Essential Workplace Ethics Report **(2025)**

Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION

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Executive Summary

*In accordance with KRS 158.1413 (Section 5), by **Sept. 1, 2019**, and every two years thereafter, the superintendent of each school district shall provide to the commissioner of education and the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board a report, in a format specified by the commissioner, describing the school district's essential workplace ethics programs and how they are implemented at each school. A summary report compiled by the commissioner that includes information from all local school district reports shall be provided to the Kentucky Board of Education, the Interim Joint Committee on Education, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board and each Kentucky superintendent and principal in order to foster program improvement and the sharing of best practices.*

The Essential Workplace Ethics Report highlights ongoing efforts by districts to integrate characteristics of workplace ethics as outlined in the above legislation. Adaptability, diligence and initiative are among a few of the characteristics being implemented into not only classroom instruction, but also school culture. Districts are required to establish local indicators in collaboration with local partners.

> ***"All of our community partners are vocal and valued in our process to implement workplace ethics in all schools."***
> Perry County Schools

This report outlines varying implementation approaches utilized by districts across grade bands and summarizes statewide patterns as to how Kentucky schools prepare students for post-secondary education and future careers through a commitment to equipping students with essential workplace ethics skills.

For the current reporting cycle, 138 Kentucky school districts submitted the required biennial Essential Workplace Ethics information to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). The collection of this data forms the basis on the statewide summary found in this report.

For consistency, this report is organized according to the major components outlined in KRS 158.1413. Structuring it in this way will allow for clarity and completion by providing a summary of responses related to the specific legislative requirement.

Collaboration with Local Partners

Per KRS 158.1413 (Section 2b and 3):
2(b) Each school district's local workforce investment board, in conjunction with local economic development organizations from its state regional sector, and other economic, workforce, or industry organizations the workforce investment board deems necessary, shall recommend to the school district best practices which may be used by schools to implement an essential workplace ethics program.
(3) By January 1, 2019, and every two (2) years thereafter, each local school board shall collaborate with the local workforce investment board, in conjunction with local economic development organizations from its state regional sector, and other economic, workforce, or industry organizations the workforce investment board deems necessary, to establish essential workplace ethics indicators for middle and high school students that are aligned with the essential workplace ethics characteristics listed in subsection (1) of this section.

Table 1: Count of district responses indicating which local partners they collaborated with by grade span.

Local Partners	Elementary	Middle	High
Advisory Groups	75	80	121
Business and Industry	45	111	126
Chamber of Commerce	75	84	106
Economic Development	34	47	80
Junior Achievement	29	27	21
Local Colleges/Universities	44	65	118
Other	11	11	13
Workforce Investment Board	12	13	44

The highest number of reported collaborations occurred with business and industry partners, particularly at the secondary level. This highlights the importance districts are placing on connecting middle and secondary students with real-world career paths with industry relevance. A high level of collaboration also took place with advisory groups and the Chamber of Commerce, which coincidentally are the most engaged partners at the elementary school level. A significant number of districts also reported partnering with Economic Development and local institutions of higher education. Overall, the data reveals a breadth of support demonstrated by the sheer number of diverse partner types contributing to a strong community support system that can be leveraged by districts. District leaders were given the opportunity to identify other significant partnerships outside of the ones listed in the survey and found in Table 1. A list of those influential partnerships can be found in Appendix A.

When asked how collaboration typically occurs with local partners, responses varied, however the most reported were in-person meetings followed by email. Only a few reporting districts (n=4)- Woodford County, Raceland-Worthington, Caverna and Covington Independent School Districts- reported having no collaboration. This data suggests that district leadership and local partners prefer direct communication however the number of responses for those utilizing surveys suggests that they were of supplementary

value and may have been an efficient way to collect broad data or feedback rather than a means for deep engagement (see Table 2).

Table 2: Count of district responses indicating the type of collaboration that took place.

