

District of Innovation Report-Danville Independent

Cohort 1- 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 MOU signed by each district. Part 3 was tailored to the individual innovation plan of each district.

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 of innovation 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.

In its first year, Danville Independent teachers and students made several presentations to groups such as the Next Generation Leadership Academy. These presentations provided an opportunity to witness the implementation of the plan in action. Frequent presentations by the superintendent (Dr. Carmen Coleman) also provided updates on the innovation plan. In December 2014 staff met with the district's new superintendent to discuss the monitoring plan.

After review of the monitoring rubric, KDE staff requested a site visit with the leadership team and any board members who might wish to meet. KDE staff asked to visit classrooms, although this did not occur. Instead, KDE staff were permitted to meet with groups from each school. At the time of the site visit, KDE staff were approached by the district board of education chairman and asked to look into the implementation of the innovation plan, as the chair felt that the plan was not being followed. The chair expressed concern that the innovation plan was being disregarded and expressed fear that the district could lose its district of innovation status.

KDE staff visited the district's elementary school and, on the same day, met with the former high school principal. KDE staff also met with the middle school principal.

KDE staff followed up with the teacher who had been designated as the interdisciplinary learning designer and also with the Success Coach.

Monitoring Summary:

A review of the implementation of the Danville Independent innovation plan for the 2014-15 school year provided little or no evidence that implementation of the plan was moving forward.

Topic: Incorporation

There is little evidence to show that the strategies outlined in the district's innovation plan have been incorporated in the Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (CDIP) as required by 701 KAR 5:140. Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIP) appear to have the same strategies and measurable objectives, regardless of the individual goals for each school. It is not evident from reading the CDIP that Danville Independent is a district of innovation.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the strategies outlined in the innovation plan become a significant part of the CDIP. The CDIP should not simply reflect Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (KPREP) and end-of-course (EOC) targets, but other measures that the district deems important in carrying out the specifics of the innovation plan. The specific components of the

innovation plan should be included as part of the CDIP and the major goals of the innovation plan should be included in the CDIP goals.

Topic: Website

According to the signed MOUs, all districts of innovation were required to “post to any website specified by the 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 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: Leadership Team

The district provided a list of members of the Leadership team (required under 701 KAR 5:140). However, there is no evidence to suggest that the meetings of the leadership team related to the implementation of the innovation plan. It was reported by district staff that these meetings focused on test scores and compliance issues and were not used to further the work of the innovation plan.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the leadership team function as an advisory board for the superintendent, central office staff, local school board, and community regarding the implementation and modification of the innovation plan. This leadership team should be charged with brainstorming ideas, monitoring the progress of plan implementation, and be involved in various professional development opportunities that relate to project-based learning, performance assessments, blended and online learning, development of course competencies to match new designs for credit bearing non-traditional coursework, internships, etc. Minutes of these meetings should be kept on file.

Topic: Student data reporting per 701 KAR 5:140

The district was required to provide the number of students served by the innovation plan, total number and by socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, gender, disability, and grade level; per 701 KAR 5:140 (4)(a). The district was advised that it could provide a link to the data.

The district reported “construction of new data collection system that allows for sorting and summarizing of performance data by all criteria listed here. Data can be analyzed both within and across years, particularly since 2012-13.” This response did not provide the information requested.

Per 701 KAR 5:140 (4) (b), the district was required to provide the 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.

The district reported “construction of new data collection system that allows for sorting and summarizing of performance data by all criteria listed here. Data can be analyzed both within

and across years, particularly since 2012-13.” This response was identical to the one provided for the previous requirement and did not provide the information requested.

The district was required to provide documentation of student progress toward graduation and college and career readiness per 701 KAR 5:140 (4) (c).

The district reported “data wall, Building Assessment Coordinator, and counselor in the high school tracks individual student progression.” This response did not provide the requested information.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district provide the actual data requested or a link to the database in which the information can be found.

