

# **Districts of Innovation Report – Trigg County**

Cohort II - 1<sup>st</sup> 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, and the second year for the second cohort. The Trigg County monitoring visit took place on April 27<sup>th</sup> and involved site visits to schools and discussions with staff, as well as meetings with the leadership team and designated point of contact. Additional site visits were made in Trigg County during the 2015-16 school year.

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 KDE staff by October 31, 2015 using the 3 rubrics.

## **Executive Summary**

Trigg County Public Schools was one of the subjects in a recent film entitled *Beyond Measure: What Counts Can't be Counted*. The filmmaker states, "In *Beyond Measure*, we find a revolution brewing in public schools across the country. From rural Kentucky to New York City, schools that are breaking away from an outmoded, test-driven education are shaping a new vision for our classrooms. These are schools that see critical thinking, communication, exploration, experimentation, collaboration, and creativity as the key to good education. And they are dramatically improving outcomes for children of all backgrounds."

Visionary leadership and community support has enabled Trigg County to take bold steps to implement a variety of innovative instructional models throughout the district, and has provided robust staff training and support. Teachers across all content areas have been making a concerted effort to integrate meaningful project-based experiences into their instruction. This work has been supported by training provided by High Tech High and the Buck Institute. New efforts this year are focused on the concepts designed by the Summit Schools in California. The district has also partnered with The Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky, the Innovation Lab Network and representatives from Stanford University to pilot performance-based experiences in the four EOC areas. The district is moving toward a fully competency-based system as it seeks to further personalize learning for students at all levels.

The elementary school is implementing concepts from the Kettle Moraine Explore model used in Wisconsin.

The high school continues its Fusion program allowing for focused instruction. The high school has also expanded the concept of embedding initial CTE competencies into core instruction. Trigg County is a 1:1 district and uses Schoology as its learning management system. Students use technology in a variety of ways including credit recovery, pursuing individual interests, working at their own pace, demonstrating mastery, etc.

The district recently completed a new strategic plan which embeds all of the innovation work. One goal is to integrate arts and the related standards into all courses in such a way that a portfolio of work or demonstration of understanding will be able to be reviewed and approved to award a performance-based credit in Arts and Humanities from a certified teacher.

The district is an exemplary model of a District of Innovation. From an innovation design standpoint, there is much occurring in Trigg County that others can learn from. Trigg County's innovation design has many strands and many entry points for teachers, giving many options and opportunities to join in the work.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Topic: College- and Career-Readiness**

The district has implemented a number of programs to provide a variety of approaches for students to become college- and career-ready. The emphasis on project-based and competency-

based learning and the continuous effort to expand and improve these strategies provides a solid foundation for college- and career-readiness.

### **Topic: Certified and Classified Staff**

The documentation of certified and classified staff operating in a non-traditional environment, pursuant to 701 KAR 5:140, is being revised as additional opportunities are created for students involving additional teachers and mentors.

### **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.

Students have the opportunity to participate in intercessions in fall and spring which provide internships in a variety of fields in a local, regional, national and international arena. The district is working to transition increasing numbers of students into longer-term internships and has forged partnerships with the community in areas such as health, family consumer science, and business and marketing related pathways.

### ***Staff Comment***

*KDE requests documentation for the 2016-17 school year regarding internships in order to provide a picture of the learning opportunities available to students and how their success in these internships is being documented.*

### **Waiver Requests**

**Waiver request to allow use of alternative standardized assessments other than those designated in Kentucky for end-of-course (EOC) assessment. 703 KAR 4:060, KRS 158.860, and KRS 158.6453.**

The district requested to use a system of performance-based assessment in lieu of the current system of assessment. The waiver was denied but the district reported work is continuously occurring to improve and modify assessment practices in the four EOC tested areas at Trigg County High School. A system of supports exists in the area of mathematics through the ALEKS Math program and Math XL, which provides formative assessment data. Language Arts has instituted a process of standards-based grading in grades 9-12. Teachers are beginning to look for patterns in classroom performance data that will allow them to make predictions for college readiness.

**Waiver of Certification-Certified Staff to teach Arts and Humanities. KRS 161.020 and 704 KAR 3:305**

This waiver was denied. The district reports that at the present time, Arts and Humanities is taught by teachers with appropriate certifications. Sophomore students are enrolled in a performance-based Arts and Humanities course, which they experience in the “Fusion” setting led by a pair of English and Social Studies teachers working collaboratively together.

**Waiver of Certification requirement for instruction of students to allow classified staff to work in a blended environment. KRS 161.180.**

This waiver was denied and the district was advised to work with the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB). The district reports they have worked to integrate the use of classified and certified staff in instructional settings. One example is the use of a classified language assistant and certified instructor in the language lab that allows the school to implement blended learning strategies with up to 50 students at a time. Another is the use of two classified instructional assistants and one or more certified instructors to manage an online learning/dual credit center for up to 80 students at a time.

The district also reported that after consultation with EPSB representatives, and approval for structural modifications from KDE, they took measures to insure visibility in these and other settings.

