2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Building a Path to a Larger Life for all Kentuckians through Excellent Education
Prichard Committee Vision & Mission

"Building a Path to a Larger Life for all Kentuckians through Excellent Education"

Since 1983, the Prichard Committee has worked to study priority issues, inform the public and policy makers about best practices, and engage citizens, business leaders, families, students, and other stakeholders in a shared mission to move Kentucky to the top tier of all states for education excellence and equity for all children, from their earliest years through postsecondary education.

Thanks to the efforts of the Committee and dedicated citizens, Kentucky has moved from the bottom of the national rankings in education to the middle and above. Our ambitious goal is to move to the top tier of all states within this generation.

To accomplish this goal, the Committee focuses on three overarching priorities:

1. **A STRONG ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**
   We demand excellence through meaningful standards and robust accountability about quality and student progress from early childhood through postsecondary education. High expectations and transparency are critical components for Kentucky’s educational success.

2. **ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE FUNDING**
   We advocate for efficient use of resources and equitable funding that is adequate to assure excellence in education from early childhood through postsecondary.

3. **SUSTAINED & EXPANDED ENGAGEMENT**
   We work to engage Kentucky citizens on education issues, with the understanding that informed and empowered students, parents, communities, and business leaders will demand continued education progress across the Commonwealth.
A LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last year, we spent considerable time developing a strategic plan for the Prichard Committee’s next three years. It was obvious Kentucky was at a pivotal time in our reform trajectory and it was time to ask our members and fellow citizen advocates for better education about our next steps.

The Committee has been in existence now for 35 years. In the 1980s, the Committee’s work consisted of raising awareness of Kentucky’s poor outcomes in education – ranking at or near the bottom nationally in all indicators – and advocating for major reforms to increase student progress. The second phase of the Committee’s work, in the 1990s and beyond, was supporting the implementation of the ground-breaking Kentucky Education Reform Act. As a result, Kentucky climbed from the bottom of the national rankings to closer to the middle. However, in more recent years we’ve hit a plateau in our progress and, based on the most recent NAEP scores, we’ve started to decline.

Member sentiment across the state was clear: the Committee needs to help build and renew local capacity to support high expectations for every student and to make high-quality public education, once again, the number one priority in Kentucky.

You can read more about the 3-year strategic plan, developed under the leadership of former Committee Chair, Franklin Jelsma of Louisville, later in this report.

In the coming months you’ll begin to see established and emerging ways for citizens to engage in the work to improve and support education in Kentucky – from early childhood through post-secondary. From our Strong Start KY early childhood coalition, to a growing education equity coalition, to a reimagined Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, and to dedicated Prichard Committee membership – we hope to draw you and other leaders into the most important and longstanding campaign in Kentucky’s history – the campaign for better schools.

William H. Wilson, Chair

Brigitte Blom Ramsey, Executive Director
The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence has named Julia (Julie) Pile the inaugural recipient of the Beverly Nickell Raimondo Leadership Award.

The award, established in 2017 by the Committee and Raimondo’s family to honor her vision for excellent education and its impact on students, was announced at the Committee’s annual meeting in Lexington.

Ms. Pile, a resident of Florence, Kentucky, was nominated by Boone County School Superintendent, Dr. Randy Poe, and Northern Kentucky community leader, Helen Carroll, for her work leading parent engagement activities for the school district.

“My daughters and I can think of no more fitting way to honor Bev’s memory and legacy than to recognize parent achievement with this award,” said Tony Raimondo, Bev’s husband. “In addition, we hope the award will help to motivate other parents to carry the torch of parent involvement and achievement in the Commonwealth for many years to come.”

Generous Support for the Beverly Nickell Raimondo Leadership Award came from:

Lois Adams-Rodgers & Jack Rodgers; Jane Bellomy; John & Maritta Cronin; Will & Christa Cronin; Judy Dukas; Wayne S. Duncan; Richard & Sharon Foley; Jane Graham; Donna A. Hall; Anne & Basil Henderson; Jeffery & Linda Hinchcliffe; Charles & Fannie Louise Maddux; Greg & Laurel Martin; M. Hayes Mizell; Anthony Raimondo; Maria Rigsby; David Schwentker; Robert Schwentker; Nancy Thoma; Jerrel & Carol Von Dielingen; Peter J Wagman, CPA, P.C.; William & Ann Wheeler
In November, the Prichard Committee adopted a strategic plan to guide the organization’s priorities and work through 2020. The plan grew from a process that spanned nearly all of 2017 — a series of regional meetings with Prichard Committee members across the state and follow-up discussions facilitated by the consulting firm DeliverEd.

