LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGN GUIDE AND TOOLKIT

Kentucky Department of EDUCATION

L3 Local Laboratories of Learning

Center for Next Generation Leadership
College of Education

elevatED Studios

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGN GUIDE AND TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

Kentucky has long been a national leader in educational innovation, particularly in reimagining assessment and accountability systems that reflect what truly matters for learners, educators, and communities. From the groundbreaking work of the 1990 *Kentucky Education Reform Act* (KERA) to more recent initiatives like *United We Learn*, the Commonwealth has consistently embraced bold ideas and local leadership.

In 2021, the *Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education*—a diverse group of students, families, educators and community members—called for a system that is more meaningful, inclusive and rooted in the lived experiences of Kentucky's people. This call led to the creation of the *Local Laboratories of Learning (L3)* initiative, a cohort of community-driven design teams working to prototype new models of local assessment and accountability. These efforts have been supported and amplified by the *Kentucky United We Learn Council*, which continues to champion the development of vibrant learning experiences, innovation in assessment and deeper community collaboration.

A student from Tates Creek High School in Fayette County shares thoughts at a convening of the Kentucky United We Learn Council.

These local prototypes of assessment and accountability reflect ambitious yet grounded efforts to create systems that reflect the hopes and values of each unique community. While progress looks different across districts, the shared commitment to learner-centered, community-rooted accountability is reshaping what success means in Kentucky schools. Because of the efforts of the L3 cohorts and the Kentucky United We Learn Council, Kentucky is on the precipice of a new statewide system of assessment and accountability that honors and enshrines local accountability as a lever for change and a core new assessment and accountability mechanism.

This **Local Accountability Design Guide and Toolkit** aims to support districts, schools and communities across the Commonwealth and beyond as they develop and implement local accountability systems. It provides practical tools, design steps and reflective questions to guide the journey. Throughout, you will find links to deeper stories and resources from Kentucky communities that are leading the way.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide aims to support the development and implementation of localized assessment and accountability systems. Its intended audience includes district and school leaders as well as community stakeholders. Well-designed and effectively implemented local accountability systems lead to transformed and vibrant student experiences, enhanced community engagement and partnership, and increased transparency with actionable data to inform educational improvements and decisions.

This guide includes a variety of supports, including:

- An operational definition of local accountability
- Key design and technical quality elements
- Theory of change and aspirational outcomes
- Action steps and key strategies to design, develop, implement and iterate on a local accountability system
- Case studies of leading districts in Kentucky that are practicing local accountability
- A toolkit of resources and templates to support starting, sustaining and spreading local accountability in your community

This guide follows the structure of a Local Accountability Continuum, developed by the University of Kentucky Center for Next Generation Leadership. Readers can use the action steps and key strategies outlined in the guide as a model for the actions they can take to start developing, implementing, and refining a local accountability system. Each section includes:

descriptions of a specific local accountability phase, essential strategies that facilitate that phase's work, district highlights from various Kentucky districts applying the recommended strategies, and an in-depth case study focusing on a district's successful execution of a key local accountability strategy.

It is essential to recognize that this guide offers a wealth of resources, templates, examples and stories that represent various and diverse approaches to local accountability. It is not necessarily designed to be read linearly – instead, readers should take and use these resources when and where they are most needed and make the most sense for their individual context. It is neither possible nor necessary to accomplish all this work at once.

Key Terms Defined

The terms below are key terms that are referenced throughout this document.

- **Assessment and Accountability Systems** – The structures, policies and processes used to evaluate, report and improve student learning, educator practice and school performance. These systems may include both state and locally developed measures.
- **Competency** – The collection of knowledge, skills and dispositions that a learner must acquire and exhibit to succeed in a specific context (for example, *Critical Thinker* is a competency of Kentucky's Portrait of a Learner).
- **Competency-Based Education (CBE)** – An approach to learning where progress is determined by a learner's demonstration of mastery rather than time spent in class. CBE emphasizes clear learning targets, flexible pacing and multiple pathways to demonstrate learning.
- **Four Habits of Inclusive Design**
    - **Co-Creation** – We believe in the power of a connected, collaborative community and work together to create solutions and make decisions.
    - **Empathy** – We actively seek out and listen to each other's stories and experiences to inform our decision-making.
    - **Inclusion** – We include those whose perspectives are often devalued or left out.
    - **Reciprocity** – Our work with communities supports and gives back to the community as they bring their efforts and resources to our work.
- **Local Accountability** – A system in which a school district, in collaboration with its community, identifies shared definitions of student success and develops measures that reflect local priorities. Local accountability systems focus on transparent reporting, continuous improvement, and reciprocal responsibility between schools and the communities they serve.

- **Performance Assessment** – A form of assessment that requires students to apply their knowledge, skills and dispositions to create a product, complete a performance or engage in a real-world task that demonstrates mastery of learning outcomes.
- **Portrait of a Learner (PoL)** – A shared vision developed by a school, district or community that identifies the competencies, skills and dispositions all students should have upon graduation to thrive in life, work and citizenship.
- **Project-Based Learning (PBL)** – An instructional approach in which students gain knowledge and skills by working over an extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem or challenge. PBL emphasizes student agency, collaboration and connection to real-world contexts.
- **Vibrant Learning Experiences (VLEs)** – The application of standards-driven knowledge and skills, enacted in collaboration with families and communities, and reflective of a student's cultural wealth, gifts, and interests.

WHAT IS LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY?

Local accountability is a term that refers to transformative systems and practices that redefine traditional conceptions of assessment and accountability in public education systems. A local model emphasizes the significance of community-driven initiatives and localized decision-making. This approach advocates for enhanced involvement of local stakeholders in the accountability process, ensuring that the unique needs and priorities of each community are effectively addressed.

A local accountability system, as defined by the Kentucky United We Learn Council, consists of the system-management policies, instruments, resources and practices that district leadership uses to engage in school improvement efforts with their schools. This work typically goes beyond the minimum required to comply with federal accountability mandates and encompasses broader initiatives for school enhancement. Parental engagement, community partnerships and non-academic factors affecting school quality and the overall schooling experience are essential components of a local accountability system.

A student in Menifee County presenting their work and answering questions at a community Exhibition of Learning event.

Local accountability should include essential components, such as vibrant learning experiences and elements tailored to the community's specific needs. By addressing community feedback and emphasizing transparency and continuous improvement, districts create local accountability models that present a comprehensive view of school effectiveness. These models strive to provide a broader perspective on a school's performance by examining various aspects of educational quality. The objective is to establish an accountability system that is transparent, incorporates key pillars of a district's work, and offers stakeholders clear, honest data regarding the district's efforts and progress.

The Moonshot

Based on Kentuckians' vision for the future of education as articulated in the United We Learn report, the Kentucky United We Learn Council adopted a "moonshot" goal statement to guide its work.

"In order to build a more prosperous Kentucky, we will launch an accountability system that is meaningful and useful to all learners."

Local accountability has become a major component of a proposed framework for assessment and accountability transformation in Kentucky because of the efforts of the Local Laboratories of Learning (L3) districts and the Kentucky United We Learn Council.

Problem Statement

This problem statement articulates the current state of assessment and accountability and the constraints it causes, which have led to the exploration of local accountability work.

Kentuckians have articulated a shared vision for vibrant learning experiences that equip every student with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to lead, contribute and thrive; however, this vision is constrained by an outdated assessment accountability system that measures too narrow a range of metrics.

Theory of Action

This theory of action articulates the expected causal relationship between local accountability efforts, their expected short and medium-term outcomes, and their desired long-term transformation. A theory of action is structured like so: **If we** [action or strategies implemented by the program/initiative], **then** [short and medium-term outcome], **so that** [desired long-term, transformative goal].

IF *school districts and communities co-create local accountability systems grounded in vibrant learning, innovative assessment, and authentic community partnership,*

THEN *they will cultivate reciprocal, trusting relationships that foster growth and meaningful educational experiences, and*

SO THAT *all students graduate with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to lead joyful and productive lives.*

The underlying belief behind this theory of action is in the transformative power of vibrant learning experiences and the effectiveness of the Portrait of a Learner (PoL) strategy in bringing such experiences to life. PoL offers a framework for teachers, schools, districts, and communities to enhance the quality, richness and authenticity of learning experiences. This

improvement leads to stronger literacy and numeracy attainment, resulting in a deeper transfer of the knowledge, skills and dispositions mastered in school.

Four Habits of Inclusive Design

The Four Habits of Inclusive Design are foundational to the development of local accountability systems in Kentucky. These habits—**Empathy, Inclusion, Co-Creation and Reciprocity**—are not simply practices for engagement, but principles that foster **transparency, collaboration and trust** between schools and the communities they serve. When school systems intentionally seek out and listen to diverse experiences (Empathy), ensure that marginalized voices are heard and valued (Inclusion), work side-by-side with stakeholders to design and decide (Co-Creation), and share responsibility and benefits with their communities (Reciprocity), they build deeper, more authentic relationships with those they serve. Ultimately, these habits help establish a culture of trust in public education—one where families, students and educators see themselves as partners in shaping meaningful learning experiences and shared accountability for student success.

- Allen County Schools, under the leadership of Superintendent Travis Hamby, has deeply embraced the Four Habits of Inclusive Design as a guiding framework for its local accountability work. By centering empathy, inclusion, co-creation and reciprocity, Allen County has built stronger connections with families, students and community members—ensuring their voices play a meaningful role in shaping the future of learning. The community has responded with enthusiasm and a renewed sense of shared purpose, reflecting a strong commitment to the ambitious change effort underway.

Aspirational Goals

The following aspirational goals identify the key transformative outcomes that are intended by the implementation of local accountability systems.

- **Transformed learning systems that provide vibrant learning experiences for every student,**
- **All students are prepared with the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions to lead a joyful, productive and personally meaningful life,**
- **An accountability system that provides transparent, actionable and human-centered data (qualitative and quantitative) that informs student, parent, school, district and community-level decisions,**
- **Adaptive-level capacity that inspires and informs technical solutions,**

and a transformed and reciprocal culture of collaboration between districts, schools, communities and state agencies.

Statewide Commitment and Capacity-Building for Local Accountability

This guide accompanies a rich menu of support, resources and networks offered by the Kentucky Department of Education and its partners, along with a grassroots network of school, district and systems leaders who are committed to shared learning and the transformation of learning experiences for students.

The Kentucky Department of Education currently facilitates a community of practice through the **Local Laboratories of Learning (L3)** initiative, which has promoted the development, cycles of iteration and improvement, and now proliferation of local accountability. The L3 community of practice is an ongoing collaborative effort where leaders, community members and others from 18 L3 districts convene to share progress, participate in site visits, provide insights into prototypes for feedback and collaborate on shared problems of practice. This community of practice continues to create a space that uplifts shared knowledge, offers continuous feedback and support, and informs state-level systems and policies concerning assessment and accountability. Additionally, each member district in the community of practice receives personalized coaching from the Kentucky Department of Education and its partners.

Brian Creasman, Ed.D presents local accountability work at a Kentucky Innovative Learning Network event.

