EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE KENTUCKY PARTNERSHIP ACADEMIES 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Submitted to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education on August 4, 2014

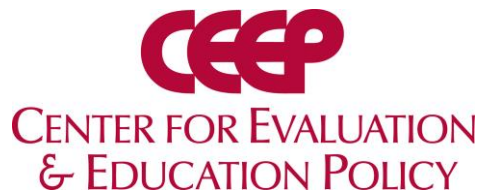REVISED, FINAL REPORT SUBMITTED SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

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Executive Summary

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) commissioned a formative evaluation from the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University to study the implementation of the Kentucky Partnership Academies. CEEP partnered with the IU Center for Postsecondary Research to complete the evaluation, which began on July 1, 2013 and concluded June 30, 2014. The evaluation focused specifically on the 2013-2014 academic year. In the course of completing the evaluation and in consultation with former CPE staff, the evaluators determined that there was inadequate data to assess the impact of the three academies on students or classroom teachers who participated in the professional development. Instead, the evaluators used available data to consider specifically how the three partnership academies were implemented.

The evaluation employed a cross-case comparative research design (Yin, 2009), whereby the evaluators considered the development of individual academies as well as compared their development to each other. Data collected for this evaluation was purely qualitative. The evaluation involved extensive fieldwork between August 2013 and May 2014. Fieldwork involved a combination of observations at Quarterly Coordinating Meetings facilitated by CPE, as well as two-day site visits to each of the academies and follow-up interviews via phone and email. Additionally, the evaluation team from CEEP conducted telephone interviews with key CPE staff and academy leadership. The analysis relied on transcribed interviews, documents obtained from the academies and CPE, and observation notes taken during the fieldwork phase of the evaluation. A thematic analysis was used to identify and categorize salient data points that characterize the implementation and development of the academies.

Key Findings

Data collected and analyzed during this formative evaluation indicate that the implementation of the three academies has varied significantly from one institution to another. Data indicate that this variation appears to be purposeful as CPE sought variation in the academy approaches and allowed such variation as part of the original Request for Proposal (RFP) and award process. Throughout the initial implementation of the academies, CPE has afforded the academies significant autonomy to respond to regional needs and develop professional development programs that serve the needs of schools and districts. Participants have found value in the professional development and support provided by the academies. Given the available data, the evaluators find the following:

- The academies have had significant autonomy from CPE to develop regional professional development partnerships. The autonomy has allowed the academies to develop different approaches to needs assessment, service delivery, and program evaluation. The autonomy afforded to the academies has, however, posed significant challenges to consistently evaluating the academy's progress toward specific performance goals and objectives. CPE is currently working to standardize and improve accountability and reporting mechanisms to allow for performance comparisons to be made across the academies. Data related to these improvements were not available at the time of this evaluation.

- The academies have primarily been embedded within existing professional development centers at the three universities where they are currently housed. This has afforded the

academies access to existing staff and resources from other grant-funded projects. This appears to have strengthened service delivery at two of three academies.

- Assessment approaches and practices utilized by the academies vary widely. Academies have used formal surveys and informal networking to assess regional professional development needs. These approaches have provided sufficient access to school systems, but have not generated the kind of systematic data-based understanding about regional needs that was originally desired by CPE. CPE is currently instituting new reporting procedures that will likely improve these challenges going forward.

- The academies have approached partnership development in varied ways. Two of the academies have relied on bottom-up approaches that primarily engage school district and school administrators in making decisions about the type of professional development needed. The third academy has relied primarily on outreach and a university-led approach, whereby the academy staff members recruit and select schools and districts for participation. The approach adopted does not appear to have influenced how well the partnerships have developed.

- The academies have developed individualized strategies toward achieving long-term sustainability. Two of the academies have focused on spending their initial allocation from CPE prior to launching fee-for-service professional development. The third is now spending some of the remaining allocation to develop new, online professional development courses that will potentially lead to long-term sustainability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Given the limitations of the data that are currently available, the evaluation team from Center for Evaluation & Education Policy cannot yet determine how effective the academies have been in improving student achievement or college and career readiness, or in meeting regional professional development needs. To assist the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education in collecting data that could address these questions, CEEP offers the following recommendations for the Council's consideration:

- Formalize the needs assessment process used by the Partnership Academies and other similar initiatives. Delineate CPE's expectations for the scope, collection, and reporting of data from the needs assessment process. Establish a statewide repository to store data obtained through the needs assessment process.
- Make explicit annual reporting requirements that relate both to the academies' current objectives and the various professional development activities that are being provided.
- Define minimum hosting criteria for colleges/universities to host a Partnership Academy.
- Establish a statewide database to collect and store professional development materials and artifacts both for the purposes of external evaluation and to promote cross-academy learning.
- Provide training to all academies (new and old) in the areas of program evaluation and sustainability strategies.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction and Context: Kentucky Partnership Academies (KYPA)

Purpose and Focus of this Evaluation

The primary purpose of this formative evaluation is to describe the structure and activities of the Kentucky Partnership Academies as of the 2013-2014 academic year. This evaluation studies the implementation of the Kentucky Partnership Academies (KYPA). The KYPA are grant-funded partnerships housed at three Kentucky universities: (1) Morehead State University, (2) Northern Kentucky University, and (3) Western Kentucky University. The academies are intended to provide support to nearby public school districts through regional professional development partnerships. In this report, a partnership is defined as a collaborative relationship between a Kentucky university and a Kentucky public school district. The evaluation considers (a) how the academies have been implemented by each university; (b) the alignment between the activities of the academies and the needs of their regional school districts; and (c) the program practices or outcomes that stakeholders at each of the academies suggest are evidence of the impact that it has had.

Evaluation Questions

The following questions guided the evaluation and were developed in consultation with former CPE staff. The questions presented reflect the data that were available to the evaluators during the completion of the evaluation and encapsulate questions posed in the original evaluation proposal.

- What is the structure of each Partnership Academy? How is each academy staffed? What are each academy's primary goals and professional development foci?
- How has each academy attempted to assess and/or respond to the professional development needs of public school systems? What evidence or data have been used to inform each academy's response to these needs?
- What challenges has each academy encountered and how have they attempted to mitigate these challenges given the resources available?
- Which practices appear promising in each of the academies and how might these practices be replicated in other academy settings?

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into sections. The first section of the report provides a brief review of existing empirical literature on higher education/P-12 partnerships is provided. Next, the evaluation design, including the methods used to analyze the data is presented. Following this discussion, the report presents the evaluation findings for each evaluation site. The next section discusses the cross-case findings from each of the academies. The final section offers recommendations for program improvement.

Literature Review

The literature on partnerships between institutions of higher education and P-12 districts includes several themes around their use and utility for various educational and organizational goals. These themes include the role of partnership goals and expectations, the nature of relationships among partners (particularly between P-12 and higher education institutions), and the role of evaluation and accountability (internal and/or external). In addition, the literature discusses the "success" of partnerships and the ways in which they may be evaluated. However, recent empirical work specifically on P-12/higher education partnerships is limited and shows mixed results; thus, these themes should be seen as emergent rather than conclusive. The mixed results found in the literature are likely due in part to the difficulty of collecting data which directly reflect the impact of a partnership; for example, making data-based connections between student achievement outcomes and the development of deeper links between institutions is nearly impossible. Further, a partnership may involve a myriad of activities, and it may not be possible to tease out which effects are attributable to a specific activity or to the partnership as a whole (Brinkerhoff, 2002).

Setting goals and expectations

A recurring theme in the inter-organizational literature (e.g., Schermerhorn, 1979) and the theory and research on partnership development is the process of setting goals and expectations. Given the likelihood that partnerships will be addressing complex problems, the importance of setting specific goals and expectations in the early stages is essential (Bullough & Kauchak, 1997; Thomas et al., 2012). Clarifying expectations and goals is necessary especially since partnerships can have a wide variety of content areas and objectives (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). Teitel (1993) suggests that related third parties, such as state agencies, can assist in the setting of goals and expectations, for example, by establishing goal-oriented requirements for funding and providing forums for partners to hash out their individual and shared goals and expectations.

Common challenges to partnership development and sustainability involve goal- or expectation-setting processes (or lack thereof; Feldman, 1993). Teitel (1993) suggests that grant proposals written for partnerships should be completed with the full cooperation and participation of all partners. This relates to the goal-setting process, but also suggests potential funding streams for partnerships that are able to coordinate at a complex planning level. Not only could coordination increase efficiencies and save money, it may be able to increase revenue streams as well.

Relationships between stakeholders/partners

Researchers highlight the importance of maintaining relationships among stakeholders in partnership programs. The research suggests that the nature of partner relationships is related to the broad purposes of partnerships. Domina and Ruzek (2012) provide a simple binary to illustrate the difference between "programmatic" and "comprehensive" partnerships. Programmatic partnerships revolve around collaboration on a specific intervention, such as a professional development activity. The partnership analyzed in Thomas et al. (2012), for example, is an example of a program-oriented partnership. In contrast, comprehensive partnerships seek to examine and revise policy as well as address institutional issues. Comprehensive partnerships are more expansive as well as deeply-rooted

in the operations of organizations. Comprehensive partnerships are thus more complicated endeavors, requiring broad buy-in at all levels.

Sustainability

Sustainability of partnerships requires a significant investment of human and financial resources. As discussed by Feldman (1993), the amounts of time and money needed to fully establish the "high level of trust required" are substantial investments (citing Jackson, 1991, and Johnson, 1990). When sufficient time to build relationships is not available, partners can feel "hurried into beginning activity before they ha[ve] a chance to establish trust, mutual understanding, clearer goals, or an identifiable plan for moving forward" (CHEPA, 2006, citing Teitel, 1991).

Stakeholder and participant availability is another serious consideration for the sustainability of partnerships. Staff employed by partnering institutions are often expected to participate in activities that contribute to the partnership goals, but time for participation must be taken away from other activities. The literature suggests that there are numerous barriers, such as internal organizational structures, to participating in partnership activities at all levels and institutions.

One example of this is teacher scheduling; operating within a tightly structured school day, teachers must be given set-aside time out of the classroom and in addition to normal planning periods in order to allow for participation in partnership activities (Bullough & Kauchek, 1997; Feldman, 1993). Peters (2002) cites a similar example for university staff: they may be encouraged to participate in partnership activities without release time from teaching or compensation for summer participation. Bullough & Kauchak (1997) suggest an "adjustment in university faculty roles that currently support higher education-led or separatist models for partnership" (p. 230); considering the prevalence of this theme in the literature, it may be wise for both universities *and* P-12 institutions to consider how their structural arrangements could be adapted to encourage partnership work.

Some organizations may be more willing than others to use their own resources to support and sustain the work of a partnership, or flexibility may be embedded in existing structures. For example, Feldman (1993) makes the point that, in a partnership focusing on research in schools, "the research was the main job for the university researchers, but something extra for the school teachers" (p. 349).

Evidence of effectiveness

Partners and funders are often interested in showing immediate outcomes—particularly when a goal for a partnership is to improve student achievement. However, showing evidence of the direct effects of partnerships on student achievement or other accountability measures is nearly impossible, given the fact that many partnerships are intended to be wide-reaching and focus on capacity-building (Teitel, 1993). Relatedly, partnerships often cannot identify specific students who have been directly affected by partnership activities (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). In contrast, as suggested by Teitel (1993), it is more often the case that partnerships track participation and participant change and engagement data, as opposed to student standardized achievement data (e.g., Anagnostopoulos

et al., 2007; Bullough & Kauchak, 1997; Thomas et al., 2012). This tracking is also more likely to be used formatively instead of as evidence of effectiveness.