The resulting plan charges the Prichard Committee with expanding the ranks of grassroots champions for education across the state, improving the connection between early childhood programs and success in reading and math skills by third grade, boosting the number of students who finish high school prepared for college and careers, increasing postsecondary attainment, and reaffirming education as the top priority for the Commonwealth.

Brigitte Blom Ramsey, the Committee’s executive director, said that the six-month process “represents an important milestone in the now over three-decades-long life of the Committee.” Nick Rodriguez, a founder of DeliverEd, based in Washington, D.C., said that the plan will ensure “the needle is moving for students and families” by telling the story of education’s impact in Kentucky and building grassroots capacity.

The plan sets two key objectives: that Kentucky achieves top-tier status in national rankings of education success by closing achievement gaps and ensuring every student achieves proficiency and beyond; and that citizens across the state commit to a world-class education for every public school student as the top priority at the local and state level. To carry out these objectives, the plan defines five goals and nine strategies to help achieve those goals.

Franklin Jelsma, a Louisville lawyer and Prichard Committee member who served as the group’s chairman during the development of the plan, said that the process is a reminder that the group draws strength from involved citizens across Kentucky. “Our members and our communities care deeply about improving education,” he said. “It was inspirational for the board members and staff to experience this level of commitment and passion throughout the Commonwealth.”

Jelsma said that the plan should ensure that the group remains a vital presence in Kentucky. “The Prichard Committee has stood the test of time by remaining vigilant and never failing to demand excellence. We have earned our position as the Commonwealth’s trusted adviser on education issues,” he said. “If Kentuckians insist that our top priority be providing a world-class education to all students, our elected representatives will listen, and our system will change.”

“Improving education remains the only viable solution for increasing opportunity in Kentucky,” he added.
The goal of delivering quality early care and education became clearer in 2017 after a Prichard Committee advisory group working with national experts developed new cost models that allow budgeting that can deliver stronger outcomes for young children.

“Building Blocks: The Kentucky Early Childhood Cost of Quality Study,” published in November, was driven by the need to increase quality learning interactions between teachers and students and also support specialized needs of children and families.

Looking at the Kentucky Preschool Program, the study used research-based quality standards and input from seven Kentucky school districts. The state’s preschool program serves about 10,000 three- and four-year-olds with special needs and more than 9,000 four-year-olds whose families meet income guidelines. For 2017-18, Kentucky funded school districts at a per-child rate of $7,810 for children with severe or multiple disabilities and $4,100 for other eligible children. To fund the preschool at a minimum level of quality, the study concludes that those figures should be increased by nearly 13 percent and 21 percent, respectively. The report also defined and provided costs for “intermediate” and “target” quality levels.

Under the Child Care Assistance Program, a similar process with site visits in six communities called for significantly increasing reimbursement levels for programs, which combines federal and state funds to reach about 27,000 Kentucky infants, toddlers and young children. For centers to reach even the lowest level of quality, the study found that infant and one-year-old reimbursement rates should be raised from $19-25 per day to at least $31 per day. The study defined standards and associated costs over five quality levels.

Kristie Dover, director of the Easter Seals Child Development Center in Paducah, said that costs and quality are obviously linked. The nonprofit center has invested heavily in boosting quality, currently holding a 4-STAR rating on the state’s five-point scale. A better prepared staff, lower class sizes, competitive wages and benefits, screenings and systems for monitoring children’s development all come with costs that far exceed state and federal funding. “Our at risk children are not able to attend high quality childcare centers because of this high cost, even after receiving the max funding from government,” Dover said.

The cost study and other early childhood advocacy by the Prichard Committee raise awareness and spur wider involvement to make adequate funding and increased availability a more urgent priority, Dover said. “The Prichard Committee’s efforts help providers to get the word out about the need to provide a strong foundation for children starting at birth. They have been a huge asset to early childhood advocates like myself by collecting data and looking at the needs to increase funding for our youngest children and helping build a strong workforce for Kentucky’s future.”

