

Executive Summary: Robertson County Management Audit

On October 8, 2013, the Kentucky Board of Education voted to enter Robertson County into state assistance so as to address academic concerns, financial systems, and financial strain on the district.

Pursuant to 703 KAR 3:205(2)(2), the comprehensive audit conducted April 11-13, 2017 included an investigation of the district's compliance with state and federal statutes and administrative regulations and local board policies. The comprehensive audit included an on-site review, investigation, and analysis of the governance and administration of the school district.

Key Findings:

- The superintendent has developed strong relationships between the board of education and school leadership personnel to build a collaborative team approach to decision-making and ensuring stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in the governance and management of the district/school. It is evident through interviews with representatives of all stakeholder groups, along with review of artifacts, the superintendent has been proactive in communication about the goals, general plans, and initiatives of the school.
- Stakeholder groups shared that one of the most significant changes within district culture and operations was the increased level of communication between the school staff and stakeholders. Board members expressed their satisfaction with the superintendent's transparency about school business and activities.
- Interviews indicated a very positive relationship between the board and central office personnel. The term "team" was used several times when describing how the board and central office worked together.
- Based on the 2016 Teaching and Learning Review report results, the district was rated a level 2 on indicator 3.1 and this indicator, in combination with 3.6, was chosen as an Improvement Priority to guide the next steps for school and system improvement. Indicator 3.1 states, "The system's curriculum, instructional design and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses." A level 2 rating states, "Curriculum and learning experiences in each course/class provide most students across the system with challenging and equitable opportunities to develop learning skills, thinking skills and life skills. There is little evidence to indicate curriculum and learning experiences prepare students for success at the next level. Most like courses/classes have equivalent learning expectations. Some individualized learning activities for each student are evident randomly or in some but not all schools." Based on shared curriculum documents online, there is little evidence supporting the systematic occurrence of vertical or horizontal curriculum alignment across the district.
- In Goal 4, strategy 1 of the Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (CDIP), an activity states, "Develop an improvement plan to ensure that students receive a highly effective, culturally responsive, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate instruction within the core that is aligned tightly to state standards." The existence of such a formalized plan was not evidenced. Based on teacher interviews, teachers meet informally at their own discretion in order to discuss curriculum revisions or development. Staff could not identify any common structure for developing curriculum or curriculum mapping.
- The district has made significant improvement based upon Kentucky's Accountability and Assessment System. The district has moved to the 7th highest performing school district in the

state with a label of Distinguished/Progressing. This accomplishment has been celebrated and recognized by school and community stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- Leadership must sustain the improvement efforts by building written protocols and processes to guide the future work. In addition, documented protocols should include implementation levels of improvement initiatives and strategies for monitoring for effectiveness. This work should begin with the shared development of a CDIP and CSIP by representatives from all stakeholder groups that truly guide the day-to-day workings of the system from Kentucky Board of Education goals chunked into actionable next steps.
- While district administrators have begun to revise board and school policies based on day-to-day need in a reactive manner, a structure for regularly reviewing and updating policies in a continuous manner must be created.
- Leadership should address the recommendation from the last management audit around implementing a site based decision making council. This group would alleviate the need for the board of education to deal with both district and school level policy and would promote collaborative decision making to include teachers and parents. This additional structure would also provide another layer of sustainable protocols and policies toward student achievement and efficiency.
- Leadership should find a means to create a guidance counselor position for the district. While a counseling position is not required by regulation, the position is necessary to improve students' mental, emotional, and social health, provide interventions and promulgate referrals. Counselors and psychologists contribute not only to the health of students but also to the health of the school environment.
- Despite purposeful steps to improve communication, there was little evidence that parents and community were involved in the continuous improvement planning process to create a Comprehensive District Improvement Plan that guides the next steps for school improvement.