The department, its partners and the current members of the L3 community of practice are dedicated to the ongoing growth, development and enhancement of local accountability. These supports exist alongside this design guide and toolkit, and we invite any readers interested in implementing local accountability to reach out to take advantage of these resources and connections.

The Impact of Local Accountability So Far

Several Kentucky districts have already developed and implemented sophisticated prototypes of local assessment and accountability systems. The leaders, teachers, students and community members of these districts tell compelling stories about the power of local accountability in action. We define the term local accountability and discuss the rationale for its implementation above, but the true impacts of local accountability are best described by those leaders and learners who experience it in action. The following quotes tell the story of local accountability through the lens of superintendents, community members and students.

Superintendent Traysea Moresea of Greenup County Public Schools shares how local accountability has deepened the reciprocal relationship between the school district and community:

> **"Collaborating with our community stakeholders grew into more than a dashboard that highlights data for transparency. We now have community members contacting us to become more involved in our schools, simply because they believe in what we are doing for our students. They follow our social media, where we tell our stories and share them with family members and friends throughout the country. Business owners, local leaders and community activists will request meetings to discuss providing monetary support, grants, new programs and offer to volunteer as mentors.**
>
> **The district itself has a different feeling. Students are telling us what they want to become and sharing their hopes and dreams. Students openly provide feedback, complement each other on their accomplishments and encourage each other to take on new challenges. It feels as if our community is waiting to learn about the next innovative way we can update or change for the better, and they want to know how to become involved in the process.**
>
> **Local Accountability is much bigger than transparency, storytelling, data, tests, projects, etc. It's an attitude and an appreciation for the hope that can come from**

public education. I hope it one day liberates our schools from the single data point to identify their quality via ranking and name to shame. Local Accountability is what is needed to move our educational system forward and produce successful students who can embrace their strengths and know their worth to the world."

It is clear from the voices of leaders, students, teachers and community members across the state that local accountability provides a framework to develop richer learning and partnerships in our school systems, while also articulating, evaluating and communicating progress on a broader range of aspirations for our students that include academic achievement, but other areas of achievement and excellence, as well. This toolkit aims to enable to ongoing growth of these systems in service of an aspirational educational system in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

A student at Lawrence County High School demonstrates an aeronautics simulator for community members.

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGN GUIDE

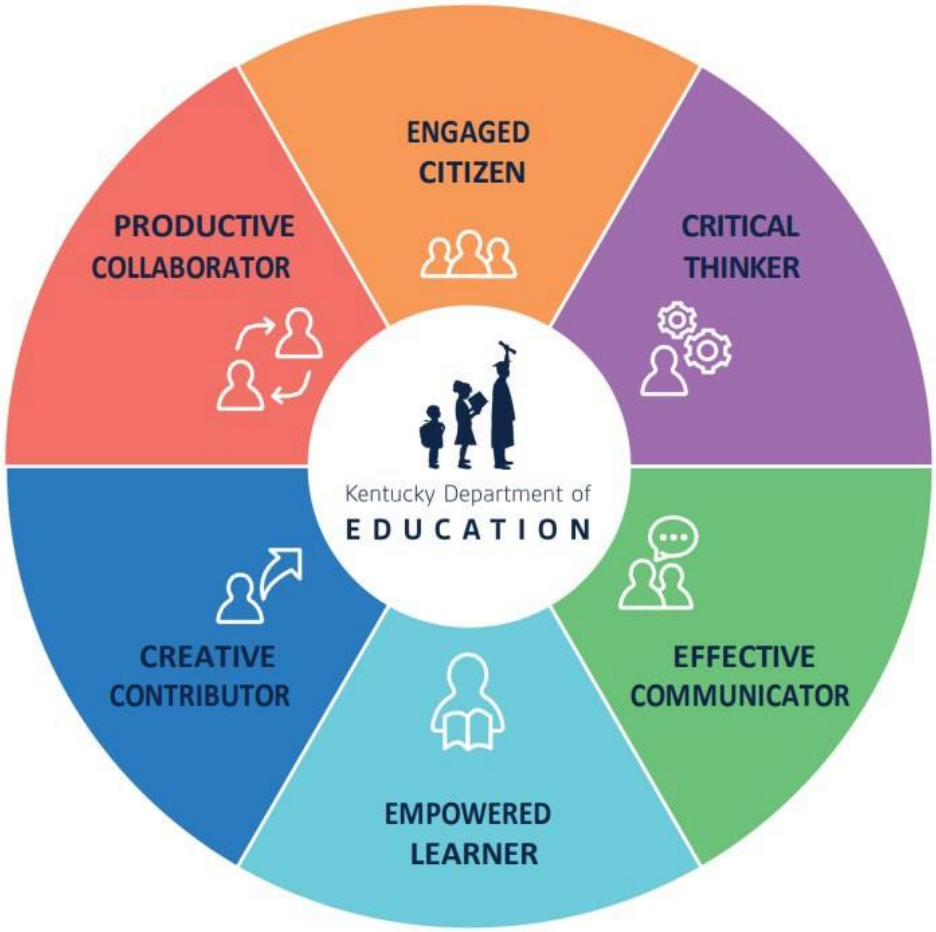
The team at the University of Kentucky's Center for Next Generation Leadership (UK NextGen) has created a Local Accountability Continuum based on partnerships and examples from districts in the field that are designing, developing and implementing local accountability systems.

The Local Accountability Continuum encompasses various approaches to developing a local accountability system. It is essential to recognize that this resource is a continuum rather than a linear representation of engaging with local accountability. Each district presents its own unique needs and methods for local accountability.

ACTION ONE: DEFINE SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS

Defining success for students is a foundational step in creating meaningful local accountability systems. This involves forming a coalition of essential stakeholders—educators, administrators, parents, students and community members—to collaboratively envision outcomes for learners. Together, stakeholders address the central question: *"What do we want students to know, be like and be able to do when they leave us?"* By engaging deeply in co-creation, this coalition identifies and prioritizes the specific knowledge, skills and dispositions essential for student success within the context of their community. This collaborative effort often culminates in the creation of a Portrait of a Learner (PoL), a shared, community-driven framework that articulates the vision for student achievement and growth.

While developing a Portrait of a Learner (PoL) is not the only way for a district, school or community to define and communicate student success, it is a proven and effective method that has been adopted by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) and is currently being implemented in over 150 districts across Kentucky. This guide will consistently refer to PoL as a high-leverage and essential strategy for designing and implementing effective local accountability systems.



KENTUCKY PORTRAIT OF A LEARNER

The Kentucky Portrait of a Learner features six competencies: Engaged Citizen, Critical Thinker, Effective Communicator, Empowered Learner, Creative Contributor and Productive Collaborator.

Key Strategy – Portrait of a Learner

The following steps outline how a school, district, or community might approach developing a local Portrait of a Learner (PoL). These steps have been adapted from the Developing Competencies, Performance Outcomes and Indicators for Portrait of a Learner guidance from the Kentucky Department of Education.

1. **Assemble an Inclusive Design Team:**
    - Form a diverse group that includes educators, administrators, students, parents, business leaders and community members.

- This team is responsible for designing the PoL, engaging the broader community and facilitating key decisions.

2. **Establish a Vision:**
   - Clearly define the competencies a successful learner should possess, considering the unique needs and characteristics of the community.
   - Address relevant challenges, opportunities and educational and workforce trends.
3. **Gather Community Input:**
   - Utilize surveys, focus groups, public forums and empathy interviews to gather input from various stakeholders, especially students.
   - Aim to understand community perspectives on essential learner competencies.

District Spotlight: Middlesboro Independent School District

To ensure broad and inclusive input in their Portrait of a Learner process, Middlesboro Independent School District launched a community-wide survey aimed at engaging those who

were unable to attend in-person meetings. This brief, five-question survey invited students, families, educators and community members to review the draft competencies and descriptors and share their feedback. The goal was to gather a wide range of perspectives to inform final discussions and edits at the concluding community meeting. The district received 167 thoughtful responses, which led to meaningful adjustments, refining language for clarity and adding important elements such as creativity and a stronger emphasis on emotional intelligence. This approach allowed the district to cast a wider net for engagement and ensure the final Portrait reflected the collective vision and values of the broader Middlesboro community.

1. **Analyze Input and Draft the Portrait of a Learner:**
    - Analyze stakeholder feedback to draft a PoL reflecting the community's shared vision.
    - Ensure competencies identified are applicable beyond the school environment, preparing students for college, career and life.
2. **Seek Feedback on Draft PoL:**
    - Distribute the draft widely and collect feedback using multiple methods to ensure broad community support and inclusiveness.
3. **Revise and Finalize the PoL:**
    - Incorporate community feedback to refine the PoL.
        - Obtain approval from the design team and key stakeholders such as the local Board of Education, then finalize and publish the PoL.
4. **Communicate the PoL:**
    - Use various communication channels to inform and engage the community.
        - Highlight the purpose and significance of the PoL, its benefits to students, schools, and the broader community.

District Spotlight: Christian County

"The Christian County Profile of a Graduate billboard was advertised to bring awareness to the community about the value of non-academic skills that we consider superpowers: communication, collaboration, professionalism, innovation and accountability. The billboard design was advertised during the month of February, which is a month where all schools are encouraged to advertise and use the language of Profile of a Graduate on their social media platforms and other communications." – Dr. Kadi Ralston, Christian County

5. **Review and Update the PoL:**
    - Periodically reconvene the design team to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the PoL.
    - Update as necessary in response to community shifts or broader educational developments.

Summary

By embracing community collaboration and continuous improvement, districts across Kentucky have successfully implemented the Portrait of a Learner as a flexible framework for defining and communicating student success. This represents a crucial first step along the Local Accountability continuum. It establishes a shared purpose, language and pathway for achieving student success in a transparent and reciprocal partnership with students, educators,

community members and other stakeholders towards a thriving and reimagined assessment and accountability system.

Community members meet with students and discuss their plans, priorities and opportunities in Hardin County.

CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY: Portrait in the Bluegrass: Woodford County's Journey to Redefine Success

Setting the Scene: Local Accountability in Woodford County

Nestled in the heart of Kentucky's Bluegrass region, Woodford County is known for its rolling farmland, horse farms, and close-knit neighborhoods. Its schools are a source of pride and community identity, serving just over 4,000 students across seven schools. The district mirrors its community: rooted in tradition but increasingly diverse, with nearly three in ten students from minority backgrounds. Families and educators alike describe Woodford as a place where people value strong relationships and high expectations but also recognize the urgency of preparing students for a world that looks very different from the one their parents grew up in.

That tension, between honoring tradition and embracing change, set the stage for a new chapter. In the fall of 2022, district leaders and community members came together to begin shaping a Portrait of a Learner (PoL), a vision that defines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions every Woodford student should grow and carry with them, from kindergarten through graduation. The effort grew out of Kentucky's statewide "United We Learn" vision and was catalyzed by the Deeper Learning (DL) grant through the Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative (CKEC). Together, the grant and the conversations it sparked gave Woodford County an opening to ask hard questions: What do we really want for our children? How should success be measured beyond test scores?

