



2025-2026 Phase Two: The Needs Assessment for Districts_10072025_13:17

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Hardin County Schools
Teresa Thompson Morgan
65 W.A. Jenkins Rd
Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 42701
United States of America

Table of Contents

2025-2026 Phase Two: The Needs Assessment for Districts 3

2025-2026 Phase Two: The Needs Assessment for Districts

Understanding Continuous Improvement: The Needs Assessment for Districts

The Needs Assessment Diagnostic will facilitate the use of multiple sources of data to determine the current reality and establish a foundation for decision-making around district goals and strategies. Once completed, the diagnostic will lead to priorities to be addressed in the comprehensive district improvement plan to build staff capacity and increase student achievement. The needs assessment is to be conducted annually as an essential part of the continuous improvement process and precedes the development of strategic goals (i.e. desired state).

While the focus of continuous improvement is student performance, the aspects of teaching and learning that affect performance must guide the work. An effective improvement process should address the contributing factors creating the learning environment (inputs) and the performance data (outcomes).

The needs assessment provides the framework for all districts to clearly and honestly identify their most critical areas for improvement that they will address later in the planning process through the development of goals, objectives, strategies and activities. 703 KAR 2:225 requires, as part of continuous improvement planning for districts, each district to complete the needs assessment between October 1 and November 1 of each year and include: (1) a description of the data reviewed and the process used to develop the needs assessment; (2) a review of the previous plan and its implementation to inform development of the new plan; and, (3) perception data gathered from the administration of a valid and reliable measure of teaching and learning conditions.

Protocol

1. Clearly detail the process used to determine the priorities of this year's needs assessment. Include the following information in your response:

- names of district leadership teams and stakeholder groups (i.e., faculty, staff, representatives of school councils, Family Resource Youth Service Centers, community partners such as civic and business organizations, etc.) involved
- a timeline of the process
- the specific data sources reviewed and analyzed
- how and where the meetings were documented.

Teams and Groups: The Hardin County Schools district is composed of various stakeholders that are committed to continuous review, analysis, and discussion of various types of data. These stakeholders are also committed to developing plans for continuous improvement in all areas including academic achievement, post-secondary transition readiness, and multi-tiered system of support for academics and behavior. District and school administrators receive data first and begin the analysis process. This group, ISD, consists of the district's Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Director of Early Childhood Education, Director of Elementary Instruction, Director of Middle School Instruction, Director of High School Instruction, Director of Data and System Efficiency, Director of Special Education,

Principals, and Assistant Principals. The second group, that meets monthly at Administrative Leadership Meetings (ALM) includes but is not limited to the following: Director of Federal Programs and Leadership Development, Director of Instructional Technology, Director of Innovation, Director of Hardin County Educational and Community Television, Chief Operations Officer, Finance Director, Director of Human Resources and Talent Recruitment, Director of Employment, Director of Benefits, Director of Student Services, Director of Alternative Programs, Director of Pupil Personnel, Director of Health and Family Services, and Community Relations Specialist

Timeline & Data Sources: The district and school-level administrators collaborate monthly to discuss our current status. We also meet monthly to participate in leadership development sessions, communicate about operational and procedural needs as well as initiative and programming, collaboratively plan for district initiatives, and review student data.

Upon the release of state assessment data, the District Assessment Coordinator hosts a series of data workshops in order to share school-level information with principals. The District Assessment Coordinator & Director of Data and System Efficiency uses an internal site to house school and district-level data. This site is used on a regular basis at each of the following leadership development sessions in which the Instructional Services Department works with principals and school leads to facilitate analysis of the data. More detailed analysis is continued by the staff in team or departmental groups, vertical teams, and the whole group. The Director of Data and System Efficiency has created multiple platforms for the district leadership team. principals and assistant principals to analyze multiple sets of data over multiple years. The Director of Data and System Efficiency along with ISD meets with principals and assists with analysis, recognizing trends, strengths, and needs. The Instructional Service Department and the Superintendent work with principals to analyze data and determine action steps. As the Instructional Services Department and the Superintendent work with principals to analyze data, notes are also captured in order to assist with developing an improvement plan. Data is also shared with stakeholders outside of the school in public meetings (SBDM and Board of Education). Various pieces of data are analyzed throughout the year including state assessment, benchmark diagnostic assessments, multiple universal screeners, student survey data, behavior screener, MTSS progress, attendance, Studer survey, and anecdotal data.

Documented: Meetings are documented on ISD agenda/minutes, ALM agenda/minutes, board meeting minutes.

Review of Previous Plan

2. Summarize the implementation of the goals, objectives, strategies and activities from the previous year's comprehensive district improvement plan (CDIP). What was successful? How will your results inform this year's plan?