One review of the literature disclosed only one set of statistical models which directly examined outcomes related to the type of partnerships studied in this evaluation (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). These models looked at certain indicators used by school districts with partnerships that operated over a period of time, including graduation rate, on-time graduation rate, participation in college preparation courses, and enrollment in the state university system. Domina and Ruzek (2012) also found differences in effectiveness that varied based on whether a partnership focused on widespread institutional changes or on specific programs:

> …[there were] robust positive effects for comprehensive partnerships, where districts and higher education partners worked together to formulate district educational policies, as well as offer services to students, and professional development opportunities for teachers. However, we find no sustained positive effects for partnership programs that focused on student services or teacher professional development, but not policy formulation. (p. 261)

Finally, there are often mismatches in terms of what types of effects data are useful to P-12 versus higher education institutions; as pointed out by Feldman (1993), the data that schools can use to improve practice differ from the analysis and publication that are valued in the higher education reward structure. In order for evaluation data to be useful to all partners, the processes of data collection and analysis need to involve all stakeholders (Feldman, 1993).

Evaluation Design

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education contracted with the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University to conduct a formative evaluation of the Kentucky Partnership Academies. CEEP partnered with the IU Center for Postsecondary Research (CPR) to complete the evaluation. The evaluation began on July 1, 2013 and concluded on June 30, 2014. The evaluation examines the implementation and development of the academies.

Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation focuses on partnership-related activities that were completed by the three academies in the 2013-2014 academic year. The evaluation focuses specifically on the nature and structure of the partnership between the universities where the academies are housed and the school districts which these universities serve. Particular attention was given to the ways in which each of the academies completed a regional needs assessment and how they then used this information to inform the delivery of professional development activities. Given the available data and narrow scope of the evaluation, the evaluation does not consider (indeed, cannot consider) the impact that the academies have had on student achievement nor on metrics related to college and career readiness as defined by CPE.

Participants, Data Collection, and Triangulation

For each academy, the evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups,[1] observed key partnership activities, and gathered documents from partnership staff. The evaluation team conducted initial interviews with CPE and academy staff at the beginning of the evaluation to determine the primary direction of the evaluation. At that time, CPE staff directed the evaluation team to describe the "gestalt" of each academy. The evaluation team thus focused on the overall implementation and development of each academy. It should be noted that detailed data on specific professional development activities and student learning outcomes was not available, and therefore impact on students is reported as part of this evaluation.

Data Collection Timeline

The evaluation team began data collection in August 2013 and concluded data collection in June 2014. All data collected or received by June 30, 2014 was included in the evaluation. Data received outside the data collection period was not included in the analysis. The evaluation included the following data sources: observations of Quarterly Coordinating Meetings hosted by CPE, initial phone interviews with CPE and academy staff, two-day site visits to each of the academies, and follow-up phone and email interviews. The data collection timeline is illustrated in Table 1, below.

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[1] Interviews and focus groups followed the same protocols. The focus group format was used in some cases in order to maximize the evaluators' time during site visits.

Table 1. Evaluation timeline

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
CPE Quarterly Coordinating Meeting	●										
Evaluation Planning and Implementation		●	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Initial Document Request							●	●	●		
Initial CPE Interviews						●	●	●			
CPE Quarterly Coordinating Meeting						X					
Initial Academy Interviews							●	●			
WKU Site Visit (March 27 & 28)								●			
MSU Site Visit (April 1 & 2)									●		
NKU Site Visit (April 17 & 18)									●		
CPE Quarterly Coordinating Meeting										●	
Data Analysis						●	●	●	●	●	
Final Report											●

Note: Boxes marked with "●" indicate the task was completed; boxes marked with "X" indicate that the task was not completed as planned.

Interviews

The evaluation team employed a purposeful sampling strategy to select interviewees for this study (Patton, 2002). Interviewees were invited to participate in the evaluation upon the recommendation of the academy directors. Interviewees were included in the evaluation if they were a stakeholder or participant in partnership activities, particularly those activities that were described as the academy's primary activities during the 2013-14 academic year. Given differences in each of the academies, the composition of the interview sample varied slightly. Interviewees included the university/college grant or business manager, the dean of the college in which each of the academies was housed, P-12 administrators and teachers who were stakeholders in the partnership and/or participated in professional development provided by the partnership, faculty affiliated with the academy, and other partners as identified by the academy directors (see Table 2). A copy of the interview protocols is included in Appendix A.

Table 2. Interviewees by title and organization

	CPE	MSU	NKU	WKU	Total
Senior administrators	2	1	1	1	5
Academy staff	2	4	2	2	10
University faculty	-	2	5	-	7
University staff	-	1	2	2	5
School and school district staff	-	3	7	7	17
Community partners	-	2	1	-	3

Observations of Academy Activities

Given the timing of the evaluation, it was not possible for the evaluators to observe many of the professional development activities facilitated by the academies. Many of the activities occurred during the summer (May through July). When possible, academy-related professional development events were observed as part of the evaluators' site visits. These observations provided opportunities for independent verification of statements offered by academy staff concerning the aims and scope of professional development activities (see Table 3). During on-site observations, the evaluators

focused on the content of professional development activities as well as took note of evaluation/assessment practices used within these activities.

Table 3. Observations conducted during the external evaluation

CPE	Morehead State	Northern Kentucky	Western Kentucky
Academy Coordinating Meeting (August 15, 2013)

Academy Coordinating Meeting (May 6, 2014) | Carter County CARE PD Session (April 2, 2014) | Counselor Job-Alike Network (April 18, 2014) | Conducted a middle school site visit (March 27, 2014) |

Documents

Documents related to the design and implementation of the three academies was requested from academy staff (see Table 4). The documents requested were intended to provide context for the academies' development as well as evidence that the academies had delivered professional development to their partners. The request was made to all academies prior to the beginning of academy site visits. This request included documents describing the original and subsequently revised academy descriptions, annual reports submitted to CPE, examples of the needs assessment and/or regional assessment that were undertaken by the academies, as well as monitoring or internal evaluation reports. Morehead State University and Northern Kentucky University responded to the initial request for documentation in spring 2014. They sent copies of professional development-related materials as well as artifacts illustrating how they had conducted regional needs assessment(s). Western Kentucky University did not fully respond to the initial request for documentation. Upon reviewing a preliminary draft of the report, WKU provided documentation in June 2014. This information was saved by the evaluators and included in the report as appropriate.

Table 4. Documents requested from academies and CPE

Type of document	CPE	Morehead State	Northern Kentucky	Western Kentucky
Academy design and proposal documents (e.g., RFPs, completed proposals)	●	●	●	●
Yearly calendar or schedule of partnership activities	●	●	●	●
Participant data from professional development activities	●	●	●	●
Budget documentation (e.g., budget-to-actual reports, projected expenditures, etc.)	●	●	●	●
Activity reports, progress updates, presentations to the CPE coordinator	●	●	●	●
Partnership activity documents (e.g., program descriptions, training agendas, evaluation forms)	●	●	●	●
Internal evaluation documents or evidence of analysis	●	●	●	●

Table 5. Documents received from evaluation participants in response to the initial request

Type of document	CPE [i]	Morehead State	Northern Kentucky	Western Kentucky
Academy design and proposal documents (e.g., RFPs, completed proposals)	●[i]	●	●	
Yearly calendar or schedule of partnership activities		●	●	
Participant data from professional development activities		●	●	
Budget documentation (e.g., budget-to-actual reports, projected expenditures, etc.)		●	●	●
Activity reports, progress updates, presentations to the CPE coordinator	●	●	●	
Partnership activity documents (e.g., program descriptions, training agendas, evaluation forms)	●	●	●	●
Internal evaluation documents or evidence of analysis			●	●[ii]

[i] CPE provided additional documentation after reviewing a preliminary draft of the report. The documentation included meetings agendas, handouts, and details forwarded by email describing oversight activities.

[ii] Documentation provided by WKU in response to the original data requested reflected an evaluation completed by WKU for one of the districts who participated in the Summer Reading Academy.

Analytic Approach

An inductive analysis was used for this evaluation. The analytic approach focused on verifying informal hypotheses with multiple data sources (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). The approach involved generating overarching research findings from individual, coded passages of qualitative data. Two levels of coding were used in this analysis (Saldaña, 2012). The first level of codes were applied to passages of text which related to the participants' experience with the academies. The second level of codes related these statements to each other and served as the basis for the evaluation's primary findings. Throughout the coding process "tentative conclusions" were identified by the evaluators for each academy (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). In the next phase of the analysis, these tentative conclusions for each academy were compared and contrasted to develop cross-case themes. The findings section of this report includes the analytic description of each

academy as well as a sub-section describing the cross-case themes. Cross-case themes constitute areas in which two or three academies had significantly similar experiences.

Limitations

Despite efforts to collect information from CPE and each of the academies, the evaluators encountered limitations regarding the availability of rigorous, verifiable, and comparable data. For example, the evaluators found that academies had not been asked by CPE to generate a formal annual report describing academy activities and documenting the number of participants served during professional development activities. Academy staff indicated that such a report was never requested from CPE or required by the grant contract, and thus data collected to document participation in professional development activities was uneven across academies and programs.

Second, the evaluators requested documentation from CPE about the development of the academies. This information was partially available. The evaluators were unable to obtain documentation from CPE which provided baseline information about each of the academies, and in at least one case CPE was unable to provide a copy of the original proposal submitted by the academy; this was later retrieved directly from the academy. Current CPE staff provided the evaluators with additional documentation following a preliminary review of the evaluation report. This documentation affirmed that CPE oversaw the academy's development through a series of quarterly meetings and informal exchanges (email, phone, and in-person) between CPE staff and academy staff. Given that much of this oversight occurred outside the 2013-2014 scope of the evaluation, the evaluators were unable to fully assess how this approach to oversight influenced the academies' development in the first two years of funding.

Third, the academies host many of their professional development activities during the summer. Given the timing of the evaluation, the evaluators were unable to observe many of the professional development activities that the academies provide. There were only a few opportunities to observe the delivery of professional development during the evaluation timeframe. Evaluators were also not able to survey participants about their experiences in professional development. Thus, the description of the professional development activities is largely second-hand. Evaluators treated these interview and archival data as evidence that the academies had established partnerships with school districts and created professional development activities that were responsive to the school districts' needs. In two cases, NKU and MSU, the evaluators were able to observe a professional development activity directly. This observation affirmed that the type of professional development described by academy staff was, in fact, being provided. However, the evaluators could not assess the overall quality of the professional development provided throughout the academic year.

Fourth, the data that were collected through the evaluation were primarily qualitative and thus did not permit the evaluation team to consider how the academies may have impacted student learning or achievement. This limitation resulted in the modification of the research design—moving from a mixed-methods design to a purely qualitative research design. While not a significant limitation, this change did alter the scope of the evaluation from one which focused on outcomes to one that more specifically focused on development and implementation. Consistent with the original directive of CPE, the evaluation captured the "gestalt" of the academies rather than their impact on students, teachers, and school districts.

Fifth, the evaluators only received comprehensive documentation from two of the three academies in response to the original request submitted on March 25, 2014. The third provided additional documentation after reviewing the preliminary evaluation report. The documentation they provided was consistent with information received from other academies; however, the information could not be fully analyzed and integrated given that it was received after the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy had completed its analysis of the data and submitted a draft report to CPE. The contract between CPE and Indiana University expired on June 30, 2014. The additional documentation was received between July 17 and July 21, 2014.

Evaluation Findings

The data indicate that CPE has afforded the three Partnership Academies considerable autonomy to design and administer partnerships with nearby public school systems. CPE sought variation among the three academies and therefore selected the academies for funding on the basis of their unique approaches to the needs of their regions. CPE oversaw the academies' activities upon disbursement of the grant funds, and data indicate that oversight has increased since the original funds were disbursed. In this section, we begin by highlighting findings related to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. These findings provide context for the selection, oversight, and administration of the academies. Next, we present findings related to each of the three academies. These findings highlight the extent to which the academies instituted regional needs assessment and developed partnerships. We then summarize cross-case findings derived from the evaluation.