Spotlight on a Promising Practice: From Fog to Clarity - Building the Portrait

At first, the process felt murky. Committee members described the early phases as *"foggy work"*—exciting but hard to pin down. For some, like Ryan Asher, Chief Academic Officer, that

fog was particularly dense: “I wasn’t truly a believer at first. It felt intangible.” But step by step, clarity began to emerge. Woodford County’s Deeper Learning Team convened a design group that included not only educators but also the mayor, judge executive, parents, and local leaders. Facilitated by UK Next Generation, the group started with a deceptively simple question: *“What do you hope for your children?”*

Through three surveys (to parents, students, and community members), social media outreach, and repeated community conversations, the team refined the portrait. To make it truly K–12, they intentionally called it a Portrait of a Learner, not graduate, and wove in all seven school colors to signal unity. The first competency drafted was “Resilient Learner.”

The district also visited other systems further along in their Portrait journey. Watching students confidently demonstrate competencies and educators design meaningful learning experiences transformed the Portrait from theory to practice. For many, those visits cleared away lingering doubts, turning skeptics into believers and giving the district both clarity and conviction for its own path forward.

When the design was ready, Elaine Bailey, the district’s Communications Officer, led an intentional rollout guided by a simple litmus test: in every communication she aimed to answer, ‘I want to know one thing, what does this mean for me and my kid?’ Leaders described her efforts as critical. Through careful scheduling, consistent messaging, and patience, she helped shift the community’s perception of the Portrait from ‘What the heck are we doing?’ to ‘I see what this means for our kids.’

After the Portrait was designed, year one was framed as a soft launch, a cycle of *“Learn, Launch, Look”*—focused on building understanding, piloting practices, and refining as they went. As Scott Hundley, Coordinator of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, explained, this approach empowered educators to “Learn the competencies. Launch the language. Look for opportunities to connect. That slow approach made all the difference.”

For Woodford, the Portrait of a Learner wasn’t meant to stay on a poster. The district knew that unless teachers and students could see themselves in it, the competencies would remain abstract. Their solution was to create five “Paths to the Portrait,” entry points that bring the PoL to life across grade levels and subject areas.

Woodford County's Portrait of a Learner and the "Paths to the Portrait."

Each Path represents a way for students and staff to "live" the competencies in daily practice. These aren't side initiatives; they are the vehicles through which the PoL moves from vision to reality. Leaders describe them as both guardrails and green lights: guardrails to keep the work focused on the competencies and green lights to encourage innovation and experimentation.

- **Deeper Learning** – Focuses instructional design on applying standards and building PoL competencies. Woodford County understands that committing to their Portrait of a Learner means the student experience has to shift. As Susan Tracy explained, "It's not a work sheet, sit-and-get experience. They have to have some sort of vibrant experience to get those competencies" The plan for Deeper Learning sequences capacity-building (e.g., REAL protocol for identifying essentials, the 4 Shifts Protocol, and a Deeper Learning Academy) to help teachers redesign tasks and assessments over four years.

- **Demonstrations of Learning** – Establishes public exhibitions, student-led conferences, and Defenses of Learning so students show what they know. The timeline phases in one exhibition per level, then mini defenses (grade 4, 7, 11), and will ultimately culminate in defenses at grades 5, 8, and 12 with community participation. By selecting the word 'demonstration' in place of 'assessment,' this path reframed the experience, not as another test to pass, but as a chance for students to show what they know in authentic ways.

- **Technology & Innovation –** Focuses on building both staff and student capacity through initiatives like the Tech & Innovation Academy. The emphasis is on digital citizenship, authentic learning, and meaningful feedback. Experiences and tools such as robotics, VR field trips, and student tech leadership are used not as add-ons, but as ways to deepen thinking and enrich learning experiences.

- **Career Readiness** – Treats career readiness as **K–12** endeavor which ensures that preparation doesn't start in high school, it's embedded from the early grades. Students see clearer links between what they learn in class and the futures they're building.

- **Community Engagement** – opportunities such as "Woodford Wins" and "Sip and Share" events invite students to showcase their work alongside families and local partners, reinforcing that learning has value beyond the classroom.

Why it matters: The Paths are the district's "how." They convert a shared vision into routinized experiences, schedules, and supports, so the Portrait isn't a poster, it's alive. As one leader explained: *"Think of it like teaching a new language. The more we repeat it, the more fluent our staff and students become."* The five Paths are Woodford's grammar for that new language, making sure the Portrait isn't just aspirational words but a living part of how students learn every day.

Habits of Co-Creation in Action

Woodford's PoL development and roll-out harnesses the power of designing with empathy. Leaders made deliberate moves to center voices that are often left out, such as Hispanic families, local officials, and parents across roles. The district hosted "Woodford Wins" (with 40 community participants) and Sip and Share sessions to gather feedback and ensure their Portrait responded to the needs and feelings of their greater community.

That feedback wasn't always easy. Early drafts were critiqued as being full of jargon. Surveys revealed that many parents "didn't know what it was." The district responded by simplifying language and sharing concrete examples.

Once the Portrait was developed, rolling it out with the "Launch, Learn, Look" approach acknowledged the weight already on educators. Rather than a top-down approach, Woodford County gave educators the time to authentically learn about their Portrait and identify areas in their current practices that have already brought Portrait competencies to life. This empathetic design choice led to educators owning the Portrait and it is spreading in a more sustainable, authentic way.

Educators explore how Woodford County Portrait of a Learner competencies connect to key teaching and learning practices.

Even after the initial rollout, leaders acknowledged that 'the Portrait still feels abstract to some of our key stakeholders.' To bring it to life, the district hosted a Leadership Summit that gathered a diverse group of voices, counselors, instructional coaches, youth service center coordinators, and social workers. Together they explored questions like, 'Where do I fit in this Portrait work? What do I have to offer? What resources can I help our students tap into?' From those conversations, the group developed a short video that now serves as an orientation tool for new staff, helping them see how their roles connect directly to the Portrait.

Shifts in Student Experience: Living the Portrait Through the Paths

The clearest evidence that the Portrait of a Learner is taking hold in Woodford can be seen in how students now show their learning. Through the Demonstrations of Learning Path, exhibitions, like The Amazing Shake and student-led conferences, as well as early pilots of student defenses are changing the way students reflect and present. Instead of learning being tucked away in a gradebook, students are standing up, telling the story of their work, and practicing the kind of communication and self-advocacy that the Portrait envisions. By the

time full defenses roll out across the district, public demonstrations will feel as natural to students as turning in an assignment once did.

Students at Woodford County Middle School showcased artifacts of their learning during Student-Led Conferences, highlighting their growth in the district's Portrait of a Learner.

These showcases are supported by the Deeper Learning Path, which has reshaped classroom experiences. Teachers are using frameworks like REAL and the 4 Shifts to design tasks that stretch beyond coverage of standards, giving students opportunities to wrestle with authentic problems and exercise more agency in how they demonstrate mastery.

Together, these shifts are changing the feel of school for students. As Communications Director Elaine observed, *"There's a stronger creativity in student groups now—enough that I noticed it right away."* The Portrait no longer lives in abstract language on the wall; it's being acted out as students present, problem-solve, and create in ways that mirror the competencies their community said mattered most.

What's Next: Deepening the Portrait

As Woodford looks ahead, leaders describe this stage of the journey as moving from *design* to *definition*. The Portrait exists, the five Paths are in place, and now the work is about building consistency and coherence so that every student, in every school, feels the impact.

One major focus is on scaling up Demonstrations of Learning. After piloting exhibitions and early defenses, the district is preparing for the moment when every student in grades 5, 8, and 12 stands before an audience to defend their growth. Leaders are working to create rubrics that will give structure without stifling authenticity. The goal is for these defenses to become milestones that families and the community look forward to, just like concerts or ballgames. At the same time, Woodford is mapping out strategic plans for each Path, ensuring that Deeper Learning, Innovation, Career Readiness, and Community Engagement all have roadmaps with clear leadership and support.

The Woodford County Portrait of a Learner comes to life as Woodford County High School and Northside Elementary School students work hands-on in a science discovery activity.

The slow, steady pacing that characterized the launch will continue. Leaders talk openly about the need to balance urgency with patience: building something that lasts requires giving teachers and students time to connect the Portrait to their own work.

And while the district is looking inward to refine its own systems, it's also looking outward. Leaders emphasized the power of visiting peers and learning from their examples, but also equal value when others come to Woodford. As one leader noted, 'You don't know what you don't know until you experience it… and when people visit us, we learn just as much from their questions as they do from our story.' That reciprocal exchange has become part of how Woodford keeps sharpening its Portrait work.

They also credit their progress to taking it slowly. 'Go slow to go fast,' Hundley reflected, explaining how the district resisted the temptation to cram everything into a year. Instead, they built background knowledge, modeled strategies, and allowed teachers to make connections to what they already do. The result: not a poster on the wall, but a living framework that teachers, students, and families recognize in action.

Community events like Woodford Wins and new industry partnerships are expected to grow, creating more opportunities for students to showcase their competencies with authentic audiences and mentors. In short, the next chapter is about turning sparks into structures, embedding exhibitions, mapping the Paths, and weaving the Portrait so deeply into the culture that it becomes the natural way of doing school. The vision is clear; now the work is about making it unmistakable in every classroom, for every learner.

ACTION TWO: DESIGN VIBRANT LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS

At the heart of local accountability lies a collective commitment to creating learning experiences that are relevant, authentic, and joyful for every student. This starts with a clear, community-defined vision of student success—the knowledge, skills and dispositions students need to thrive in school and beyond. Once a community has developed its Portrait of a Learner and defined its shared goals and aspirations for students, the next step is to design and promote vibrant learning experiences for all students.

The Kentucky United We Learn Council defines vibrant learning experiences as the following:

> **"Learning that matters to students."**
>
> **In partnership with families and communities, students are agents of their own learning, engaged in relevant, authentic and joyful learning opportunities. Vibrant learning honors students' cultural wealth, gifts and interests. Vibrant learning culminates in the application of knowledge and skills demonstrated through personalized products.**

There are two key strategies for this Local Accountability action. First, create performance outcomes and indicators aligned with the district-level Portrait of a Learner so that all schools, educators, students and stakeholders are clear on the design elements, standards-driven knowledge and skills students should experience and demonstrate across all grade bands. Second, provide purposeful and widespread professional development for educators to enhance their capacity and skills in effectively utilizing High Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs) where possible, refining HQIRs over time for deeper learning, and designing their own vibrant learning experiences aligned to grade-level standards.

A representative from the Kentucky Student Voice Team shares their work with a room of stakeholders.

Key Strategy – Development of Performance Outcomes and Indicators for Portrait of a Learner

Developing performance outcomes and indicators aligned with a local Portrait of a Learner (PoL) is an iterative process. While it is helpful to follow a general sequence, districts should anticipate revisiting and refining steps as teachers design instruction and students produce authentic work. What follows is a flexible roadmap to guide your district in designing curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

1. Understand the Competencies

Begin with a shared understanding of the competencies in your PoL. Gather teachers from each district-assigned grade band to explore what each competency looks like in practice. The grade bands are determined based on how the schools in the district naturally transition students from primary to intermediate to middle and finally to high school. The designated teachers who serve as authors of the outcomes and indicators should be experienced in curriculum design and well-acquainted with the cognitive and social development associated with each grade band.