Collaboration Type	Total Responses
Electronic Surveys	51
Email	87
In-Person Meetings	131
Phone/Conference Calls	69
Virtual Meetings	48

Program Characteristics

Per KRS 158.1413 (Section 1):

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, each school district shall implement essential workplace ethics programs that promote characteristics that are critical to success in the workplace. Each student in elementary, middle, and high school shall receive essential workplace ethics instruction that shall include but not be limited to: (a) Adaptability, including an openness to learning and problem solving, an ability to embrace new ways of doing things, and a capability for critical thinking; (b) Diligence, including seeing a task through to completion; (c) Initiative, including taking appropriate action when needed without waiting for direct instruction; (d) Knowledge, including exhibiting an understanding of work-related information, the ability to apply that understanding to a job, and effectively explain the concepts to colleagues in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and technology as required by the job; (e) Reliability, including showing up on time, wearing appropriate attire, self-control, motivation, and ethical behavior; (f) Remaining drug-free; and (g) Working well with others, including effective communication skills, respect for different points of view and diversity of coworkers, the ability to cooperate and collaborate, enthusiasm, and the ability to provide appropriate leadership to or support for colleagues.

Districts were asked how they measure students' understanding, skills and performance with various program characteristics deemed as critical to success in the workforce. These characteristics are identified in the legislation excerpt above and results summarized in the tables below. Districts were also allowed to share additional measures or resources. Appendix B provides a table of these "other" responses.

Adaptability – Districts were provided with a list of common measures aligned with being open to and embracing new ways of doing things and the ability to think critically. Each of the measures requires students to adapt by managing tasks and resources, working in a real-world setting and addressing unexpected challenges. Table 3 shows the frequencies in which these measures were utilized by districts across grade spans with Project-based learning being the most common measure used at all levels. As could be expected, work-based learning opportunities increase significantly from elementary to high

school given the relevance to career readiness at that level, directly preparing students for college and careers.

Table 3: District responses to being asked about how they measure *adaptability*.

Adaptability Responses	Elementary	Middle	High
Project-based Learning	126	129	129
Simulated workplace	32	63	85
Work-based learning	22	29	132
Young Entrepreneur	16	39	60
Other	22	19	25

Diligence – Districts were provided with a list of common measures addressing a students' ability to maintain effort over time despite challenges. Each of the measures emphasizes the importance of seeing a task through to completion. Table 4 reveals a progression towards valuing sustainable, multi-year efforts such as Career pathway and ILP completion over daily task completion or measures. Measures like homework and missing assignments policies remain significant indicators at all levels.

Table 4: District responses to being asked about how they measure *diligence*.

Diligence Responses	Elementary	Middle	High
Career Pathway Completion	5	24	133
Course Completion	75	108	130
Homework Policy	109	104	98
ILP Completion	40	130	126
Minimum GPA/No Failing Grades	38	49	77
Missing Assignments Policy	84	95	94
Other	12	11	9

Initiative – Districts were provided with a list of common measures addressing a students' ability to take on tasks independently and proactively. Common measures include allowing students to take ownership as well as providing choice. The measures provided require students to organize their time and begin tasks and proactively choose to initiate a commitment to a program or task and potentially seek out opportunities or leadership roles often on their own time. Athletic, club and after-school programs were the most frequently cited measures allowing students to show a willingness to self-select, commit personal time and demonstrate effort beyond academics. Table 5 provides a breakdown for each measure.

Table 5: District responses to being asked about how they measure *initiative*.

Initiative Responses	Elementary	Middle	High
After-school programs	128	123	114
Athletics	105	138	135
Clubs	118	136	134
"The Leader in Me" Program	21	11	15
Summative Projects	69	81	91
Volunteer Hours	39	73	117
Other	11	4	9

Knowledge – Districts were provided with a list of common measures relating to knowledge requiring technical proficiency and transferable communication skills. Common measures include allowing students to take ownership as well as providing choice. The measures allow students to move knowledge beyond traditional lessons into practical settings to ensure students have the ability to apply the understanding and skills to a job or career. Table 6 highlights project-based learning as a constant measure of knowledge application across all grand spans. Job shadowing and work-based learning are the most prevalent measures for high schools demonstrating an emphasis on applying knowledge to a professional context.

Table 6: District responses to being asked about how they measure *knowledge*.

