

Districts of Innovation Report – Danville Independent

Cohort I - 2nd Monitoring Year
2015-16 School Year

The 2015-16 school year was the third year of implementation for the first cohort of Districts of Innovation, and the second year for the second cohort. Danville Independent was placed on probation by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) for the 2015-2016 school year for failure to make adequate progress on the implementation of their innovation plan. The district was given a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to ensure progress during 2015-2016.

The Danville Independent monitoring visit took place on April 22nd. Since the district was under a CAP, the monitoring process for the district was different than the other Districts of Innovation (DOI). In additional monitoring visits took place and the district was also required to produce additional documentation showing revisions to their plan, evidence of leadership team and board of education focus on the plan, and documentation of more effective implementation of the plan. The district successfully met the requirements of the CAP.

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 DOI. Part 3 was tailored to the individual innovation plan of each district.

Monitoring was discussed with participating districts during the 2013 DOI retreat and again at the fall 2014 retreat. Additional discussions pertaining to monitoring were held individually between the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), Division of Innovation staff and each DOI leadership team. Districts were asked for input regarding additional measures they felt would provide evidence of the effects of the innovation plan.

Both Cohort I and Cohort II districts were asked to provide updated reports to the KDE staff by October 31, 2015 using the 3 rubrics. Danville Independent, because of its probationary status and CAP, operated under a different timeline.

Executive Summary

The CAP stated:

“The district will implement all activities in the approved Innovation Plan on approved timelines or, in the alternative, request amendments to the Plan. If the district wishes to amend the Innovation Plan, the district must, by close of business on August 31, 2015 submit to the KDE any amendments the district wishes to make to the approved Plan. The amendment should include activities listed in the plan that the district wishes to abandon, activities that the district wishes to add, and any changes in timelines that the districts wishes to make and a justification for each. Any amendments must be approved by the Danville Board of Education. All amendments must follow the guidelines set forth in 701 KAR 5:140(7).”

A proposed innovation plan update was provided to Associate Commissioner, Dr. Kelly Foster in September of 2015. These amendments are addressed in the Waiver Request section of this report.

Danville Independent has reset its innovation plan and is in the process of providing KDE with a revised version. There is evidence that the district staff and board have directed efforts to strengthen and support the core of the innovation plan, the Danville Diploma. Key evidence of this is the inclusion of all three elementary schools in the plan. The elementary schools are now actively engaging in the DOI work and teachers are excited about learning and trying new things. Hogsett Elementary is focused on arts and literacy and evidences of this work abound throughout the school.

The Danville Diploma is the anchor for the DOI work across the district and serves as the impetus for Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) at the middle level and Gateway showcases at the end of elementary, middle and high school. The district has created a rubric for the diploma and 7th and 8th grade PBATs are only scored on that rubric.

The district is making a change in school configuration as part of the facility expansion at Toliver Elementary School. The new addition will include a theatrical multi-use space and will house grades 2-5. One elementary school will become a Pre-K center and another will house K-1 students. District leadership believes this new configuration will dramatically overhaul the thinking behind K-12 education. The new facility will be completed for the 2017-18 school year.

The successful intercession week to provide non-traditional opportunities for high school students to engage in learning through their interests now occurs twice a year. A capstone project has been added to the senior year to provide for additional measurement of learning and mastery of the Danville Diploma. The high school schedule will switch from an A-B block schedule to a traditional 6 period day in the 2016-17 school year. This will impact the unique program known as The EDGE which provides students the opportunity to spend time in out-of-school learning environments two days a week.

The district requested to add the following to their revised innovation plan:

Student Growth. The Danville Schools will contract with EVAAS to explore greater measures of student growth, beginning with MAP data for students in grades K-8. Danville Independent will identify and track student trajectories towards predicted levels of performance and determine factors that may impact those trajectories both positively and negatively.

Standards-Based Instruction & Reporting. Beginning in the elementary schools, Danville Independent will utilize standards-tracking software such as Mastery Connect to identify student performance as it relates to standards inherent in the course or content. Elementary teachers will align instruction and reporting of student performance by standard in reading, math, and writing.

Focus on Personalized & Blended Learning. To raise student achievement, the district will explore personalized and blended learning models in K-12. The anticipated outcome is increased college- and career-readiness

These initiatives do not require approval from KDE.

Topic: Incorporation

The district reported in 2014-15 that the DOI plan was incorporated in the Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (CDIP) but little evidence was found to support this. While there is cursory mention of Danville as a DOI within the CDIP for 2015-16, the plan is still not reflected in the CDIP goals and strategies nor is it incorporated within the CDIP as a whole.

Staff Comment

The Danville Innovation Plan was revised earlier this year. However, KDE has not received a narrative version of the new plan and requested this once again during the monitoring visit. The new plan will need to be incorporated in the CDIP and individual school plans will need to be incorporated into their respective Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIP). The 2015-16 CDIP provides minimal reference to the innovation plan. The current CDIP and CSIPS should be amended.

