



REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2025 Regional Town Halls

A Summary of Comments Received and
Frequently Asked Questions
Framework 2.0

March 2025



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION



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General Information

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) in partnership with the Kentucky United We Learn Council and the Regional Educational Cooperatives held a series of town hall style meetings for local educators and community members to discuss the new state assessment and accountability model framework 2.0.

Schedule:

- Jan. 15, Lexington – Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative (CKEC)
- Jan. 16, Hazard – Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC)
- Jan. 21, Bowling Green – Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC)
- Jan. 27, Bowling Green – Hybrid Spanish
- Jan. 29, Shelbyville – Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC)
- Jan. 30, Eddyville – Western Kentucky Educational Cooperative (WKEC)
- Feb. 4, London – Southeast South-Central Educational Cooperative (SESC)
- Feb. 23, Taylor Mill – Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES)
- Feb. 27, Ashland – Kentucky Educational Development Corporation (KEDC)

This report summarizes frequently asked questions, and overall themes derived from comments made during the town halls or via the QR code provided at the town halls. Over 600 people attended the town halls including educators, students, families, community members, business leaders and legislators. The majority of attendees were educators, making up 83% of the overall attendance. These responses are a convenience sample of educators and community members across the state. Results may not be representative of the entire state's population as only those individuals who chose to attend a town hall are represented.

Themes

Comments and questions from attendees ranged across several commonly occurring themes, reflecting a broad spectrum of concerns and interests.

Assessments emerged as a prominent theme, with 27 comments and questions from eight town halls. Attendees frequently inquired about the integration of assessments into the accountability system, the role of interim assessments, and the alignment of these assessments with state standards. Specific concerns included the use of diagnostic tools like Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), STAR and iReady, and the potential for adaptive interim assessments to replace current diagnostics, thereby reducing costs and providing valuable instructional data.

Local accountability was another significant theme, with 21 comments and questions from seven town halls. Discussions centered on the flexibility and autonomy of local districts in designing accountability systems, the inclusion of community input and the establishment of guardrails to ensure equity and quality of education. Attendees expressed the need for clear guidelines and support for districts, especially those lacking resources and/or local buy-in.

Vibrant learning experiences were highlighted in eight comments and questions from four town halls. Participants emphasized the importance of balancing engaging, project-based learning with the instruction of fundamental content. Concerns were raised about ensuring that vibrant learning projects do not overshadow essential academic standards and that there is a good balance between experiential learning and content mastery.

Social studies and science were discussed in 10 comments and questions from three town halls. Attendees questioned the requirements for including social studies and science in local accountability systems, the potential for these subjects to be optional, and the need for clear models and resources to support their effective integration into the curriculum.

Student growth was addressed in five comments and questions from three town halls. The focus was on how growth would be measured, particularly in the context of interim assessments and the alignment with summative assessments. Attendees also discussed the importance of growth metrics in ensuring that all students, including those with special needs, have opportunities to demonstrate their progress.

Equity concerns were raised in three comments and questions from two town halls. Participants highlighted the need for external evaluators to identify gaps and exemplars in local accountability systems to promote equity. They also discussed the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have access to high-quality education and vibrant learning opportunities.

Special education was mentioned in three comments and questions from two town halls. Attendees focused on how the new accountability system would impact students in special education programs, emphasizing the need to support these students and ensure they have

the same opportunities as their peers to engage in vibrant learning and demonstrate their knowledge.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This section addresses common questions that emerged throughout the feedback process. Many of the FAQs reflect recurring themes and key areas of interest, while others provide clarity on specific, standalone inquiries. Together, they help illuminate stakeholder perspectives and provide insight into the ongoing development of our initiatives.

American College Testing (ACT)

How will ACT fit into the assessment and/or accountability system, if at all?

In the current accountability system, the ACT is one measure of Postsecondary Readiness/Transition Readiness. In the local accountability systems districts could have the option to include the ACT as a measure that is valued in their system.

Interim Assessments

Would the state developed interim assessments be used as screeners for math and reading or would districts have to purchase and spend more time giving screeners to required grade levels?

The interim assessments offered by the state will be optional. Districts will have the option to include interim assessment results within their local accountability systems. The state will provide interim assessments aligned to the summative and aligned to the Kentucky standards. A Request for Proposal (RFP) would include the requirement of the interim and summative to be aligned to the standards.