2. Define Performance Outcomes

Translate each competency into broad performance outcomes. Ask: *What does it look like when a student fully embodies this competency?* For example, complete the phrase: "An engaged citizen is someone who…" These outcomes serve as the foundation for assessment and instructional planning. Often, the performance outcomes can be directly derived from the published Portrait of a Learner descriptors. However, the descriptors must be clear, concise and distinctly unique from one another. This practice creates a strong cohesion between the Portrait of a Learner and its associated performance outcomes, benefiting all potential users – teachers, students, parents and community members.

3. Create Performance Indicators

Break each outcome into specific, observable and measurable indicators by grade level or grade band. Performance indicators must be applicable to any content area and context. Indicators should illustrate how a student's ability grows over time, from foundational understanding to more complex applications. There are multiple ways to enhance complexity across the grade bands. One method is the taxonomy of the verbs used in the expected indicators. Another involves the complexity of the tasks that a student must complete to provide evidence of the indicators. Indicators can describe how students will demonstrate their learning—through essays, mathematical modeling, data presentations, research, performances and other authentic tasks—across all grade bands. This progression supports alignment across classrooms and helps educators, students and families understand the learning journey.

4. Align Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Using the performance outcomes and indicators, start designing learning experiences that help students develop the PoL competencies defined by the grade-band indicator. These experiences may come from multiple entry points:

- Leveraging HQIR: Many High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs) already embed inquiry-driven, authentic learning opportunities (e.g., EL Education, My Perspectives, OpenSciEd, Illustrative Mathematics). Districts can intentionally align these existing Tier 1 resources to the PoL competencies by making thoughtful adjustments where needed and curating evidence of learning within them.

- Designing Vibrant Learning Experiences: In cases where current resources do not address the intended competencies or authentic contexts, districts may develop new experiences or extend existing ones to ensure alignment to the PoL.

- Assessment Alignment: As instructional design increasingly reflects the performance indicators, assessment practices will also evolve. This may include both evidences collected from Tier 1 experiences and more formal performance-based assessments

(such as capstone projects, student defenses, or exhibitions of learning). These demonstrations of learning serve as culminating evidence while also reinforcing that performance assessment is not separate from day-to-day instruction but embedded across the continuum. This alignment process is not meant to replace local curriculum adoption or development, but rather to support districts in connecting existing HQIR and learning experiences with their Portrait of a Learner in meaningful and authentic ways.

5. Monitor and Adjust

Use performance indicators to track student growth. Continuously monitor progress, provide feedback, and adjust instruction to meet student needs. This helps ensure all learners stay on a path toward mastery of the performance outcome.

Key Strategy – Professional Development and Support for Staff Focused on Vibrant Learning Experiences

Vibrant learning experiences have the power to transform student outcomes, but they don't happen by chance—they require educators who are equipped, supported and inspired to design and facilitate them. To make this possible, districts must invest in professional learning that mirrors the very experiences we want for students: engaging, relevant, collaborative and anchored in real-world application.

When educators reflect on their own joyful, memorable learning moments, they often identify shared qualities: relevance, authenticity, active participation and personal meaning. Yet moving from agreement on these characteristics to consistently implementing them in classrooms requires more than good intentions—it requires time, targeted skill development and the support to experiment and refine practice.

A systemic approach to local accountability recognizes that **educators deserve the same kinds of learning experiences we aspire to create for students**. This "parallel pedagogy" ensures that professional learning is not passive or compliance-driven, but immersive and transformative. Whether it's competency-based education, project-based learning, or building authentic partnerships with community members, teachers must first experience these approaches as learners themselves to fully understand their potential impact.

Kentucky Innovative Teacher Fellows participate in a design and engineering activity during a professional development session.

Effective professional development for vibrant learning experiences should:

- **Engage educators as learners** through hands-on, immersive experiences that mirror the authentic, inquiry-driven activities they will later facilitate with students.
- Build **competency in high-impact practices** such as designing performance assessments, facilitating project-based learning and integrating community assets into the curriculum.
- Strengthen Tier 1 instruction by ensuring **effective, evidence-based practices** are consistently implemented, providing a strong foundation for all learners and guaranteeing equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities.
- Build **collaborative learning communities** where educators reflect together, share strategies, and co-create solutions that are responsive to their students and local contexts.
- **Provide sustained support and feedback** so that new practices are enforced, refined, and scaled over time.

When professional learning is designed in this way, it does more than align curriculum, instruction, and assessment – it elevates teacher efficacy, cultivates a shared commitment to the district's vision for vibrant learning, and directly enhances the quality and authenticity of student experiences.

Bryan Quillen and Jeremy Hall celebrated completion of the Kentucky Innovative Teacher Fellowship.

Summary

Action Two focuses on creating learning experiences that are relevant, authentic and joyful for all students, grounded in a community-driven vision of student success, often illustrated as a Portrait of a Learner (PoL). Designing dynamic learning experiences promotes student agency and fosters continuous growth through personalized and competency-based learning. Ultimately, developing vibrant learning experiences necessitates a system-wide commitment to innovation, collaboration and reflective practice among educators**.**

An agriculture student in Hardin County shows the results of his work in the hydroponics/aquaponics lab.

CASE STUDY

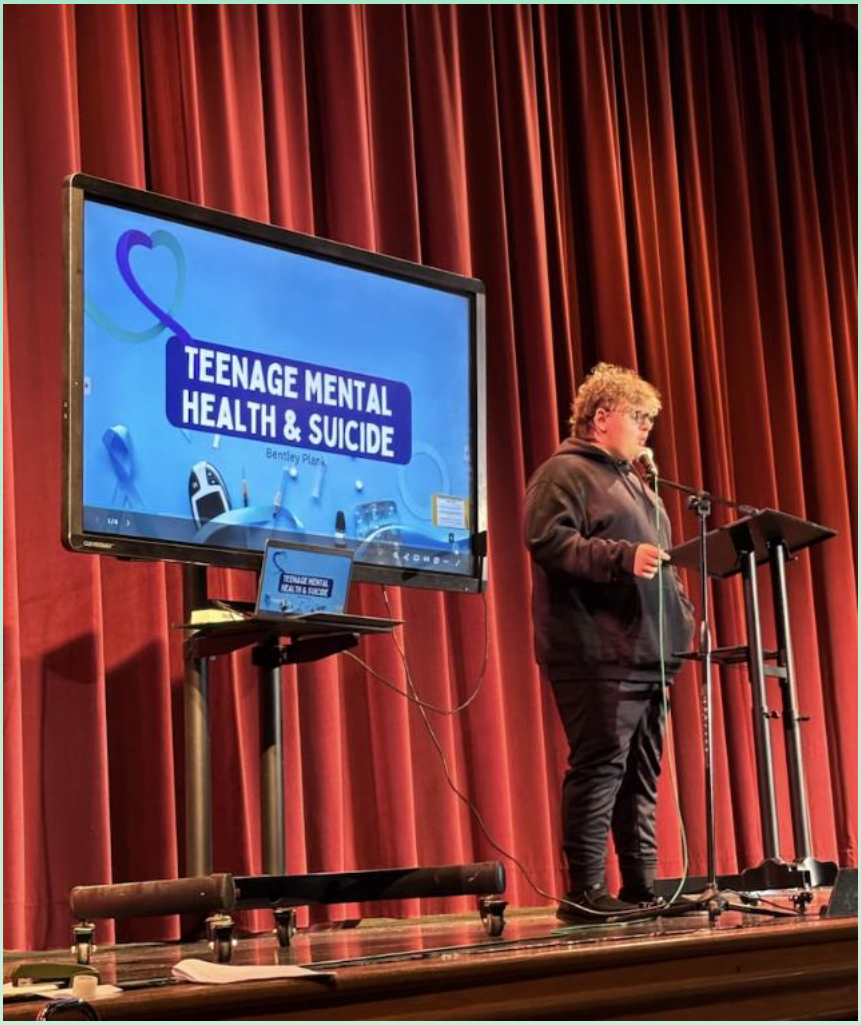
CASE STUDY: From Poster to Practice: Designing Vibrant Learning in Rowan County

Setting the Scene: Local Accountability in Rowan County

With just over 3,200 students and nearly 70 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price meals, Rowan County Schools is a small district with big aspirations. Its four elementary schools, middle and high school, preschool, alternative program, and virtual academy serve a diverse community, strengthened by close partnerships with Morehead State University and UK St. Claire Regional Medical Center.

Like many districts, Rowan once measured success largely through state accountability ratings. When Rowan County High School earned the title of "School of Distinction," leaders initially celebrated, only to realize little had changed for students. As Brandy Carver, Assistant Superintendent, then high school assistant principal, reflected, "The disheartening part was that we figured out how to manipulate that accountability system. We had mastered the game, but nothing about student achievement or growth had actually improved."

That realization became a turning point. Rather than chasing test labels, Rowan's leaders began asking: What skills do our students truly need to thrive in life, work, and community? To answer that question, they turned outward. As an L3 district, Rowan brought its draft Portrait of a Learner to local families, business leaders, and civic partners for feedback from kitchen table conversations to Rotary and Chamber of Commerce meetings. This collaboration not only shaped the Valiant Viking but also signaled that accountability would be rooted in shared values, not just compliance.



All 9th graders in Rowan County share a *TED Talk* on a topic they're passionate about.

The launch of student defenses soon put this vision to the test. While promising, early defenses fell flat, with presentations that looked and sounded alike. As Carver recalled, "Everybody's defense looked the same…something had to change." The experience made clear that if students were going to demonstrate the Valiant Viking competencies, they first needed vibrant, meaningful learning experiences in their classrooms to draw from.

Spotlight on a Promising Practice: Building Vibrant Learning Through Teacher and Leader Supports

Rowan's journey toward vibrant learning wasn't about layering another initiative onto teachers; it instead focused on reshaping daily instruction so that standards-based learning and the competencies of the Valiant Viking Portrait of a Learner worked in tandem. District

leaders made it clear: this was not an *either/or* choice. Vibrant learning was the connective tissue that tied academic standards to the Valiant Viking competencies.

To move from vision to practice, Rowan relied on what leaders called the "coalition of the willing." Rather than mandate a uniform approach, they started with teachers eager to try something new: piloting exhibitions, authentic projects, and community partnerships. Those early adopters became models for colleagues. "You always start with the willing," noted Kellyn Poage, Community Schools Director. "Once you have a foundation of teachers in each building leading, others see it's possible, and everyone wants to be recognized too."

Rowan knew that lasting change required building capacity at every level. The district invested deeply in leadership and teacher learning, sending instructional coaches, principals, and teacher leaders to UK Next Gen to develop shared language and entry points for vibrant learning. Back home, that investment showed up in vision days where educators worked by grade bands to explore how HQIRs could be springboards for authentic, student-centered experiences. Instructional coaches became the backbone of the work, carrying their Next Gen learning into PLCs and co-planning lessons that pushed beyond coverage of content toward deeper, more connected learning.

