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**For Immediate Release**

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**Prichard Committee focuses on bold actions for education improvement**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Effective school leadership, quality teaching and globally competitive standards for students, teachers and principals have emerged as the principle areas of improvement that the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence will ask the governor to emphasize in his review of Kentucky’s education system.

Meeting recently in Louisville (on June 19, 2009), members of the citizens’ advocacy organization agreed that it is time for bold action to improve student achievement in Kentucky. The review that Governor Steve Beshear has said his administration plans to conduct is considered a strong opportunity for such bold action.

After a day of discussion and priority setting, the members identified the following top themes, or areas of focus, emphasizing that “advocacy must lead to action:”

- Quality teaching in every classroom
- Principal leadership in schools
- Ongoing education for teachers, principals and superintendents
- An expansion of early childhood education
- Engaging parents and communities in school improvement
- Raising expectations and changing school and community culture to reflect the changing world, and using technology as a tool in that work

The day-long committee meeting featured a presentation by Sir Michael Barber, head of McKinsey & Company’s Global Education Practice and executive director of the Education Delivery Institute in Washington, D.C. Barber also is a former top advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Barber said he had first heard of the committee in the 1990s when he was working with Blair to restructure Great Britain's education system, describing the Kentucky group as a "globally unique" committee engaging citizens in making change.

Such work is even more critical as the pace of change accelerates around the globe, with population growth and technological advancements creating new challenges, he said. "We are preparing students, not for a world we know, but for a world we don't know," he said. Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need knowledge and skills, but also the ability to think, resilience and higher aspirations.

Research by McKinsey & Company has found that big spending increases and smaller student-teacher ratios have not improved student performance in nations around the world, he said. Rather, "consistent quality of teaching is by far the most important factor driving performance, and it is missing in most systems."

Barber offered the committee four lessons on the importance of improving teaching and leadership quality in schools:

1. The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. The nation's great education systems attract great people into teaching. In Korea, it's the top 5 percent of graduates, in Finland the top 10 percent.
2. The only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction. Top-performing teachers take professional development into the classroom and make it a routine part of their work, and "this is really, really important," Barber noted.
3. High performance requires every child to succeed. Inspections and examinations enable schools to continuously track their performance and improve.
4. Great leadership at the school level is a key enabling factor. Top-performing countries recruit and train excellent school leaders, using courses taken from leading executive training programs, placements with major corporations, rigorous evaluations and other strategies.

Finally, Barber outlined the building blocks of a world-class education system, organized under three categories.

Standards and Accountability:

- Globally-benchmarked standards
- Good, transparent data
- Every child is always on the agenda to challenge inequality

Human Capital:

- Recruit great people and train them well
- Continuous improvement of pedagogical skills and knowledge
- Great leadership at the school level

Structure and Organization:

- Effective, enabling central department and agencies
- Capacity to manage change and engage communities at every level
- Operational responsibility and budgets significantly devolved to school level

A report from the meeting will be sent to Governor Beshear and officials of his administration.

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