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
Original Intent of the Kentucky Partnership Academies

Based on documentation provided by the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Kentucky Partnership Academies were primarily funded by a one-time appropriation from the Kentucky Legislature.[2] The funding for the academies was provided by Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), the *Unbridled Learning Law*, and sought to improve college and career readiness statewide. SB 1 provided $720,000 to support the development of partnerships between Kentucky's institutions of higher education and public school systems. Per the terms of the funding, each partnership was to be housed at a state university. The university was charged with developing the partnership and providing services and support to nearby public school systems. These services and supports were intended to reflect the needs of public school systems as identified through formal needs assessment. As originally conceived, the academies were intended to help Kentucky public school systems meet the state's goals related to college and career readiness as described in Senate Bill 1:

> [The intent is to] incent the development of a P-20 continuous assessment model that would be suitable for taking to scale across the Commonwealth. Collaborations include at least two public universities, a KCTCS [Kentucky Community and Technical College System] institution, an independent institution, and an adult education program to develop and implement activities to improve postsecondary readiness, placement, and student success at the P-12, adult education, and postsecondary levels. These collaborations will work with P-12 school districts and adult education programs to assess needs of the districts and adult education centers within the district and to then develop and implement activities to address those needs. (Council on Postsecondary Education, n.d.)

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[2] CPE provided additional funding to the academies from the Rockefeller Foundation. These grants were prepared under separate RFPs and were targeted toward specific purposes (e.g., establishing feedback loops).

Under the terms of Senate Bill 1, CPE was charged with the administration and oversight of the academies. Consistent with other programs that CPE administers, the Council's primary responsibilities included reviewing proposals and awarding grant monies; providing support to grantees on project design and implementation; and contracting with an external evaluator. The evaluation data do not clearly indicate which CPE staff member was originally charged with formal oversight of the academies. Data show that three CPE staff provided guidance for the program during the 2013-2014 year.
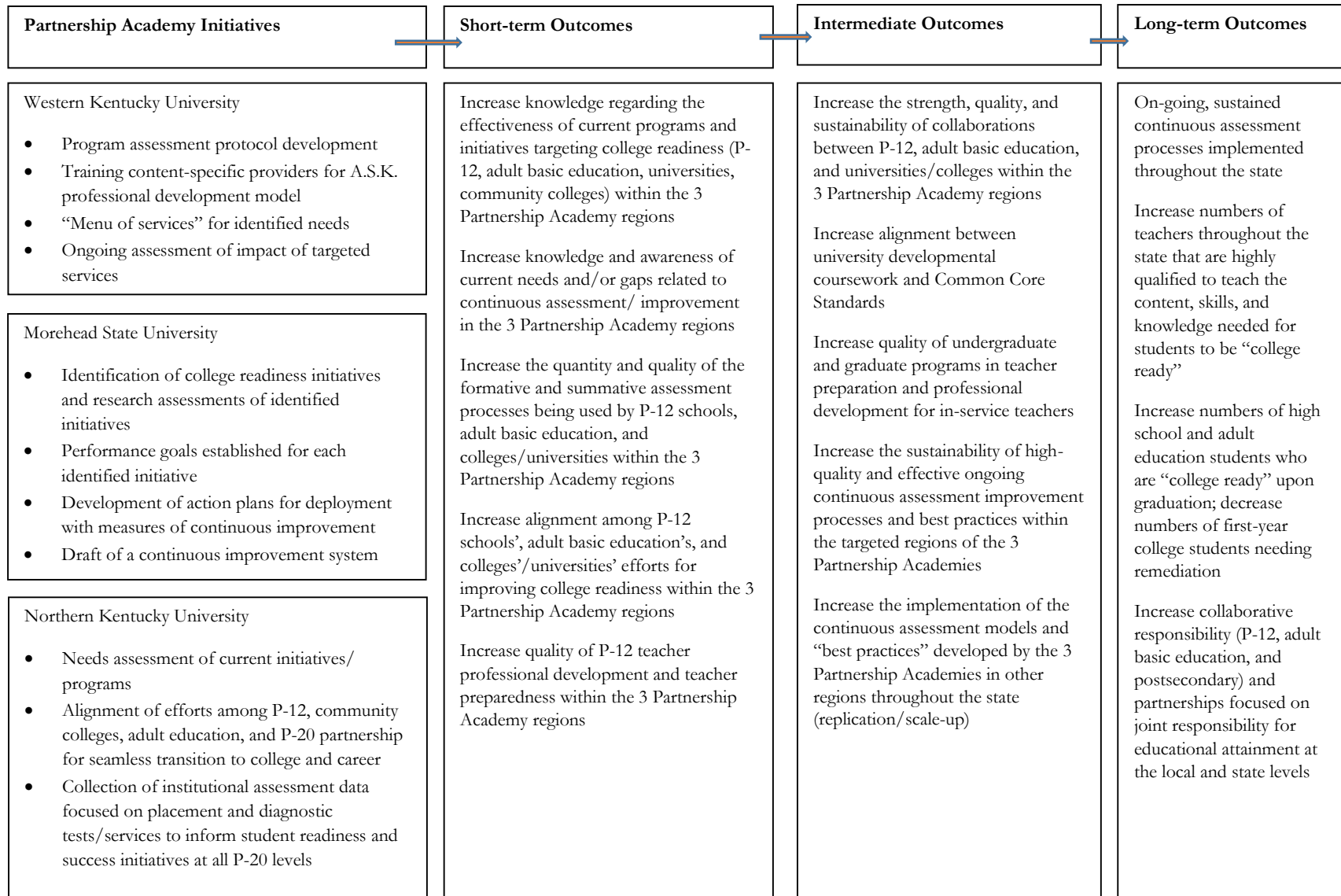
Data from interviews with CPE staff involved in the development of the first RFP indicated that a central goal for the original proposal was for each academy to work collaboratively with school districts to analyze assessment data and identify potential opportunities for partnerships that would support college and career readiness. The academies were initially referred to as "Assessment Academies." This term captured the overarching goal that the academies would serve as partners to school districts in the area of assessment. The original RFP issued by the Council on Postsecondary Education also highlighted this goal. In their proposals, universities were asked to develop proposals that would meet the following objectives:

- *Work collaboratively to develop a seamless P-20 assessment model that would inform teacher preparation programs and professional development of practicing educators;*
- *Conduct a needs assessment of P-12 school districts, institutions of higher education remedial instruction programs, and adult education centers to identify initiatives supporting student transitions to college and career;*
- *Align efforts among P-12 school districts, community colleges, adult education programs, and P-20 education partnerships in placement and retention efforts at the university/college level for a seamless transition to college and career; and*
- *Collect institutional assessment data focused on placement and diagnostic testing and services (i.e., MAP, EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT, KYOTE, Early Assessment Program in English, National Career Readiness Certificate) of students to inform student readiness and success initiatives at all P-20 levels.*

The regional focus of the academy structure led CPE to select funding recipients based on perceived capacity to assess and meet local needs; thus, by default, the characteristics of each recipient were unique to the needs of each region.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the academies were funded in order to achieve four long-term objectives. First, the academies were funded to develop and sustain an ongoing assessment model that would enable universities to support school district professional learning needs. Second, the academies were developed to increase the number of classroom teachers who received professional development that enabled them to teach "college ready" courses. Third, the academies were developed to increase the number of high school students who were "college ready" and thus prepared for college/university enrollment. Finally, the academies were developed to increase collaboration between the postsecondary and K-12 education system in Kentucky. A logic model showing the original aims of the academies is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Kentucky Partnership Academies original logic model

Partnership Academy Initiatives	Short-term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes

Western Kentucky University

- Program assessment protocol development
- Training content-specific providers for A.S.K. professional development model
- "Menu of services" for identified needs
- Ongoing assessment of impact of targeted services

Morehead State University

- Identification of college readiness initiatives and research assessments of identified initiatives
- Performance goals established for each identified initiative
- Development of action plans for deployment with measures of continuous improvement
- Draft of a continuous improvement system

Northern Kentucky University

- Needs assessment of current initiatives/ programs
- Alignment of efforts among P-12, community colleges, adult education, and P-20 partnership for seamless transition to college and career
- Collection of institutional assessment data focused on placement and diagnostic tests/services to inform student readiness and success initiatives at all P-20 levels

Short-term Outcomes

Increase knowledge regarding the effectiveness of current programs and initiatives targeting college readiness (P-12, adult basic education, universities, community colleges) within the 3 Partnership Academy regions

Increase knowledge and awareness of current needs and/or gaps related to continuous assessment/ improvement in the 3 Partnership Academy regions

Increase the quantity and quality of the formative and summative assessment processes being used by P-12 schools, adult basic education, and colleges/universities within the 3 Partnership Academy regions

Increase alignment among P-12 schools', adult basic education's, and colleges'/universities' efforts for improving college readiness within the 3 Partnership Academy regions

Increase quality of P-12 teacher professional development and teacher preparedness within the 3 Partnership Academy regions

Intermediate Outcomes

Increase the strength, quality, and sustainability of collaborations between P-12, adult basic education, and universities/colleges within the 3 Partnership Academy regions

Increase alignment between university developmental coursework and Common Core Standards

Increase quality of undergraduate and graduate programs in teacher preparation and professional development for in-service teachers

Increase the sustainability of high-quality and effective ongoing continuous assessment improvement processes and best practices within the targeted regions of the 3 Partnership Academies

Increase the implementation of the continuous assessment models and "best practices" developed by the 3 Partnership Academies in other regions throughout the state (replication/scale-up)

Long-term Outcomes

On-going, sustained continuous assessment processes implemented throughout the state

Increase numbers of teachers throughout the state that are highly qualified to teach the content, skills, and knowledge needed for students to be "college ready"

Increase numbers of high school and adult education students who are "college ready" upon graduation; decrease numbers of first-year college students needing remediation

Increase collaborative responsibility (P-12, adult basic education, and postsecondary) and partnerships focused on joint responsibility for educational attainment at the local and state levels

Shifting from the Assessment Academies to the Partnership Academies

CPE redefined the purpose of the academies after their first year of funding. The academies were renamed "Partnership Academies" and were refocused almost exclusively on the provision of professional development services for public school systems. The focus on other priorities identified in the original RFP was lessened. As one CPE staff member explained, "The shift transformed the aims from a focus on data and assessment to a focus on building on the relationships between school districts and universities so that universities would become a go-to source for PD needs of the schools." Data do not indicate that this shift occurred in response to a formal evaluation or internal assessment of the existing work of the academies.

Rather, the data suggest that CPE staff decided that the assessment model was not developing as originally conceived and that the outcomes associated with professional development-oriented partnership activities could be more easily measured. Further, CPE staff believed that the way the academies were implementing the assessment model was not sustainable:

> The idea was never that this would be a grant-funded program, but that this would be start-up money to enable the academies to establish and prove themselves in order to have school districts invest in them, and that isn't really happening. (CPE staff)

This observation facilitated CPE's change in focus toward a more concrete, professional development-oriented partnership structure. A professional development focus seemed to have more potential in terms of being an avenue for generating revenue in the form of public school systems' funds for allowable professional development activities:

> So we thought professional development seems like a great option because colleges of education understand it, they're very knowledgeable in different facets of that, and obviously schools have needs in that area, especially when it comes to increasing K-12 teachers' capacity to get kids ready for standards, so let's start there. And so we wanted to make sure we connected student performance to that, or at least try to, because we know that that would be a good way to get into the front door of a lot of our schools that traditionally we haven't been in. Principals are obviously faced with that challenge. So we decided to rename the Partnership Academies, and every academy henceforward would be focused on providing professional development targeted to increasing teachers' effectiveness for not only implementing Common Core but getting their students college ready. (CPE staff)

The data indicate that the academies underwent an additional reframing in October 2012. According to an RFP issued by CPE at that time, the academies were each provided with an additional $20,000 to develop a "feedback system" that would result in each academy developing and maintaining "a detailed inventory of school district professional development needs to address achievement gaps in college and career readiness and common core implementation." Further, each academy would develop and maintain "a detailed inventory of postsecondary faculty at their local institution and Kentucky Community and Technical College that can assist the Partnership Academy in delivering targeted professional development." Comments provided during interviews with CPE staff indicate that the creation of such an inventory has occurred or is currently occurring; however, CPE and the academies were unable to provide documentation to illustrate how this process was unfolding.

