



Robin Fields Kinney
Interim Commissioner of Education

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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April 9, 2024

Brian Robinson, Superintendent
Fort Thomas Independent Public Schools
28 N Ft. Thomas Ave.
Fort Thomas, KY 41075

Dear Superintendent Robinson:

As you know, one goal of Kentucky Statewide Consolidated Monitoring (KSCM) is to help create opportunities for the programs in our schools and districts to look at new ways to collaborate and collectively meet our ultimate goal: increasing student achievement while closing gaps and positioning our students to be college- and career-ready. The team members from your visit have engaged in this collaborative process in order to produce the attached Consolidated Monitoring Report.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted monitoring in the Fort Thomas Independent School District. During this process, KDE program staff, utilizing program-specific monitoring tools, conducted on-site visits for the following programs:

- Title I, Part A
- Title II, Part A
- Title III, Part A
- Title IV, Part A
- Gifted and Talented
- Preschool

Each program involved in the KSCM has an impact on our goal. For example, Title II, Part A focuses on improving teacher and principal quality to ensure that all students have equal access to highly qualified and effective teachers and leaders. Title I programs provide not only funding, but also guidance on working with disadvantaged students.

This report is the result of what can be best described as a “snapshot” of the district taken during our visit. It begins with identifying “effective practices.” These are individual program practices that the team felt were effective, and in some cases innovative. We

strongly suggest that the practices identified be submitted to the [KDE Best Practices website](#).

Each district program has already been provided an individual report as required by federal or state law. All findings will need to be addressed by district program areas as specified in the individual reports.

In the meantime, if you have questions regarding specific program monitoring requirements, please contact the individual program contacts listed in this report. If you have questions concerning the consolidated monitoring process, please contact [Erin Sudduth](#) by email or by phone at (502) 564-3791, Ext. 4021. Information regarding education programs within the state of Kentucky may also be found at the [KDE website](#).

Thank you for your work in improving Kentucky's education programs to better serve our children.

Sincerely,

Kelly Foster, Ed.D.
Associate Commissioner
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support

KF/TR/ES/vb

Attachment: Consolidated Monitoring Report for Fort Thomas Independent Public Schools

2023-2024 Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Report

District: Fort Thomas Independent School District

Date(s) of Visit: Jan. 16 - 18, 2024

Team Leads:

- Title I, Part A – Wes Blake
- Title II, Part A – Sean Murphy
- Title III – Kaiman Triplett
- Title IV, Part A – Lee Bowling
- GT – Kathie Anderson
- Preschool – Andrea Bartholomew

Effective Practice No. 1: Community

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Gifted and Talented

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 1

Several programs were noted for having strong relationships with community partners. The local parent and teacher organization (PTO) financially supports many events, and the district partners with local businesses like cafes and coffee shops to host events and increase engagement.

Gifted and Talented (GT) students created and facilitated a Family Game Night. GT students also created an app to help new teenagers in the area learn about opportunities in Fort Thomas.

Effective Practice No. 2: Parent and Family Engagement

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title III; Gifted and Talented; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 2

There was evidence of authentic student and family engagement events that are both popular in the community and supportive of students' academic needs. Newsletters and frequent teacher emails highlighting student successes are shared with parents and families. Committees include parent representatives, and the local parent teacher organizations are active.

Title III noted family engagement events, including Teatime, Cultural Night and Winter Celebration of Reading, among others. District staff have prioritized efforts to strengthen parent, family and community connections to ensure all English Learner students and families feel welcome and supported.

Parents expressed concerns regarding GT services at one school, and in response to the concerns, a nine-week GT course was created.

The preschool program noted that the district collaborates with parents and families regularly to ensure their needs are met.

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Effective Practice No. 3: Student Services and Plans

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title III; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 3

District schools had effective processes for both identification and continuation of services for identified students based on academic growth data. Tracking and providing wraparound services like mental health and supports for students experiencing homelessness show that the district focuses on all of students' needs.

Title III program staff have defined roles and organizational practices to track student data and inform stakeholders of next steps that ensure English Learners have all the needed supports to be successful.

Preschool curriculum was designed to compensate and address differing abilities and offer the most effective strategies to help all learners.

Effective Practice No. 4: Policies and Procedures

Program(s) Addressed: Title II, Part A; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 4

The district maintains internal controls in the disbursement of Title II, Part A funds. Detailed procedures on approval and disbursement of funds ensure strong internal control for district purchases.

Evidence demonstrated that Fort Thomas Independent adheres to all required policies and procedures for state-funded preschools.