Knowledge Responses	Elementary	Middle	High
Job shadowing	15	40	129
Partnerships with ATCs	7	31	122
Project-based learning	120	127	119
Technical Math/English/Science Courses	26	52	29
Work-based learning	10	17	133
Other	24	27	21

Reliability – Common measures were provided to districts focused on reliability combining both dependability as it relates to being physically prevalent and mental discipline such as self-control, ethical behavior and motivation. Common measures include allowing students to take ownership as well as providing choice. Essentially these measures emphasize the importance of being counted on to not only be present but to conduct oneself honestly and professionally. Results for these characteristics are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: District responses to being asked about how they measure *reliability*.

Reliability Responses	Elementary	Middle	High
Attendance Policy	139	140	137
Homework Policy	101	100	101
PBIS/Behavior Policies/Trauma Informed	138	134	126
Project-based learning	107	118	117
Unexcused Absence/Tardy Policy	132	52	133
Work-based learning	9	18	123
Other	9	6	10

Remaining Drug Free– Common measures were provided to districts focused on remaining drug-free. Most common were those relating to students' commitment to remaining drug free as evidenced by participation in athletic or co-curricular programs. Some initiatives such as health course instruction show an increase across grade levels. Others such as drug testing policies, Drug-Free Club of America participation, and work-based learning are more frequently used at the high school level than in earlier grades. Results for these characteristics are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: District responses to being asked about how they measure *remaining drug free.*

Remaining Drug Free	Elementary	Middle	High
Athletic Programming/Club/Co-Curricular	120	137	135
District drug testing policies	22	53	89
Drug Free Clubs of America	23	26	43
Drug-free pledge	80	98	104
Standards taught through health courses	93	123	133
Work-based learning	9	20	111
Other	13	10	16

Working Well With Others– Districts were provided with common measures reflecting the ability to work effectively with others. This includes a focus on communicating clearly, respecting the perspectives of others, leadership, professionalism, collaboration and supporting peers. Working with collaborative projects is the most common method across all grade levels while CTE student organizations and simulated workplace experiences are more prominent at the high school level. Results for these characteristics are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: District responses to being asked about how they measure *working well with others.*

Working Well with Others	Elementary	Middle	High
Collaborative projects	136	140	137
CTE Student Organizations	4	30	131
Group presentations	14	136	135
Simulated workplace	25	51	87
Student Senate	17	36	66
Workplace Ethics Course	7	20	67
Other	13	13	12

Instructional Programming Overview

Per KRS 158.1413 (Section 2a):
"A school district shall use the essential workplace ethics characteristics listed in subsection (1) of this section when creating a program or when choosing an existing program." KRS 158.1413 subsection (1) characteristics include adaptability, diligence, initiative, knowledge, reliability, remaining drug-free, and working well with others.

Districts were asked to report on the types of resources used to support essential workplace ethics instructional programs. Table 10 provides a breakdown of the results with most schools reporting the use of district- or school-designed and a smaller portion using off-the-shelf or combined programs. Few districts reported partnering with external organizations or reported that none of the options applied.

Table 10: District responses to being asked to provide information on the *instructional program(s)* used.

Instructional Programs	Elementary	Middle	High
District/school designed program	83	85	74
Purchased off-the-shelf program	27	38	37
Used a program developed by Local Chamber of Commerce/Workforce Investment Board	7	7	7
A combination of the previous options	43	45	45
None of the previous options	4	2	14

Districts were also given the opportunity to provide the names of off-the-shelf programs used as well as an overview of their programming. A complete list of off-the-shelf programs is provided in Appendix C.
As to descriptions related to the overall programming in districts, we can see they vary significantly across five broad categories, including:

- General academic and instructional strategies (what is taught and how it's taught)
- Specialized Student Services including intervention
- Workforce readiness for employability (job skills and economic outcomes)
- Partnerships and external programs
- Character and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Data analysis also identified common programming focus combinations across districts to reveal their overall program structure: whether they pursue a single area of focus to describe their workplace ethics program or integrate multiple categories. Table 11 shows a summary of the results with the vast majority of elementary and middle schools focused on one dominant feature. Much of the elementary programming revolves around the usage of off-the shelf programs or is guided by the district's Portrait/ Profile of a Learner tenets. Middle school programming largely relies heavily on use of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and course embedded opportunities with a significant number of districts reporting the use of off-the-shelf programming as essential resources. High school responses highlight the importance of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses as a mechanism for delivery along with elements of their Portrait/ Profile of a Learner/Graduate competencies and course embedded programming.

