

Districts of Innovation Report – Owsley County

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

Background

The 2015-16 school year was the third year of implementation for the first cohort of Districts of Innovation (DOI), and the second year for the second cohort. The Owsley County monitoring visit took place on April 21st. The visit involved site visits to schools and discussions with staff, as well as meetings with the leadership team and designated point of contact. Over the course of the first two years, observations were made on an on-going basis through attendance at presentations in the district and school walk-throughs.

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.

Executive Summary:

Owsley County leadership embraces innovation and is guided by the motto “we will find a way.” Owsley County continues to explore innovative ways to meet the needs of a struggling population. The district fully embraces the notion of personalized learning for each student.

Project-based learning continues to develop, there is good use of the virtual program, and the additional career pathways are encouraging more students to finish school. Through the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative’s (KVEC) Appalachian Technology Initiative, students now have the opportunity to study coding. Two Wi-Fi equipped buses provide Internet access for students to and from school and extracurricular events. Additionally, the district has partnered with the Owsley County Public Library and the Action Team to provide Internet access for students who may not have it at home. The district continues to meet its innovation timeline.

Owsley County continues to be an exemplary innovation district. The district has a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all students. Owsley County is a member of and only Kentucky district to participate in the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools. The district

was recently awarded the Kentucky School Board Association Public Education Achieves in Kentucky Award (PEAK Award).

Personalized learning is evident throughout the district at all school levels. Students are encouraged to explore all options available to them and supported by faculty and staff.

Topic: Incorporation

Pursuant to 701 KAR 5:140, the district has incorporated the innovation plan into the comprehensive district improvement plan and has established a district leadership team. Gary Cornett 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 DOI plan.

Topic: Teachers

The district provided a list of certified teachers participating in the innovation plan and their roles and responsibilities, pursuant to 701 KAR 5:140. The district maintains that all teachers are participating in the innovation plan.

Topic: College- and Career-Readiness

The district works tirelessly to keep students engaged in school and working toward a successful college or career pathway. Owsley County provides one of the best examples of implementation of the graduation requirement waiver of any of the Districts of Innovation. Documentation was provided demonstrating specific instances where students who, without the opportunity to meet benchmark graduation requirements and enroll in additional classes at the Area Technology Center, would have been dropouts. Instead, they have received industry certifications, graduated from high school and been offered well-paying jobs in the region.

Other students take advantage of the virtual program which is provided through Edgenuity. A staff person is assigned to monitor the work on Edgenuity.

Owsley County has high truancy rates and significant special needs population. An excellent example of district's commitment to making sure these students are successful was found in CTE pathway for Engineering. Twelve students took and passed KOSSA assessment for this pathway. Over half were either special needs students or chronic truants.

Staff Comment

The district should continue to expand access to career pathways and utilize the resources provided through the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative such as the Appalachian Technology Institute.

Topic: Certified and Classified Staff

The documentation of certified and classified staff operating in a non-traditional environment, pursuant to 701 KAR 5:140, was sufficient.

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.

Staff Comment:

The district should continue implementing its innovation plan and provide additional unique opportunities for student success. As the district explores new ideas it may find a need to request additional waivers.

Waiver Requests

Waiver of graduation requirements. 704 KAR 3:305.

The district has utilized the graduation requirement waiver to offer courses, project-based learning opportunities, virtual classes, and flexible scheduling to meet the needs of its students to ensure that they successfully complete high school and have a clear path toward successful careers.

A waiver request to waive the grade 12 limitation of school district grades in order to add grades 13 and 14 to allow students to begin or continue college studies through the school district has not been utilized due to the reluctance of post-secondary institutions to work with the district on this issue.

Waiver of the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky funding formula. KRS 157.360(2).

The waiver allowing a modified distribution of SEEK funds for students in average daily attendance in nontraditional programming time has been successfully implemented in a variety of instances through the virtual school and online coursework for a specific subset of students for whom a traditional school day was not possible. The district has had much success in keeping students engaged and in school through this program. The district provided records indicating students enrolled in performance-based courses.

Waiver of average daily attendance calculation for Support Education Excellence in Kentucky funding. KRS 160.107.

The district requested this waiver to ensure students may be allowed to enroll in as many performance-based courses as needed. They requested flexibility in counting students present who are enrolled in any number of performance-based courses. The waiver would also cover students successfully meeting their individualized education plan through virtual and blended learning approaches.

The district has used this waiver to expand its virtual programs and provide alternative pathways for graduation based on individual student needs. By virtue of this waiver, more students remain enrolled in school and are completing high school requirements and beyond.

Waiver of Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) certification requirements for teaching particular subject areas so current teachers can teach additional subjects. KRS 161.020.

This waiver was denied. The district continues to work with the EPSB to explore options.

Waiver of EPSB certification requirements to allow “pairing certified teachers with community, non-certified professionals in health, agriculture and business fields, etc., and having flexibility of roles as teachers and community professionals plan and work together to deepen and expand learning for students. KRS 161.046.

Waiver to permit community and postsecondary internships where students are not working directly with teachers but are earning work/study credit, or other arrangements. 704 KAR 3:305.

The district has utilized these waivers to pair certified teachers with community, non-certified professionals as permitted by EPSB in order to provide health requirements such as the PE/Health class at Owsley County High School. Pathways to Careers include internships for credit in year 4.

Waiver of the student attendance requirement for eligibility for funds equivalent to those granted for attending students' transportation and food service for students receiving instruction through a virtual model. KRS 157.360(2).

The district is participating in a pilot with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide food service to students on days when school is not in session due to inclement weather.

Waiver of the minimum school term. KRS 158.070.

The district has created flexibility in the school calendar to allow for intercession courses, non-traditional instruction days and virtual credit recovery/course offerings. The district provided information on the students for whom this waiver was applied.

Noteworthy

Owsley County will go to 1:1 technology initiative in the next school year. Teachers are eagerly anticipating this addition to their resources and the district has been providing technology integration professional development on a monthly basis.

The district expanded the school lunch program to include meals delivered to community locations during inclement weather days.

The district created additional pathways in collaboration with KVEC and the Lee County ATC resulting in increased enrollment in vocational pathway courses as well as increased numbers in both college- and career-readiness.

The district created an Innovation Learning Lab space and STEM lab at the Owsley County High School. STEM based class has students designing remote controlled cars and a full size racetrack to demonstrate learning in physics, geometry and ELA.

District shows maturity in crafting innovation plans. Educators clearly understand the leadership vision and students expressed the positive output of the work.

Appendix

The monitoring team for Owsley County was composed of the following:

- David Cook, Director, Division of Innovation, KDE
- Pat Trotter, District of Innovation Coordinator, KDE
- Karla Tipton, Office of Career and Technical Education, KDE
- John Fields, EPSB
- Marty Park, Office of Knowledge, Information and Data Services, KDE

Visits were made to the following schools:

- Owsley County High School
- Owsley County Elementary

Meetings were held with the following:

- Gary Cornett, CAO/DPP
- Gary Evans, CIO
- Stacey Davidson, Instructional Supervisor
- Craig Herald, Principal, Lee County ATC
- Alan Turner, Principal, Owsley County Elementary
- Charles Davidson, Principal, Owsley County High School

Informal conversations occurred with teachers and students during school walk-throughs.

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.