A snapshot of a social media post from EL Education exemplifying how Rowan County brings vibrant learning to life with HQIRs like EL Education's.

Early on, one hurdle was helping teachers see that high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) and vibrant learning weren't competing priorities. The breakthrough came when the district embedded a coach directly in PLCs to make the connection visible. The coach's role was to listen for natural openings in unit planning and connect teachers with community partners who could bring content to life. She arranged for a university paleontologist to enrich a fossil unit and helped fourth graders host a poetry slam at a downtown coffee shop. These "simple shifts," as Carver described, showed teachers that vibrant learning didn't require elaborate projects, just small, sustainable connections that made curriculum come alive.

With this support and continued learning, teachers began to view HQIRs as launchpads rather than limits. A second grade EL pollinator unit, for instance, connected with the high school's civil engineering class, whose students maintained beehives and brought them to elementary schools for hands-on lessons. In another case, a birds unit evolved into a yearlong study of local species. These kinds of experiences showed that HQIRs and vibrant learning could work together to spark authentic, student-centered learning.

To sustain the momentum, Rowan cultivated a culture of recognition and storytelling. A districtwide hashtag and regular social media posts highlighted vibrant classrooms, celebrating both students and teachers. As Carver explained, "If you highlight those things and recognize the teachers who are doing it, it spreads."

Over time, this visibility gave the community a stronger role in shaping and benefiting from student learning. Downtown businesses hosted poetry slams, civic leaders joined exhibitions, and industry partners began to see defenses as a talent pipeline. What began as simply including the community has grown into mutual benefit, setting the stage for true reciprocity.

By starting with the willing, embedding coaching into daily practice, investing in leadership learning, and reframing HQIRs as gateways rather than guardrails, Rowan has transformed vibrant learning from isolated moments into a shared way of teaching and learning.

Habits of Co-Creation in Action: Reciprocity

Rowan's story illustrates how inclusive design can grow into reciprocal relationships between schools and their community. Early on, leaders recognized that the district couldn't do this work in isolation. Through L3 and the Prichard Committee, they learned that families, businesses, and local organizations wanted to contribute but often lacked a clear entry point. By inviting community members into the conversation about success, from Rotary and

Chamber of Commerce meetings to university roundtables, Rowan created pathways for authentic participation.

Rowan County's vibrant learning shines as Dual Credit Teaching + Learning pathway students connect with Morehead State University and community partners on their journey to becoming future teachers.

What has emerged is more than inclusion; it's reciprocity. Community members are not just giving opinions; they're benefitting from the partnership. During student defenses, for example, seniors now present to authentic audiences aligned with their career interests. Last year, two students left with job offers after defending their learning in front of local industry leaders. These moments affirm students' readiness while giving businesses access to the very talent they say they need.

The same dynamic is playing out across classrooms. High school civil engineering students share their beekeeping expertise with second graders studying pollinators, and elementary students bring new energy and purpose to their younger peers' learning. Downtown businesses host student-led poetry slams and civic design projects, gaining fresh ideas while reinforcing the value of student voice. In Carver's words, what began as an effort to include the community has grown into a cycle of giving back- "small, sustainable connections that make learning real for kids and meaningful for our partners."

Shifts in the Student Experience: Learning That Matters

Rowan's investment in designing vibrant learning is most evident in how day-to-day student experiences have changed. Rowan's defenses have matured from scripted presentations into authentic demonstrations of learning that reflect each student's journey. Defenses which were once described as "cookie-cutter" now are praised as individualized and meaningful, with students speaking confidently about their growth. As Carver noted, "This year's defenses were hands down the best they had been…kids weren't just reading from a script, they were having conversations." For seniors, shifts in defense to include meaningful community and industry partners opened doors to employment and valuable connections, underscoring their real-world value.

These shifts extend beyond defenses. In classrooms across the district, students are engaging in work that feels authentic and connected to the world around them. Sixth graders reading *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* extended their learning through a Zoom call with a family member in Kansas to explore wind energy firsthand. Other students turned an EL module on schools around the world into a "traveling libraries" project, designing creative ways to expand access to books. At the middle school level, an epidemic unit pushed students to wrestle with public health challenges and present their solutions to peers and staff. Together, these experiences show how HQIRs, paired with teacher creativity and community connections, have made learning more vibrant and real.

Even the youngest learners are embracing the Portrait of a Learner. Kindergarten and preschool students now use the Valiant Viking language to describe their growth. As Carver shared, “When you have kindergartners say, ‘I’m an effective communicator because…,’ you know something has shifted.”

Together, these experiences signal a profound change: students are no longer producing work only for grades or tests, but for audiences and purposes that matter. Learning is becoming public, reciprocal, and rooted in the skills the community values most.

What’s Next for Rowan County

As Rowan looks ahead, leaders describe this stage of the journey as moving from scattered pilots to full system alignment. The district recently made student defenses a graduation requirement, a decision the board embraced without hesitation. For Carver, the lack of pushback was telling: “It wasn’t even a debate. This has just become who we are.”

The next major step is the development of a local accountability dashboard. Poage, Carver, and their team are visiting community groups, from Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce to university roundtables and women’s clubs, to gather feedback on what success should look like for Rowan County Schools. Their goal is to design a dashboard that reflects not just compliance metrics but the skills, values, and outcomes the community says matter most.

Over the next three to five years, Rowan plans to implement exhibitions of learning at every grade level in preparation for defenses at transition grades.

Leaders envision kindergartners through seniors using the Valiant Viking language to describe their growth, and students at every level engaged in authentic, connected learning. As Carver explained, the ultimate measure of success will be when more graduates leave not only academically prepared, but ready to thrive in work, community, and life.

By continuing to move deliberately, invest in teacher and leader learning, and strengthen reciprocal partnerships with the community, Rowan is positioning its accountability system as a living framework- one that grows from shared values and creates real opportunities for its learners.

Points of Reflection

- **Pace vs. Scale:** How might your district balance a “go slow to go fast” approach with the urgency of spreading vibrant learning to every grade level?

- **Sustaining Reciprocity:** In what ways can community partnerships be designed as reciprocal, so that vibrant learning benefits both students and local partners?

- **Equity of Experience:** How can you ensure that every learner, across schools, programs, and grade levels, has access to vibrant, meaningful learning tied to your Portrait of a Learner?

- **From Poster to Practice:** What supports do teachers and leaders in your district need to design classroom experiences that move beyond the poster on the wall and bring your Portrait competencies to life every day?

ACTION THREE: DEMONSTRATE STUDENT SUCCESS

As districts deepen their implementation of a Portrait of a Learner, demonstrating student success requires more than just test scores. A performance assessment system allows students to showcase their knowledge and capabilities through a curated body of evidence aligned with the district's agreed-upon knowledge, skills and dispositions.

This evidence—often in the form of student work artifacts, reflections and multimodal demonstrations—should stem from **engaging learning experiences** and illustrate clear growth over time. These artifacts represent not only academic mastery but also real-world application and personal significance.

Students regularly share their learning with authentic audiences, including peers, educators, families and community members. At key transition points (e.g., the end of elementary, middle or high school), districts may incorporate various performance assessment strategies, like **Defenses of Learning—**structured presentations in which students articulate their growth, reflect on challenges and make the case for their readiness for next steps.

To promote transparency and shared accountability, some districts opt to publicly report trends from these culminating learning defenses. This practice enhances community awareness of student growth, reinforces shared expectations regarding the Portrait of a Learner competencies, and illustrates a commitment to reciprocal accountability between schools and their communities.

Key Practice – Developing a Performance Assessment System

To effectively monitor students' growth in the knowledge, skills and dispositions that signify success in a community, the district or school must create a system that regularly supports students and educators in demonstrating these competencies. Three key strategies contribute to an effective performance assessment system.

Key Strategy – Determining Grade Level Performance Assessment Expectations

1. Convene a Design Team

Bring together a group of educators who represent all grade bands and schools across the district. The design team works together to design performance assessment expectations for all grade levels that reflect the developmental appropriateness of students.

2. Explore Performance Assessment Types

Consider the various types of performance assessments – performance tasks, student-led conferences, exhibitions of learning and defenses or presentations of learning. Take time to explore examples of each of these types at various grade levels considering the content, audience and presentation style.

3. Build a Scaffolded System

First, decide at which grade levels students will present a curated collection of evidence linked to the competencies defined by the local definition of student success. This type of assessment is typically called a Defense of Learning, Presentation of Learning or Capstone Presentation. Next, consider how to develop presentation and reflection skills by establishing performance assessment expectations at each grade level. Ask these questions:

1. When should students start conducting a student-led conference with a trusted adult?
2. How frequently should students engage in Exhibitions of Learning with a real audience?
3. How frequently should teachers incorporate performance tasks into their instruction?
4. How can we create a system that allows students to develop their presentation skills each year while collecting evidence of engaging learning, ultimately culminating in a curated collection to demonstrate their readiness for the next steps?

Key Strategy – Exhibitions of Learning and Student-Led Conferences

1. Define Student-Led Conference

Create a common understanding of a *student-led conference*. It is typically a meeting involving a student, their family and teachers, where students take the lead in sharing their work, reflecting on their learning and discussing next steps.

2. Define Exhibition of Learning

Create a common understanding of an *exhibition of learning.* It is commonly defined as a student-driven, public presentation of learning to showcase the student's understanding and application of knowledge and skills to an authentic audience. In a competency-based system, the exhibitions display a Portrait of a Learner competency in the context of academic content.

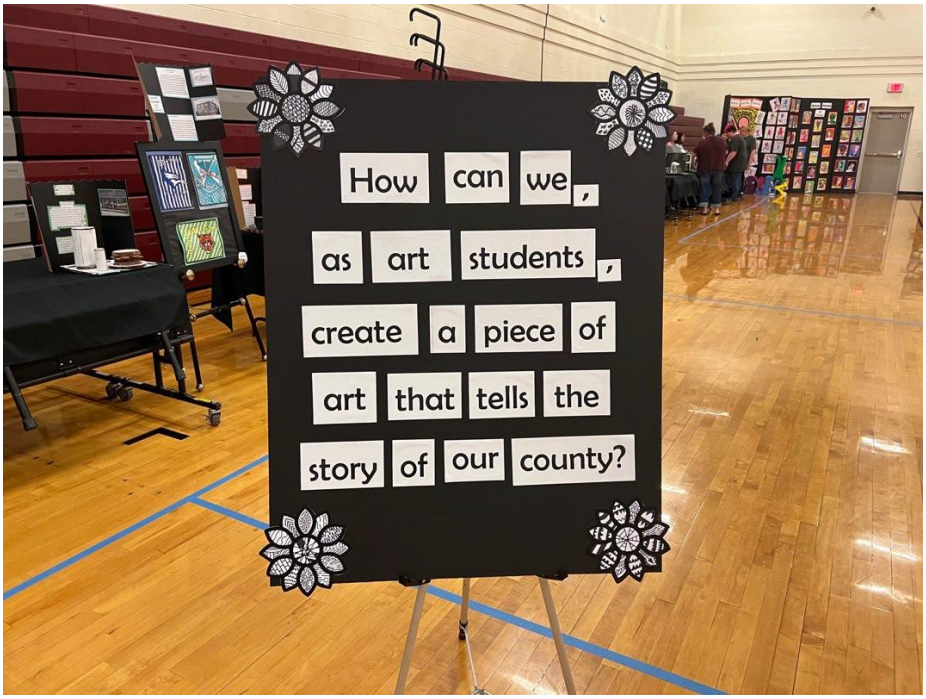
3. Plan the Events

- Consider the number of students presenting.
- Choose a location that can comfortably accommodate the number of students and the audience members.
- Choose a time that meets the needs of all of those involved.
- Allow students to be involved in the planning and execution of the event by sending invitations, creating signage, greeting guests and providing directions as needed.

