

Districts of Innovation Report – Eminence Independent

Cohort I - 1st Monitoring Year 2014-15 School Year

Monitoring Districts of Innovation

701 KAR 5:140 directs the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to monitor the implementation of the Districts of Innovation plans. The specific requirements for monitoring are found in Section 4 as follows:

Monitoring of Plan Implementation. (1) District and school innovation plans shall:

- (a) Be incorporated within the overall district comprehensive plan; or
- (b) Replace the district comprehensive plan.

(2) At the completion of the second year after plan approval and each year thereafter for the term of the approval status, a district approved as a District of Innovation shall annually provide data to the commissioner that shall include the following:

- (a) Number of students served by the innovation plan, total number and by socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, gender, disability, and grade level;
- (b) Number of students served by the innovation plan not on track to graduate from high school, total number and by socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, gender, disability, and grade level;
- (c) Documentation of student progress toward graduation and college and career readiness;
- (d) Total number of certified teachers participating in the innovation plan and their roles and responsibilities;
- (e) Documentation of certified and classified staff operating in a non-traditional school environment;
- (f) Documentation of any extended learning opportunities in which students in the school of innovation participate for the purposes of earning or recovering credit, including qualifications of instructors, time spent, and student outcomes; and
- (g) Other measurable outcomes specific to the district's innovation plan as described in the initial application or through modification of the original plan.

(3) At the end of the second year after plan approval and each year thereafter for the term of the approval status, a district approved as a District of Innovation shall receive an annual site visit from a review team selected and trained by the department. The purpose of the visit shall be to monitor progress and interview staff and students to collect qualitative data on the effect of the innovation plan and for future research needs.

The 2014-15 school year was the second year of innovation plan implementation for the first cohort of Districts of Innovation, and thus the first year when monitoring was required. Monitoring was contoured to meet the specific Innovation Plan for each participating district.

A 3-part rubric was developed for the monitoring process. Parts 1 and 2 referred specifically to requirements listed in the regulation and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by each district. Part 3 was tailored to the individual innovation plan of each district of innovation.

District of innovation monitoring was discussed with the districts of innovation as a whole during the 2013 districts of innovation retreat and again at the fall 2014 retreat. Districts were asked for input on what additional measures they felt would provide evidence of the effects of the innovation plan.

Staff met with superintendents and/or leadership team members in each of the districts of innovation to discuss the monitoring rubrics which had been provided to each district at the 2014 retreat. Districts were asked to complete the rubrics by February 15, 2015.

The visit to the Eminence Independent School District did not involve site visits to schools or discussions with staff, but rather meetings with the leadership team and superintendent/points of contact.

Observations were made in Eminence on an on-going basis through attendance at presentations at the district, and school walk-throughs over the course of the first 2 years of the plan.

Monitoring Summary:

Eminence Independent continues to be an exemplary innovation district and was selected for a site visit during the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) national meeting in 2014.

Topic: Incorporation

As required by 701 KAR 5:140, the district has incorporated the innovation plan into the comprehensive district improvement plan and has established a district leadership team. Superintendent Buddy Berry is the point of contact for the innovation plan.

Topic: Leadership Team

The district reports that all members of the leadership team are involved in the planning and implementation of activities to move the innovation plan forward. The leadership team meets regularly to reflect on outcomes and to plan initiatives to ensure full implementation of the District of Innovation Plan. District staff has made presentations to several groups about their work as part of an innovation district.

Topic: Website

According to the signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), all districts of innovation were required to “post to any website specified by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), all non-proprietary products and lessons learned from the implementation of the district’s plan”. KDE established a District of Innovation SharePoint web site, presented this at the 2013 Districts of Innovation retreat, and verified that all districts could access the site. None of the Districts of Innovation utilized the site. The Division of Innovation has been working to refine the posting process and has not penalized any District of Innovation for failing to post.

Topic: Teachers

The district did not provide a list of certified teachers participating in the innovation plan, and their roles and responsibilities as required by 701 KAR 5:140. The district maintains that all teachers are participating in the innovation plan. In a follow up communication with the point of contact, the district was asked to provide a roster of teachers by name, grade and subject and to include any specific duties related to the innovation plan.

