

Districts of Innovation Report – Eminence Independent

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 Eminence Independent monitoring visit occurred on April 29th. The visit involved site visits to schools and discussions with staff, as well as meetings with the leadership team and designated point of contact. Additional informal site visits were made in Eminence Independent 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 district. Part 3 was tailored to the individual innovation plan of each district of innovation.

Monitoring was discussed with the participating districts as a whole 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:

Eminence Independent continues to be a model of innovation, exploring a broad path of opportunities to meet the needs of all students. The innovation plan is woven throughout all grade levels and embodies the district's exemplars of excellence: world-class knowledge and skills, college and career readiness, and next generation skills.

An exciting development is the new learning space being constructed as an addition to the original school. Designed with flexibility and student interests in mind, the new facility named "The Hub," due to open fall 2016, will house a state of the art Maker Space, media center and multiple spaces for expanded learning opportunities, presentation spaces for performance assessments and an amphitheater. The district has expanded its CTE work by utilizing an additional space they own across from the school to provide an area for culinary arts and robotics.

The district continues to make progress in implementing a competency-based system. A distinctive new data system, the competency collector, has been developed in-house to collect evidences of student mastery of learning progressions for competencies. The system allows

teachers to collect proof of competency of all standards in English, Math, Social Studies and Science.

Eminence continues to push for certification options for non-traditional professionals. They have also been successful in retaining exceptional master teachers through an alternative salary schedule, which they piloted and would like to expand. The Eminence Board of Education honors up to ten years of experience in math and science for salary increases.

The partnership with Bellarmine University continues to strengthen as more students, now including sophomores, are able to take college courses for credit. Students continue to be transported in the Wi-Fi equipped bus so they can work to and from Bellarmine.

Eminence would like to re-invent their high school so it becomes more interest-based. Passion projects are the Eminence version of intercession, something seen in other DOI districts. Many of the Passion Projects have a service focus.

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 DOI plan. District staff has made presentations to several groups about their work as part of an innovation district.

Topic: Teachers

The district provided 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.

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. KDE recommended 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.

Staff Comment:

KDE will follow up on the documentation for college and career readiness and requests that the district provide the link to the data.

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 updated. 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.

Staff Comment:

KDE again 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, 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 continues to participate 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.

Staff Comment:

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

Waiver of school-based decision making (SBDM) council membership to add an elected student representative with full voting rights. KRS 160.345.

Students were elected to both school SBDM councils. The elementary representative is elected from the 5th grade 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. The students are a part of all aspects of all meetings except for closed sessions including but not limited to budget, curriculum, interviews, programming, etc.

Staff Comment:

The monitoring team met with the representative from the 5th grade and was impressed with his comments and how he views his role as a voting member of the SBDM council. This process appears to be working well and students have an authentic voice within the district.

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. KRS 158.070.

The district reported it is still exploring how best to utilize this waiver. Staff size is limited and it has been difficult to make major changes to calendars.

Staff Comment:

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. The new facility, “The Hub,” should provide opportunities for providing flexibility in scheduling.

Waiver of the restriction of capital outlay funding to allow more flexibility in the use of funds. KRS 157.420.

In the 2015 report the district reported that they had not utilized the capital outlay funding for more flexibility of spending towards the DOI planning. Money was reserved for capital improvements and for Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust settlements.

Staff Comment:

Construction of “The Hub” is a capital improvement directly tied to the innovation plan.

Waiver of average daily attendance calculation of Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding. KRS 157.320 and 702 KAR 7:125.

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. The district reported in 2015 that so far this has only been a factor in competency-based courses. The district indicated it would be cross-referencing funding between current model and previous years to determine gains and/or losses.

Staff Comment:

The district is requested to provide the information gathered from the cross-referencing of funding between the 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Waiver of the single salary schedule requirement to create alternate pay scales for non-traditional roles for teachers and classified staff. KRS 157.320.

Alternate salary schedule has been a great resource to Eminence Independent. The district has used the non-traditional salary schedule for adjuncts, areas/subjects that have saturated candidates, master teacher of high demand fields, and for teachers that are alternatively certified and considered interns, but fully employed.

Staff Comment:

The district provided information about the application of the alternate salary schedule which has enabled them to retain a master teacher. Additional information and documentation for the upcoming school year is requested.

Waiver of Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) certification. KRS 161.030.

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 the University of Kentucky 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 Comment:

Eminence should continue to explore creative staffing plans and share those plans with other districts of innovation.

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. KRS 161.010.

The district reported it continues to have classified staff providing assistance in virtual learning, small group instruction and electives.

Staff Comment:

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

Waiver of EPSB certifications on subject areas so current teachers can teach additional subjects. KRS 161.020

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.

Waiver of the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) statute. KRS 164.7874.

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.

Waiver of the school district reciprocal agreement requirement for district’s receipt of SEEK funding for non-residents students. KRS 157.350(4).

The district sought to “open the opportunity for all students in the Commonwealth” to attend school in the district. The waiver was denied but the district continues to advocate for school choice across districts.

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.

Staff Comment:

This waiver was originally denied.

Noteworthy

The district has created a digital database of personalized learning resources referred to as the “competency collector” and which provides a mechanism for capturing performance-based demonstrations of learning. Teachers can use the system to collect video, audio or photographic evidence of any students’ work that meets the competency of the standard at hand. Funding was provided through a \$50,000 grant from The Fund for Excellence in Education in Kentucky.

The UNLOCK Class/Course enabled students to utilize Design Thinking to change the world in Nicaragua with a bus donated by the Board of Education. The bus is used by students to raise awareness of clean water issues and use problem solving skills to make a difference.

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

The district established a virtual credit program. Students can earn all their credits online via Edgenuity. Initially, the district believed that the program would be entirely virtual but found that every day virtual learning was not working for students. The district is making changes based on the needs and interests of the students.

Appendix

The monitoring team for Eminence Independent was composed of the following:

- David Cook, Director, Division of Innovation, KDE
- Pat Trotter, Division of Innovation, KDE
- John Fields, EPSB
- Kathy Mansfield, Office of Next Generation Learners, KDE
- Marissa Hancock, Office of Career and Technical Education, KDE

Visits were made to the following schools:

- Eminence Elementary
- Eminence Middle
- Eminence High

Meetings were held with the following:

- Buddy Berry, Superintendent
- Thom Coffee, Instructional Supervisor
- Larry Jesse, Technology/Data
- Mike Doran, Principal
- Sherry Curtsinger, Teacher
- James Allen, Librarian
- Student SBDM member

The monitoring team visited classrooms and talked informally with teacher and students.

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.