Table 11: Overview of districts declared workplace ethics instructional programming

Type	Elementary School Percentage (n=138 relevant responses)	Middle School Percentage (n=138 relevant responses)	High School Percentage (n=135 relevant responses)	Description of Combination
Single Focus Programming	49%	52%	40%	The program is almost entirely dedicated to one category.
Dual Focus Programming	20%	15%	18%	The program clearly combines two major categories.
Three or More Focus Programming	31%	33%	42%	The program integrates three or more components and/or is highly comprehensive.

Districts were asked to identify whether or not a specific course in workplace ethics was offered and at which grade level(s) it was available. To best account for the differences and better understand the distribution, the data is presented in macro-categories (see Table 12). Sixty percent of districts noted no specific course was offered. Appendix D provides a table noting specific grade level mentions.

Table 12: Summary of grade levels or spans where an essential workplace ethics *course* was offered

Category	Count	Percentage	Description
Broad K-12 Coverage	11	9%	Programs designed to cover the entire or nearly the entire K-12 educational span (Kindergarten through 12th grade).
Single Span Coverage	26	21%	Programs targeting a specific, continuous range of grades, such as high school only, middle and high school, or K-8.
Disjointed/Specific Grade Coverage	13	10%	Programs covering specific, non-continuous grades, single grades, or disparate ranges across the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
No Specific Coverage	76	60%	Programs that do not explicitly specify a target grade range or educational level.

Attestation of Compliance

Districts were asked to confirm whether or not they implemented a workplace ethics program as described in KRS 158.1413. Results are shown on the table below. Note two of the elementary and middle schools that indicated no implementation were from the same districts.

Table 13: District counts as to whether or not a *Workplace Ethics Program* was implemented as described in KRS 158.1413.

Attestation of Compliance	Yes	No	Districts Indicating "No" Implementation
Elementary	138	3	Covington Independent, Marion County and Nelson County Schools
Middle	138	2	Covington Independent and Marion County Schools
High	138	3	Anchorage, Science Hill and Southgate Independent Schools

Student Awards

Per KRS 158.1413 (Section 4):

"Each local school board shall design and adopt a diploma seal, certificate, card, or other identifiable symbol to award students deemed as having minimally demonstrated attainment of the local board's essential workplace ethics indicators."

The type of student recognition varied by school level as summarized in Table 14. Elementary and middle schools most frequently issued certificates and hosted school-wide recognition events. While some high schools also utilized these, they more often reported favoring diploma seals and graduation cords. Fewer than five districts indicated that they do not award students in this area at the elementary and middle levels.

Table 14: Types of *awards* related to workforce ethics program to demonstrate attainment.

School Level	Description of Awards
Elementary	celebrations, cards, certificates, work-ethic medallions, promotion cards, completion of school led conferences, counselor awards in special areas, electronic badges, graded rubrics with feedback, recognition boards, seals of completion
Middle	certificates, badges, work-ethic medallions, coins, honor cards, school-wide recognition, celebrations, tickets
High	celebrations, cards, certificates, work-ethic medallions, graduation cords, diploma seals, letters of recommendation, school-wide recognition, Profile of a Learner competency awards, badges

When asked about the types of metrics used to make awards, responses again varied by level. Districts were provided with a list to capture all relevant metrics from those provided and additionally had the opportunity to identify any other metrics used. The results from this question are provided in Table 15 and reveal attendance and academic performance along with a commitment to remain drug-free are important measures used for recognition. Elementary and middle schools rely heavily on character-based measures and positive behavior attributes while high schools tend to focus to a heavier degree on career readiness and community service metrics compared to lower levels. This again reflects an expected shift towards post-secondary preparation.