Effective PLCs continue to be an activity to address the review of data and adjust the curriculum. Across the district, PLCs continue to develop standards-based assessments and activities as well as align curriculum. As data is analyzed,

adjustments are made. We will continue this process and focus on targeting our subgroups performing below their peer group. For example, for 25-26, upon review of attendance data, we have added two district level social workers to assist the DPP.

From 23-24 data:

Goal One- Reading and Math Goal- Upon review of this goal and objectives, the committee determined that elementary and middle schools still have work to do in reaching our 2024 objectives of 57% proficiency in reading at elementary and 54% proficiency in middle school. Data from 23-24 shows that our elementary schools are 9% behind the objective we set and our middle schools are a10% behind the objective for 2024. Our high schools were 15.5% from obtaining their objective for reading proficiency so we will look at modifying activities. In math our elementary and middle schools will modify activities and progress monitoring to impact our continued proficiency. Elementary schools were 7.5% below the objective of 48.5%; middle schools were 6% below the objective of 44% and high schools were 15% below the objective of 49%.

Goal Two- Science, Social Studies, and Writing Goals (Separate Academic Indicators)- Upon review of this goal and objectives, our schools did not meet the science or social studies objectives. We will continue on track to reach our continuation 2025 goal by modifying activities and checking progress monitoring to ensure growth is continued. Upon review of the Combined Writing goal and objective, Elementary, middle and high school fell below the objective. We will continue on track to reach our continuation 2025 goal by modifying activities and checking progress monitoring to ensure growth is continued.

Goal Three Achievement Gap- Two years ago we had 4 schools within the district that are TSI in the Disability subgroup and last year we only have 3. The reading objectives set for 2024 were focused on lowering the percent of novice at each level for students with IEPs. Elementary did lower the percent of students with IEP's scoring novice, however it did fall short of our objective goal. The percent of students with IEPs scoring novice in middle school stayed the same and did not meet the objective goal. High school had an objective in 22-23 to lower their novice percentage from 63% to 53% and they surpassed the goal by lowering their novice to 46%. However, this year they had an increase of students with IEP's scoring novice increase to 63%, far off from the objective of 36%. The committee determined the need to continue the objectives and modify/reassess activities. When reflecting on last year's math objective for students with disabilities, it was determined by the committee that the math objective was focused on lowering the percent novice at each level for students with IEP's. None of the levels met the objective and the committee determined the need to continue the objectives and modify/reassess activities.

Goal Four-English Learner Progress When reflecting on the objective for EL Progress, the change scores show that elementary went up and high school went up

significantly (change score of 36.8). Middle school went down with a change score of -6.4.

Goal Five- Quality of School Climate and Safety- When reflecting on the change scores for QSCS both elementary and middle school went down, but high school went up. For the climate and safety indexes, none met the objective, however high school did increase both the safety index and the climate index.

Goal Six- Postsecondary Readiness-Hardin County schools PSR readiness status increased from 89.4 to 90.4, but did not reach the objective of 93.25. Continued purposeful one-on one scheduling with students, goal setting with students, and involving teachers,

Goal Seven- Graduation Rate- The status went from 91.3 to 92.5 achieving the objective exactly.

The previous year's plan saw significant success in non-academic indicators, with Postsecondary Readiness and Graduation Rate both exceeding objectives, and School Climate and Safety improving across all schools. While academic objectives were not met, the district saw measurable improvement in Reading proficiency and reduction in TSI schools for the Disability subgroup. The district will continue to rely on the supporting framework of Instructional Coaches, Interventionists, Mentor Programs, and Option 6 teacher training to drive improvement across all academic goals. We also need interventionists and coaches to support the MTSS process to make targeted growth for the most significantly identified populations.

Trends

3. After analyzing data trends from the previous two academic years, which academic, cultural and behavioral measures remain significant areas for improvement?

Example of Trends

- Behavior remains an area for improvement, as referrals have increased in the last two years from 204 in 2023-2024 to 288 in 2024-2025.
- Reading for students in our gap groups remains an area for improvement because the district saw an 11% increase in novice scores in reading among students with achievement gaps from 2024-2025.

Academic Proficiency Concerns: A significant concern across the district is the level of student proficiency in both Math and Reading. Across all levels, approximately half of the students are scoring in the Novice or Apprentice categories.