Topic: College and Career Readiness

The district stated that it had a 100% on the accountability index and provided this information in response to the requirement to provide documentation of student progress toward graduation and college and career readiness. The district did not provide a link to where this information could be found.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district create a graph for the 2015-16 report that shows student progress toward college and career readiness since the initial implementation of the plan.

Topic: Certified and Classified Staff

The documentation of certified and classified staff operating in a non-traditional environment, as required by 701 KAR 5:140, was insufficient. The district reported that it has employed teachers on an alternative salary scale and has been moving candidates from interns to residents to regular scale. While the Local Educator Assignment Data (LEAD) report provides some information, there is not enough information to link this part of the innovation plan with student progress. Follow-up communication with the district generated this response: “we have had two staff hired as adjuncts. One is our retired Food Service Coordinator and the other is our Media Specialist. They have both been certified through EPSB. We also have multiple classified staff Supervising online / blended environments, or working with students on specific standards, interventions, or enrichments.”

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district provide a narrative description of specific certified and classified staff and their roles and how they are tied together. This information can serve as a model for policy change at the state level.

Topic: Extended Learning Opportunities

The district is required to provide documentation of any extended learning opportunities in which students in the school of innovation participate for the purposes of earning or recovering credit, including qualifications of instructors, time spent, and student outcomes, and other measurable outcomes specific to the district’s innovation plan as described in the initial application or through modification of the original plan.

The district indicated that the district participates in the 21st Century Community Learning grant program in order to maximize offerings for after-school activities. Schools in Eminence also provide long term internship opportunities for students. The district’s implementation of 21st Century Community Learning programs is documented through the Division of Consolidated

Plans and Audits. No specific links were made to the overall innovation plan. No details were provided for internship programs.

Staff Recommendations:

KDE recommends that the district continue to seek 21st Century funding for afterschool programs, increase connections with other afterschool providers, ensure that these programs are in some way linked with the schools and teachers and reflect the goals and objectives of the innovation plan, and continue exploration of internship opportunities and service learning projects.

Waiver Requests

The district requested a **waiver of SBDM council membership to add an elected student representative with full voting rights**. The district cited KRS 160.345 in the district's waiver request. The district provided this information:

Students were elected to both of our school SBDM councils. The elementary representative is elected from the 5th Grade Class and all students are eligible to run for the office. The elementary students campaign and conduct speeches and are then elected by their 5th Grade Peers. The High School representative is also an elected position. However, any student of any grade can run for this office. They campaign and are elected. The students have been a part of all aspects of all meetings except for closed sessions including but not limited to budget, curriculum, interviews, programming, etc.

Staff Assessment:

This process appears to be working well and students have an authentic voice within the district.

The district requested a **waiver of the minimum school term to create flexibility for the school calendar to be year round, with various configurations of days and hours and minimum time worked to be equivalent to 175 six-hour instructional days**.

The district provided this information:

We have not been able to make major changes to staffing and student calendars yet. Due to our limited staff size, it has been tricky to make this particular concept a reality, yet. However, we have made great strides with numerous competency-based courses and embedded competencies.

Staff Assessment:

The district continues to work on this portion of the innovation plan. Blended learning options may be a way to move forward with this aspect of the innovation plan. Using platforms such as Skype may provide ways in which master teachers from other districts can provide instruction to students in Eminence.

The district requested a **waiver of the restriction of capital outlay funding to allow more flexibility in the use of funds.**

The district provided this information:

We have not utilized the capital outlay funding for more flexibility of spending towards the DOI planning. We have reserved this money for capital improvements and for KYSBIT [Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust] settlements.

Staff Assessment:

Some capital improvements are related to the district of innovation status inasmuch as the improvements are providing space for new practices to provide more personalized learning as outlined in the innovation plan. KDE requests that the district document the connections between the capital improvements and specific pieces of the innovation plan.