There were few comments related to "other" metrics utilized. These measures include such activities as: student-led conferences, senior interviews with community members and low numbers of disciplinary issues.

Table 15: Types of *metrics* used to inform awards

Metrics	Elementary	Middle	High
Career Pathway Completion	3	16	58
Drug-free pledge	76	77	67
Junior Achievement Success Skills Completion	18	11	15
Minimum Attendance Percentage/Maximum Number of Excused Absences	98	98	109
Minimum Grade Point Average	50	64	94
Required Volunteer/Community /Service/Work-based Learning Hours	17	31	85
Required Involvement in Club/Athletics/After-school Programs	22	38	58
Soft Skills Certificate	12	8	30
Summative Project	24	33	46
Other	11	9	9

Data Collection

A comprehensive survey was used to collect information from local school districts about workplace ethics instructional programs in accordance with each component of KRS 158.1413. The district response rate was 79%, providing a substantial but incomplete representation of programming across the state. Specifically, districts were asked to indicate components of their programming from a provided list and provide notations for any other practices or resources used without asking them to rate or rank any responses. As such the results are a reflection only of the participating districts and the presence of activities and resources and are not a measure of their quality or effectiveness. The survey was administered from June through Mid-October to allow ample time for districts to respond.

Limitations

The findings outlined in this report are based on self-reported data via survey responses provided by some districts. Responses reflect the perceptions and interpretations of the questions asked and their own programming, which likely varies across districts. Importantly not all districts submitted data, meaning and therefore the results presented do not represent a complete statewide sample. As such, the findings are not comprehensive and should therefore be interpreted as indicative of the implementation of work-place ethics instruction and programming, providing useful insights into current practices rather than definitive measures of implementation across all districts.

Appendix A: Additional Local Partners Identified by Districts

1. Educate NKY
2. Fiscal Court
3. Gear Up
4. Government Officials
5. Kentucky Department of Education
6. Kentucky Farm Bureau (FFA/Agriculture)
7. Kiwanis
8. Local Bank
9. Local Experts in various fields
10. Local Library
11. Rotary
12. Unite-We
13. University of Kentucky Extension Office
14. University of Kentucky NextGen

Appendix B: Measures and/or Resources Identified by Districts Related to Program Characteristics

"Other" Responses	Adaptability	Diligence	Initiative	Knowledge	Reliability	Remaining Drug Free	Working Well with Others
Addressed in General Curriculum including with HQIRs and routines	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
AmeriCorps						x	
Anti-Vaping Course						x	
BPIs			x	x	x		x
BRIDGE Performance Indicators	x	x					
Career and Reality Fairs				x			
Career Cluster Clubs				x			
CASEL							x
Character Education						x	
Character Strong	x	x	x			x	x
College Prep Courses		x					
Community Action Network (CAN)						x	
Community Collaborative Models for Performance Based Credit	x						
Community Schools Clubs			x				x
Competency Personal Champion		x					
CONNECT			x				
Coops/Internships				x			
Daily Mentor	x	x	x				x
Defenses of Learning	x		x	x			
Dollar and Sense				x			
Drug Programs DARE						x	
Durable Skills							
Early College Academy				x			
Exploratory Classes/Courses				x			
Field Trips				x			
Flexible Groups Strategies	x						
Free Tobacco Training Program						x	
Gifted and talented: Leadership			x				
Goal Setting		x					
Guest Speakers				x			
Habits of Work							
Here's Looking at You (Sheriff Dept. Program)						x	
Internships, apprenticeships, Job Shadowing	x						