Key Strategy – Defense/Presentation of Learning

1. Determine the Driving Question

Create a driving question for the Defense of Learning/Presentation of Learning. The driving question serves as a lens for collecting and curating artifacts as students prepare to answer it, supported by evidence in their summative presentation.



A sign featuring the Driving Question for a student exhibition at Metcalfe County Middle School.

2. Decide upon the Required Evidence

Based on the driving question, determine the necessary components of the defense, including the following:

- How many competencies must the student defend to answer the driving question?
- How many essential academic artifacts need to be included in the presentation?
- Can artifacts outside of school and/or academic classes be included?
- Will there be shared artifacts for all students in a grade band, such as a writing sample or a resume?

3. Create the Rubric

After determining the driving question and required components, create a rubric that reflects the quantity and quality of evidence presented, the reflection on the learning connected to the competencies, and the presentation skills. Depending on the level of accountability for the student, decide on the specific scoring criteria. If providing strong feedback is the goal, consider using a single-point rubric. If assigning a score for a grade or transition requirement, use a multi-level rubric that clearly states the expectations for each scoring component.

4. Implement an Advisory System

Provide ongoing support for students throughout the year through an advisor or mentor. Preparation for the defense or presentation of learning should be continuous. The advisor or mentor can help the student in collecting and curating artifacts related to the competencies and standards that will eventually be used in the presentation.

5. Plan the Event

Determine the timeframe for presentations and create a schedule that accommodates the school calendar, location, students, panel members and families. Provide training for panel members who will be scoring. Communicate event details to all stakeholders in advance.

A student at Leestown Middle School in Fayette County Public Schools presents a defense of learning to a panel of adults and peers.

Summary

To effectively demonstrate student success beyond test scores, implement a comprehensive performance assessment system aligned with the defined knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for student success. Key strategies include establishing clear grade-level expectations, incorporating exhibitions of learning and student-led conferences, and organizing Defenses of Learning, where students articulate their readiness for future steps. Schools foster shared accountability and build reciprocal relationships with all stakeholders by publicly sharing outcomes and involving the community.

ACTION FOUR: DEFINE SUCCESS FOR THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Defining success starts with bringing the right people to the table. The school district forms a local coalition of key stakeholders — including students, families, educators, employers, local leaders and community members — to collectively determine what matters most for learners and the broader community.

Together, this coalition defines success by identifying the specific components of a thriving school system that reflect shared values and aspirations. These may include academic achievement, well-being, workforce readiness, civic engagement or other meaningful local outcomes.

A strong process to define success typically includes:

- Open and accessible recruitment for a steering group, with outreach to underrepresented voices through multiple channels and languages.
- Community-building activities at each meeting to foster trust, encourage honest dialogue and create shared purpose.
- Structured co-design routines—such as silent tuning, gallery walks, and reflection protocols—to surface priorities, challenge assumptions and build consensus.
- Development of clear pillars or domains of success that capture both academic and non-academic outcomes, such as student well-being, readiness for work and life, community engagement, and operational excellence.
- Benefit statements and expectations for each pillar, describing what success looks and feels like in everyday practice.
- Consistent feedback loops that invite participants to assess the process, suggest refinements and validate the work with the wider community through surveys, public updates and community forums.

When these steps are intentional, transparent and inclusive, the result is a locally defined vision of success that is clear, relevant and owned by the entire community. This shared vision becomes the foundation for a local accountability system that measures what matters, drives continuous improvement and builds lasting trust.

Kristal Doolin, regional innovation specialist at KDE, shares about the Kentucky Portrait of a Learner at a Community Meeting for Hazard Independent Schools.

Summary

Redefining success starts by bringing together a diverse coalition of local stakeholders—students, families, educators, employers and community members—to identify what truly matters for learners and the broader community. Through inclusive dialogue, the group co-creates a shared vision of a thriving school system, grounded in local values and aspirations.

This vision often becomes the foundation for a locally driven accountability system, with clearly defined goals that go beyond test scores to include well-being, readiness and engagement. When communities help define success, accountability becomes more meaningful, transparent and rooted in shared ownership.

CASE STUDY

UNITED WE LEARN

CASE STUDY: From the Ground Up: Designing a Vision of Success Rooted in Community Voice

Bullitt County Public Schools (BCPS) serves roughly 13,000 students across 300 square miles in north-central Kentucky, making it the state's seventh-largest district. With 13 elementary, six middle, three high schools and five specialized programs, the district employs some 2,300 staff and manages over two million square feet of facilities. Every day, 87 bus routes carry 8,500 learners nearly 7,750 miles across Bullitt County—a sprawling, largely rural community where access and equity have long been district priorities.

Yet as BCPS entered the last decade, leaders realized that test scores alone were an incomplete picture of success. In 2016, a district-wide "call to action" asked: "What are we missing?" and "Which measures will truly reflect life-ready graduates?"

Over the next two years, teachers, parents, students, business partners and community members came together—to co-draft the Board's Aspiration Statements, Core Values and Graduate Profile, anchoring each statement in real stories of local learners. That collaborative groundwork led to cohort-based professional learning and the launch of the Community Collaborators for Innovative Learning Team (CCILT) in 2021—culminating in Fall 2024 with the formal establishment of the Community-Based Accountability (CBA) Steering Committee, the latest chapter in a 10-year evolution toward community-driven accountability.

Spotlight on Bullitt's Practice: Convening an Inclusive Coalition of Local Stakeholders

The establishment of the CBA Steering Committee marked a pivotal moment in Bullitt County Public Schools' journey to redefine what success looks like. The district didn't just open the front door to community input—it invited the community to help redesign the house.

Through a bilingual, open-application process, BCPS recruited a 40-member committee that reflected the full spectrum of its community. Participants hailed from each corner of the district's 300-square-mile geography, a deliberate effort to ensure not just diversity of demographics, but diversity of perspective.

What followed wasn't a traditional planning process. It was an invitation to co-create a new foundation for accountability—one rooted in trust, vision, and community values. The Community-Based Accountability Steering Committee began not with data, but with shared purpose.

An image created by Bullitt County to promote their community-based accountability work.

Superintendent Jesse Bacon opened the first session by grounding the group in the Kentucky United We Learn moonshot:

> ***"To build a prosperous Kentucky, we will launch an accountability system that is meaningful and useful to all our learners."***

Then he issued a challenge that would guide the committee's work:

> "If we want to be held accountable to what our community expects," he said, "then we have to make sure we know what those expectations are. That starts with our Aspiration Statements. Do they still reflect what we want for our learners? If not, let's fix them. Because our accountability system should be built on the vision we truly believe in."

From that launch point, BCPS designed each session with intentionality—balancing structure, reflection and responsiveness to ensure participants felt seen, heard and valued.

- **Community-building first**
  Every meeting began with a community builder rooted in the district's Graduate Profile or Core Values. These short reflection prompts, and table conversations weren't just

icebreakers—they created the psychological safety needed for participants to speak honestly, challenge assumptions, and build trust across roles.

- **Co-design that evolved with the work**
  The bulk of each session was dedicated to co-creation, beginning with the question, ***"What matters most?"*** and progressing toward a refined set of Community-Based Accountability Pillars rooted in shared values and real-world relevance. Early on, participants revisited the district's Aspiration Statements and engaged in a silent tuning protocol to provide timed, structured feedback on current statements.

  In the second session, gallery walks paired with the **"I Know / I Wonder / I Learned" protocol** helped surface new insights and generate community-informed revisions to those statements. These revised statements became the six pillars for Bullitt County's accountability system: Student Learning, Fiscal and Operational Care, Life Readiness, Engaged and Well-Rounded Students, Community Collaboration & Engagement, and Student Safety and Well-Being.

  In the final sessions, participants drafted benefit statements. Focused on the tangible benefits that stakeholders experience, benefit statements are succinct descriptions of what success should look and feel like for each pillar. These statements are designed to guide the development of future metrics in a public-facing dashboard. For example, the benefit statement for Community Collaboration and Engagement the committee created reads:

  Progress happens when we move forward together. This pillar focuses on building meaningful partnerships with families, businesses and community organizations to enrich learning, strengthen engagement and develop an understanding of civic responsibility.

  In addition to benefit statements, the committee also identified expectations for each pillar—concrete descriptions of what it looks like when the pillar is truly alive in the system.

  Throughout, the co-design focus remained on clarity and accessibility of language choices as well as authentic alignment to what the community values most.

- **Consistent feedback loops**
  Every session ended with a Plus/Delta reflection, where participants noted what was working and what could be improved. Superintendent Bacon personally responded to each delta after every session, sharing a follow-up email with transparent next steps. This modeled accountability in real time and reinforced that this was *their* process—not just the district's.

Old Mill Elementary students pose after leading community members on a guided tour of their new school facility.

Between meetings, BCPS translated committee input into concise, two-page summary reports—combining visuals and narrative—to share progress with the wider community. These updates were posted on the district website, placed in school front offices, and distributed through trusted partners. To extend ownership beyond the room, the district also launched a follow-up survey—online and at school kiosks—to validate whether the pillars resonated more broadly.

By embedding transparent, resource-light protocols and leveraging existing communication channels, Bullitt County Public Schools has crafted a replicable model of community-rooted accountability—one designed and owned by the very people it serves.

Habits of Co-Creation in Action: Inclusion

Inclusion ensures that accountability isn't defined in a vacuum but emerges from the real experiences of everyone who lives and learns in the district. By intentionally weaving under-represented voices into every step, BCPS models what it means to listen and learn from diverse perspectives.

How do we understand and listen to the perspectives, needs, & voices of the broader community? Bullitt County Public Schools opened its CBA Steering Committee to any resident—parents, students, staff, business partners and at-large community members—through a simple two-page English/Spanish application. The district partnered with Family Resource and Youth Services Centers and ELL liaisons to reach multilingual families and historically under-

represented groups, ensuring outreach wasn't limited to email blasts but included phone calls, in-person visits and paper flyers in community hubs.

Furthermore, meetings were intentionally designed for equity of access. Each session took place in a different school or community location across the district's 300 square miles—a deliberate effort to reduce travel burdens and signal that all regions and voices mattered. In a county where it takes time to drive from east to west, rotating locations made participation more feasible—and fairer.