How will the content on each assessment be determined? What standards will be covered in the fall, and what standards will be covered in the winter?

There are several steps which must be completed to implement a new accountability system, such as the accountability regulation must be revised and approved in addition to revision to the state consolidated plan. Once these steps are completed the department will release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for vendors to submit bids. The specific content of the RFP has not been drafted.

Which grades will have "opt-in" interim assessments?

The interim assessments for reading and mathematics will be adaptive. Districts could continue purchasing assessments or use the state-provided measures (grades K-10) in reading and mathematics. With the exception of grade 9, which will be used for instructional purposes, the spring summative administration will be used for federal reporting purposes.

If a district chooses to go with the state interim assessment, will that interim assessment also include options for regular growth monitoring?

The interims could be used to make instructional decisions, giving teachers the data to make informed decisions for the students. The summative would be used to measure growth.

Would the Kentucky State Assessment (KSA) need to change in order to determine a grade equivalent score?

Yes, currently the state only provides the summative assessment aligned to the standards. Providing schools with adaptive interim assessments wrapped around the summative aligned to the state standards is a very different model.

Social Studies & Science

Will Social Studies be required to be a part of local accountability for each grade 3-10, regardless of whether a district opts-in to use KDE assessments?

Social Studies would be a choice point for local districts in the proposed framework.

Will Science be required to be a part of local accountability in non-federally designated grades?

Science is a requirement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to be assessed and reported once at elementary, middle and high school. The districts would have the option to decide how science would be included in the local system in addition to the federal requirement.

Local Accountability

How can we ensure that local districts have the support they need to create effective and cohesive plans for vibrant learning while still covering all standards?

Local systems will not simply be designed by the school, it requires community input. One option would be to collaborate with other districts with similar demographics and community objectives. KDE will consider bringing in an outside evaluator to provide support regarding gaps and provide exemplars that could be used in the development of the local system.

How will local accountability be equitable between districts? If districts create their own metrics, how are all Kentucky students held to high standards?

Local accountability ensures equity by balancing local flexibility with rigorous statewide academic standards. While districts create community-driven measures, they must ensure students have access to vibrant learning experiences aligned to the meet Kentucky Academic Standards and state and local graduation requirements. KDE, in collaboration with partners and districts, provides guiding frameworks, resources, and support to uphold consistency, validity, and high expectations for all students. These local systems also enhance transparency and continuous improvement through greater collaboration and shared learning across districts.

How will districts be supported that do not have support or buy-in from their local boards of education or their superintendents?

The Kentucky Department of Education, along with education cooperatives and various partners, will offer a range of resources and support to assist districts in their efforts to secure the approval and commitment of local boards of education and superintendents. These resources will be designed to facilitate the development and implementation of effective strategies, ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged in the process.

Is it possible for districts to simply not comply and still rely on federal/state accountability?

The goal is for districts to collaborate with their communities to develop a local system that addresses the needs of their stakeholders and creates vibrant learning opportunities for students. Whether or not districts are required to create local accountability systems will largely depend on the specific wording and provisions outlined in future legislation. Details in the legislation will determine the obligations and expectations for districts.

How will local accountability be monitored?

The local accountability model should include collaboration with community stakeholders who provide input and guidance based on feedback on the quality of the system. Networks of support are planned to enable districts to review and provide critical feedback. Additionally, an external evaluator is planned to provide feedback and look for best practices and exemplars.

Who determines if a district's optional accountability measures are actually measuring proficiency?

The local district will be responsible for evaluating whether a district's optional accountability measures effectively assess student proficiency. The Kentucky Department of Education, along with education cooperatives and various partners, will offer a range of resources and support to assist districts in their efforts.

How can my district prepare now for the coming changes?

Districts can start by reviewing any of the eighteen Local Laboratories of Learning (L3) districts' work and contacting them to discuss methods and the next steps. The districts could also begin engaging their communities to identify priorities for student learning.

How will the new framework ensure data consistency through changes?

In the new framework, the data within the federal accountability system remains largely unchanged, ensuring consistency and reliability in the information collected and reported. This continuity allows for seamless comparison and analysis over time. Additionally, the framework reduces federal oversight, granting more autonomy to local schools and districts.

Vibrant Learning Experiences (VLE)

What does an accountability and assessment system look like at the state level in a VLE?