- Reading:
 - Elementary: 49% Novice/Apprentice
 - Middle School: 54% Novice/Apprentice
 - High School: 49% Novice/Apprentice

-
- **Math:**
 - Elementary: 54% Novice/Apprentice
 - Middle School: 62% Novice/Apprentice (The highest rate of need)
 - High School: 49% Novice/Apprentice

Internal vs. External Data Trends: While district-wide proficiency remains a concern based on state data, the iReady trend data provides a positive external comparison: Positive iReady Trend: Hardin County Schools matches or outperforms both the Kentucky (KY) fall benchmark scores and national fall benchmark scores in both Math and Reading.

Specific Subgroup and Operational Focus Areas

- **Students with Disabilities (SWD):** Based on sustained data trends, improving the performance and climate for students with disabilities remains a central area of focus.
- **High School Graduation Rate:** The district's high school graduation rate continues to be a central area of focus.

Emerging Priority: Social-Emotional Needs

While not yet reflected in long-term, quantitative data trends, multiple sources indicate an urgent and emerging priority:

- **Source Data:** Anecdotal notes, staff/student discussions, and the Quality of School Climate and Safety survey.

Current State of Academics and Climate and Culture

4. Describe in narrative form the current academic state of the district using precise numbers and percentages as revealed by multiple sources of your most recent outcome data. Cite the source of data used. Consider the following data sources:

- Kentucky Summative Assessments
- Benchmark assessments
- Formative assessments
- Graduation rate
- Progress in achieving English language proficiency
- Student access to high quality instructional resources, advanced placement courses, dual credit courses, career and technical education courses, before/after school and summer programs, preschool, full day kindergarten

Example of Current Academic Narratives:

- Thirty-four percent (34%) of students in the achievement gap scored proficient on Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) in reading. Local benchmark data indicates that 32% of all students receive Tier II intervention in reading.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of our students scored proficient in math on the KSA compared

to the state average of 57%. Local formative assessments show 53% of students are on grade level in math.

We administered the IReady universal diagnostic in late August/early September 2025. Reading data showed 33% of students in Tier I (on or above grade level), 39% in Tier II (one grade level below), and 28% in Tier III (two or more grade levels below). Math data showed 19% of students in Tier I (on or above grade level), 52% in Tier II (one grade level below), and 30% in Tier III (two or more grade levels below).

Based on ACT data, our district's average composite score is 22.8 as of October, 2025

Student in HCS in 24-25 were enrolled in the following courses: 13 AP, 139 Dual Credit, 181 CTE

KSA: 24-25: In elementary schools, 51% of students scored Proficient/ Distinguished in reading, 46% P/D in math, 34% P/D in science, 40% P/D in social studies, and 46% P/D in combined writing. In middle school, 47% of students scored Proficient/ Distinguished in reading, 39% P/D in math, 31% P/D in science, 36% P/D in social studies, and 43% P/D in combined writing. In high school, 51% of students scored Proficient/ Distinguished in reading, 51% P/D in math, 21% P/D in science (suppressed), 40% P/D in social studies, and 46% P/D in writing. Our high school graduation rate was 94.4(4 year cohort)and our postsecondary readiness indicator was 103.1.

5. Describe in narrative form the current climate and culture conditions of the district using precise numbers and percentages as revealed by multiple sources of your most recent data. Cite the source of data used. Consider the following data sources:

- Educator and school staff retention rates
- High-quality professional learning opportunities
- Chronic absenteeism
- School climate
- Behavior
- Staff and student access to mental healthcare
- Family and community involvement

Example of Current Climate and Culture Narratives:

- Teacher attendance rate was 84% for the 2024-2025 academic year. 2023-2024 Impact survey data shows that 71% of staff feel like they belong at their school.
- Survey results and perception data indicated 74% of the district's teachers received adequate professional development.

Hardin County Schools continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to student success and staff well-being through strategic investments in professional development, mental health support, and workforce stability.

Staff Retention and Stability We are proud to report a certified staff retention rate of 88.3% and a classified staff retention rate of 83%. These figures reflect our ongoing efforts to foster a supportive and engaging work environment for all employees. Our retention rates are calculated based on hiring and resignation data, underscoring our ability to maintain a dedicated team of professionals year after year.

Mental Health Access for All Every student and staff member in Hardin County Schools has access to comprehensive mental health services through our 10 contracted partners. This includes:

- **Cumberland Family Medical:** Serving approximately 797 distinct patients with over 13,400 encounters
- **Other Contracted Agencies:** Supporting around 612 distinct patients during the same period.

These partnerships ensure that our school community receives timely, personalized care—whether through individual, family, group, or collateral services.

Professional Development Excellence Hardin County Schools is deeply invested in continuous learning:

- Over 80 district-level PD sessions were offered, with 77% of surveyed staff rating them as outstanding
- More than 150 school-based PD sessions provided targeted, site-specific growth opportunities.