Accountability Mechanisms and Performance Measures

There are two primary areas of accountability for the partnership academy grants: (1) oversight of programmatic outcomes and (2) use of grant funds. CPE was charged with both responsibilities. In the first area, data indicate that supervision of the academies related to programmatic outcomes occurred primarily through quarterly meetings between CPE and the academy staff. Documentation provided to the evaluators indicates that seven quarterly meetings were held between 2012-2014 in addition to individual meetings between CPE staff and the academy sites. Within the timeframe of the evaluation, CEEP observed two of these coordinating meetings. These meetings provided an opportunity for each academy to update CPE about their work and for CPE staff to offer guidance to the academies. Data indicate that the majority of program oversight appears to have occurred during and through these meetings. These activities were substantiated in documentation provided by CPE after reviewing a preliminary draft of this report.

CPE is aware that these meetings were not sufficient to provide direction and support. The current program coordinator, who assumed responsibility for the initiative in Spring 2014, indicated that the academies will be subject to greater oversight and accountability going forward. This oversight was described in an email communication received on July 31, 2014:

> … based on our own investigation and review of documents and materials on this project it became evident that my predecessors should have had a framework or template for these [annual] reports to ensure that all academies addressed the same information in their reporting and that progress could be determined by each subsequent report…. [CPE] will be exercising tighter control and more stringent oversight and require more accountability of the academies and that this will be articulated in the next RFP, award letters, and in the new reporting framework and that will ensure that our expectation are clear and that we get the desired information for accountability purposes and consistent information from all the academies. (CPE staff)

The evaluators interpret these actions as evidence that CPE staff members are aware that new accountability measures are needed to ensure so that programmatic outcomes are more closely monitored.

Financial Oversight and Progress Monitoring

CPE was also responsible for providing financial oversight for the academy funding. Staff at each of the academies indicated that CPE had not formally requested annual funding updates, progress reports, or any type of documentation. Academy staff indicated that CPE had not requested sustainability plans. Fiscal staff at the universities noted that this was an "anomaly" as other CPE programs often required such formal reports. The evaluators requested copies of annual financial information for each of the academies and from CPE. Information was not provided by CPE; however, the academies were able to provide informal financial reports to the evaluation team that document current and projected expenditures with varying levels of details.

According to CPE staff interviewed for the evaluation, the grant process required disbursement of the money up front, as opposed to incrementally or via reimbursements. This one-time

disbursement did not allow CPE to monitor the use of funds as closely as it had with other programs. A budget specialist at one of the academies describes this type of grant:

> This is a fixed-price contract with CPE, and what that means is, we aren't required to provide financials; we are required to give an overview of financials and the performance reports. So as long as we're meeting our performance requirements, they gave us the money up front. And as long as we meet all of our milestones and all of the performance requirements of the grants, that's all the reporting that we do. But as far as reporting to CPE, it's only done through performance reviews. And they receive updates at the quarterly meetings. They don't get a financial report at that time. They just receive programming updates at the quarterly meetings. (Budget specialist)

Business staff at each academy indicated that the contract did not include, nor had they received any request from CPE for, documentation pertaining to the original academy funding or additional funds provided for the purposes of developing feedback systems.

> It was frontloaded before any plans were made in terms of how they were even going to meet [the grant requirements]. This is a totally unique situation for both of these grants from CPE in that no set programming. Other than the broad ideas that [the dean] had written into her proposal, there were no specific activities written into that grant. It was like "here's this money, how can you help us meet the goals of Senate Bill 1, how can you help us identify and help us and our schools districts, how can we meet the goals of Senate Bill 1 and help Kentucky get college and career ready." We were the Kentucky College and Career Readiness Initiative. So it was kind of wide open. You know, here's the money, let's go make this happen. (MSU academy staff)

Data also indicate that a financial monitoring system was not developed. As a staff member at one of the academies indicated, "Budget reporting was not required in the contract. [The grant] was very much almost more of a gift, but we've had the integrity and stayed true to that initial vision." (NKU grant manager) This interpretation of the funding was also affirmed in comments provided by one of the CPE staff members associated with the program. According to the staff member: "So when [the program coordinator] came on board in April 2012, there had been a substantial amount of time and some money already distributed on this idea of assessment academies. One of the first things [he] was interested in [was], how much money's been spent, what do we have to work with, what were the original objectives, and where do we want to go."(CPE staff) Formal questions regarding the fiscal status of the academies do not appear to have been considered prior to April 2012.

Data indicate that CPE is currently improving accountability and oversight for the academies under the leadership of a new coordinator. The new coordinator was appointed in the spring of 2014 and has begun instituting new reporting mechanisms that, once fully implemented, will address many of the inconsistencies observed in the evaluation. For example, the new coordinator has developed quarterly reporting templates, a standardized data collection protocol, and financial monitoring resources that will significantly improve oversight. Further, the new coordinator is working closely with the academies to standardized regional needs assessment practices without undercutting the positive aspects of regional autonomy that the academies have been afforded.

Morehead State University

Description of the Academy

The academy at Morehead State University is housed in the College of Education and administered by the 21st Century Education Enterprise (TCEE). The academy has received $275,000 from the Council on Postsecondary Education, including the original grant and subsequent extensions. The TCEE employs four full-time staff, including a director, two professional development associates, and a communications/business manager. The TCEE manages a variety of professional development grants and projects—a total of five since TCEE's inception, including Improving Educator Quality (IEQ) grants, an on-going partnership with the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, an initiative with Kentucky Dataseam (www.kydataseam.com), and a variety of district-specific projects or initiatives. Data indicate that some of these district-specific projects are funded solely by academy dollars. These include Carter County CARES, National History Day/Finding Your Future, and Expressions and Equations, among others. Budget data provided by the academy do not specifically indicate how much funding from the original academy allocation was used to support each of these projects.

Approach to Partnership Formation

Data indicate that the academy at MSU has aggressively sought to establish partnerships with nearby public school systems in ways that reflect and respond to schools' professional development needs. Their approach to developing partnerships can be categorized as primarily "bottom-up," with efforts to engage school districts occurring at the earliest stages of program planning. The most successful method of partnership formation, according to the TCEE staff, involves getting out into the communities and seeking to identify the specific needs of school districts. As one TCEE staff member noted:

> We meet with whoever is in charge of professional development [at each district], sometimes it's the superintendent, sometimes it's the assistant superintendent, sometimes curriculum supervisor, it just depends district to district. We're getting ready to go on our spring tour, where we go and we visit the school systems. . . . In Eastern Kentucky it's all about word of mouth, I'm going to be so much more successful, it's about personal relationships, I'm going to get so much more out of sitting in someone's office, and really listening after we talk about our kids, and our family, and what connections we have, "so tell me what do you need for your schools, what's your biggest problem that you foresee?" And really, those relationships are so much more important than a mass survey. (MSU academy staff)

Data indicate that the academy has been very responsive to regional needs. As districts and schools express needs or interests, for example, the data indicate that the academy has sought to secure resources to meet those needs and/or to provide professional development programming that is aligned with the needs. Academy staff have developed new funding proposals or pursued resources outside the university to meet these needs. Budget data provided by the academy staff do not specifically indicate, however, what proportion of funding streams may be attributed to district-specific requests.

Primary Goals

Given that the academy at MSU is embedded within the TCEE, the specific goals for the academy are subsumed within the larger mission of the TCEE. Specifically, the TCEE focuses on "project-based learning techniques and promotes the use of technology in the classroom" as well as "professional development to improve teacher effectiveness and better engage today's students." In regards to professional development, the TCEE strives to promote multi-year partnerships focused on job-embedded professional learning, individualized professional development plans for classroom teachers, and customized workshops that are designed to meet the needs of individual schools and districts. Data indicate that the goals for each of TCEE's sub-projects are decided jointly with the partners who are involved in those projects. These goals are thus unique to each project and are part of ongoing informal needs assessment conducted by the academy in conjunction with the assistance of P-12 stakeholders.

Needs Assessment

The data indicate that staff at MSU originally developed a formal needs assessment process, wherein the academy staff conducted a survey of regional stakeholders (i.e., school districts, other institutions of higher education, regional cooperatives, etc.) to determine what these stakeholders were currently doing in terms of college and career readiness. The survey inventoried the region to identify what college and career ready initiatives were in place and how various stakeholders might be connected in order to make use of and expand the scope of these initiatives. A copy of this inventory was provided to evaluators as part of the data request for the external evaluation. The data indicate that MSU surveyed Eastern Kentucky University, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, Kentucky State University, Murray State University, Northern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University, the University of Louisville, and the University of Kentucky. In addition, MSU surveyed school districts in the service region to determine what needs they currently had and what initiatives they were currently engaged in. Ultimately, the goal of this survey was described by one academy staff member as being an effort to connect existing resources to areas of need *across* institutions:

> The whole point initially when [the dean] answered the call for proposals and wrote our RFP was, "Why don't we look at what's already being done and take an inventory?" That survey was to try to get information, to try to help CPE get a grasp of what was being done and who was doing it well, and to help connect people. [Single institutions] couldn't provide everything to everyone, there aren't enough hours in the day, [so our goal was to facilitate the conversation:] "Hey, you need this? TCEE can do that for you. You need this? WKU can do that for you." So we threw that [survey] out there: "What are you providing, what kind of PD (college and career readiness), either K-12 or post-secondary?" We got a little over 50% response, gave [the results] back to CPE and said "What would you like us to do?" And that's about as far as it went. (MSU faculty/academy staff)

This formal needs assessment process was replaced with a less formal process beginning in the second year of the academy. The informal process was introduced following CPE-initiated changes in the original RFP—specifically, the change from an Assessment Academy to a Partnership Academy. As part of these changes, the needs assessment was folded into the work of the TCEE.

Data indicate that this integration fundamentally changed the focus of the needs assessment from college and career readiness to broader consideration and delivery of teacher and principal professional development related to college and career readiness.

Under the current approach to needs assessment, academy staff at MSU have relied heavily on informal relationships with school districts—particularly central office administrators—to identify professional development needs and assess the ways in which the MSU team could provide professional development that is aligned with those needs. Thus, the MSU academy's current approach to needs assessment can be described, much as its approach to partnership development, as mostly bottom-up. Through this informal process, academy staff at MSU meet regularly with district and school administrators throughout the service region to identify areas of need related to teacher professional development.

There are several projects which the academy operated in 2013-2014 and which were developed in response to the needs of the school districts served by the university. For example, one of the projects described in interviews with the evaluator was closely aligned with the professional development needs of classroom teachers implementing the Common Core. In particular, it helped prepare teachers to assist students in decoding or deconstructing sophisticated texts. This project, which was referred to as National History Day, was initiated by one of the academy staff members, but grew in response to demand from the region's districts as more teachers became involved in and committed to the project. The project involved having students develop a research topic, conduct research aligned with that topic, and write a manuscript or prepare a presentation about the topic. As one classroom teacher who participated in National History Day described, the program was "spot on" with respect to its alignment with the Common Core. Furthermore, participating teachers indicated that the support provided was in direct relationship with their unmet professional learning needs. As one teacher described:

> It fits Common Core spot on. Everything that you're looking for… it hits everything, the speaking, the listening. In seventh grade one of the big bullet points is citing textual evidence and bibliographies. It just hits everything spot on with the project-based learning. All of the skills that are aligned in the Common Core essentially are all of the skills that are within this program. (Teacher participant)

Another initiative that was discussed by academy staff was Carter County CARE (Carter Adolescent Reading for Excellence), which primarily sought to provide literacy professional development to content-area classroom teachers; the training was aligned with the literacy strategies needed for the Common Core. The project involved professional development sessions at schools that were facilitated by an MSU faculty member affiliated with the Partnership Academy. A staff member and a P-12 administrator, respectively, described how various partnership activities were the result of the needs assessment undertaken by the academy staff:

> With the Carter Co. CARE, from the beginning that was just for one district, that one district sat down with us and said, "These are our needs in terms of reading, writing, and content areas." That was built around them, coming to us, [saying "National] History Day is really great, this is a goal, we want our middle school involved in this." Or the district saying,

"Our goal is to have these materials, Expressions & Equations in our classroom," . . . so as for telling us what they need and want, yes. (MSU academy staff)

Our goal is to increase student achievement and knowledge. I think that's one of the things that our district in particular has really turned around, and it is looking at literacy as the gateway to every subject area, not just English or reading. It's the foundation of what we have to have in order to be successful in science and social studies and math and everything else. I think that's been the goal, is to just, we want all of our teachers in our district to be proficient reading teachers no matter what they teach. (P-12 administrator)

Taken together, the academy's facilitation of National History Day and CARE illustrate how the academy identified school district needs and developed professional learning activities that were aligned with those needs. These examples highlight how, even though the needs assessment process at MSU has become less formal, over the years it has become more responsive to the region's professional development needs.