The district requested a **waiver of average daily attendance calculation of Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding.**

The district sought this waiver to fund classes through traditional funding means while also allowing for all competency courses to be paid through (pass/fail) and (all/nothing) funding. Each competency credit earned would be for a value of 1/6 of the SEEK for that year and total funding for each student would not exceed total SEEK allocation per traditional funding matrix. The district provided the following update:

So far this has only been a factor in our competency based courses. It has only affected our high school students which number around 180. We will be cross-referencing funding between current model and previous years to determine gains and/or losses.

Staff Assessment:

It is expected that this section of the innovation plan will have more complete information after another year of implementation.

The district requested a **waiver of the single salary schedule requirement to create alternate pay scales for non-traditional roles for teachers and classified staff.**

The district provided the following information:

Alternate salary schedule has been a great resource to Eminence Schools. We have maximized all categories except Master Teacher status due to a lack of definitive criteria. Alternate Salary Schedule is attached.

We have used the non-traditional salary schedule for adjuncts, areas / subjects that have saturated candidates, master teacher of high demand fields (such as HS Math), and for teachers that are alt cert and considered interns, but fully employed.

Staff Assessment:

The district did not provide information about non-traditional roles. The alternate salary schedule does not explain non-traditional roles and how the salary schedule relates to those

teachers. KDE has requested additional information in the form of a list of names of persons being paid as adjuncts and the course work they are instructing.

KDE recommends that the district provide more information with the alternate salary schedule to reflect the non-traditional roles for teachers and classified staff. The district may want to explore ways of measuring the impact of this waiver on student learning, CCR, etc. and provide that information in the 2015-16 report.

The district requested a **waiver of Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) certification**. The district sought a waiver of requirements to allow the district to hire student teachers to be considered in new roles defined for classified staff under a partnership with UK in which student teachers would take on new roles and responsibilities while completing all graduation and certification requirements. This waiver was denied.

The district indicated it had not had any definitive new conversations on this issue but had hired adjunct faculty as a result of earlier conversations with EPSB. The district has engaged in conversations with EPSB and found some room for compromise.

Staff Assessment:

The issue of teacher certification requirements is one which crosses all districts of innovation and KDE will continue to work with the districts of innovation and with EPSB on this matter. Eminence should continue to explore creative staffing plans and share those plans with other districts of innovation.

The district sought a **waiver of the “teacher aide” definition to allow the district to provide some levels of instruction created and monitored by appropriate certified staff, but for potentially full class periods or monitoring.**

The district reported it currently has classified staff providing assistance in virtual learning, small group instruction and electives.

Staff Assessment:

KDE suggests that the district should continue to explore ways to re-invent the teacher aide role and request additional waivers where necessary.

The district sought a **waiver of EPSB certifications on subject areas so current teachers can teach additional subjects**. The district requested this waiver so staff could teach cross-discipline/outside their certification area. This waiver was denied and the district reported that no arrangements could be made with EPSB. The district further reported that it has had to bring in multiple teachers for multiple subjects when needed.

Staff Assessment:

KDE recommends that Eminence Independent look at the Big Picture Learning system and the role of their “advisors,” all of whom have specific content area certifications, but collaborate with other advisors to ensure content is covered on a more flexible basis.

The district sought a **waiver of the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) statute**. The district sought this waiver so that students who have completed all graduation credits, and either have enrolled as a full-time college student or have completed their fourth year of high school experience can be allowed to continue attending the school district for their first two years of college. Classes can be taken virtually, on college campuses, at the school district, or a blended variation of these options. KDE has no authority over KEES and thus this waiver was denied.

Staff Assessment:

The district has not moved forward with this part of the innovation plan and this is on hold.

The district sought a **waiver of the school district reciprocal agreement requirement for district's receipt of SEEK funding for non-residents students**. The district cited KRS 158.120 in this waiver request but KDE staff believed the more applicable statute to be KRS 157.350(4). The district sought to "open the opportunity for all students in the Commonwealth" to attend school in the district. The district provided this update:

We are having to continue reciprocal agreements with neighboring districts, but still believe in the power of open enrollment for creating an urgency for districts to strive for more excellence.