In addition, meetings were held from 6:00 to7:30 p.m., a 90-minute format chosen to respect the schedules of working families and community members. This structure ensured that showing up didn't require privilege—it just required care.

How do we come to understand the perspectives of others during the process? Once convened, committee members engaged in structured co-design routines—community building welcome and inclusions, silent tuning rounds, gallery walks with "I Know / I Wonder / I Learned" annotations, and plus/delta reflections—that surfaced not only individual priorities but also moments of tension and shared insight. These interactive protocols created space for participants to listen deeply, challenge assumptions and build collective understanding, ensuring each pillar truly reflected the community's diverse experiences.

Impact on Student Experience

"We knew that test scores alone couldn't capture the full story of our students' success," reflects Superintendent Jesse Bacon—and nowhere is that truth more evident than in BCPS's evolving classroom practices and student engagement. As BCPS moved beyond mere compliance with state and federal metrics to embrace life readiness, authentic learning experiences shifted from rare exceptions to everyday practice. Through BCPS's cohort-based professional learning, teachers have launched authentic learning experiences that immerse students in real-world challenges—from designing community gardens to developing local history exhibits—culminating in vibrant student exhibitions where learners showcase their work to peers, family and community partners.

This hands-on approach has deepened students' sense of agency. In focus groups and surveys, community members noted that learners are moving from "guest speakers" to co-designers of their own education, shaping the very metrics that will define success in the district's new dashboard. In BCPS's "Engaged & Well-Rounded Students" pillar, benefits like "Students have a voice" and "Relevant and meaningful work" serve not as abstract ideals but as daily realities—students lead empathy interviews, pitch ideas to business partners, and co-author aspiration statements that guide district policy.

Early indicators show this student-centered shift is fostering deeper connections between learning and life: attendance at exhibitions is up, survey feedback highlights increased motivation, and students report greater confidence in their own learning. As BCPS continues to

refine its local indicators, the true impact will be measured not only in traditional data points but also those representing the curiosity, agency, and community-minded spirit of its learners.

What's Next for BCPS?

BCPS is moving swiftly from visioning to visible action. In the coming months, the district will finalize its locally co-created accountability pillars and launch a public-facing dashboard, mapping each pillar to clear, measurable indicators—anticipating soft-launch prototypes in Fall 2025 before a full community rollout. Steering-committee subgroups will partner with district data teams to define "student-friendly" metrics for everything from Life Readiness to Community Collaboration, ensuring the dashboard speaks in plain language and invites ongoing feedback.

Even as technical work ramps up, BCPS is planning its next rhythm of review. The district has committed to treating its five accountability pillars not as static edicts but as a living framework, with formal revisits every three to five years to refine language, surface new community insights, and adjust measures based on emerging needs. This cadence balances the depth of stakeholder engagement with the need to respond nimbly to changing conditions—striking a thoughtful tension between process and pace.

Bullitt County's journey reminds us that true accountability grows from the ground up—anchored in local values, informed by diverse voices, and sustained through transparent, iterative practices. By moving beyond a compliance mindset to a partnership-driven model, BCPS has not only crafted measures that matter to its learners and families but also forged stronger bonds of trust across its schools and communities. As the district pilots its public dashboard and refines its indicators, it stands as a living example for any system seeking to center equity, agency, and real-world success.

Points of Reflection:

- **Pace vs. Process:** How might we balance the thorough, inclusive co-design routines that build trust with the need for timely decision-making and visible progress?
- **Representation vs. Fatigue:** What strategies will ensure ongoing, diverse community participation—so voices stay fresh without over-burdening volunteers?
- **Training and Capacity-Building:** How might we (district and individual schools) equip staff to interpret, communicate and act on the new local indicators?
- **Evidence Collection and Integrity:** What systems might we put in place to gather, verify, and sustain the data behind each pillar—ensuring measures remain reliable, relevant and low-burden over time?

ACTION FIVE: DESIGN AN INTERACTIVE LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Once a shared definition of success has been established, the local school district develops an **interactive accountability system** that reflects the priorities of the community. This system serves as a public-facing platform to display progress on the agreed-upon components of a successful school district.

To support this, the district builds the necessary systems and structures to collect and organize data tied to each success indicator. This includes both quantitative and qualitative data — academic performance, student artifacts, stakeholder surveys and stories of impact — that highlight not only outcomes, but also the quality of experiences for students, families, educators and community members. A key component of a meaningful local accountability system is the thriving development and facilitation of vibrant learning experiences. It is essential that interactive local accountability systems continually demonstrate and reflect on the presence and impact of vibrant learning experiences in the district.

Key steps in building such a system include:

- **Aligning indicators to the shared vision** so each measure reflects agreed-upon priorities for students, staff and the community.
- **Collecting diverse types of evidence**—from performance data and student work to survey feedback and stories of impact—to paint a full picture of learning and growth.
- **Highlighting vibrant learning experiences** as a core measure of success, ensuring the dashboard reflects not only what students achieve but also how they learn.
- **Designing for accessibility and engagement**, with clear visuals, plain language and domains that connect directly to the community's values.

- **Embedding reciprocal accountability**, using the platform to show how the district is meeting its commitments while also inviting community members to provide the support and partnerships needed to achieve shared goals.

A well-designed local accountability system is more than a dashboard. It is a living tool for learning, reflection and action, offering a transparent view into the district's progress and reinforcing a shared commitment to continuous improvement. Though several leading districts have invested in developing and implementing a local accountability dashboard, a core tenet of these dashboards is how they enable reciprocal accountability – not only are districts accountable to the needs of their students and communities as communicated through the dashboards, community members and other stakeholders are accountable to the district in providing the supports and partnerships necessary to enable vibrant learning, operational excellence, and more.

Key Practice: Local Accountability Dashboards

Sample Sources of Evidence Included on Dashboards

1. Student Learning and Performance:
    - Exhibitions and Defenses of Learning
    - Competency-based portfolios and performance tasks
    - Interim Assessment Data (like iReady/Map), ACT and Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA)
2. College, Career and Community Readiness:
    - Co-Op participation, AP/Dual Credit enrollment and credits recovered/GEDs
    - Business partnerships and student service initiatives
3. Climate and Culture:
    - Student sense of safety and belonging
    - Staff and parent satisfaction
4. Operational Excellence and Transparency
    - Facilities, transportation, budget and safety walkthroughs
5. Engagement and Outreach:
    - Social media reach, alumni connections and community partners
    - Grant funding and student device access

Dashboard Examples

Fleming County – Local Accountability Dashboard

- **Contact**

- Brian Creasman, Ed.D, Superintendent

- **Dashboard Domains**
  - Community of Learning
  - Vibrant Learning
  - Core Learning

- **Key Design Feature**
  - Fleming has employed a broad range of indicators beyond traditional academic metrics, such as student engagement and school climate to provide a holistic view of school performance.

A screenshot of Fleming County's Local Accountability model is available on their public website.

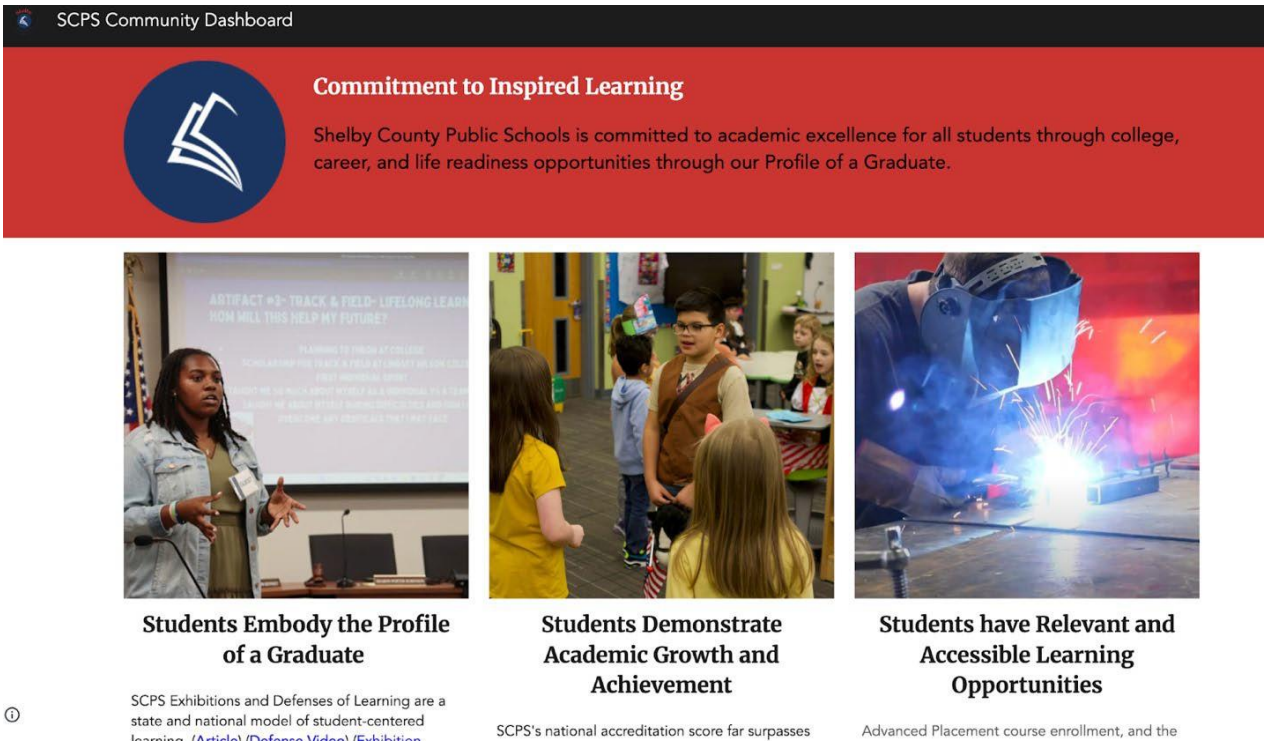
Shelby County – Local Accountability Dashboard

- **Contact**
  - Adam Hicks, Ed.D,Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- **Dashboard Domains**

- Inspired Learning
- Inspired Living
- Inspired Leading

- **Key Design Feature**
  - Shelby County has chosen a largely narrative-driven focus on their dashboard, focusing on student defenses as demonstrations of learning and career readiness. Quantitative metrics are available but are not the main focus.



A screenshot of Shelby County's Local Accountability Dashboard. Shelby County's Dashboard leads with a narrative-first approach to tell their story of their values, efforts, and achievements to stakeholders.