Topic: Leadership Team

The district has established a new leadership team pursuant to 701 KAR 5:140 as personnel and roles changed over the past year.

Staff Comment

The new district leadership team, staff and board members show evidence of coming together around the heart of the original Danville application: the Danville Diploma.

Topic: College and Career Readiness

Districts of Innovation are required to provide the following information:

- Number of students served by the innovation plan, total number and by socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity, gender, disability, and grade level;
- 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;

This information was not provided for 2014-15 and the district reported at the time that it was developing a new data collection system that allows for sorting and summarizing of performance data by all criteria listed above. The district indicated it would provide this data once this system was in place. To date, this data has not been received.

Staff Comment

KDE requests that the district provide this data by July 1, 2016.

Topic: Certified and Classified Staff

Pursuant to 701 KAR 5:140(4)(d) the district was to provide a list of certified and classified teachers participating in the innovation plan and their roles and responsibilities. The district has not yet provided this information.

Staff Comment

The principal at Jenny Rogers Elementary presented a monitoring team member with a list of responses from individual teachers about what they were doing in their classrooms under the heading of “innovation.” This data should be available from all of the participating schools. KDE requests that the district provide this information by July 1, 2016.

Topic: Extended Learning Opportunities

Extended learning opportunities are listed as strategies in the CDIP for improving reading and math proficiencies, but not for engaging students in unique opportunities to meet the Danville Diploma requirements, which is the basis of the innovation plan.

The use of a block schedule provided the time for the district to implement an extended learning program called “The EDGE” at the high school level. Students were given the freedom to explore their interests outside of the classroom on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons through activities such as off-campus shadowing. Students and parents supported this program. Due to a move from block to traditional 6-period scheduling for 2016-17, this program will no longer be available to students. District leadership stated the program was not being utilized as it should. The district did not report implementing another program to take its place.

Interdisciplinary courses are found mostly in the high school intercession program, which is another extended learning opportunity provided students. This program was moved from winter to spring and is constantly being improved and expanded. While many teachers have embraced the intercession program and designed unique learning experiences, not all have buy-in. The district offers summer professional development to assist teachers in learning how to do new things they can then bring to the classroom or intercession.

Subsequent to the monitoring visit, Danville High School students participated in a Skype session about the industries of the future with Alec Ross, a leading expert on innovation and former Innovation Policy Director for Hillary Clinton when she was Secretary of State.

Staff Comment

The intercession program provides unique opportunities for students to explore careers and their personal interests and is well supported. Danville has many opportunities to follow an innovative

pathway through extended learning options.

Waiver Requests

Waiver to use alternative standardized assessments. KRS 158.6453, 703 KAR 4:060, and 703 KAR 5:225.

The district stated in its amendment request: “With the waiver request denied to modify state accountability and the expiration of the ACT Explore and Plan, the Danville Schools will continue its pursuit of performance-based assessment as the primary measure of Danville Diploma competency. We will re-distribute the weight of our college readiness focus to be more inclusive of the 8th grade benchmark. MAP data will serve as the primary measure of progress unless the state introduces a better aligned tool to replace the ACT Explore. The aim for students to be career ready by the end of 10th grade is deleted, as the number of students that are 16 years of age and able to acquire 3 CTE credits by that time prevents us from setting that goal for all.”

Staff Comment

The Danville request to administer the ACT at 10th grade as a summative measure for all students and then to repeat it at 11th grade as a summative measure as it is for all Kentucky High School Students was denied. Two reasons were cited for the denial: 1) giving all 10th grade students the ACT as a summative measure gives Danville students an advantage when taking the ACT as a summative measure in 11th grade, and 2) the request defeats the purpose of the original intent of the innovation plan, to have ALL students college ready by the end of 10th grade. Therefore, Danville Independent has chosen not to pursue the accelerated college ready concept. KDE staff feels this was a key factor in approving the original plan, since the district is still continuing to pursue the Danville Diploma as a foundational piece to the plan, but does not warrant additional consequence at this time.

Waiver of Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) certification restrictions on subject areas so current teachers can teach additional subjects KRS 160.348, 704 KAR 3:305.

The district stated in its amendment request: “With the waiver request denied for high school teachers to teach courses for credit outside of their certified areas, the Danville Schools will build an Accelerated Program at the middle school aimed at preparing students for success in Advanced Academics at both the middle and high school levels.”

Project-based learning has expanded across grades 6-8. Project Lead the Way Gateway to Technology has been applied at the middle school level. Middle school students are exploring the use of Mastery Connect and digital badging.

Staff Comment

As the district moves forward with this component of its plan it should provide a description of the Accelerated Program being implemented at the middle school level and track the effect on students. The emphasis on middle school provides an opportunity for the district to ensure that students have a solid foundation and are well prepared to move on successfully in high school and beyond.