Topic: Certified and Classified Staff

The district did not provide a list of certified teachers participating in the innovation plan and their roles and responsibilities, nor documentation of certified and classified staff operating in a non-traditional school environment as required by 701 KAR 5:140. Site visits revealed that teachers in the middle and high school were not carrying out the plan due to a perceived lack of support from central office and also revealed a reversion to traditional assessment and accountability processes at the expense of innovation. The district reported that “participation impacts directly teachers in grades K-12 though to say 100% of staff participate actively would be in error.”

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that teachers actively engaged in implementing the innovation plan as approved be identified and provided with resources and support to effectively move the work forward. Those willing to carry out the actions defined in the innovation plan should be recognized and provided with the freedom and flexibility to do so.

Topic: District Plan to Create New Learning Experiences

There was no evidence that the district had engaged in work to create new learning experiences and methods for awarding credit, as was stated in the plan. The district reported “we are exploring unlocked options for 2015-16 in both the high school and middle school.” The district response is unclear and did not include information about non-traditional programs in place and in planning stages. It is not clear what “unlocked options” are.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district provide more detailed information about non-traditional programs and personnel responsible for those programs as required by 701 KAR 5:140. In this area, the Pathways Coach and the Interdisciplinary Learning Designer should be fully engaged. Both of these positions are listed as key components of the innovation plan.

Topic: Extended Learning Opportunities

The district was required to provide documentation of any extended learning opportunities in which students in the school of innovation participate for the purpose 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's response indicated "work beyond the school day focuses most heavily on exposure and experience. Credit bearing/credit recovery remains a target, currently experienced mostly by students in our alternative program via online learning systems."

There was no report on the component of the plan which states that the district would develop a policy and process for awarding credit for outside learning experiences which would fall under this category of extended learning opportunities. It appears that traditional credit recovery processes are in use, with no attempt to create alternative learning opportunities in keeping with the spirit and intent of the innovation plan.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district move forward with developing policies and processes to award credit for non-traditional learning experiences in order to adhere to the innovation plan. These experiences can be credit bearing or used for credit recovery, but should be related to Innovative Design Component 5 of the original plan.

Waiver Requests

The district requested a **waiver of state accountability** to allow the use of alternative standardized assessments other than those designated in Kentucky. This waiver was denied.

The district reported "the Danville School District continues the development of Performance-based Assessment and Project-Based Learning as means to measure what students know and are able to do. In addition, the Danville Diploma, which specifies attitudes, behaviors, and soft skills, is incorporated in the PBAT and PBL work."

There was evidence of increased use of project-based learning at the elementary school level and the use of some performance-based assessments. Creation of new and diverse methods of assessing student learning was less noticeable at the middle and high school levels, with the exception of the project-based learning presentations at the middle school which were a continuation of the previous year's procedures. Although the district is still held accountable for the state testing instruments (KPREP, EOC, etc.) the original innovation plan included a commitment to move toward alternate forms of assessment that better reflect mastery of the core standards and Danville Diploma skills.

Staff Recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district continue to push in this direction in order to implement the innovation plan with fidelity.

The district requested a waiver of **Education Professional Standards Board [EPSB] certification restrictions on subject areas** so that current teachers can teach additional subjects. The report rubric requested information illustrating how the district worked with EPSB to allow the district to proceed with this aspect of the plan. EPSB determined that the teacher of record option might apply in this scenario.

The district responded, “the Danville Independent School District operates within the rules established by the EPSB, which includes limited flexibility provided via the teacher of record criteria.” The district response avoids the question of what the district has done to develop an alternative plan with the advice of EPSB. EPSB offered an alternative, yet the district did not mention how the district utilized this option. This was a significant component of the innovation plan.

Staff recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district explore how to utilize the teacher of record option proffered by EPSB.

The district also requested a waiver of EPSB certification restrictions on subject areas **so current teachers can teach additional subjects in order to permit staff to teach across disciplines**. The district was asked to describe how the district collaborated with EPSB to address this request and how teachers taught cross-discipline.