Staff Assessment:

The district believes that open enrollment across the state would be beneficial to all schools and districts.

The district sought a **waiver of the grade 12 limitation of school district grades so the district can add grades 13 and 14 to allow students to either begin or continue their college studies through the school district**. Under the waiver sought by the district, students would not be allowed to participate once they exceed age 21 and the district would receive SEEK funding under the current K-12 statute. This waiver was approved.

Part B of this waiver request related to KEES funding in the implementation plan section of its application, regarding the grades 13 and 14 plan, and requested a waiver so students could utilize KEES funding in grades 13 and 14 for education in the district and so the district can receive KEES funding for these educational services. This section of the waiver was denied.

The district provided this update:

We have never received clarification if we are allowed to let students graduate and still receive SEEK monies for grades 13 and 14 or if we have to just keep them in a 6 year high school plan.

Staff Assessment:

This waiver was originally denied and still is an issue at the state level. The district's update is accurate.

Miscellaneous Plan Components

The innovation plan submitted by Eminence Independent also included a District of Innovation Support Plan. KDE requested a report on this support plan. Following is a list of questions posed to the district and the responses provided:

KDE: Briefly describe the status of the support plan. Were model classrooms established? Were the SPARC [Student, Parent, Advisor, Readiness, Committee] teams created? What actions have they taken?

DISTRICT: SPARC teams have been established and are going very well. Model Classrooms are created and have spread. We also have opened our district to over 200 visitors from across KY and US.

KDE: Did the district create a digital database of personalized learning resources and depository of ideas, lessons, examples? How is this integrated with CIITS?

DISTRICT: Yes...it is currently being housed at www.buddyberry.com . We are looking to move it to a different site for the future. It is not currently integrated with CIITS. We also use Haiku as our LMS with many of the resources in it.

KDE: Have teachers created competency-based course materials with peer, administrator and student voice team feedback? How have these been implemented and what do the early results show in terms of college and career readiness and graduation? What evidence is presented of teacher-created PBL experiences that were initiated in the 2013-14 school year?

DISTRICT: Yes one model example is our UNLOCK Class / Course in which students have been using Design Thinking to change the world in Nicaragua with a bus donated by our Board of Education. We had a graduating CCR rate of 100% and look to repeat that number this year.

KDE: Were competency-based credit courses implemented in the 2014-15 school year? Which courses were developed as competency-based courses? How will student learning be measured in these courses?

DISTRICT: Several high school competency based courses have been established and a use of standards based reporting / digital portfolios are being used for monitoring.

KDE: Did the district create a virtual diploma? Briefly describe its implementation and current use.

DISTRICT: We established a virtual credit program. Students can earn all their credits online via Edgenuity.

KDE: Provide update on the implementation of standards based report cards including parent feedback.

DISTRICT: Standards Based Report Cards are being used in K-12.

KDE: Briefly describe how the VOICE team has helped to scale up project based learning in the district. Is there indication of increased student engagement?

DISTRICT: Yes. The VOICE team meets regularly. They have moved from a place of Entitlement to true Empowerment in the past three years of implementation.

KDE: How has Eminence monitored, as stated in the support plan, the percentage of students at each grade level that have achieved the Exemplars of Eminence Excellence? Has this number increased since the implementation of the plan?

DISTRICT: We have been monitoring it through a digital portfolio and teacher tracking at the elementary level. We are seeing increased percentages of completers and will begin monitoring this through the COCOA app beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

Overall comments:

Eminence Independent has remained on course to implement, and expand, its District of Innovation plan. It has been held up as an exemplary model for other small districts and has willingly shared its information with others through presentations at the UK Next Generation Leadership Academy and hosting site visits and on-location staff presentations for local and national groups.

The district was awarded a \$50,000 innovation grant from The Fund for Excellence in Education to create a Competency Collector Application which is in the works. Eminence was also selected to participate in the Kentucky Instructional Transformation Grant. This district continues to be a model for innovation and personalized learning.