Capacity, Funding, and Sustainability

The academy staff at MSU did not express significant concerns about the current capacity to achieve the stated/desired goals of the academy. Rather, their comments indicate that they currently have sufficient capacity to achieve most of the goals that they have identified, and they continue to develop new funding streams (i.e., grants) to support professional development activities that were initiated as part of the Partnership Academy. The approach to sustainability at Morehead State is thus largely dependent on continued grant funding. The data indicate that the academy at MSU is largely self-sustaining.

One of the primary strengths of the MSU approach to sustainability relates to the large number of partners which have been recruited by the academy. Staff members at the university and districts acknowledge that there are numerous opportunities for engagement in and through the partnership structure at the TCEE. In particular, staff at MSU indicated that having multiple institutional partners has increased the demand for professional development from their academy as well as enabled it to secure resources that make providing such professional development possible. As one academy staff member explained:

We bring in these partners to strengthen our relationships and to broaden the scope within these communities that we serve. . . . You also have these checks and balances, if it's just me coming with my ideas, I don't have anyone to challenge me, I know [Kentucky Historical Society staff] will challenge me, she'll say, "That was a good idea but I don't think that will work in the long run." (MSU academy staff)

Data indicate that sustainability, capacity, and funding are interrelated at the TCEE. Specifically, the formation of successful partnerships attracts the interest of potential funders, which in turn allows the academy to bring more human resources on board for particular projects. This reinforcing cycle has enabled the academy to expand its reach without significantly increasing the number of staff employed by the academy. As one staff member explained:

This is going to be sustainable because National History Day goes on, even after my project is over, because also it attracted another donor, who is now going to fund the project for

$50,000 for a second year, the second year emphasis will be more on specific reading and writing strategies in the content areas, because we talked about project-based learning, and how reading and writing works with that, but the teachers came back and say, "I'm still having trouble with my kids comprehending the texts, and I'm still having problems with my kids taking own notes, knowing what to highlight, creating their own research questions." So we asked another faculty member to work with us . . . we said ok, that's not our expertise, let's go grab a professor who has published in this area so that she can help us out. (MSU academy staff)

MSU faculty members have also proven to be essential partners in the academy. Faculty members at MSU are particularly involved in content-area partnership projects. One faculty member also assists with internal evaluation of the partnership activities. Staff members employed by the academy indicate that the involvement of faculty is crucial to sustaining the academy structure. However, data indicate that the number of faculty who participate in the academy has not increased significantly since it became focused on professional development in the second year of the grant. Data indicate that there are only a few committed, long-term faculty relationships at the MSU academy. The TCEE staff members see the barriers to faculty involvement as primarily interest-oriented:

I think one, if they're not tenured, then they might get involved; if they're tenured, forget it. [Tenured faculty who are involved] are just a special breed, you can't even count them, they're different. They do it for the joy. I think that has a lot to do with it, whether they were classroom teachers. I think that makes a difference. I think it has to do with how much they put into it. What is ironic to us, we have better luck with faculty outside of the College of Education than with people here in our own building, so people in the science and math, or the space science center, we have better luck with those faculty members on grants than we do with people right here. I don't know what it is. They're aware of the opportunities; we've made them very aware. . . . I don't see how you wouldn't see the connection. (MSU academy staff)

As the staff member's comments highlight, the interest and engagement of faculty at MSU was not exclusively housed within the College of Education. Rather, faculty from other academic units often were the most aggressive and active participants in the academy. As one of the faculty members who was involved in the academy explained, "I have done presentations on the local, the state, the national, and the international level on some of the stuff that we've done. I'm finishing up an article on one of the things. I would think with all of this going on, you would have these faculty members going, holy cow, how can I get in on some of that?" However, as the faculty member's comments indicate, faculty participation in the academy was not consistent.

Internal Evaluation

Prior to the 2013-2014 academic year, the academy at MSU had not undertaken any internal evaluation focused on the relationship between academy activities and teacher performance, student achievement, or specific consideration of the impact that the academy has had on college or career readiness. In 2013-2014, a faculty member at MSU who is engaged in the academy initiatives began collecting this kind of information and is in the process of preparing a quantitative data analysis for the academy. This analysis was not completed in time for consideration in this report. However, his

expertise and training in data analysis has clearly enabled the TCEE to undertake rigorous and thoughtful evaluation, which it previously had not undertaken. As the faculty member explained:

> It's one thing to make the cognitive leap and say, "Well, we're training teachers to be better so therefore better teachers mean students do better," but that doesn't mean it's accurate. So what we're trying to do is figure out a model that works. We're trying to look at ways to tie what the students are doing to what the 21st Century Education Enterprise did. A lot of times in a situation like this, you can't compare students to themselves like in a pre-[test] and post-[test] thing because they don't have a pre-/post-. So instead the approach we're taking is, we're taking teacher X's 8th grade social studies students this year and how they met these standards and comparing them to last year's data on the same standards. So if teacher X has this intervention here in this PD, are they reaching those benchmarks quicker? So have a beginning and an end and some intermediate things where we try, that's kind of the model we're trying out this year to see if it works. It may or may not, but we're trying something. (MSU faculty)

Northern Kentucky University

Description of the Academy

The academy at Northern Kentucky University is housed in the College of Education and Human Services and is administered by the Northern Kentucky Center for Educator Excellence (NKCEE). The academy has received $285,000 from the Council on Postsecondary Education, including the original grant and subsequent extensions. The academy is administered by two staff members and assisted by one graduate student employee. The two staff members dedicate one-quarter and one-half of their time, respectively. The NKCEE manages a number of other grant-funded projects, including Improving Educator Quality (IEQ) grants, Title II grants, and evaluation activities in regional districts. The Center partners closely with faculty both in departments in the College of Education and Human Sciences as well as in content-area departments in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Approach to Partnership Formation

The NKU academy has clearly adopted a "bottom-up" approach to partnership formation. The academy staff members work collaboratively with nearby school districts to plan and co-facilitate professional development events. The topics for these activities have been recommended by the region's superintendents. The first event identified by this group was a "job-alike" professional development network aimed specifically at school counselors.[3] Based on the success of this initial job-alike training, the academy has responded to subsequent requests from stakeholders to provide job-alike professional development support to librarians, instructional coaches, IT professionals, school principals, and assistant principals. All networks are modeled on this same design, but are flexible in implementation in order to meet the on-the-ground needs of the participant groups. As one staff member explained:

> We operate basically our same process time and time again in how we identify which [job-alike] group to lead and how we set about planning with a team that represents all of the participants. And then the implementation [i.e., sharing best practices and strategies] is similar [across groups] if that's what indeed they want to be able to do during their time together. (NKU academy staff)

Two additional community partnerships are crucial to the academy's work. This includes a partnership with the regional educational cooperative and the local business-education council. Both provide regional networking opportunities and support for academy events (such as information dissemination).

Primary Goals

Given its location in the Center for Educator Excellence, the goals of the academy at NKU reflect those of the Center as well as explicit objectives identified in the proposal submitted to CPE.

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[3] Job-alike networks bring together individuals who participate in similar work. The networks serve, for example, school nurses, librarians, or principals—staff members who are often working in isolation in schools or districts without peers or colleagues with whom to collaborate. The job-alike network creates a collaborative opportunity for these individuals.

According to the Center's website, the Center's goal is to "offer high quality professional development, develop sound teacher recruitment and retention programs, support college and career readiness initiatives, monitor P-12 assessment data, convene professional learning communities, and foster the growth of the Future Educators of America's middle and secondary school chapters." The grant proposal submitted to CPE from NKU emphasized four goals that were related to those of the Center.

Needs Assessment

NKU employs an informal approach to needs assessment, which relies primarily on direct engagement with regional superintendents and stakeholders. The academy directors have attempted to assess the needs of the school districts by meeting with and listening to all stakeholders, either individually or in groups, on a regular basis.

Data indicate that NKU academy staff found the needs assessment process somewhat challenging, given what they perceived to be the tension between the current needs of P-12 stakeholders and the current beliefs of college/university faculty. Data indicate that academy staff perceived their role as being partly about "negotiating" between faculty assumptions and the practical needs of P-12 stakeholders. As one academy staff member explained:

> . . . That struggle between us responding to what our districts are looking for, and filling the gap of what maybe the coop can't provide in professional development, but being that alternative source of professional development for K-12 based on K-12 needs, rather than what university faculty see as something that "we should be giving" to P-12. There's just a disconnect between, "Well, I have content expertise in this area, and so everybody should want my knowledge," versus P-12 saying, "these are the demands of KDE, and here's where our teachers are, and here's where we're trying to get to, can you help us?" Our approach has always been, "Absolutely, let's work it out, let's figure it out." (NKU academy staff)

The academy has addressed this negotiation by focusing first on the needs of the P-12 stakeholders. Utilizing existing networks with district leaders in the region via the regional cooperative, the NKU academy staff has designed PD activities based on the needs identified by area superintendents. Ongoing, informal evaluation and needs assessment since the implementation of the first PD activities have resulted in a variety of academy programs that are linked to the current, identified needs of the region.

Among the academies considered in this evaluation, NKU appears unique given how it has responded to regional needs by facilitating job-alike networks for administrators and support staff rather than focusing on classroom teachers. This focus has largely occurred because of the ongoing conversations with regional school districts, which indicate that adequate professional development is already being provided for classroom teachers but not for administrators and support staff. A central concern for academy staff and regional stakeholders is to prevent the academy from duplicating professional development that is already being offered by other regional providers (such as the cooperative).

Data indicate that stakeholders are regularly consulted about the direction of the partnership as well as in regard to the design and implementation of specific partnership activities. As NKU Academy

staff explained, "Once we decide on a specific group to serve… we'll say, 'who should be around the planning table?' And then we get the leaders of that group, we'll contact the state people, as well as any other regional [stakeholders], meaning like the coop and get them around the table." Including these stakeholders is meant to ensure that the partnership activities will meet the needs of the relevant parties in the region.

Data indicate that academy staff and affiliated faculty members all see cooperation as a by-product of the region in which they serve. Participants indicate that the region values community and collaboration. Further, the regional educational cooperative has an active role in the area, which clearly influences the direction of the NKU academy. For example, the cooperative hosts periodic meetings for all area superintendents, which provided the academy with an opportunity conduct informal needs assessment.