The district reported “cross-discipline experience are most prevalent in middle grades performance-based assessment. High school EDGE learning opportunities allow for teachers to reach students in content, topic, and skill areas beyond one’s certification, thus allowing to capitalize on other expertise possibly not included or addressed in EPSB certifications.” This response was adequate.

Staff recommendation:

For future reporting, the district should provide more detailed explanations about cross-discipline teaching and the arrangements made with EPSB.

The district requested a waiver for the district **to create and hire a classified employee for what appears to be the traditional role and duties of currently-employed guidance counselors**. The district stated in its innovation application that the district wanted a “success coach” to “build relationships with students and families” and “create stronger connections between school and postsecondary opportunities.” KDE requested that the district provide a description of how it proceeded with this component of the innovation plan.

The district responded “the Danville Independent School District was able to put a certified teacher into the Pathways Coach position. The role continues to evolve in determining which students are served, what goals are established, and how they are met. Models beyond the DISD that relate to post-secondary success continue to be researched as we reconsider notions of “beginning with the end in mind.”

KDE found that the Pathways Coach has been working throughout the year to meet the intent of this aspect of the plan. However, it appears that the work of the Pathways Coach has not been fully supported. This part of the plan was implemented, though there seems to be some question whether this position will be funded next year.

Staff recommendation:

Because of the emphasis placed on this position in the innovation plan, KDE recommends that the Pathways Coach be an integral part of the innovation leadership team. This individual would benefit greatly from attending the Big Picture Learning conference, “The Big Bang,” in August of 2015, as this relates directly to advisory and internships, which are a key component of the work of a Pathways Coach. A failure to fund this position in the coming school year would violate the innovation plan.

The district requested a waiver **to create a new certified position called an “interdisciplinary learning designer”** to “ensure orchestration and creation of dynamic learning experiences cross-discipline”, “develop challenging, engaging courses across subject areas”, create learning experiences designed to utilize and build higher-order thinking skills”, and “become a resource in understanding and translating the growing and changing world of online learning and new ways of using technology to improve learning.

The district reported “the interdisciplinary learning designer has been instrumental in convening educators from across the district (K-12) to dive deeply into re-inventing educational practices. This includes, but not limited to, PBATs, PBL, and the Danville Diploma. We’ve learned that the ILD, with only a bit of release time from his instructional load, is challenged to have enough time, resources, and authority to support the work to fruition, particularly in schools outside of his own. The district is considering options for 2015-16 that would improve impact.”

The interdisciplinary learning designer was appointed in February 2014 but has not been able to carry out all of the duties spelled out in the innovation the 2014-15 school year as acknowledged by the district’s response. The instructional learning designer was to participate in the continued work with the Performance Standards Consortium in New York City, yet there was no follow up and no current staff involvement in working with the Consortium, which is a key component of the innovation plan. In addition, the instructional learning designer was to work with a university partner to craft a new certification in this area, as stated as a component of the innovation plan. There was no evidence that this connection to a university had been made.

Staff recommendation:

KDE recommends that, in light of the fact that this new position is a key component of the innovation plan, the position should be more clearly defined for the coming school year. This was to be a new certified position and was assumed to be a full time position which would include work with a university to create a new certification modeled after the innovation learning designers found in most charter schools. The district should provide more support for this position and ensure that work with the Performance Standards Consortium in New York City

is supported and enhanced. This position has not been realized to full extent articulated in the innovation plan and, hinders implementation of the innovation plan with fidelity.

The district requested a waiver to **create a new classified position called “teaching assistant”** that would “seek candidates with college degrees and with newly certified teachers being likely candidates.”