In the proposed new system, accountability will encompass the fundamental federal requirements for reporting and identifying Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI),

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools. The accountability framework will feature a summative assessment for Reading and Mathematics, Individual Student Growth, Transition Readiness, Graduation Rate, English Language Progress, and a Climate and Safety Survey. Additionally, a summative assessment for science will be administered once during elementary, middle, and high school.

Will there be collaboration with Kentucky College's/Universities teacher prep programs to help train future teachers on how to implement VLEs?

The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) has developed a Graduate Profile which changes the experiences of the teacher education programs across the state. The Graduate Profile includes competencies to prepare future teachers for teaching in the new accountability system.

Dr. Thompson, the President of CPE, is collaborating with KDE on the alignment of Profile of a Learner with the Graduate Profile for teachers.

How can we identify a good balance of experiences/projects with quality teaching content?

Balancing vibrant learning experiences with rigorous academic content requires intentional alignment with Kentucky Academic Standards and district Portrait of a Learner competencies. Implementation of high-quality instructional resources promotes consistent access to standards-aligned, grade-level learning for all students. Well-designed experiences, such as performance assessments, student-led inquiries, and work-based learning integrate academic content while fostering deeper learning. KDE, in collaboration with partners, districts, and stakeholders, will provide resources, professional learning communities, and best-practice models to support this balance. By sharing exemplars and refining approaches across districts, we ensure students demonstrate knowledge in authentic ways, preparing them for college, careers, and civic life.

If vibrant learning is important, why are the arts not included? Where is the accountability for the revised VPA standards?

In the local accountability model, districts will engage the community to identify what is included in vibrant learning opportunities for students in their communities. The framework reduces federal oversight, granting more autonomy to local schools and districts. This shift aims to empower communities to tailor their accountability measures to better suit their unique contexts and needs.

Equity of Opportunity and Access

How can KDE ensure local accountability includes guardrails as the "floor", to ensure quality of instruction, true mastery, and data reporting?

One possible option could be to have an outside evaluator to identify gaps and exemplars to support the local accountability systems.

How can we ensure that students statewide are all achieving an equitable education via local accountability systems? How do we not regress to the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA)?

KDE has received feedback from community stakeholders requesting the implementation of guardrails to ensure that all students receive vibrant learning opportunities without minimizing content. To promote equity in education, the agency will consider the option of bringing in an external evaluator to identify gaps and exemplars that can support local accountability systems.

What specific measures will KDE take to ensure equity between urban and rural districts?

KDE along with education cooperatives and various partners, will offer a range of resources and support to assist districts in their efforts.

Student Growth

How does the statewide assessment measure or follow student growth as they transfer from one school district (or state) to another?

The current system measures status and change, it does not measure growth except for English Language Proficiency. There are several steps which must be taken to implement a new assessment system. The assessment regulation and related statutes must be revised and approved in addition to a revision to the state consolidated plan. Once these steps are completed the department will release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for vendors to submit bids. The specific content of the RFP has not been drafted.

If a district chooses to go with the state interim, will that interim also include options for regular growth monitoring?

The interims could be used to make instructional decisions, giving teachers the data to make informed decisions for the students. The Summative would be used to measure growth.

If student growth is reintroduced as a measure, would Change fall out of the accountability formula for science, social studies, and writing? If it does, would that indicator score be derived only from reading and math growth or would the points previously associated with science, social studies, and writing be redistributed to other indicators for elementary and middle? What would that do to high school scores that cannot have growth?

In order to include growth and remove Change in the accountability system the accountability regulation would have to change. Currently no bills have been filed to make changes to the current accountability system.

Special Education

For special education students, the high school grade level is not low enough for AKSA. Is there any way to test them on their grade level?

Vibrate learning experiences and local accountability will provide opportunities for those students to showcase their learning. However, federal accountability requires these students to test in their current grades.

How are students with Special Needs included within the local accountability?

Special Students are included within the local accountability and are expected to participate in the defense of learning, with modification.

Federal Requirements & Implementation Timeline

Has "graduation rate" been considered as an element in local accountability instead of just a high school measure?

The graduation rate is a federal requirement and must be reported based on the federal guidelines.

If the Framework is presented to the legislature in 2026 and then the "piloting phase" begins, what is an approximate timeline for expected implementation?