***Staff Comment***

*The district is encouraged to continue to explore how to integrate non-certified individuals into instructional settings.*

**Waiver of Class Size. KRS 157.360(4).**

This waiver was requested to allow integration and collaboration in common spaces with common groups of students to fully integrate a system of problem-based learning into the curriculum.

The district reports it has been able to maintain traditional teacher/student ratios in a majority of classrooms. The school-based decision making (SBDM) policy has been revised to allow for increased teacher enrollments. Individual situations are reviewed and approved by the SBDM council. The language lab mentioned above is one example of modified caseload. Additionally the district cites the business and marketing teachers. According to the district “historically, we have employed two (2) certified teachers with business and marketing certification. With the approval of personnel at KDE, we converted our CTA/Digital Literacy course to performance-based and embedded the standards into our freshman core classes. As a result, our single

business and marketing teacher has worked with core teachers while maintaining a traditional marketing pathway. Enrollments for this individual teaching position have increased and credits have been awarded to our students through this collaborative effort.”

***Staff Comment***

*The district is encouraged to continue to explore full integration of problem-based learning across disciplines.*

**Waiver of graduation requirements for four (4) years of Math and Language Arts for students who demonstrate performance-based competency sufficient to gain credit for four (4) appropriately leveled math courses. 704 KAR 3:305 Section 1(1)(a).**

This request was to allow those students who demonstrate competencies in mathematics and/or attain performance-based credits in four appropriately leveled mathematics courses, the opportunity to commit their time to other meaningful experiences in their senior year.

The district reported that it is in the process of defining and establishing the procedures and measures through which the students will be able to demonstrate competency prior to their senior year. Measures under consideration include mastery of specific standards, ACT scores, and EOC performance. Many students in the county are currently enrolled in Math and ELA courses at higher grade levels under the umbrella of dual credit offerings.

The district is working with students to develop personalized learning plans for students accessing the relaxed graduation requirements to help prepare them for the post-secondary experience of their choice.

***Staff Comment***

*KDE requests that the district report on students are utilizing the relaxed graduation requirements in the context of mastery-learning and the outcomes as measured on the EOC, ACT and other college/career ready measures.*

**Waiver of graduation cohort calculation.**

Under the accountability model in place when the plan was presented, each high school is evaluated on its ability to graduate students in four years. This request specifically calls for students continuing enrollment in a fifth year program, to be excluded from the graduation calculation.

The district reported that at the present time, a five-year calculation is allowed for accountability purposes.

**Waiver of Kentucky Labor Cabinet regulation requiring compensation for work in an employer-employee relationship to reduce the financial commitment requirement placed on community partners when accepting students for internships up to six (6) weeks. 803 KAR 1:005.**

This waiver was denied due to federal law and KDE encouraged the district to communicate with the Kentucky Labor Cabinet to explore alternative options.

The district reported that students participating in internships are rotating into and out of a variety of settings throughout the year while limiting the financial burden of a Co-Op or paid internship on the partners. A number of contacts at the state level have helped facilitate the district's efforts to date and other partnerships are being formed to increase the number and types of opportunities available to students.

**Waiver of SBDM council membership to add an elected student member. KRS 160.345.**

The district reported that a variety of collaborative efforts have taken place to establish student representation on the SBDM council. The first student representative was elected in the fall of 2015.

**Noteworthy**

Focus on project-based learning by adopting models such as High Tech High and utilizing the resources of the Buck Institute to ensure that staff has training in project-based learning and the resources necessary to do the work.

High school Fusion program which provides a method for students to earn first course CTE pathway credit through embedded courses.

District featured in film *Beyond Measure* shining a spotlight on innovative practices occurring in rural Kentucky.

Fall and spring intercession providing real-world opportunities for students to explore interests and careers.

This district is making real connections to industry and resources in the community. Working with professionals from a wide range of businesses gives Trigg County students access to knowledge, cutting edge practice and real life connections. The students can experience first-hand the power of problem solving.

Creative use of technology for research, infographic design, tutoring, and language learning that matches the learning style of many students.

## Appendix

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

- David Cook, Director, Division of Innovation, KDE
- Beth Peterson, Branch Manager, Division of Innovation, KDE
- Christina Weeter, Director, Division of Student Success, KDE
- Marty Park, Office of Knowledge, Information and Data Services, KDE
- Holly Bloodworth, former Kentucky Teacher of the Year

Visits were made to the following schools:

- Trigg County High
- Trigg County Middle School
- Trigg County Intermediate School
- Trigg County Primary School

Meetings were held with the following:

- Travis Hamby, Superintendent
- Beth Sumner, Assistant Superintendent
- Shannon Burcham, Principal, Trigg County High School
- James Mangels, Pupil Personnel
- Brian Futrell, Principal, Trigg County Intermediate School
- Amy Breckel, Principal, Trigg County Middle School
- Cassandra Taylor, Principal, Trigg County Primary School
- Mike Davis, Chair, Trigg County Board of Education
- Sharon Simmons, Member, Trigg County Board of Education
- Matt Ladd, Director of Operations
- Rory Fundora, Chief Information Officer
- Linda Tribble, Finance Officer
- SBDM Parents from all four schools

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.