JAG	x						
Junior Achievement				x			
Just Say No to Drugs Week						x	
Kagan Strategies							x
KIPP Survey						x	
Leadership Course							x
Leadership Teams/Ambassador Groups/Clubs/Government		x	x				x
Morning Meetings/Assembly						x	x
Most Valuable Peer Campaign (MVP)						x	
NAVIGO		x			x		x
Operation Unite						x	
PAXTON/Patterson CCR Modules				x			
PBIS	x	x	x				x
Practices around missing work		x					
Practitioner Partnerships				x			
Profile of Success	x						
Profile or Portraits of Learners and Graduates	x	x	x	x	x		x
Project Lead the Way	x						
Project-based Learning/Deeper learning				x			
Red Ribbon Week						x	
Remediation Opportunities, RTI/MTSS, Credit Recovery		x					
Ron Clark Academy "House System"	x	x	x		x	x	x
Scaffolding Instruction	x						
School Connect		x				x	x
School Counselor Program aligned to ASCA and RAMP (Includes Second Steps, Executive Skills, Character Effect, Stand, etc.)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
School Nurses						x	
School Policies					x		
SEL Lessons				x			x
Self-paced Dual Credit Courses/Work Based Learning		x	x				
Senior Internship	x						
Service teams					x		
Seven Counties Early Intervention						x	
Simulations				x			
Sources of Strength						x	
Standards-based grading		x					
STLP				x			

Student Run Enterprises (News Casts, Cafes, FFA, Greenhouses, etc.)				x			
Taught in Club Structure including Career Cluster Clubs	x						
Tenets of a Tiger	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Leader in Me	x	x		x	x	x	x
Too Good for Drugs						x	
Varied School Types (In Person, Virtual, Hybrid, Alternative, Tech, Sunset)	x						
Why Try		x				x	
Work Ethic Seal Sessions with Community Partners	x				x	x	
XELLO		x					

Appendix C: District identified Off-the-Shelf programs used by level

Off-the-Shelf Programs	Elementary	Middle	High
4H	x		
ACE	x		x
AmeriCorps	x	x	x
Amplify	x	x	x
Biztown	x	x	
Blueprint		x	x
Botvin		x	
Bridges Math	x		
Career Pathways	x		
CASEL	x	x	x
Catch my Breath		x	x
CCR Modules		x	
Cedar Entrepreneur		x	x
Character Counts	x		
Character Strong	x	x	x
CKLA		x	x
Classworks			x
Common Lit 360		x	x
Compass	x	x	x
Dave Ramsey		x	x
Dollars and Sense	x		
Dream Catcher		x	x
Edmentum			x
ELA Wonders	x		
EL Education		x	
Energy Bus		x	
Envision		x	x
Eureka	x	x	
Eureka Math Squared	x	x	
EverFi	x		x
Fish Tank for Learning	x		
Ford Next Gen Learning			x
Greatest of All Time		x	x
Illustrative Math		x	
Imago		x	
IXL	x		x
JAG		x	x
Jostens			x
Junior Achievement	x	x	x
Kagan	x	x	x

LASER			x
Leader in Me	x		
Life Ready Leadership			x
Lions Quest	x		
Magma Math	x	x	x
Mastery Prep			x
Math 180			x
Navigator	x	x	x
Navigo		x	x
Open SciEd	x	x	x
Openup Resources Math			x
Operation Preparation	x		
Overcoming Obstacles	x	x	x
Pathful			x
Patterson Career Lab		x	x
Paxton Career Labs	x	x	x
Purposeful People	x		
Reading Works	x		
Resilience for Youth		x	x
Ripple Effects	x	x	x
School Connect		x	x
Second Steps	x	x	x
SEL	x		x
Skills to Pay the Bills		x	x
SOS			x
Sources of Strength	x	x	x
SRA		x	x
StudySync		x	x
Tassel Connect	x	x	x
TCI History		x	
The Leader in Me	x	x	x
The Stock Market Game	x		
Time		x	
Too Good for Drugs	x	x	x
Traverse Social Studies			x
UNITE	x	x	x
XELLO		x	x
Why Try	x	x	x
Win at Social	x	x	x
WIN Learning			x
You Science		x	x

Appendix D: Number of mentions of workplace ethics courses offered by grade level

Grade	Total mentions that include this grade level
Twelfth Grade	59
Eighth Grade	54
Eleventh Grade	51
Tenth Grade	49
Ninth Grade	48
Seventh Grade	47
Sixth Grade	46
Fifth Grade	41
Fourth Grade	29
Third Grade	29
First Grade	26
Second Grade	26
Kindergarten	13