To implement a Reimagined Assessment and Accountability System, regulations must be revised. The department is currently collecting information from stakeholders to inform the proposal to the Kentucky legislature. Once there is an approved revision for the accountability system, the department will enter the piloting phase, followed by the expansion phase then finally the sustainability phase.

Comments from Attendees

Comments and questions from attendees ranged across several commonly occurring themes, including assessments, vibrant learning experiences, social studies/science, student growth, equity concerns and special education. Comments not otherwise addressed by the FAQs above have been included below. These comments have had personal identifying information removed and may be summarized or condensed to avoid repetition.

The WOWs heard from Kentuckians across the state:

- (Jan. 15 – CKEC; Educator) How can I become involved in "reimagining" education, specifically vibrant learning in social studies?
- (Jan. 16 – KVEC; Educator) Thinking about Vibrant Learning Experiences (VLE), students with disabilities will benefit tremendously from this because it allows them to express themselves differently and grow. I had a student with some behavioral issues and in order to de-escalate a situation he could be given a task of taking a computer apart and putting it back together. The VLE will be amazing for students just like that.
- (Feb. 4 – SESC; Community) Realizing that the assessments for high school would be over by grade 10 frees them up for postsecondary readiness.
- (Feb. 4th – SESC; Community) The honey making project in Rowan County is impressive.
- (Jan. 16 – KVEC; Community) Students who may not qualify for special education but still struggle and do not test well, will benefit greatly from VLE and ensure that they are not forgotten.
- (Jan. 16 – KVEC; Educator) Please do not take the vibrant learning and the local accountability parts away. I love that all kids have the opportunity to show their brilliance - not just the kids who are good at taking tests.
- (Jan. 15 – CKEF; Educator) We use our interim assessment for so many things that help teachers personalize and accelerate learning - universal screener, instruction, grouping, growth, monitoring, placement on personalized learning pathways, standards mastery measures, Special Education (SPED), Response to Intervention (RTI) and Gifted and Talented (GT) identification, etc. If we could have these interim assessments bring that rich use that we can use across the commonwealth, I'm thrilled.

The WONDERS heard from Kentuckians across the state:

- (Jan. 15 – CKEC; Educator) If vibrant learning is important, why are the arts not included? Where is the accountability for the revised Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) standards? I understand the shift to move local control, however, once the previous accountability system was removed (program review) many students lost access to arts learning because principals/site based decision making councils made the

choice to cut music or art. If we expect students to be well-rounded, this shouldn't be an option.

- (Jan. 15 – CKEC; Educator) If you are going to give local districts the autonomy to create what "vibrant learning" looks like while still covering all the standards, it would be nice to offer at least a model plan (per grade level) to show what this could look like or even a menu of several different options. If the state changes something, there should be a clear model outline of what a grade-level plan actually looks like and then districts can adapt it to meet their individual needs.
- (Jan 15 – CKEC; Community) With the current system and federal mandates testing at specific levels, history tells us that's where we teach the content. A big concern is how can we ensure that we're not setting our kids up for a tremendous amount of trauma when they're not prepared?
- (Jan. 21 – GRREC; Community) The largest companies in the world are science based. I would like to see the commissioner leverage his position to get legislators to look at technology and things like elementary physical education (PE) and bring back PE to combat obesity and to show children that PE education is part of their livelihood. I have concerns about the strategies driving us toward things like social studies when we need to focus on things like technology.
- (Jan.16 – KVEC, Educator) What specific measures will KDE take to ensure equity between urban and rural districts? I cannot afford to take 100 kids to Kentucky Youth Assembly (KYA) like Louisville-area schools. Will funding be opened to rural districts to close the equity gap? I realize that these specific policies to ensure equity may still be under development, but as a rural educator, this aspect of the overall system feels crucial to me.
- (Feb 12 – NKCES; Educator) I commend the commissioner and KDE for listening. The change from Framework 1.0 to 2.0 is huge. A concern/something to think about is foundational principles for local accountability. This may maintain some of the integrity, so it isn't lost in a few years if/when administration changes.
- (Jan. 15 – CKEC; Community) What can be done about discipline within the classroom? It's keeping the other kids from learning. Teachers feel their hands are tied. How much more paperwork will this involve for the teachers? How are we going to instill respect for authority within the classroom and give back authority?
- (Jan. 16 – KVEC; Educator) When deciding on interim assessments, please take into consideration that it be norm referenced for special education and GT identification.