
	Leslie County Middle School	\$16,328	\$2,791
Livingston County	Livingston County Middle School	\$16,008	\$2,119
Martin County	Inez Middle School	\$11,397	\$2,936
Pendleton County	Pendleton County High School	\$18,357	\$7,055
Scott County	Georgetown Middle School	\$17,228	\$4,681
Todd County	South Todd Elementary School	\$6,592	\$3,344
Trimble County	Trimble County Middle School	\$11,511	\$3,174
Union County	Union County Middle School	\$22,017	\$4,238
Washington County	Washington County Middle School	\$5,842	\$1,770
Whitley County	Whitley County Middle School	\$17,742	\$5,761
Total		\$591,000	\$170,200

Source for all tables: Staff analysis of data provided by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Appendix D

Statistical Analysis

The regression models used in this report included several independent variables to help explain the dependent variable, which is the change in a school's accountability index score. The independent variables listed here are grouped by category. Unless indicated otherwise, the value used for each variable is for the year analyzed. A value for a "prior year" variable is for the immediately preceding year. For example, the regression model for 2005 takes into account whether the school had an HSE in 2005 and the school's index score in 2004.

Type of School Assistance

1. Highly skilled educator (HSE)
2. Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grant (CSIF)
3. Scholastic audit or review
4. Combinations of school assistance (HSE, CSIF, scholastic audit or review)

Characteristics of Schools

5. Prior year index score
6. Total enrollment
7. Percent of students retained
8. New principal (current year)
9. New principal (prior year)
10. Student:Teacher ratio
11. Declining accountability index score in prior year

Characteristics of Students

12. Percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch
13. Percent of migrant students
14. Percent of African American students
15. Percent of Asian students
16. Percent of Hispanic students

Characteristics of Teachers

17. Percent of teachers with a master's degree
18. Percent of teachers teaching at trained grade level

Characteristics of Parents

19. Percent of parents attending at least one parent-teacher conference
20. Hours volunteered per student enrolled

Statistical Results of Regression Analysis

Variables by Category	2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Estimate	t-statistic	Estimate	t-statistic	Estimate	t-statistic	Estimate	t-statistic
Types of Assistance								
HSE only	0.51	0.47	-1.35	-1.34	1.07	0.82	-1.47	-1.10
CSIF only	1.73	1.23	1.84	2.27	1.48	1.79	1.27	1.84
Audit only	-0.11	-0.19	0.20	0.20	-0.38	-0.44	1.90	1.31
HSE & CSIF	6.48	1.64	0.94	1.52	1.10	0.76	1.94	2.37
HSE & Audit	-0.67	-0.29	n/a	n/a	2.71	0.60	0.79	0.17
CSIF & Audit	2.22	3.14	n/a	n/a	2.23	2.40	-1.44	-0.32
HSE, CSIF, & Audit	3.48	4.82	n/a	n/a	2.04	2.64	n/a	n/a
Characteristics of Schools								
Prior Year's Index Score	-0.11	-6.53	-0.06	-3.33	-0.12	2.40	-0.04	-2.54
Total Enrollment	0.00	-0.42	0.00	-0.79	0.00	0.22	*	*
New principal (current year)	0.60	0.18	-0.44	-1.17	0.08	0.19	-0.59	-1.63
New principal (prior year)	-0.52	-1.62	0.02	0.07	0.62	1.73	0.73	1.52
Student: teacher ratio	-0.14	-2.55	-0.14	-2.14	0.02	0.35	*	*
Declining school index score	0.75	2.82	1.60	5.15	1.31	3.36	2.19	7.71
Characteristics of Students								
% eligible for free/reduced-price lunch	-0.01	-1.31	0.01	1.47	-0.02	-1.80	0.02	2.13
% retained	-0.28	-5.57	-0.14	-2.66	-0.00	-0.07	*	*
% migrant	-0.07	-0.92	-0.08	-1.09	-0.19	-2.31	*	*
% African American	-0.03	-2.96	-0.02	-2.05	-0.02	-2.17	*	*
% Hispanic	-0.09	-1.46	0.02	0.31	-0.04	-0.96	*	*
% Asian	0.26	2.58	0.04	0.38	0.01	0.08	*	*
Characteristics of Teachers								
% with master's	0.01	0.54	0.01	0.97	0.04	3.26	*	*
% teaching at trained grade level	0.09	1.59	-0.08	-1.19	-0.06	-1.16	*	*
Characteristics of Parents								
% attending at least one parent-teacher conference	0.01	1.40	0.03	4.39	0.01	0.94	*	*
Hours volunteered per enrolled student	0.01	0.55	-0.00	-0.19	0.02	0.68	*	*
Adjusted R ²	0.13		0.09		0.12		0.08	
F Value	8.14		6.11		7.21		9.92	
Pr > F	<0.0001		<0.0001		<0.0001		<0.0001	
Number of schools	1096		1099		1093		1127	

