

## Back on Track - Presenter Notes

### Slide 1: Back on Track

Welcome, and thank you for giving us time to talk about SEEK funding — the state's main formula for funding schools. Today we'll walk through what SEEK is, why it matters, and what it means specifically for schools across Kentucky.

Before we begin, it's important to clarify something up front: The SEEK formula isn't broken. It functions as intended — to fairly divide available funding across districts. The real issue isn't the formula itself — it's that there simply isn't enough money going into it. That distinction is key to understanding what the data shows and what needs to change moving forward.

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### Slide 2: What Is SEEK?

SEEK stands for **Support Education Excellence in Kentucky**. It's the main way the state helps fund our public schools. SEEK includes a **base amount for every student**, plus **additional funding** for students with greater needs — like special education, low-income families, or English learners. It also includes transportation funding.

In short, SEEK is the **engine that powers Kentucky's public education system**.

Again, it's important to note: the SEEK formula itself is not the problem. It does exactly what it's supposed to — distribute funds fairly. The issue is **there hasn't been enough money going into the formula**.

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### Slide 3: How SEEK Works

Kentucky schools rely on two main sources of funding: local property taxes and SEEK. The state expects local taxes to cover about **30%**, and SEEK is supposed to make up the remaining **70%**.

Think of your school's budget like a race car fuel tank — local funding gets us part of the way, but **SEEK is supposed to top off the tank**. When the state underfunds its share, the tank stays empty — and that affects how far we can go.

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#### Slide 4: Why SEEK Is Falling Behind

This is where the challenge begins. Since 2008, SEEK funding has not kept pace with inflation. The cost of educating students has risen — but the dollars haven't.

- Transportation funding remains underfunded
- Support for students with added needs hasn't increased proportionally
- Local communities are paying more than ever — but still falling short

The SEEK formula isn't broken - we're just not putting enough fuel into the system.

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#### Slide 5: What's the Real Problem?

There's a common misconception that SEEK itself is flawed. In reality, the formula is doing its job — it divides available funds equitably. The problem is: there **just aren't enough funds to go around**.

Think of it like this: The formula is your car's fuel gauge. It helps you distribute what you have wisely. But if there's only **half a tank - or less** - it doesn't matter how well the car is tuned. You're not going to finish the race.

Changing the formula doesn't fix the issue. We need more funding in the tank to ensure every district has what it needs to cross the finish line.

Without **adequacy**, we can't achieve **equity** and Kentucky's most vulnerable students are impacted the most.

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#### Slide 6: Pit Stop Report

This snapshot shows the **statewide gap** between what schools are receiving and what they would need to operate with inflation-adjusted funding.

The current SEEK base guarantee is **\$4,326 per student**.  
But to match 2008 buying power, it would need to exceed **\$5,743**.  
Transportation is underfunded at **just 74% of actual costs**.

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### **Slide 7: What Full Funding Looks Like**

This visual compares **actual SEEK funding** to **adequate funding levels**. The shortfall isn't theoretical — it represents a very real loss in staffing, resources, and support services in schools across the state.

These gaps grow each year without action.

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### **Slide 8: Why It Matters**

When SEEK falls short, districts are forced to make difficult decisions:

- Larger class sizes
- Fewer support staff
- Reduced student services
- Deferred maintenance and outdated materials

Despite strong local contributions, **districts can't keep up alone**. Without adequate state investment, schools are being asked to do more with less — and it's not sustainable.

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### **Slide 9: Equity Gap in Kentucky**

In 2008, the SEEK per-student base was **\$3,822**.

To keep up with inflation, that number should be over **\$5,743** today but it's only **\$4,326**.

This is a funding regression, not progress, and it undermines Kentucky's commitment to equitable education.

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## Slide 10: The Law Is on Our Side

The Kentucky Constitution guarantees every child a **fair, adequate, and equitable education**.

This principle was reaffirmed in the **Rose v. Council for Better Education** case — which led to the creation of SEEK. But the formula can only do its job if it's properly funded.

SEEK is how the state keeps its promise — and **right now, that promise isn't being kept**.

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## Slide 11: Call to Action

We're not asking for more than what's fair — just for SEEK to do what it was **designed** to do:

- Fund the full **base amount**
- Support **student add-on needs**
- Reimburse **real transportation costs**
- **Adjust annually for inflation**

Every student deserves a **full tank** — and with adequate funding, we can help every Kentucky district get **Back on Track**.

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Visit [www.kycbe.org](http://www.kycbe.org) to view the statewide report and find your district's data.