This feedback reflects our commitment to delivering high-quality, relevant training that empowers educators and staff to thrive.

Understanding and Addressing Absenteeism We are actively monitoring and addressing absenteeism to better support both students and staff:

- Teacher Chronic Absenteeism stands at 77%, highlighting the need for continued focus on wellness and
- In the 2024–2025 school year, 2,913 students—or 19.82% of our student population—were flagged as

These insights help us tailor interventions and resources to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Strengths

6. Plainly state, using precise numbers and percentages revealed by current data, the strengths of the district.

Example:

- We have active partnerships with twelve community organizations and businesses.
- Eighty-three percent (83%) of certified staff have participated in high-quality professional learning through the Kentucky Reading Academies.
 - Five Hardin County Schools Family Resource and Youth Services Centers have been recognized in the annual KY FRYSC Impact Report Spotlight. The Family Resource Centers at Creekside Elementary School, GC Burkhead Elementary

School and Meadow View Elementary School received recognition. The Youth Services Centers at North Middle School and North Hardin High School also earned a position in the spotlight

- East Hardin Middle School was named a Spotlight School by the New Tech Network (NTN)
 - The Kentucky Department of Education announced that John Hardin High School is among the o
 - Hardin County Schools opened its Early Learning Academy North Campus located in Radcliff, Ken
 - Hardin County Schools classrooms are brighter and use less energy through a dynamic collabora
 - All Hardin County Schools have earned the Purple Star Award, an award that stems from the Dep
 - Hardin County Schools and Elizabethtown Independent Schools presented “Mother Goose on th
 - Hardin County Schools has another tool to communicate with students, parents, staff and the co

Leverages/Assets

7. Explain how the district will utilize its strengths and leverages, including community resources and assets (i.e., colleges, community partnerships, businesses, industry, etc.) to improve areas for improvement listed above.

Examples:

- We will coordinate efforts with our community partners to meet the behavior needs of more students.
- We will utilize the knowledge gained from the Kentucky Reading Academies to develop a reading action plan to target students in our achievement gap groups.

We will continue to work with our community parnters as we grow our Portrait of a Learner, expecially in the defenses at grades 5,8, and 12. To do this, we need to continue to support our contract with New Tech Network (NTN). NTN provides coaches for our middle and high school principals to support them in implementing Project Based Learning in their schools which in turn supports the Portrait of a Learner initiatives.

We will continue to work with community partners and nearby school dsitricts to increase opportunities for all students in our area

COMMENTS

Evaluate the Teaching and Learning Environment

- Consider the processes, practices and conditions evident in the teaching and learning environment as identified in the six Key Core Work Processes outlined below:

KCWP 1: Design and Deploy Standards

KCWP 2: Design and Deliver Instruction

KCWP 3: Design and Deliver Assessment Literacy

KCWP 4: Review, Analyze and Apply Data Results

KCWP 5: Design, Align and Deliver Support Processes

KCWP 6: Establish Learning Environment and Culture

8a. KCWP 1: Design and Deploy Standards

Schools continually assess, review, and revise school curricula to support the assurance that all students have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for future success.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ No

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

8b. KCWP 2: Design and Deliver Instruction

Instructional programs include consistent implementation of evidence-based instructional practices essential for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional competencies that are aligned to Kentucky Academic Standards and current research.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☐ No

☒ Yes

COMMENTS

We continue to offer professional development learning days in our school calendar. We strive to improve the same every year. Continued revision of our newly designed curriculum maps. Focus on instruction at monthly ALM meetings as well as focus on and modeling of PLC practices. Analysis of walkthroughs and learning walks.

8c. KCWP 3: Design and Deliver Assessment Literacy

Schools have a comprehensive, balanced assessment system that provides a variety of evidence to support educational decision making and includes four primary assessment purposes: formative, diagnostic, interim/benchmark, and summative.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ No

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

8d. KCWP 4: Review, Analyze and Apply Data Results

Schools communicate and implement a sustainable system for reviewing, analyzing, and applying data results to ensure a uniform way to elicit, interpret, and act on meaningful evidence of student learning.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ No

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

8e. KCWP 5: Design, Align and Deliver Support Processes

Schools establish a framework that organizes systems, data, and practices to promote positive, equitable and inclusive learning experiences for all students.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☐ No

☒ Yes

COMMENTS

We are in the process of refining our MTSS process. We are currently reworking how our data is housed and formatted to improve analysis.

8f. KCWP 6: Establish Learning Environment and Culture

Schools intentionally design the learning environment to be inclusive and accessible for all students within a culture where learning and continued growth is the primary focus and foundation for all actions.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ No

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)
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