



A Call to *Action*





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Introduction

In April 2023, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) approved the creation of special committees composed of KBE members, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) staff, in-service educators, students, and external partners for the purpose of understanding, supporting, and promoting United We Learn through the lens of the Inclusive Learner Experience in Kentucky. The three special committees met to develop their “non-negotiables” in the form of value statements within the areas of learning experiences, assessment practices, and accountability mindsets and structures.



These special committees provided a great deal of additional insight into the work of the KBE and United We Learn. The input from these committees represents an ongoing, iterative effort on the part of the Board to engage stakeholders broadly to support Kentucky’s pursuit of a bold new future of teaching and learning.

This document serves several purposes. Primarily, it will be a touchstone for the KBE to ensure future KBE actions align with the established values for the future of assessment and accountability in Kentucky. Additionally, the document will be used as a communication and advocacy tool by the KBE members when sharing about KBE goals, United We Learn, and the importance of a transformed educational experience for every student in the Commonwealth.



Theory of Action

Listening

We listen to the voices of all stakeholders in Kentucky to better understand their frustrations, hopes, and aspirations for an improved education system that better serves the future generation of learners and community members in the state.



Learning

We engage representatives from all stakeholder groups in an inclusive co-design process to identify powerful methodologies and examples that can be applied and adapted for Kentucky.



Experimenting

We support local experimentation around vibrant learning, assessment and accountability, and policy through various initiatives that leverage external funding and partnerships.



Orienting

We collaborate with local communities to create a state-level portrait of a learner as a policy tool to incentivize meaningful changes in educational practices and school culture.



Evaluating

We co-design tools, metrics, and reflection practices to engage in continuous improvement of innovation efforts around learning, assessment and accountability.



Fulfilling

We co-create a reimagined educational system that fulfills the aspirations expressed by stakeholders at the outset and matters to them in meaningful and productive ways.





What is United We Learn?

United We Learn is our vision for the future of public education in Kentucky. This vision builds around three big ideas:

- creating a more vibrant experience for every student;
- encouraging innovation in our schools – especially when it comes to assessment; and
- creating a bold new future for Kentucky’s schools through collaboration with our communities.

These three big ideas – students, innovation and community – form the vision for the future of public education in Kentucky.

Building on the strength and success of KDE initiatives to date, education stakeholders are working on ways to enrich student experiences in our schools and improve learning outcomes for all students. These ideas will be bold and forward-thinking, motivated by our desire to give all children the equitable and engaging learning opportunities they need for success.

United We Learn means everyone in our Commonwealth – educators, families, students, community members and business leaders – working together to support our public schools in bringing about deep and authentic learning experiences for all students.

Why is United We Learn so important?

Students across Kentucky are growing up in a globally interconnected world that is accelerating in competitiveness and possibility. We know that every student has the potential for success, but learning opportunities and outcomes have been uneven. While many students and school districts are thriving, others are struggling. Even for those districts with stronger outcomes, we envision a spirit of constant improvement, innovation and sharing the best ideas with others. This is the way Kentucky’s children will realize their full potential and we must ensure high-quality learning experiences to meet the needs of all students.

How will we realize this vision?

Opportunities to engage communities and create deep and meaningful learning experiences for students abound in our Commonwealth. Every district, school and community will aspire to accomplish the vision people from across the state imagined in United We Learn, and help bring about a bold new era of education in Kentucky.

The Three Big Ideas

Vibrant Student Experiences



Vibrant student experiences spark curiosity, motivation and engagement, while cultivating enthusiasm for lifelong learning. A key part of this effort will be creating more personalized education experiences, which recognize that each family has a unique story and ensure each student feels known, supported and challenged to succeed.

Accelerating Innovation



Encouraging innovation in our schools means addressing the challenge to find better approaches to both teaching and assessments. We know the best organizations are those that are constantly evolving, improving, experimenting and sharing best practices - and this is especially true in education. Teachers must feel safe trying new things, which fosters a culture of innovation as part of everyday practices. Students will be encouraged to answer questions such as “How can I solve this problem?” and “Is there a better way?”