Data also indicate that a team of educational leadership faculty at NKU has developed an innovative, systematic approach to assessing the regional needs of schools and school districts. While the uses of this approach have not yet been fully developed, data indicate that this approach may have particular merit in accurately identifying the professional development needs of regional schools and school districts. The educational leadership faculty members have created a database which draws upon comprehensive school and district improvement plans (CSIPs and CDIPs) to identify current instructional improvement goals in schools and districts throughout the region. These plans afford academy staff and faculty a means to identify existing professional development needs in the school and district. The database thus enables the academy and its affiliated faculty to tailor professional development offerings and activities to the specific needs of schools and districts. Data indicate that this approach is far more systematic than any previous approach adopted. As one faculty member explained:

> You can use [the database], that's a list of all of the needs, the twenty-some needs, and sort it by school. We see right away that there are fifty-two schools that are saying we need some help with intervention strategies for math. Forty-four schools for reading and forty for general intervention. So one of the things we did is we shared this with [math education faculty member]. We sat down with him and said, "here's what we found out," and he's like, "this is exactly [what I need]," and so what he's able to do is go back to the spreadsheet and say we want to look at just math, just say intervention strategies in math, we can look at the specific schools that are saying we need help with that. That's what he designed. I mean, this is the kind of thing we were hoping to accomplish by saying, "Where are the areas, who are the experts, and how can we quickly and easily access the data and understand what's going on in our region, and help to support the ongoing [initiatives]?" (NKU faculty)

While not yet fully implemented across the academy, the data indicate that this database may serve as a promising project for the NKU academy and, more broadly, as a model for other academies to replicate.

Capacity, Funding, and Sustainability

Data indicate that staff and faculty associated with the NKU academy did not express considerable concerns about their current capacity to meet the professional development needs of their region. Data further indicate that the academy at NKU has increased existing capacity by recruiting faculty

members to take the lead on projects and by directly engaging faculty as partners in the academy. In some cases, faculty members have secured additional external funding to continue work initially launched by the academy.

With regard to generating revenue, however, NKU academy staff members indicate that districts throughout the region already pay for professional development support through the regional cooperative and thus are unable to pay for additional teacher professional development from the academy at NKU. As one NKU academy staff member explained:

> We can't go out and expect to even generate revenue for PD . . . because [districts a]re already paying the coop, so we have to be different enough by providing targeted PD… so that we weren't competing with the coop, we were collaborating alongside the coop to complement what was already happening, not duplicate, what's the point of that. (NKU budget staff)

Staff and other stakeholders both indicate that a fee-for-service professional development model is unlikely to occur. Indeed, academy staff members were very clear that districts will not be willing to pay for PD services that they are already paying for from the regional cooperative. This approach was not out of the question, however, as one academy staff member explained:

> I think there's a potential for the new dean to bring her experience in running a similar institute for revenue. I asked the question actually of her during the interview process that we have this PD inventory, we've identified the needs in our districts, and we'd like to begin offering PD for some, to generate some revenue. She said a lot of revenue is possible. I'm like, well, we just need that kind of focus and leadership to help us understand more of how it can be done, and she's been successful in doing so. (NKU academy staff)

The academy's ability to market its PD activities as unique, relevant, and necessary for districts will be key in moving toward a fee-for-service model. In addition, plans for future revenue generation include receiving income for contracted evaluation work and using that money to continue to fund PD events.

NKU has also partnered with the University of Massachusetts Center for School Counseling Outcome Research to host the national Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference. The initiative emerged following the success of the school counselor partnership academy network that brought together 115 counselors across the region. The national conference brings together counselors, counselor educators, and professionals from 21 states. The conference schedule has featured presentations by school counselors from local school districts to highlight their efforts to evolve school counseling as data-driven, evidence-based practice.

Internal Evaluation

Data indicate that the academy at NKU has not undertaken an internal evaluation related to the development of the academy or the impact of its services overall. However, the academy has routinely collected participant satisfaction follow-up surveys related to the professional development that has been provided. Staff from the academy at NKU provided the evaluators with copies of the survey instruments used to collect participant feedback. The questions included:

- "Which strategies do you intend to implement?"
- "What is your overall rating for [X] session?"
- "Do you anticipate information presented today will help you in your position?"

Staff from the academy at NKU also provided a few examples of summaries of the survey results that they had collected. These documents were offered as examples of their internal evaluation procedures. It was beyond the scope of the evaluation to determine whether these surveys have been used consistently and how data obtained from them are being used to guide and inform professional development planning.

Western Kentucky University
Description of the Academy

The Partnership Academy at Western Kentucky University is housed in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences and administered by the WKU Center for Literacy and A.S.K. (Assistance – Strategies – Knowhow), an initiative of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The academy has received $275,000 from the Council on Postsecondary Education, including the original grant and subsequent extensions. The academy is managed by two full-time faculty members and an office assistant. The original proposal was co-written by the current principal investigators and a faculty member who is no longer working on the project. This faculty member served as the first PI, though the current PIs took over that position after a few months during the first year of funding. The original proposal development process is unclear, and the first academy director is no longer involved; according to CPE staff, this former director did not follow through with any project activities during the first year.

The original design for the academy consisted of faculty at WKU and partner universities offering a variety of professional development services, which would be organized and cultivated by academy staff. However, after the initial menu of PD services was created and communicated to districts, "no school system expressed interest in the services listed" (WKU academy staff). In discussion with CPE staff, the academy changed directions, instead focusing on long-term partnerships which have primarily focused on literacy, given the expertise of the WKU faculty involved in the academy. The academy currently operates a number of literacy-related professional development activities, including a Summer Reading Academy offered to a few school districts in the region. The Summer Reading Academy is an intensive, four-week professional development program focused on content-area reading strategies. The program is entering its third year of operation and is the academy's most intensive project.

Additionally, the academy is developing a new, online professional development service—LEAD PD [Learn, Embed, Assess, Disseminate]—that will enable classroom teachers to participate in reading/literacy professional development. The first course in the LEAD PD series will be piloted in the summer of 2014 and its implementation and outcomes will be assessed by a graduate researcher at WKU as well as by the academy staff. Although the Summer Reading Academy and LEAD PD are not the only two activities run by the WKU academy, this report focuses mainly on these activities since they were the two primary, active projects at the time of the evaluation data collection.

Approach to Partnership Formation

The academy at WKU has adopted a "university-led" approach to partnership development. The WKU academy has only partnered with school districts that have identified needs related to literacy. The academy's approach to partnership development involves identifying several "indicators" which demonstrate a district's readiness to participate in long-term professional development activities. These indicators include consensus among district and/or school leaders about the need for professional development in literacy; stakeholder involvement in the planning of the professional development activities; and commitment in terms of bringing resources to the partnership. As one academy staff member explained, "We're pitching what we can do, which is not a sales job, we don't

sell anything, we'll tell you what we can do, and if it's not a good fit, well, there's plenty of [other] people to work with." District administrators echoed this view, noting that "we weren't really selecting them, they were selecting us." A district administrator explained how the selection process unfolded:

> I attended a meeting at Western with [academy director] where the superintendent of [school district name] presented on the Summer Reading Academy. After that presentation I came back, very intrigued, very excited about things that he mentioned had occurred in his district, and brought in [name], who is our instructional supervisor, and [name], another central office employee, and asked them to check into this, so they in turn contacted [director], and that's sort of when the wheels began to turn, because my belief was that if we could have half the success that the [school district] superintendent said that they had with the program, then I certainly want to be a part of that, wanted to look into that. (District administrator)

Beyond these interactions, the data indicate that superintendents and other district administrators were not asked to participate in a formal needs assessment as required by the original RFP.[4]

Although at two points—once in November of 2011 and again in the summer of 2012—the Academy did broadly reach out to area district administrators, there was little response to this method, and it was not repeated. Recent comments from the academy staff indicate that the staff members prefer districts to "pursue" the academy as opposed to the academy taking the initiative and reaching out:

> We don't seek partnerships through advertising or anything like that, it is really word of mouth, and school systems knowing that they have to pursue us, because that is one of the first steps in us knowing that they're being serious. Anything that we do has to be long-term, and they have to bring something to the table as well. We certainly have money to grease the wheels, but sometimes school systems see that as dollar signs in their eyes, and they want to hook up with us because they know that we can provide resources and some funding, but they don't want to bring anything to the table, so once we check through those boxes of filters that say that we know they're being serious, that we know they're invested time-wise, faculty-wise, and monetarily, then we can begin our partnership. (WKU academy staff)

Data indicate that the staff members at WKU do work closely with school districts to tailor the professional development activities to the needs of each district. For example, the data indicate that the academy staff changed the amount of time required for teachers to participate in professional development in one school district, modified the focus of professional development in response to

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[4] This statement refers to the academy activities as implemented beginning in late 2012. During the first year of implementation, academy staff did hold focus groups with WKU faculty and administrators from eleven P-12 districts in the region; these focus groups covered needs-assessment topics such as

- What types of professional development do you believe teachers and administrators at both P-12 and post-secondary institutions need to ensure students are college and career ready AND retained in college?
- What steps do you believe need to take place to form partnerships between P-12 and postsecondary institutions?

The data indicate that this type of needs assessment did not continue after the partnership focus shifted.

teachers' professional development needs, and sustained professional development activities over time on an as-needed basis.

Academy staff members were clear that this approach was necessary given the kind of teacher change that they pursued through their professional development model. WKU staff members strive to provide long-standing, embedded professional development in which the district and university work collaboratively and intensively around literacy instruction. As one staff member explained:

> We are serving school systems through the formation of long-standing partnerships. We meet with school systems or buildings, with their leadership, administrators, principals, key teachers, whoever they want to bring to the table, and we just get an idea of what their needs are, what their desires are in terms of training, addressing any deficiencies in their district. We have a philosophy that says, we can't serve everybody, and we need a district that is ripe for the picking, because we have certainly had some experiences with districts who aren't being serious about a partnership, they want your traditional professional development where they ask someone to come in, speak to whole groups of faculty. . . . and then that's the end of it, just so they can check their professional development box, or say that they're addressing their school improvement plan, but it's not necessarily a long-standing partnership that can enact real change. So sometimes we have to turn schools down because they're not being serious about long-term change, and really that's one of our first filters about who we're going to work with. (WKU academy staff)

Primary Goals

According to academy staff, providing professional development was the goal of the WKU academy, even in the first year when it was called the Assessment Academy. However, the original Memorandum of Agreement between CPE and WKU described the academy's objectives as a broad range of activities related to communication and collaboration among P-12 and higher education stakeholders:

- Communicate postsecondary expectations to school districts and adult education centers and aid in the implementation of the common core standards and related assessments for placement purposes, paying particular attention to struggling school districts;
- Develop and implement transition courses and related placement assessments in school districts, using assessments from these transition courses to improve the courses, improve postsecondary delivery, and create a shareable protocol for implementation;
- Work with school districts and adult education centers to create sustainable lines of funding for long-term partnerships for success;
- Enhance the readiness of postsecondary faculty to instruct students moving into the postsecondary environment;
- Enhance the transition from P-12 and adult education programs to postsecondary to improve placement, retention, and graduation;
- Feed information back from these experiences into teacher and adult educator preparation; and
- Feed information back from these experiences into the entire postsecondary experience.

After the change to Partnership Academies, however, the focus of the WKU Academy narrowed to professional development in the area of literacy. Data indicate that the ultimate goal for the academy was to increase student achievement by developing the knowledge and skills of educators:

> Probably 80% of the partnership work that we've done has been focused around developing and following those teachers through the year. Because what we really want is widespread change and teacher quality enhancement throughout the schools where those teachers come from. So we work really hard to establish capacity there. It's not enough for those teachers to remain isolated. (WKU academy staff)

Needs Assessment

Data indicate that WKU took an informal approach to regional needs assessment after summer of 2012.[5] Interviews with academy staff indicate that they networked with regional superintendents informally, using testimony from current partners to share ideas with other districts which might be interested in the kind of PD that WKU could offer:

> We sat down at the table with them and actually started discussing student needs and deficits that we were having in our district. [The academy staff] was very clear, . . . said this model is primarily for teachers [as opposed to students]. We had to change our mindset as to what we wanted by the end of our Summer Reading Academy. (District administrator)

In terms of responsiveness to need, the academy at WKU is focused on a single content area (literacy), as this is the director's area of expertise. However, district and school administrators interviewed for this evaluation generally confirmed that literacy issues were improvement priorities and that professional development about effective literacy strategies was an important aspect of the district's professional development needs:

> Getting kids interested and helping them get a renewed interest in reading is a challenge… you'll find students that are very apathetic, students that are falling behind, but I believe that all students have potential, and sometimes we need to go above and beyond, outside the scope to reach them. It touched me, as a superintendent, former teacher, principal, if this is something that was available to kids, why would we not investigate this opportunity to partner with Western. (District administrator)

A school administrator offered comments that appeared to reinforce his colleague's thoughts about the importance of focusing on reading, noting that the school's participation in the program was "natural" and a "good fit" with the priorities the school identified. Another administrator noted that "Reading underscores all of our efforts in career/college readiness." A school administrator explained:

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[5] During the first year of implementation, under the model of the "menu of services," the academy did receive some applications for services from school districts. The application form included questions such as: "What is the area of concern for your educational program?" "What data do you have supporting your reason for concern?" "In what ways have you tried to address these areas of concerns in the past?" However, academy staff also indicated that they did not have demand for services under this model.