Generous Support from: The Alliance for Early Childhood, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, and the United Way of Greater Cincinnati
After being closely involved while Kentucky moved toward a rewrite of its school accountability system, the Prichard Committee joined several other groups in July to more forcefully push for the State Board of Education to set ambitious goals for greater progress and focus more intentionally on closing achievement gaps. In making that call, the Prichard Committee joined with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky State Conference of NAACP Branches, the Louisville Urban League, and Teach for America-Appalachia.

The alliance encouraged the State Board of Education to increase clarity and create more ambitious goals after reviewing its June draft for a system that would define expectations for student proficiency, student growth, transition into postsecondary education and closing achievement gaps.

In August, the State Board unanimously approved a new system that the alliance groups said responded to their concerns. The Board “took a positive step by approving an increased level of ambition in new long-term goals and interim benchmarks, especially for students who have traditionally had less opportunity to excel — children of color, those whose families have less income, English language learners and students who are challenged by learning differences,” the partner groups said in a news release after the vote. The Kentucky overhaul moved to the U.S. Department of Education for a review of its compliance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

Sherron Jackson, chair of the education committee of the Kentucky State Conference of NAACP Branches, said that the approach to closing achievement gaps had not been as aggressive as it could have been and lacked timeframes for progress. “The goals approved by the State Board,” he said, “are a step forward that should, over time, boost postsecondary participation and increase education attainment in the state.”

Jackson said that the Prichard Committee served as a conduit for his organization to get involved and up-to-speed on the education accountability issue. “The Prichard Committee is considered the go-to organization when major conversations occur around P-12 policy. The organization has built a reputation — well deserved — for engaging in relevant and reliable research on topics related to P-12 education policy.”

“The Prichard Committee’s participation and guidance was and is critical to the identification of solutions and policy that will enhance educational opportunity on a broad, statewide basis,” added Jackson. “Its presence also provided the leadership that helped to focus the energies of the organizations toward a common goal.”
In 2017, we focused on reinventing our family and parent engagement strategies and revamped our 20-year old Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. We went from a six-day training spread out over three months to a one-day intensive, Basecamp. With funding directed at making our biggest impact in Northern Kentucky, we held three Basecamps in the Fall of 2017. Over forty participants attended Basecamps this year.

We also created a statewide parent leadership award, the Beverly Nickell Raimondo Leadership Award. Our first award winner was recognized at our annual meeting in October of 2017.

Efforts in 2017 to lay the foundation for a leadership track of education champions in Kentucky led to the Kentucky Parent Leadership Summit. A statewide parent leadership conference with the objective to build a network of parent leaders actively working to improve education.

In 2017, the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team (SVT) celebrated its five-year anniversary and continued to prototype ways to support young people as education research, policy, and advocacy partners in the efforts to improve Kentucky schools.

With a membership of 115 middle school through college-age students from 19 Kentucky counties driving activities, highlights of the year included:

- Publishing Ready or Not, Stories from Students Behind the Statistics;
- Scaling student-led school climate audits to include three high schools representing the geographic diversity of the state;
- Expanding an independent education blog, The Student Voice Forum, to amplify more stories about education from traditionally marginalized youth;
- Delivering 21 local and 9 national presentations about SVT’s model for integrating students in education decision making to adult and intergenerational audiences.

In 2017, The Strong Start Kentucky Coalition continued to unite Kentucky’s early childhood advocates through shared goals to strengthen early care and education for Kentucky children from birth through third grade. The Prichard Committee serves as convener to the coalition, which meets quarterly and adopts annual policy priorities. We currently have 73 organizations, 13 school districts, 11 college and universities, and 15 individuals.

A policy committee was established within Strong Start to set the coalition’s priorities for the 2018 legislative budget session, including the recommended funding levels for preschool and child care assistance given the results of the Prichard Committee’s Early Childhood Cost of Quality Study.

The Prichard Committee published a 4-page special report, Grants Grow Quality, in June of 2017 sharing what has been learned from new collaborations among public preschools, child care centers, and Head Start locations.