Collaboration with Communities



Collaboration with communities means involving families, educators, students, community members, business leaders and policymakers to help define and co-create opportunities that bring out students’ unique gifts. Each family has a unique story and each child has individual talents to contribute - and those should be valued and understood.

Inclusive Design Process

In order to sustain shared trust, creativity and investment, the inclusive design process used in Kentucky has focused on cultivating four habits on the part of leaders and participants.



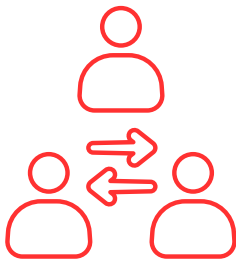
Inclusion

Bringing in diverse voices, building a sense of belonging



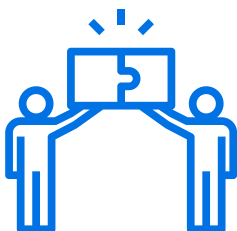
Empathy

Understanding the views, feelings and needs of others



Reciprocity

Exchanging or sharing power/privileges for mutual benefit



Co-Creation

Working together to create and/or implement a solution to a challenge

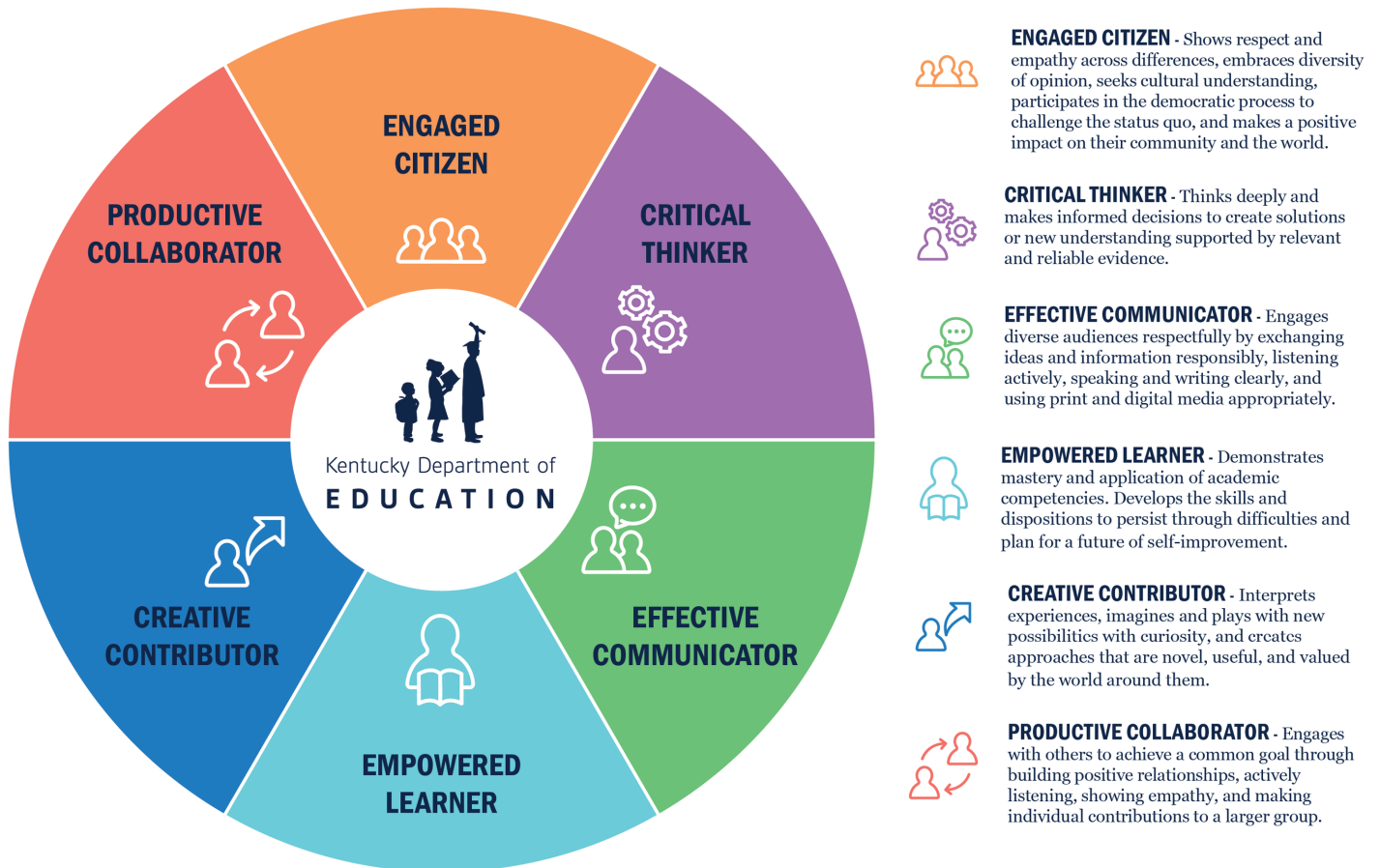
Inclusive Learner Experience

The Inclusive Learner Experience represents the recognition that all parts of a learner's experience in our education system are connected. These efforts layer together and build from one another to support districts in localized systemic transformation. Various initiatives are not intended to be isolated work done to improve individual parts of a learner's experience, rather each initiative plays a role in creating a holistic system – an inclusive learner experience that aligns with our future vision of education.



Portrait of a Learner

A Portrait of a Learner is an agreed-upon set of school- or district-level aspirations for what every learner will know and be able to do when they leave school. That exit may happen at the end of elementary school, middle school, high school graduation or at any other checkpoint along the way.



The statewide Portrait of a Learner (PoL) was approved by the Kentucky Board of Education in October 2022 and was developed through an inclusive process by a committee composed of students, educators, administrators, business leaders, family representatives and KBE members.

The Kentucky statewide PoL identifies the skills students need to be prepared for an ever-changing world that is driven by technology, human interaction and innovation. This portrait gives school leaders and teachers the framework to design instruction in a way that promotes real-world competencies and job readiness.

Prepared Graduate

A benefit to having a statewide PoL – which features the competencies valued most by Kentuckians – is to use it as an anchor for a new, more balanced assessment and accountability system. This is a different approach than our current testing and accountability system, which uses high-stakes testing to determine student and school performance.