Statistics in bold are significant at the 0.05 level.

*Data will not be released until 2007.

Source: Staff analysis.

Appendix E

Response From the Kentucky Department of Education

Note: This response is to an earlier draft of this report and some revisions were made to the final report as appropriate. The revisions are explained below in italics.

Program Review and Investigations Study
Highly Skilled Educators
October 12, 2006

The department has the following responses to the LRC recommendations.

Recommendation 2.1

Under the authority established in KRS 158.6455 (4) to promulgate administrative regulations, the Kentucky Department of Education should clearly define “threshold” as it is used in this statutory section. This would clarify the type of schools to which a highly skilled educator may be assigned.

The department will define “threshold” by administrative regulation. The number of schools in each assistance level and the number of HSEs at the beginning of each biennium determine how many schools will receive the invitation or how many requests for services can be honored. A school’s status does not change until the end of the biennium. HSEs are assigned to schools in the following priority based on availability:

1. All level 3 schools are assigned an HSE at the beginning of each biennium.
2. All level 2 schools are offered the assistance of an HSE.
3. All level 1 schools are offered the assistance of an HSE.
4. Local school superintendents may request the assistance of an HSE for a school or schools that are struggling. KDE staff evaluates the needs of each school to determine if the school will receive assistance from an HSE.

The number of HSEs is not sufficient to provide one HSE per school for every school represented in the above list. Level 3 schools are assigned a full-time HSE. Level 1, 2 and request schools may have a full-time HSE, or they may receive part-time assistance from an HSE assigned to serve more than one school.

Recommendation 2.2

The Kentucky Department of Education should work with the General Assembly to establish definitive policies that specify the amount of HSE compensation and the process for determining such compensation. This could be accomplished through changes in statute or regulation or through budget language.

The department has followed policy based on previous General Assembly and Kentucky Board of Education direction, but will recommend an administrative regulation to the Kentucky Board of Education.

Recommendation 2.3

The Board of Education should provide, as directed by KRS 158.782 (1), “guidelines for providing highly skilled education assistance to schools and school districts.”

See response to 2.1.

A clarification should be made about the report’s description of HSE selection and hiring. On page 21, the report states “KDE hires with some degree of uncertainty concerning where and if they will be assigned” and “some hired as HSEs are not immediately assigned to work at a school because of a mismatch between HSE skills and preferences and the needs of a school.”

These statements are not correct and are based on a misunderstanding of the “HSE Pool.” The HSE Pool is a listing of HSE applicants who successfully completed the selection process, but have not been hired as HSEs. If HSEs who have not completed a third year in the program choose to leave the program early, and the decision is made after new HSEs have been named in April and prior to July 1, they are replaced by an applicant whose name is in the HSE Pool. When the applicant is offered the opportunity to accept the vacant position, he or she will then be hired as an HSE. Those whose names remain in the pool after July 1 are not selected as HSEs; therefore, they are not hired as HSEs. They may remain in the pool until the following year if they choose to do so. At that time, they will compete with the new applicants for assignments as HSEs without having to complete the steps of the selection process the second time. The score earned during the first selection process will be used as they compete with new applicants to become HSEs.