Waiver of EPSB certification restrictions so staff can teach cross discipline. KRS 160.348 and 704 KAR 3:305.

The district stated in its amendment request: “With the waiver request denied for relaxed certification restrictions so teachers can teach additional subjects outside of their area of expertise, the Danville Schools will modify daily schedules to promote interdisciplinary teaching opportunities among certified colleagues and look for non-credit bearing opportunities for teachers to facilitate learning that may extend beyond their respective areas of certification.”

The district also stated anticipated outcomes of this component of the plan would include modified daily schedules to promote interdisciplinary teaching opportunities; continuation of Intercession at the high school; and, continuance of The EDGE at Danville High School. The district has abandoned The EDGE for the coming school year.

Staff Comment

Most of the interdisciplinary teaching occurs during intercession and has not yet been incorporated into the daily schedule of the high school. No replacement for The EDGE has been proposed. Danville visited the Big Picture School in Nashville and may want to consider exploring the advisory/internship model witnessed at that school. This could provide an opportunity for replacing The EDGE in a more deliberate and structured manner.

Waiver of traditional certified and classified job classifications. KRS 161.180.

The district stated in their original application the desire to hire a success coach to fill a newly created classified position. The district decided to create one certified role referred to as a Pathways Coach. EPSB recommended using the adjunct certification as an option for classified positions when degrees are required.

The district stated in its amendment request: “The ‘Success Coach’ will be referred to as the “Pathways Coach.” Job descriptions for both the Pathways Coach, Interdisciplinary Learning Designer, and Teaching Assistant are updated as experience, resources, and lessons learned dictate.” The district now has created a position of Student Engagement Coach.

Staff Comment

The addition of these positions will benefit students by allowing for increased relationship building and guidance. KDE requests that the district provide a description of each of the positions created and the names and qualifications of the persons holding those positions. It is

unclear which positions are in place and/or renamed since the original plan. This should be included in the narrative of the plan as a whole.

Waiver to allow students' extracurricular involvement to count for high school credit. 704 KAR 3:305.

In the district's amendment request it noted that per local board policy, Danville High School school-based decision making council (SBDM) is charged with the duty of defining performance-based credit. The SBDM will ensure alignment with 704 KAR 3:30. Danville High School will define performance-based credit and promote those opportunities with students and will also track students earning performance-based credits.

Staff Comment

The district should include in the narrative of its amended plan a description of performance-based credit and how it will promote opportunities for students to follow this path. The district should also explain how it will track students earning performance-based credits and determine mastery.

Waiver of average daily attendance requirement. 702 KAR 7:125.

The district stated in its amendment request: "Funding Based on Average Daily Membership. Informed that our funding will not exceed current allotments no matter conclusions drawn, exploration of a different formula will be put on hold."

Noteworthy

Skype session for students to explore industries of the future was hosted with Alex Ross, leading expert on innovation.

The creation of partnership with the Community Arts Center through National Endowment for the Arts grant for printmaking with goal of engaging students in the arts through community-based artists.

The creation of technical theater class, which is interdisciplinary in nature using math, science, technology, visual art and literacy.

Danville Diploma, which clearly articulates the expectations of all students when they leave high school. The diploma anchors the innovation plan.

Creation of intercession for Danville High School students to explore interests in a variety of subject areas.

Jennie Rogers Elementary student engagement beyond walls project. Some of the connections made with students included the Humane Society, wildlife rehabilitation specialist visits and kindergarten production at a professional theater.

Appendix

The monitoring team for Danville Independent consisted of the following:

David Cook, Director, Division of Innovation, KDE
Pat Trotter, Division of Innovation, KDE
Dr. Lu Young, University of Kentucky
Tara Rodriguez, Division of Student Success, KDE
John Fields, EPSB

Visits were made to the following schools:

Danville High School
Bate Middle School
Toliver Elementary School
Hogsett Elementary School
Jenny Rogers Elementary

Meetings were held with:

Dr. Keith Look, Superintendent
Ron Ballard, Principal, Toliver Elementary
Win Smith, Interim Principal, Danville High School
Beth Lee, Principal, Bate Middle School
Judy Spellacy, Curriculum and Instruction
Tina Rey, Special Education
Robin Kelly, Principal, Jenny Rogers Elementary
Brian Gover, Public Information
Greg Shultz, Gifted and Talented
David McAvie, DAC
Lonnie Harp, Board Member
Steve Becker, Board Member
Jane Dewey, Parent & Teacher
Chris Verhoven, Parent
Summer Emerson, Parent
Joey Sallee, Parent & Teacher

The report to the KBE and the Danville corrective action plan using the following link:

<https://portal.ksba.org/public/Meeting.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4388&PublicMeetingID=14066&AgencyTypeID=1>

Informal meetings were held with teachers, and students in the schools visited.

The district will submit their revised innovation plan no later than July 31, 2016 and will sign a new Memorandum of Understanding no later than September 1, 2016.