KDE noted that the suggested roles and duties appear very similar to “teacher aides” currently allowed by Kentucky law. The district reported that it has utilized the teaching assistants to broaden instructional offerings and focus support of students in key content (college ready) areas. The district further stated “as these individuals hold bachelor degrees, they are able to serve in many instances as content experts, which in turn is allowing the district to consider new models of teacher leadership development- an unintended but exciting consequence of the teaching assistant application.”

More information is needed on the number of teaching assistants, where they are assigned and how their work is furthering the innovation plan. This criteria of the plan appears to have been met to a minimal degree.

The district requested a waiver to **allow students’ extra-curricular involvement to count for high school credit** in that area if the students demonstrate competency through either ACT testing or if a teacher certifies that the students demonstrated competency in the required content standards and if the students’ participation is validated and approved by a coach/director of the extracurricular program.

The district indicated the “the Danville Independent School District continues to work on the criteria for performance-based credit. Consideration may expand to include incorporation into summer transition programs, particularly from 8th to 9th grade.” KDE found that little or no progress has been made in this area.

Staff recommendation:

KDE recommends that the district give high priority to this component of the innovation plan as it directly relates to college and career readiness, the Danville Diploma, and most strategies outlined in the original plan. It is a kingpin of the plan but seems to have been relegated to a back-burner in favor of traditional testing and scoring.

The district requested a waiver of **average daily attendance requirements contained in the pupil attendance regulation for Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding**. The district requested funding based on average daily “membership” instead of average daily attendance. The district did not further explain “average daily membership.” KDE asked district to briefly describe how this waiver was applied and how average daily membership is being defined under this waiver. KDE requested that the district explain the measurable outcomes used to support this initiative.

The district response did not provide an adequate answer explaining how this waiver has been implemented. The district reported “we would like to be funded on the total number of students

served rather than the rate at which they attend. In rudimentary form, we must buy books for all 30 students in a class, not the 27 who may attend on a given day.” It is unclear if this waiver has been applied. If this waiver is no longer part of the innovation plan the district must submit an amendment for approval.

Miscellaneous Plan Components

The Danville plan calls for **students to meet college and career ready benchmarks by 10th grade as measured by the ACT**. The application stated that the district planned to administer the ACT in 10th grade for accountability purposes, instead of in the 11th grade, as is the norm in the state. The superintendent has indicated to KDE Innovation staff that he will not follow this strategy within the innovation plan. If this component of the innovation plan is not implemented, the innovation plan must be amended.

The underlying strength of Danville’s innovation plan is a strategy to move all students to college and career readiness by tenth grade and to offer students flexible pathways to reach this goal. The innovation plan also provides for additional time for those students who do not meet the benchmark to attain this level of success by the end of 12th grade, while providing additional opportunities for other students to go above and beyond the basic requirements. For the innovation plan to be implemented as approved, administering the ACT in tenth grade as part of the accountability system must remain a strategy.

Overall Findings:

The district has provided no concrete evidence that all of the strategies described in the innovation plan were implemented during the 2014-15 school year. The district work on the innovation plan appears to have stagnated or in some instances been derailed. Danville Independent presented an ambitious and exciting innovation plan when it first applied to become a District of Innovation and for this reason received the designation. The most significant components of the plan have been ignored, slowed or replaced with a traditional focus on accountability and assessment. The strength of the districts of innovation lies in the ability to go out on a limb, take chances with new and creative learning strategies, and not be afraid to take into account all forms of measuring student growth and achievement that are more in line with what students need to know and do in order to be globally competent and successful in life. The district has reported no progress in continuing the work of the innovation plan during the 2014-15 school year. Key components of this plan appear to be threatened. No opportunities for staff development and growth have been offered since spring of 2014, with the exception of the Next Generation Leadership Academy participation. However, staff reported that they have been denied an opportunity to implement the strategies and best practices to which they have been exposed in the Next Generation Leadership Academy workshops. Accordingly, KDE staff recommends that the district be placed on probation as a District of Innovation for the 2015-16 school year and be given a corrective action plan to assist the district in resuming compliance with the innovation plan.