Our school has been the primary beneficiary of the partnership with WKU. One reason was we had a clear need, the other was basically what WKU had to offer fit with our needs. [The director] was looking at more of an adolescent reading model… we found it to be more beneficial with what resources they were providing for our middle school group, for example, some of the reading resources they provided were too advanced for fourth grade but more appropriate for fifth. This year we are just focused on incoming sixth grade to our present eighth grade students. So that's where our goal was. (School administrator)

Capacity, Funding, and Sustainability

Data indicate that staff at WKU expressed serious concerns about the long-term capacity of the academy to meet the region's needs given its current staffing and funding level. As observed during an August 2013 coordinating meeting at CPE, the staff from WKU "expressed the most concerns of the three academies about long-term sustainability, faculty engagement, and expanding their service area." The data indicate that these concerns were still relevant during the Spring 2014 data collection visit. An administrator from WKU attributed the challenges of sustaining the academy to a "silo" effect:

> I think there are opportunities to do much more than what is currently occurring relative to the partnership. If one goes back historically in time, the intent on what is now the Partnership Academy was really to position higher education in a much more favorable position in terms of professional development. I believe we're going to have to ratchet that up quite a little bit in order for us to be as impactful as I believe the original intent was. Some of our original work was much more closely connected with GREC [the regional cooperative] than what the Partnership Academy is at the current point in time. If one is not careful, you get silos, and the Partnership Academy has kind of become a silo, and we need to broaden it out a little bit and pull in additional areas so that we would go beyond literacy and truly make it a partnership in terms of the work that we're doing. (WKU administrator)

The reference to silos was clearly in relation to the narrow focus on literacy professional development. While WKU staff members have expressed a strong preference for sustained, in-depth partnerships with school districts, these kinds of partnerships require significant staffing— particularly given the level of support that the academy staff strive to provide. Data show, however, that the school and district administrators interviewed for the evaluation indicated that an in-depth, on-site approach was their preferred professional development option. However, WKU staff members acknowledge that continuing to build long-term, in-depth partnerships with individual school districts cannot continue, much less expand to other districts, with the current levels of funding (including both grant monies and school district contributions) as well as the limitations of staffing.

One sustainability strategy recently adopted by WKU is to develop new, large-enrollment open online courses (MOOCs) that will ultimately provide an array of professional development opportunities to school systems across the state (and potentially beyond). Academy staff members describe the MOOCs as an opportunity for the academy to become "self-sustaining" as well as to create enduring "virtual" partnerships that will facilitate long-term professional growth. As one academy staff member explained, "we have approximately ten experts in different fields of education building modules for the MOOC and subsequently setting themselves up to partner with

schools/systems; and we have a revenue generating model in place." The evaluators asked to interview these faculty but were told at the time of the site visit that they were unavailable. As currently planned, individuals working in school districts will have access to entry-level training focused on core academic subjects. After entry-level training has been completed, teachers will then have the opportunity to continue receiving targeted professional development through virtual mentors (i.e., WKU faculty who are assigned to work with and support them). At this stage, the university will charge a fee to the teachers or school district.

Despite the university's support for this model, school and district staff offered less support for this approach. Classroom teachers, school administrators, and district leadership all indicated that a face-to-face professional learning model was more beneficial and comfortable than any other approach:

> I still think they [teachers] want a face-to-face. Giving out information on PD, you could do through a MOOC, you could do through online, but trying to do a strategy-driven, hands-on type of PD lends itself to face-to-face. I can see pieces of any type of PD being a combination of a MOOC and hands on, face-to-face. Going straight to a PD 360 [another online PD tool], I believe, is more of a cost-saving event, and I don't think it will be as effective. I don't solely want to do the MOOC as the PD, I would not be in favor of that, if it was a combination of "everybody go on, get started with this, get into it so that when we come in, we're talking about the same thing, everybody's on the same track," that type of PD would be effective. (School administrator)

This highlights the degree to which school staff wanted and valued the kind of personalized, in-depth support provided by WKU. Unfortunately, given CPE's preference for sustainable—i.e., low cost and/or potentially revenue generating—activities, the academy's capacity to meet the identified needs or preferences for face-to-face professional development will depend largely on enhanced institutional support for faculty participation in academy-related activities.

Internal Evaluation

At WKU, faculty have positioned themselves as research experts and provide feedback in the form of detailed statistical analyses to district participants in the Summer Reading Academy. The involvement of the academy's faculty member who is trained in data analysis proved to be crucial support to the districts' ability to understand program impacts and to make data-based decisions. As one district administrator explained, the academy provided a "very formal" report to the district about the performance of students served by classroom teachers who participated in the Summer Reading Academy professional development:

> Actually a very formal report that [academy staff] put together, of course with his background, we asked many questions, he sat down with us and explained, because it was very technical. So we actually did have that opportunity to sit down with all the principals, the superintendent, myself and [district staff], to look at the summer data, and that was where we began to look at a second year, because we knew that it was being effective, for our original purposes, for the students, and then we saw the value of what it was doing for our teachers. (School administrator)

The analysis provides districts with comparative statistics illustrating student performance on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Assessment. The analysis provided by the academy at WKU to district partners compares students by grade level and classroom teacher. School and district administrators interviewed for the evaluation indicated that this analysis was one of the most valuable components of their work with the university. School and district administrators indicated that the opportunity to receive such a "thorough look at reading data" was especially valuable given that their district lacks research and evaluation capacity:

> I'm called the district assessment coordinator on top of being the instructional supervisor and professional development [coordinator], so I don't have formal training in that. I was a business education major, so I [only] know a little bit about data, research. (District administrator)

CEEP reviewed one of the analyses provided to a district partner by the WKU Academy as part of the evaluation effort. The report contained descriptive statistics of student test scores in the Summer Reading Academy program using the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test. Statistical analyses were done by grade level, teacher, attendance, gender, race, and parental involvement indicators. The report did note that the small sample size (total number of students was approximately 30) heavily influenced the statistical outcomes.

Beyond the evaluation information provided to schools and districts, the WKU Academy provided evidence indicating that it conducted internal evaluations of its activities via follow-up surveys. Survey questions for one activity included the following:

- Today's presentation had a positive impact on my opinion about student engagement and effective teaching strategies. (Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree)
- As a result of today's workshop, I understand better how to align with SB 1, promote retention, and ensure we are increasing all students' literacy levels. (Significant change, some change, little change, no change)

Evaluation staff did not receive additional information regarding internal evaluation beyond the above-mentioned activities.

Cross-Case Themes

Across the three academies, the data indicate several cross-cutting themes, which both reflect the current development of the academies as well as provide insights about future opportunities for the development of this partnership model. The following themes appear especially germane to the external evaluation.

Academies Have Had Autonomy from CPE to Develop and Administer Regional Partnerships

> *The academies have had autonomy from CPE to develop and administer regional partnerships since the program was launched. The autonomy afforded the academies has posed challenges to standardized data collection and reporting. CPE is aware of this and has begun instituting new accountability mechanisms.*

Data indicate that the academies have operated with significant autonomy from CPE to develop and administer regional partnerships since the launch of the program. The autonomy afforded to the academies has posed challenges to standardized data collection and reporting. CPE is currently implementing new accountability mechanisms to ensure consistent reporting from the academies. For example, CPE is currently revising the RFP template, introducing new reporting requirements, and requiring specific data points from each academy. Collectively, these changes should improve the consistency of data collection and thus afford greater opportunities to assess progress in the academies than was available at the time of this evaluation.

Academies Are Embedded in Existing Professional Development Centers

> *The academies have been embedded within existing professional development centers or outreach units. This structure affords the academies access to university resources as well as the opportunity to leverage existing relationships.*

Each of the academies has been embedded within existing professional development centers at the regional universities in which they are located. This structure has enabled the academies to draw on existing staff, programs, and other institutional resources. In particular, the embedded nature of the academies provides access to existing resources as well as the opportunity to leverage academy funding with other external/internal grants.

However, the embedded nature of the academies has made identifying the specific academy goals and/or objectives difficult. Data indicate that the goals for the academies often "morph" as the academy becomes an integral part of the existing structures at the universities. Furthermore, embedding the academies within existing professional development structures makes tracking academy-specific activities difficult. In only one of the academies was it possible to directly identify the professional development that had been provided to nearby school districts and solely funded by the academy.

Assessment Practices Vary Widely

> *The academies have adopted different approaches to needs assessment, with most relying on informal practices to identify regional needs and monitor emergent professional development preferences. However, data suggest that at least one of the academies has created a model that could be potentially replicated across the academies.*

The academies have adopted different approaches to assessing the needs of their region. These approaches have largely been informal and tended to rely on interactions with school district leaders. This does not appear to align with the original intent of the partnership academies. Based on the language of the original RFP, it appears that CPE anticipated that each academy would undertake a formal needs assessment of the nearby school districts. Similarly, the most recent RFP, which called for the establishment of a "feedback system," also appears to indicate a more formal approach than had been taken by the academies thus far.

Data indicate that an emerging assessment model at NKU may provide an approach that other academies should adopt. Using information obtained from school and district improvement plans, faculty at NKU have effectively inventoried the current improvement priorities of the schools and districts they serve as well as created a database with which to map the improvement priorities to specific professional development interventions. This approach is similar to one adopted initially by MSU, which involved surveying schools, districts, and universities about their college and career readiness initiatives. Taken together, these appear to be promising practices which could be replicated at other academies and potentially lead to improved service delivery for schools and districts.

Approaches to Partnership Development Vary

> *The academies adopted different approaches to developing partnerships, but tended to provide services that were closely aligned with the needs of the school districts in the region.*

The academies have adopted different approaches to developing partnerships with regional school districts and other stakeholders. Data clearly indicate that two of the academies have adopted "bottom-up" approaches which are consistent with the original aims of the RFP issued by CPE. The third academy has adopted a "university-led" approach whereby the university's services are offered only to districts seeking a certain type of professional development. This approach does not appear consistent with the aims of the original RFP; however, it does not appear to have adversely impacted the academy's ability to cultivate meaningful partnerships with nearby school districts. Indeed, data suggest that despite their differing approaches, the academies have all provided professional development that is responsive to the needs of the region in which they serve. Moreover, based on comments from participants in the professional development activities, it is clear that participants value the services provided by the academies.

Interpretations of Funding Objectives Differ

> *Data indicate that the academies have different interpretations of the original funding and have thus adopted differing strategies to achieve long-term sustainability.*

Data indicate that the academies held different interpretations of CPE's expectations for long-term sustainability. Data collected at two of the three academies indicated that the academy staff planned to spend the majority of academy funds *before* launching fee-for-service professional development while the third academy saw fee-for-service professional development as an appropriate strategy to introduce *prior* to using all of the funds appropriated by CPE. These approaches represent different interpretations of CPE's long-term goal that the professional development activities provided by the academies were sustainable beyond the grant funding. Moreover, they represent different understandings of the purpose and intended use of the academy funding.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data indicate that the Kentucky Partnership Academies have developed partnerships with regional school districts, provided professional development within and through those partnerships, and to varying degrees engaged school districts to identify their specific professional development needs. Indeed, based on the comments provided by academy partners and participants, the Kentucky Partnership Academies are providing valuable professional development to schools and districts in the regions they serve. The data indicate that CPE is currently improving academy oversight under the leadership of a new coordinator and is in the process of implementing new reporting structures that will create greater clarity in program goals and greater consistency in academy activities.

