

KDE, Breathitt County schools partnership continues as district makes positive gains

Breathitt County schools have made good progress under state management, and will continue to partner with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to improve special education, career and technical education and other areas identified in a recent state management audit.

The Breathitt County Board of Education approved continuing the partnership with KDE at its meeting Tuesday night.

Interim Commissioner of Education Wayne Lewis said he is pleased with the collaborative relationship that Breathitt schools and KDE have developed.

“We are proud of the hard work undertaken by Breathitt County administrators and staff. Breathitt schools have made major strides and KDE looks forward to continuing this successful partnership aimed at preparing all Breathitt’s students to succeed after graduation.”

Lewis went on to note several positive changes that have come about as a result of the work between KDE and the district, including:

- The reconfiguration of schools to add grades 7-8 to Breathitt High School has enabled the district to enhance opportunity and access for middle and high school students. Students can enroll in career and technical education courses, arts and humanities courses and advanced placement courses, none of which they had access to previously.
- The district collaborated with community partners to craft a mission and vision statement with input from all stakeholder groups to ensure that the needs of all students are represented.
- Safety and security measures have been enhanced, including the hiring of a School Resource Officer. Emergency management plans have been updated in conjunction with community agencies
- All schools are participating in the Academic and Behavior Response to Intervention initiative.
- The district is making academic data-driven decisions and developed both a science curriculum and pacing guide for grades K-6. Additionally, reading curriculum and strategy work has shown promise with student academic achievement. Students engage in goal setting and have a conversational knowledge of where they are academically and what steps they can take to improve. In collaboration with KDE, the district has used Novice Reduction grants to support student learning needs.
- The district is leveraging technology to support student learning and efficiency, including providing 1,200 Chromebooks to students. New networking equipment, Wi-Fi, and interactive panels have been introduced into classrooms to create a meaningful learning experience for students and staff.
- The Breathitt County Board of Education has worked to increase the contingency fund from 2 percent to 12 percent through raising revenue, efficient use of funds and intentional processes to ensure expenditures are reasonable and necessary. The district has received clean financial audits. It also has successfully sought multiple grants to support student learning.

- The district has worked on improving efficiencies, including reducing bus routes from 33 to 30.
- The district has worked to strengthen non-resident contracts.
- Coaching and support have been provided to school leadership and teachers in numerous areas, from communication and interventions to instruction, classroom management, continuous improvement and curriculum development.

“The Breathitt County Board of Education will continue our partnership with KDE to make the best decisions for the students and reach our goals of being a distinguished district,” Breathitt County Board of Education Chair Ruschelle Hamilton said.

The Kentucky Board of Education put the Breathitt County schools under state management in December 2012 after an audit found “a pattern of a significant lack of efficiency and effectiveness in the governance and administration of the school district” and that the district lacked “the necessary capacity to develop and implement systemic change on its own.”

“As Superintendent, I appreciate the support provided by the Kentucky Department of Education and look forward to continuing our partnership,” said Breathitt County Superintendent Phillip Watts.