The Kentucky Early Childhood Cost of Quality Study substantially impacted our early learning and care advocacy prior to and during the 2018 legislative session. The report, completed in the fall of 2017, provided a much needed resource regarding the actual funding necessary to have the most impact on Kentucky’s preschool and child care age populations. Additionally, the report provided policy makers a ready reference as to why quality matters in the early years.
A CELEBRATION OF RALPH & PAM MILLER

When Ralph and Pam Miller announced last year that they would be officially retiring and moving to Massachusetts, a group of friends came together, including Prichard Committee staff members, to organize a celebration to honor them. Hundreds attended the public sendoff at the downtown Arts Center in May when the city unveiled that this building would be renamed the Pam Miller Downtown Arts Center. Pam helped usher in historic education reforms in Kentucky as a founding member of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Students from middle school, high school, and college gathered with more than 150 educators, policymakers, and education advocates at the University of Kentucky’s Boone Center in August to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence’s Student Voice Team (SVT).

SVT is a nationally-prominent, student-led initiative of the Committee that aims to integrate students as full research, policy, and advocacy partners in the efforts to improve Kentucky schools.

In its five-year tenure, SVT has organized students around issues related to college affordability, school climate, academic standards, student representation in school governance, and other areas consistent with Prichard Committee priorities.

Generous Support for the Student Voice Team Anniversary came from:

IBM; The State Farm Youth Advisory Board; The Appalachian Higher Education Network; the Wells Scholars Program at Indiana University in Bloomington; and the Brennen Family.
First-hand accounts from scores of high school seniors and recent graduates offer an up-close look at college readiness issues in a book published in October by the Prichard Committee Student Voice Team.

“Ready or Not: Stories from Students Behind the Statistics,” compiles narratives from a year of student-led research and interviews with Kentucky students. The book groups its subjects based on their experiences navigating the postsecondary transition process — from “Oddsuckers” to “Dismissers” to “Moonlighters” and more.

The themes emerged from surveys and conversations, which expanded upon previous work by the Student Voice Team to identify barriers to successful transitions from high school to college. After publication, members of the Student Voice Team presented to groups in Kentucky and nationally, ranging from the Rural Education Association conference in Ohio to the Education Writers Association in Washington, D.C. with additional presentations lined up throughout the summer.

Lily Gardner, 14, a freshman at Henry Clay High School in Lexington, said that the emphasis on individual stories added a new dimension to discussions about how to increase postsecondary enrollment, retention and completion rates. “Students, teachers, and counselors are usually the only ones who know these stories about how people are falling through the cracks and the individual issues behind the statistics,” she said.

“The Prichard Committee is at the forefront of education policy. It’s been great to be connected with an organization like this to foster the growth of student voice in education,” Gardner said. “It’s been the advocacy group to go to for research and where community organizers can get reliable information. It is a place where people connect with education issues, which now means students, too.” The Student Voice Team is made up of 130 self-selected students from 6th grade through college — ages 12 to 21 — from 17 Kentucky counties.

Gardner, who spent her elementary school years in Eastern Kentucky before her family moved to Lexington, said that the Student Voice Team is becoming more widely known as a group where students can learn about education policy issues and share their perspectives to improve outcomes. “I’ve always been interested in finding ways to empower myself and other students,” she said. “Amplifying the voices of marginalized students and sharing information is important. This has been a way to learn more about communities all over Kentucky and to get knowledge and tools to help others.”
2017 Financials are based on unaudited numbers as of December 31, 2017.

View our most recent audited financials at prichardcommittee.org/financial reports

**FINANCIALS**

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**2017 Donations**
- National Foundations: 60%
- KY Foundations & Corporations: 32%
- Individual Donations: 4%
- Member & Staff Donations: 4%

Total Donations: $1,458,966

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**2017 Expenses**
- Salaries: 33%
- Benefits & Payroll Taxes: 5%
- Consultants: 19%
- Office Expenses: 7%
- Meeting Expenses: 7%
- Printing, Copying & Postage: 2%
- Travel: 2%
- Special Projects: 5%

Total Expenses: $1,525,328

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*2017 Financials are based on unaudited numbers as of December 31, 2017.*

View our most recent audited financials at prichardcommittee.org/financial reports
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The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence Offers Sincere Gratitude to Our 2017 Donors

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