The findings and recommendations in this evaluation are limited in their scope by the limited rigorous and verifiable evidence the evaluation team received from CPE and the academies. The evaluators requested but did not initially receive comprehensive documentation. The documentation that was received did not, for example, provide evidence indicating how many participants each academy served. Further, neither CPE nor the academies were able to provide documentation or data which allowed the evaluators to assess how the professional development activities influenced student achievement or contributed to the students' college and career readiness. These limitations made it difficult for the evaluation team to assess academy performance broadly or in relation to objectives identified by CPE in the original RFP. However, it bears noting that the academies and CPE both provided additional documentation after a preliminary draft of this report was released for review. The documentation was provided in electronic form and integrated into the final report as appropriate. The documentation received indicates that CPE is taking a variety of steps to improve oversight and strengthen the academy structure.

Given the limitation of the data provided, however, the evaluators are currently unable to determine what impact the academies had and whether one or more academy models should be expanded statewide. The evaluators thus conclude that more data collection is required before conclusive statements about the academies effectiveness can be issued. To assist the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education in securing such information, the evaluators offer the following recommendations. These recommendations are intended to improve the Partnership Academies as well as to make possible future evaluation that specifically considers student-, school-, and district-level impacts.

1. ***Formalize the Partnership Academy Needs Assessment Process.*** Approach to regional needs assessment should be standardized across the academies so that CPE can construct a state-level understanding of current professional development needs as well as the current resources/capacity of the academies to meet those needs. Ideally, a formal needs assessment should be based on school or district improvement plans, surveys of regional stakeholders, and systematically conducted meetings that allow stakeholders to discuss possible professional development activities with the academy staff. As part of this process, CPE should provide training to the existing (and potential new) partnership academies which directly explains how it wants the assessment process to unfold.

2. ***Make Explicit Annual Reporting Requirements.*** CPE should require, at a minimum, annual performance reports from each of the academies which describe their current goals, number and types of professional development activities planned and provided, as well as documentation indicating how many students, teachers, administrators, schools, and districts were served. Where possible, individual student achievement data or other impact data should be collected and analyzed as part of the reporting process. However, it is imperative that CPE recognize that the likely beneficiaries of the academy model will not be K-12 students themselves. Rather, CPE should strive to collect data about the number of classroom teachers, school administrators, and other school/district staff served by the academy. Additionally, CPE should require from each academy annual financial reporting about the academy's current and upcoming expenditures that will specifically utilize academy funds. This reporting should specifically state the proportion of academy funds used to support administrative overhead versus the proportion of funds used to support program development and delivery.

3. ***CPE Should Define Minimum Criteria for Hosting a Partnership Academy.*** This criteria should include commitment from the university and college administration, a list of faculty who will participate in the academy and what their role(s) will be, internal infrastructure and resources that will be devoted to the academy (i.e., dedicated office space, staff, faculty release time, etc.), as well as specific plans for sustaining the academy beyond the grant funding through continued pursuit of external funding opportunities or the creation of fee-for-service professional development.

4. ***Establish a Statewide Database to Collect and Store Professional Development Artifacts.*** CPE should establish a statewide database (e.g., a Sharepoint site or secure server) to collect and store professional development artifacts (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, documents, handouts, lesson plans, etc.) for the purposes of both retaining these documents for external evaluation as well as sharing best practices across the academies.

5. ***CPE Should Provide Training in Program Evaluation and Sustainability Strategies for All Academies.*** This training should include how to conduct an evaluation, what kinds of data are typically collected for evaluation purposes, what are appropriate evaluation measures, and how evaluation findings can be used to inform program development. Additionally, this training should explain how to develop a sustainable funding model as well as different methods for raising revenue to support the academy in the long term.

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Appendix A. Interview Protocols

Academy Director Protocols
Morehead State University

1. Needs-assessment/differentiating
   a. How did you initially identify districts or schools to work with? Was there any kind of selection process?
   b. What was the needs-assessment process like? Was this process different for different groups of participants?
   c. In our first interview we talked about how the academy has changed over time, and you mentioned that you surveyed what's happening in the state, what was effective and not, and went from there. Can you tell us more about that survey process and the subsequent decision-making around the direction of the Academy?
      i. Who was involved? Has the Academy's direction stayed constant since that time?
2. Demand/incentives/sustainability
   a. How do school districts contribute to the partnerships? Were they involved in needs-assessment/goal-setting, and/or do they contribute to the resources needed for the partnership? If so, to what extent?
   b. How did the partnerships with non-district/school organizations come about? (e.g. KY Historical Society, Clay Sloan, Kellogg). How do these organizations contribute to the partnerships/outcomes?
   c. Describe the features of the Partnership Academy that you believe to be most sustainable, and why. Will these partnerships continue to exist after the end of CPE funding?
   d. What additional resources would be needed to make these partnerships fully sustainable?
3. Faculty engagement
   a. How have faculty been recruited for involvement in the partnership activities? What role(s) have they played?
   b. Have you had any issues with recruiting or engaging university staff/faculty to work with the partnerships? Do you provide any incentives (monetary or otherwise) to university faculty/staff?
   c. Have faculty been involved in the needs-assessment or goal-setting processes of the partnerships?

Northern Kentucky University

1. Relationships with districts:
   a. How were relationships with districts forged? (Initial contact? Leadership buy-in? Have you been approached by districts?)
   b. Describe ongoing communication with superintendents and other district leaders. Best practices/challenges?
2. Differentiating support
   a. Describe the assessments you've been implementing in the academy: what do you look at, what method, how do you use them, what developments have been made regarding them?
      i. How, ideally, would you evaluate whether the networks help individuals become more efficient and/or effective in their jobs?

b. What do you see as the Center's ideal role in the partnership (e.g., supporting the other partners, facilitating events, providing services directly)? Does this relate to sustainability?
3. Faculty engagement
   a. What do you see as the faculty role in the partnership (ideally)? How does faculty involvement contribute to the overall goals and sustainability of the partnership?
   b. Are specific faculty identified for recruitment based on their research interests? Other recruitment strategies?
   c. Have faculty been involved in the needs-assessment or goal-setting processes of the partnership activities?
      i. How if at all do partnership staff encourage or facilitate communication among faculty and other partners (district, coop, etc.)?

Western Kentucky University

1. Relationship with districts
   a. How have relationships with districts been initiated? What are districts looking for in a partnership with WKU?
   b. How are the academy partnerships different than your previous outreach and work with training teachers in public schools?
   c. Describe the goal-setting process for partnerships with each district? Who was involved? How were specific goals decided? Were goals adjusted over the course of the partnership(s)?
   d. What do the districts bring to the partnership(s)? How does the university benefit from the partnership(s)?
2. Online course development
   a. Do you consider the online course program a partnership, or is it a separate outgrowth of the academy's work?
   b. Describe the needs-assessment process for the online course development. Who has been involved and in what capacity?
3. Faculty engagement
   a. How have faculty been recruited for involvement in the partnership activities? What role(s) have they played?
   b. What are the incentives for faculty to participate in partnership activities?
   c. Have faculty been involved in the needs-assessment or goal-setting processes of the partnerships?

Cross-site Protocols

College Dean

1. Describe the purpose of the Partnership Academy as you understand it.
   a. What are the primary goals of the partnership?
   b. What are the primary activities of the partnership?
   c. How do these activities align with the current direction/strategy for the College of Education?
2. What is your involvement with the Partnership Academy?
   a. When were you first involved in the academy?

b. How long have you been actively involved?
c. Were you involved in establishing the partnership with the K-12 school district? If so, how were you involved?
3. To what extent do you think a collaborative partnership with a school district benefits the college/school of education at this university?
a. What opportunities does a partnership provide?
b. What challenges does it present?
4. What do you see as the future direction(s) of the Academy?
a. How do you plan to sustain the Academy after the funding from CPE has expired?
b. Has the school/college taken any steps to begin sustaining the program?

Affiliated Faculty Protocol

4. How did you get involved with the Partnership Academy?
a. How long have you been involved?
b. How did you learn about it?
c. Were you recruited for participation or did you volunteer?
d. Why did you decide to participate in the Academy?
5. Describe your role in the Academy.
a. What support or assistance do you provide to schools or districts?
b. How has the support or assistance you provide changed over time?
c. How has your role in the academy changed over time?
d. Who do you most closely work with regarding partnership activities?
e. Have you been part of the needs-assessment process for partnership activities?
f. Did you have any role in the design or direction of the partnership?
6. Has involvement in the Academy met your professional needs and/or goals? Explain.
a. Are there benefits or incentives to being involved in the Academy?
b. Do you have any recommendations regarding the recruitment and/or involvement of faculty in the Partnership Academy?
c. What do you think explains the reason that some faculty may not want to participate in the Partnership Academy?
d. What do you think the Academy could do to improve faculty involvement across disciplines?

K-12 Administrator (e.g., Superintendent, Principal) Protocol

1. How did you get involved with the Partnership Academy?
a. When did you get involved?
b. How did you learn about it?
c. Why did you/your organization decide to partner with the Academy?
2. Describe your role in the partnership.
a. Has your role changed over time?
b. Who do you most closely work with regarding partnership activities?
3. Describe the partnership as you understand it.
a. What are the goals of the partnership?
b. What are the primary activities?
c. Describe the progress that the partnership has made towards these goals.

4. What kind of resources does your organization (school, district) need to commit in order to make the partnership work? What kind of resources does your organization receive from the partnership?
   a. Have you done any kind of cost-benefit analysis regarding the partnership?
   b. Do you think that this partnership can be sustainable after the initial grant funding ends? Why or why not?
   c. Who in your organization has the authority to commit or reallocate resources to partnership activities?
5. Has the partnership met the needs and/or goals of your organization? Explain.
   a. What are the goals/needs of your organization?
   b. What is your role in the partnership's goal-setting/needs-assessment processes?
   c. Who are the primary decision-makers regarding the partnership's goals and activities?
   d. Has your organization done any kind of evaluation of the partnership or partnership activities to understand how it is "working/not working?"
6. Recommendations

Grant/Financial/Business Manager Protocol

1. Describe your role with the Partnership Academy.
   a. How do you interact with the Academy staff?
   b. What support do you provide to the Academy staff?
   c. How is this support similar to or different from other projects you work with?
2. Please describe the reporting requirements for the Partnership Academy?
   a. What information has CPE required you (the college) to provide?
   b. How frequently has this information been provided?
   c. How is this process similar to or different from other projects you work with?
   d. Have school district partners been required to report information to CPE?
3. Does the school/college have any internal reporting requirements for the partnership academy?
   a. Are these requirements only applicable to the Academy?
   b. If so, how was this decision made?

Partnership Activity Participant (e.g., Teacher, School Counselor) Protocol

1. How did you get involved with the Partnership Academy?
   a. When did you get involved/how long have you been actively involved for?
   b. How did you learn about it?
   c. Is your participation in partnership activities optional or mandatory?
2. Describe the partnership as you understand it.
   a. What are the goals of the partnership?
   b. What are the primary activities?
   c. What role do you have in the partnership activities?
   d. Describe the progress that the partnership has made towards these goals.
3. Has participation in the partnership activities met your professional needs and/or goals? Explain.
   a. What are your goals/needs?
   b. Were you consulted with regarding needs-assessment for partnership activities?
   c. Who are the primary decision-makers regarding the partnership's goals and activities? Do you have any communication with these decision-makers?

4. Has participation in partnership activities impacted your practice and/or student academic progress?
   a. In what ways have the activities had impact? (positive, negative)
   b. Can you give an example or evidence of this impact? (e.g., instructional materials, student work)
   c. Why do you think the activities have had such an impact? (or why do you think there has been no impact?)
   d. Has your organization (e.g., school, district) done any internal/informal evaluation of the partnership to understand how it is "working/not working?" Do you have any opinions on their evaluation process?
5. Recommendations