



Monthly Newsletter

November 2023

Welcome to the Kentucky United We Learn Council monthly newsletter!

As the United We Learn initiative progresses, it is imperative that we maintain transparent communication with the public regarding our ongoing endeavors. This newsletter will offer comprehensive coverage of the council's activities, highlight the significant contributions of the three standing committees and feature introductions to the esteemed council members. Further information about the annual Fall and Spring gatherings, as well as access to recorded committee meetings, can be found on our official website.

[Kentucky United We Learn Council Webpage](#)

Message From Council Chair Audrey Gilbert



Thank you so much to all of our members, facilitators, staff and friends for making the one-year anniversary of the Kentucky United We Learn Council so successful!

This past year has been productive and meaningful for me as I have witnessed the work that you all have put in and the passion that you have displayed. I am encouraged by the progress that we made in our committees and working groups during our convening, along with the whole group reflections on our work.

Entering our second year as a council, I know that we will keep doing our best work for our school communities and build the bold new future that Kentucky education deserves.



Message From Council Vice Chair Penny Christian

Our November convening was a confirmation of what I already felt: the members of the Kentucky United We Learn Council take their charge seriously. With children squarely at the center, we advance our work through lenses of equity, inclusion and empathy.

As we move forward, I am confident every child in the Commonwealth will have access to equitable and innovative education experiences.

Update from the Council

November 2023 Convening Recap:

The 2023 Fall Convening of the Kentucky United We Learn Council showcased substantial progress and strategic planning. Committee updates highlighted a year's worth of work, while the moonshot draft envisioned a prosperous Kentucky through a meaningful and inclusive accountability system for all learners.

A journey mapping activity identified achievements and areas needing attention, forming the basis for subsequent working groups. These groups focused on critical tasks, including drafting the "moonshot" (the council's vision), defining "vibrant learning experiences," drafting a charter for the council, identifying new ways to engage communities, discussing the council's role in implementing portraits of a learner and continuing work on an innovative system of systems.

A word cloud during the 1-year celebration encapsulated the council's values, featuring keywords like local accountability, collaboration and vision. Working groups shared their insights, and panelists reflected on accomplishments and challenges.

The event not only celebrated achievements, but also reinforced the council's commitment to collaborative, innovative approaches in advancing education in Kentucky.

Accelerating Innovation Standing Committee:

The Accelerating Innovation (AI) committee reflected on the moonshot conversations that took place prior to the committee time, solicited feedback on meeting times and engagement, and then delved into discussions about the design of a system-of-systems.

Leadership first reviewed a framework for considering different conceptual levels of the system – aspirational goals, design principles, essential features and system components. Members then worked in small groups to discuss which essential features they would like to see based on a starting list leadership had provided and voted informally on the one they considered needing the most attention at the moment. They then engaged in a second round of discussion to further narrow the focus, which led them to support a menu-of-options model. This model became the starting point for the cross-committee system-of-systems working group on the second day of the meeting.

Bold New Future Standing Committee:

The Bold New Future committee used convening time to review the next recommendation from the policy workgroup to align the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) Portrait of a Learner with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's Graduate Profile. Following the discussion, the committee voted and approved elevating the recommendation to the full Kentucky United We Learn Council for consideration. The committee concluded by finalizing a memo for the KBE highlighting gathered stakeholder feedback on perceived benefits and challenges concerning potential changes to graduation requirements to incorporate demonstrations of learning.

Vibrant Learning Experiences Standing Committee:

The Vibrant Learning Experiences committee reviewed Competitive Grant for State Assessment (CGSA) deliverables and spent convening time in workgroups focused on reviewing a mockup submission form by which local schools and districts could submit examples of vibrant learning into a statewide database, revising and editing the definition of vibrant learning and simple shifts educators can make in their classrooms. The committee also shared a need for convening in person again prior to the next full council convening, with a particular interest in additional school site visits.

Meet the Council Members

Rachel Albright

Committee: Vibrant Learning Experiences



Rachel Albright began teaching in 2015, completing her student teaching in Linköping, Sweden, at Katedralskolan. Upon her return to the United States, she taught middle school English language arts at Boyle County Middle School. She later taught at Danville High School, where she was recognized as "Rookie of the Year."

Outside the classroom, Albright led regional efforts to rebound from the impacts of the pandemic as a learning acceleration specialist with the Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative. Currently, she serves as a deeper learning design specialist for the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative, where she works to support districts in reimagining the student experience to be more relevant, inspiring and engaging.

Albright is passionate about empowering teachers to create equitable opportunities for all students, especially multilingual learners, to engage with relevant, rigorous learning.

Shelly Hammons

Committee: Bold New Future



A native of Owensboro, Shelly Hammons graduated from Apollo High School and continued her education at Murray State University, studying middle school education in science and social studies. She earned a master's degree in education in curriculum and technology from the University of Phoenix, and Rank 1 in administration from the University of the Cumberland.

In her 20th year in education, Hammons has spent 18 years in Daviess County Public Schools as a middle school science teacher and, currently, federal programs coordinator.

Jerry Cooper

Committee: Accelerating Innovation



Jerry Cooper is currently serving as vice president, for Cognia's Mid-Atlantic Region. Previous Cognia experience includes service as the Kentucky state director, Cognia field consultant, system lead evaluator, and Cognia professional learning facilitator.

Cooper holds a bachelor's degree in elementary/special education from Morehead State University, a master's degree in educational counseling and a degree in educational administration from Eastern Kentucky University. Prior educational experience includes 35 years working as a special education teacher, guidance counselor, professional staff assistant and elementary principal in the Fayette County Public Schools.

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