Assessments that support a PoL typically involve more than memorizing facts or completing simple tasks. Ultimately, a PoL drives better alignment among future employers, communities, higher education providers and families who depend on our schools to prepare students for their plans after high school.



Now, more than ever, learning experiences must not be just about mastering challenging academic content. They also must be more intentional about fostering communication, collaboration, adaptability and other skills our students need to thrive. Kentucky's accountability system needs to provide a more comprehensive picture of what student success means. The Kentucky PoL will help do this by serving as a more balanced measure, demonstrating a student's growth and achievement and ensuring their readiness for civic life, career or college.



By elevating the importance of student demonstrations of the knowledge, skills and dispositions valued in the state or locally-developed portrait of a learner, the KBE can help to ensure that EVERY learner in Kentucky experiences the deep and meaningful learning experiences valued by the Kentucky United We Learn Council and the Kentucky education community at-large.

Learning Experiences

In creating a vibrant learning environment, we strive to make learning a joyous, inspiring experience that sparks curiosity beyond the classroom and motivates students to continually seek knowledge.



We believe ALL students deserve grade-level learning experiences that are immersive, engaging, and purposeful. We advocate for learning experiences where students do the thinking by actively exploring real-world problems, solutions and challenges to acquire a deeper understanding.

We endorse proactive and preventative approaches to behavioral and social-emotional needs. We are committed to teaching and reinforcing positive behaviors and social skills, promoting a safe and respectful learning community that supports students' mental, emotional, and physical health, contributing to the holistic growth that defines our Portrait of a Learner.



We stand for student voice and choice, viewing it as vital to student engagement and ownership of their learning. We empower students to make key decisions about their learning, helping them develop critical thinking skills and a sense of agency.

Learning Experiences

We stand for and value authentic, dynamic, content-rich and real-world learning experiences that engage students in meaningful practices. We intentionally strive to help students not just learn, but understand, apply, and reflect on knowledge that they may encounter in their lives and future careers.