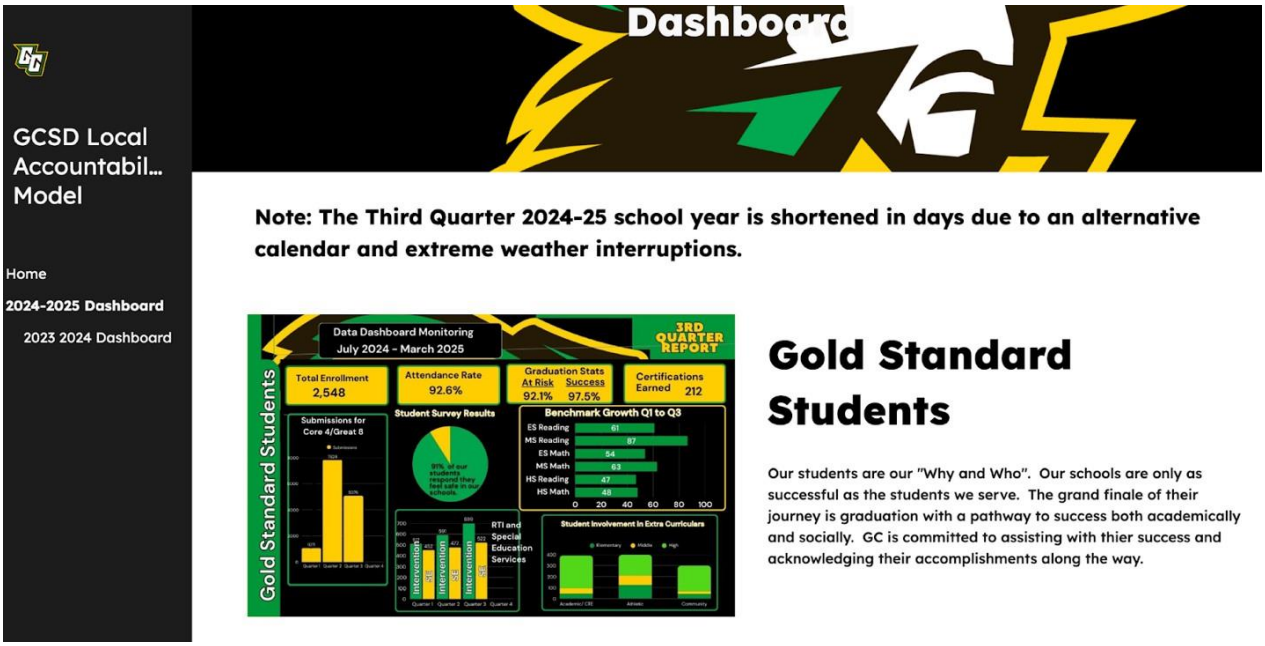
Greenup County – Local Accountability Dashboard

- **Contact**
  - Traysea Moresea, Superintendent

- **Dashboard Domains**

- Gold Standard Students
- Gold Standard Staff
- Gold Standard Community

- **Key Design Feature**
  - Greenup has organized key metrics around students, staff, and community in a visually engaging, value-driven format that emphasizes pride, progress and shared responsibility. An important design consideration in the development of the Greenup County dashboard is the alignment between its domains and the district's strategic plan.



A screenshot of Greenup County's Local Accountability Dashboard.

Summary

A well-designed local accountability system transforms how a community understands and supports its schools. By combining quantitative metrics with qualitative evidence, it offers a holistic view of progress—one that values student voice, celebrates authentic learning, and reflects the lived experiences of those it serves. When shared openly, this information builds trust, strengthens partnerships and invites stakeholders to become active contributors to the district's success. Over time, the dashboard becomes more than a measure of performance; it is

a catalyst for shared ownership, informed decision-making and a sustained commitment to ensuring that every learner has access to vibrant, life-shaping educational experiences.

ACTION SIX: DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

A strong local accountability system does more than measure; it communicates, adapts and builds trust. To sustain reciprocity and transparency, the district regularly updates the community on its progress toward the agreed-upon components of success.
This process includes ongoing feedback loops with students, families, educators, community members and other district-level practitioners. Insights from these voices help ensure the system remains meaningful and relevant. Based on this feedback, districts may revise components, refine displays, or incorporate new forms of data to better reflect the lived experiences and aspirations of the community.

Key actions to demonstrate success include:

- **Hosting community-sharing events** where stakeholders can explore progress data, hear student voices, and provide input on next steps. These events can take the form of exhibitions of learning, district "state of the schools" nights, or interactive data walks that invite dialogue and reflection.
- **Leveraging strategic communications and public relations** to tell the district's story—spotlighting not only metrics, but also the human side of student achievement and vibrant learning experiences. Social media, newsletters, local news features and short-form videos can make progress tangible and relatable for the community.
- **Engaging in peer-network collaboration** to share successes beyond the local context. Through initiatives like the Local Laboratories of Learning (L3) Community of Practice, districts connect with peers across the state to showcase progress, exchange strategies, and gather ideas for continued improvement. These peer spaces reinforce that accountability is not just local—it's also a collaborative, collective effort.

Ultimately, the local accountability system becomes a tool for continuous improvement, a vehicle for clear communication, and a platform for celebrating growth—reinforcing the shared commitment to student success, community well-being and a prosperous future.

Key Practice: Community-Focused Communication

Many districts have begun to leverage social media and other forms of public and social storytelling to share progress in ways that are accessible, transparent, and engaging for all audiences. District and school leaders should use clear language, visual storytelling and multiple platforms to ensure every community member can see, understand and act on the district's progress.

In addition to keeping community members, parents, students, and others informed about the progress of the school district and its schools, quality communication accomplishes two other goals: first, it invites participation and investment in the success of the school and its students. Second, it allows the school district to build a narrative and brand centered around the priorities, concerns, needs, unique resources and identity of the school district and community.

Key Practice: Peer Network Site Visits

Create opportunities for district leaders, educators and community partners to visit other districts, observe practices, and exchange feedback. Structured peer visits build a culture of shared learning and help identify new approaches for strengthening local accountability systems.

Many districts are leveraging **state-supported networks**—such as the **Kentucky Innovative Learning Network (KY ILN)** and the **Local Laboratories of Learning (L3) Community of Practice (CoP)**—to make these connections purposeful and impactful. These networks provide collaborative spaces for district and school leaders to:

- See the real-world impact of their work in other contexts.
- Share and receive actionable feedback.
- Explore innovative ideas that can be adapted locally.

The KY ILN regularly brings in state and national partners to introduce meaningful, effective, and forward-thinking practices that strengthen teaching and learning. The L3 CoP offers monthly virtual meetings where members:

- Uplift and share promising practices.
- Work together to tackle shared problems of practice.
- Conduct deep dives into system-level conditions that allow approaches like vibrant learning experiences to thrive.

In addition to network participation, districts frequently have opportunities to share their work with statewide groups such as the Kentucky United We Learn Council, helping to inform and shape state policy and practice.

It is also worth noting that many districts have pursued professional connections and collaborations independently forming reciprocal relationships that sustain growth, foster innovation, and provide ongoing peer-to-peer support. Whether through formal networks or self-initiated partnerships, peer visits and exchanges strengthen local accountability by ensuring that learning is shared, systems are improved, and successes are celebrated across communities.

School and district leaders participate in a Spectrum Line activity to prompt discussions around school redesign.

Summary

When districts make their progress visible, they not only strengthen trust but also inspire shared ownership of student success. By combining community-sharing events, strategic communications, and peer collaboration, districts turn accountability into a living process—one that celebrates achievements, invites ongoing feedback and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.

TOOLKIT EXAMPLES

- **Example Portraits of a Learner**
  These examples demonstrate how a specific district defines and communicates its shared vision for the competencies, skills, and dispositions students should have upon graduation, serving as a high-leverage strategy for local accountability.
  - Jefferson County Public Schools *Journey to Success* Skills

- **Example Student Defense Materials – rubrics, slides, etc.**
  These materials provide practical tools and structures, such as rubrics, used to guide and assess student presentations of learning, where students articulate their growth and readiness for next steps.
  - Shelby County Defense of Learning Exemplars and Rubrics

- **Example Community Outreach Materials**
  These examples showcase materials used to recruit and engage diverse community members in the co-creation of local accountability initiatives and understanding their shared vision for student success.
  - Bullitt County Community-Based Accountability Application
  - Woodford County's Portrait of a Learner Webpage

- **Example Local Accountability Dashboards**
  These examples serve as public-facing interactive platforms designed by school districts in collaboration with their communities to display progress on shared definitions of student and district success.
  - Kenton County – Community Based Accountability System
  - Shelby County – Community Dashboard
  - Greenup County 2024- 2025 Dashboard
  - Fleming County - Measures of Quality

- **Local Laboratories of Learning (L3) Q&A Documents**
  These resources offer insights and answers to questions arising from collective efforts and discussions within the Local Laboratories of Learning (L3) community of practice, a collaborative effort where L3 districts share progress and problems of practice.
  - Bullitt County Local Accountability FAQ
  - Jefferson County Local Accountability FAQ

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- Kentucky Innovation Guide
  This guide supports the development of personalized learning structures through Kentucky policy and detailed district examples.
- Kentucky Portrait of a Learner Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
  This resource clarifies common questions and provides guidance regarding Kentucky's "Portrait of a Learner" a model outlining essential competencies for student success adopted by many Kentucky districts.
- Developing Competencies, Performance Outcomes and Indicators for Portrait of a Learner
  This resource offers detailed guidance on how to translate the broad competencies of a Portrait of a Learner into specific, observable, and measurable performance outcomes and indicators for curriculum, instruction and assessment design.
- Kentucky United We Learn Report
  This foundational report articulates Kentuckians' shared vision for the future of education which has led to the moonshot goal for a meaningful accountability system, guiding the shift toward local accountability.
- Local Accountability Continuum
  This resource details the conceptual framework that organizes the various non-linear phases and approaches for developing a local accountability system, developed by the University of Kentucky's Center for Next Generation Leadership.
- Curriculum-Based Professional Learning Guidance Document
  This guidance supports the effective implementation of local curricula anchored in high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) through curriculum-based professional learning.
- Instructional Practice Guides (IPG)
  These tools support classroom observation, feedback, and reflection by outlining clear, evidence-based indicators of effective teaching aligned to high-quality instructional resources and standards.
  - Mathematics IPG
  - K-12 Comprehension in Reading and Writing IPG
  - Science IPG
- Vibrant Learning Experiences in Science and Social Studies
  This professional learning module provides educators with strategies and examples for designing inquiry-driven, interdisciplinary learning experiences in science and social studies that deepen student engagement and align with state standards.
- Performance Assessment in Social Studies

This module guides Kentucky educators in designing, implementing, and evaluating performance-based assessments in social studies—helping students apply disciplinary practices and develop deeper understanding through authentic tasks.

- Cultivating Vibrant Learning Experiences in Mathematics
  This module equips Kentucky educators with strategies, tasks, and planning guidance to design rich, student-centered math experiences that spark inquiry, build conceptual understanding, and connect to real-world contexts.
- Integrating HQIRs and Deeper Learning
  This resource helps educators integrate high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) with deeper learning strategies—guiding implementation so that rigorous standards, inquiry, and student agency are meaningfully woven into instruction.
- KDE Characteristics of High-Quality Professional Learning (HQPL)
  This document outlines critical design features for effective professional learning to help districts select or develop HQPL that strengthens instructional practice and student outcomes.
- Text-Based Writing Across Disciplines
  This resource supports educators in embedding discipline-specific literacies by engaging students with complex, multimodal texts and using writing to teach content, deepen understanding, and publish learning across all subject areas.

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