Effective Practice No. 5: Professional Development

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Gifted and Talented; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 5

A cadre model allows teachers to choose professional development based on their needs and interests to best serve student needs. Several programs noted how teachers play an active role and have a choice in planning their professional development based on their needs.

By annually evaluating the effectiveness of its Title II, Part A program, the district addresses student and educator learning needs.

There are professional development opportunities for the GT program.

Interviews with the preschool program staff revealed teachers' desire for early childhood specific training.

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Effective Practice No. 6: Leadership

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Title IV, Part A; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 6

Several programs noted how during interviews private school principals emphasized the district coordinator is dependable, communicative and flexible. Private and public-school principals noted that district staff were available to help when they needed it, approachable and provided prompt and helpful guidance.

The district's Title II, Part A coordinator effectively consults with schools in the development of their programs via ongoing communication.

The preschool program coordinator is knowledgeable, has been in their position for several years and is adept at leading the program.

Effective Practice No. 7: Communication

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title III; Title IV, Part A; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 7

The district had ample evidence of parent notifications and communication regarding events that foster parental support for students' academic achievement.

Communication between the Title III coordinator and English Learner program staff was notable and well documented. Roles are well defined, and next steps are effectively communicated to support student outcomes.

The non-public schools felt supported and encouraged by the district's communication practices. Communication channels between staff, leadership and community are well defined and support the successful implementation of the preschool program.

Effective Practice No. 8: Climate and Culture

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 8

The student leadership program the district implements fosters intrinsic motivation in students, and this was evident in the way that students took ownership of their academic achievement goals and took them seriously.

The climate and culture of the preschool program was notably positive and supportive for students.

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Opportunity for Improvement No. 1: Finance

Programs Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title IV, Part A

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

There were some discrepancies between the approved Grant Management Application and Planning (GMAP) application and actual spending in MUNIS for the Title I, Part A. Also, there was misalignment between the MUNIS and approved GMAP application for the Title IV, Part A program.

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s) for Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

It is highly recommended that districts develop and adhere to a process to regularly align GMAP and MUNIS. A recommended best practice is to align MUNIS and GMAP quarterly. The finance officer should meet regularly with the program coordinators. GMAP training for the finance officer may help coordinate alignment between the GMAP application and MUNIS.

Final Overview

The Fort Thomas Independent School District is communicative and responsive to its stakeholders and dedicated to empowering and working collaboratively with teachers, students, parents and their community to support students' academic achievement. District staff encourage educators to choose their most relevant avenues for authentic professional development that will lead to better outcomes for their students. Likewise, students are entrusted to create their own learning goals and take on ownership for their learning. The strategies employed by the district to support student learning are continually informed and supported by effective data analysis and supported by educators, parents and community partners.

The staff at Fort Thomas Independent district demonstrated strong support and coordination, which is highly valued by both public and private school principals. The district staff's approachability, responsiveness and helpfulness play a crucial role in bolstering programs' effectiveness and providing necessary guidance. Private school principals have highlighted their relationship with the Fort Thomas district as the most supportive and responsive they've ever encountered. This underscores the district's commitment to fostering positive and productive relationships with its educational partners.

Because the district's communication and coordination are such a strength, it could easily use this skillset to create processes for regular communication between the finance officer and program coordinators to improve alignment between the approved GMAP application and actual spending in MUNIS.

The district emphasizes authentic needs-based decision making. In terms of professional development, the district employs an effective, needs-focused approach. Decision-making is driven by data, with schools carefully selecting relevant data points and incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) and behavioral data into their decision-making processes. This methodical approach ensures that all student needs are considered and addressed.

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The district also offers a balanced array of professional development opportunities through a cadre system. Teachers are empowered to select professional development activities that align with their students' needs, their own professional expertise, and personal interests. This tailored, teacher-focused approach to professional development is contributing to notable academic growth among students.

Parent and family engagement are robust within the district. A variety of academically focused events, such as Summer Learning Flying, Leaders in Literacy Night and 6th-grade student transitions, among many others, are well-attended and engaging for families. The local parent and teacher organization (PTO) provides significant financial support for these engagement efforts. To further interest stakeholders, the district has forged partnerships with local businesses, such as coffee shops and cafes, to host events that further involve and engage parents in their children's education. The exceptional level of parent involvement is also evident in the district's English Learner (EL) program.

Effective two-way communication is evident in the ways that the district responds and gives a voice to students, teachers and stakeholders. For example, when parents and students expressed a desire to mitigate some of the undesirable effects of GT students being pulled out of the classroom to receive services, the district listened to this feedback and worked out a way to serve these students in another way. The two-way communication and culture of close listening is apparent in other ways such as the district's approach to professional development and attention to data analysis and stakeholder input when making decisions.