We believe ALL teachers and students deserve access to High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs) that are aligned to grade-level standards, promote evidence-based instructional practices and foster vibrant student learning experiences. By integrating these rigorously evaluated materials into classrooms across Kentucky, we ensure that every student receives equitable access to high-quality instruction that reflects the diversity of students while promoting inclusivity, understanding, and respect.



We uphold a culture of continuous high-quality professional learning, ensuring that Kentucky educators engage in deep learning experiences that mirror those they design for their students.



Assessment Practices

We believe a successful assessment system allows all learners to be seen, valued and represented in authentic and meaningful ways.

We believe the assessment system should instill a sense of shared responsibility for the success of all learners and encourage the consideration of rich and diverse data to inform learning processes.



We value an assessment system that eliminates stakeholders' desire to game-the-system and undermine good intentions. Assessments should be designed under careful considerations, continuous evaluation, and address unintended consequences.

We believe an assessment system should value and support educators in the enactment of high-quality teaching practices and be foregrounded in respect, authentic trust, and professional integrity.



We believe an assessment system should help meet the needs of marginalized and vulnerable students and provide all stakeholders with a coherent and comprehensive picture of learners.

Accountability Mindset



We value an accountability mindset that embraces innovative practices, fosters vibrant learning experiences, and encourages positive engagement in the continuous improvement process, with a strong emphasis on community-based accountability.



We value an accountability system that provokes, inspires, and leverages innovation in all schools across the Commonwealth.



We value an accountability system that fosters an educational experience for students focused on developing productive citizens and lifelong learners.

Accountability Structures

We value an accountability system that empowers stakeholders to use data in a timely manner to improve student learning experiences and supports continuous improvement for all schools.



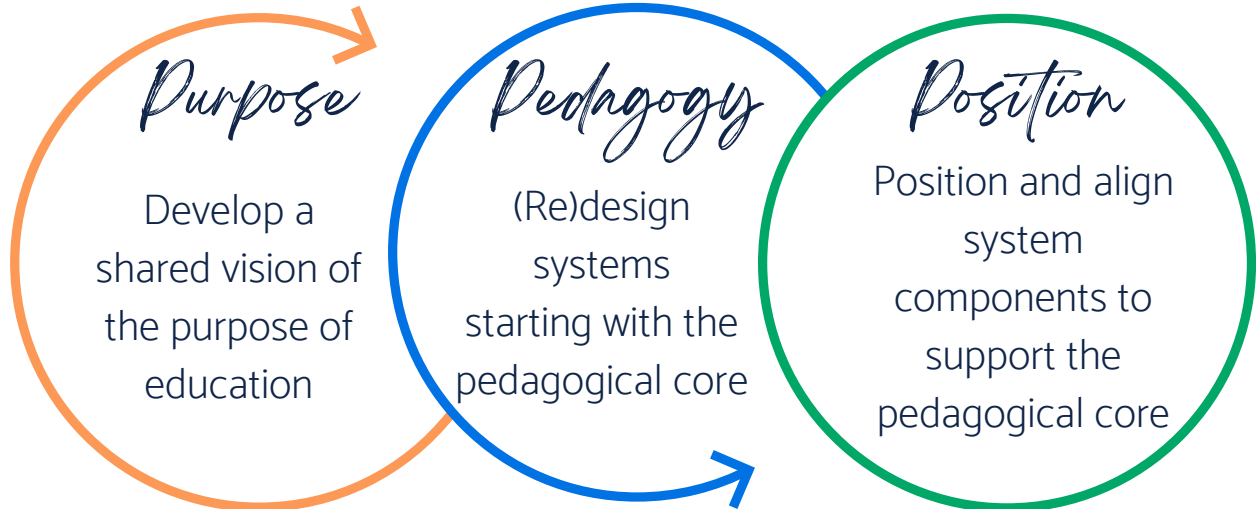
We value a dynamic, flexible and responsive accountability system that supports the diverse needs of all Kentucky learners.

We value an accountability system that creates productive learning opportunities while ensuring all students have equitable access to a high-quality education.



The Road Ahead

The Participatory Approach to Education System Transformation



The Brookings Institution, 2022