Therefore, all HSEs are immediately assigned to a school or schools. They are selected to fill the positions left vacant when HSEs exit the program each year. Consequently, there is no mismatch between HSE skills and needs of a school. Additionally, as a result of this misunderstanding, graph 2.F is not a true representation

[Comment by Program Review staff: Figure 2.F and the section on assignment that begins on page 18 have been revised.]

Recommendation 2.4

Because HSEs appear to have an inconsistent understanding of how long they may serve, the Kentucky Department of Education should provide detailed descriptions and/or training to highly skilled educators to clarify the current practice of limiting service to three years.

KDE will continue to work on clarifying this understanding, but the HSEs are clearly informed about their employment status in at least three ways. Immediately following the invitation to HSE applicants to accept a position in the program and prior to their final acceptance and signing of the MOA, the HSE Branch Manager holds regional meetings across the state with those who may become HSEs. The details of the MOA are discussed thoroughly at these meetings, with special emphasis on the length of the MOA and their status in their home district when they return to the district.

The following paragraph is on the HSE application Web page:

Who will be my employer?

HSEs continue to receive their salary, with no loss of benefits, through their home school districts. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) signs a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the HSEs' home districts on an annual basis. MOAs are renewable for a second year and may be renewable for a third. Current law requires HSEs be guaranteed a position with their employing district upon leaving the program.

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/School+Improvement/Assistance+to+Schools/Highly+Skilled+Educators/Application.htm>

Additionally, all new HSEs are required to sign the following document during HSE orientation training. The last statement of the document addresses how long HSEs may serve in the program.

I understand that as an HSE ...

...I will be working under a one-year contract renewable for a possible 2nd year, and then for a possible 3rd year. This contract may not be renewed without cause.

Signed _____ Date _____

Recommendation 2.5

The Kentucky Department of Education should establish a formal process for school administrators, faculty, parents, and others to comment about the performance of HSEs currently assigned to schools.

KDE agrees with this recommendation. We have begun the discussion of how best to collect this data in a meaningful way from the staff, parents, students and others in schools where HSEs are assigned. We hope to establish a Web-based site where comments can be easily recorded. This will provide valuable information as we continue to refine our work to best meet the needs of the students in assistance schools.

Recommendation 2.6

The Kentucky Department of Education should provide more on-site HSE reviews and maintain and regularly update a database that includes HSE school assignments, the amount of time HSEs work at each school, HSE compensation, and HSE home school district information.

Mentoring visits with HSEs continue to be a priority with HSE Branch staff. All HSEs received mentoring visits from KDE staff during the 2005–2006 school year. Staffing does not allow for ongoing site visits with HSEs, so the primary focus is on supporting new HSEs. Another full-time staff person would be needed to provide additional on-site reviews.

Other support is provided. Each HSE is assigned to a regional team of HSEs. The team is lead by an experienced HSE. The team leads meet with the team members monthly. Information on the progress of every HSE and their assigned school/s is discussed and shared during the meetings and then shared with office staff by the team lead. In addition, the majority of HSEs meet one hour weekly in the evening in an online environment with department staff. Finally, all HSEs meet in Frankfort every four to six weeks for two days of mentoring, training and progress reports.

Each month HSEs submit their detailed travel reports that include every work day for the month, the time HSEs leave home each day, the time they return home, the location where they worked that day and the types of activities in which they were involved. In addition, the Outlook calendar gives a more detailed description of the day's work. It is always available for viewing electronically and hard copies are attached to the travel reports each month.

The department has made the task of improving the database system a priority during the past year. We are now in the process of entering data in the new system. The new database will ensure that an accurate history of the program is maintained as office personnel changes occur.

[Comment by Program Review staff: The Evaluation and Administration section of Chapter 2 was updated based on information provided by KDE staff after the initial draft of the report.]

Recommendation 3.1

The Kentucky Department of Education should compile and produce annual school-level reports of Commonwealth School Improvement Fund expenditures. The department should ensure that school districts comply with all financial reporting requirements.

KDE has complete records for all districts for FY 2003- FY2004. Records for FY 2001 and FY 2002 were reconstructed due to improper record archival with a change in staff,

but information is available for most districts these years. The department will continue to improve its efforts to report and archive data.

Recommendation 3.2

The Kentucky Board of Education and the Kentucky Department of Education should review and report on the statutory or regulatory authority to provide Commonwealth School Improvement Funds to schools not classified by their accountability scores as In Need of Assistance.

The department has this authority currently under the following budget bill language:

Commonwealth School Improvement Fund: Notwithstanding KRS 158.805, the Commissioner of Education shall be authorized to use the Commonwealth School Improvement Fund to provide support services to schools needing assistance under KRS 158.6455 or in order to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. (2006 HB 380, p. 58)

[Comment by Program Review staff: This recommendation does not appear in the final version of the report. Due to renumbering, the response below to Recommendation 3.3 applies to Recommendation 3.2 in the final report.]

Recommendation 3.3

The Kentucky Board of Education and Kentucky Department of Education should develop and use a formal process, preferably through administrative regulation, that identifies and ranks which schools are eligible for targeted assistance Commonwealth School Improvement Fund grants.

The KDE has developed a formal process for identifying and ranking schools for targeted assistance. Eligibility requirements for targeted assistance include:

- ◆ progressing, but have declining scores
- ◆ scores still in the 50 – 60 range
- ◆ not meeting novice reduction goal
- ◆ not meeting dropout reduction goal
- ◆ high poverty rates
- ◆ lacking adequate yearly progress (AYP) in multiple areas (as outlined by No Child Left Behind [NCLB] requirements)
- ◆ having achievement gaps across subpopulations.

Because of the limited amount of funds available and the other services provided to Jefferson County and Fayette County, these districts have been asked to select two schools among their eligible schools for these services.

KDE Table 3.5 on page 37 should be reviewed for accuracy. The schools that did not receive assistance may have failed to meet other criteria, such as failure to meet AYP; not meeting novice reduction goal; poverty rate; not meeting dropout reduction goal; not identified by Jefferson and Fayette Counties' central offices; or were already receiving the services of an HSE. KDE did not realize that LRC staff needed more detailed information about this process. There may also be some confusion between the formula used to distribute funds and the eligibility criteria. The spreadsheet will be provided to LRC staff.

[Comment by Program Review staff: Based on the information above, Table 3.5 now includes more factors.]

Additional Comments

We would like to work with LRC staff on the data in several tables to assure accuracy. Table 2.4, relating to the percentage of schools with an HSE for the first time, does not match our numbers and may be the inverse. For example, in 2004-2005 60 schools were assigned an HSE with 29 receiving assistance for a second time. Two of the schools received two years of requested assistance, but the assistance began in the middle of a biennium so they appear to be repeat schools. Also, this group includes KSB and KSD, which have continued to receive services. Finally, the level of HSE services may not be the same in repeat schools.

On Table 4.2, the data could be misleading in that these interventions are provided usually over a biennium. An HSE will typically start working with the new school in November of the first year of the accountability cycle after the September score release and also will be away from the school periodically during this time serving on audit teams. To expect dramatic gains in four months is unrealistic.

These categories may not be as discrete as it might appear, and there may be other variables at play. As the report points out, schools that received only an HSE are typically in the "Progressing" category and may not have the same sense of urgency as schools in the "Assistance" category, and the HSE would typically be assigned to multiple schools. The majority of schools receiving only CSIF were targeted assistance schools, and these schools also received mentoring and coaching on a part-time basis, although not from an HSE. These schools also received a scholastic review. Finally, schools receiving these interventions were identified as struggling, so the fact that they kept pace with the state average could be interpreted as a sign of progress.