

Letter to the Kentucky State Board of Education

Regarding upcoming work to take the equity commitment out to the field and formulate a broader vision of a healthy and thriving commonwealth, and how our schools can play a key role in leading our state toward this more prosperous and peaceful future

THE WHY

We wanted to offer a brief description of what we think is the logic that has led to the specific design of this three phase plan. We believe we have heard the following in our conversations with you.

The Kentucky Board of Education recently reaffirmed their [commitment to equity](#). This statement, ratified nearly simultaneous to hiring Jason Glass as commissioner, recognizes the ways in which Kentucky has already made strides toward equity. Some specific examples of progress include:

- Establishing a common set of standards to communicate to both learners and educators that the state believes that each young person is capable of not just amassing knowledge and skills, but also reasoning, analysis and problem-solving
- Aligning the state's body of assessments to the academic outcomes identified in the standards
- Providing recognition of employability skills using the Work-Keys assessment alongside academic assessments in high school
- Investing deeply in educator capacity to understand these standards and the instructional and classroom assessment practices needed to support a wide range of learners in making substantial progress toward the standards
- Investing in teachers as leaders interested and able to spread these high-quality practices across the state

The KBE equity resolution also states clearly that the work of ensuring equal opportunity to learn, to thrive and to be successful as a young person in Kentucky is not complete. The board recognizes that there are gaps not just in academic achievement, or employability skills attainment, but also in how welcome, known and valued different young people and their families feel when they engage with our public education system.

Based on this view about the current level of progress toward equity, and the legislative directive to rethink some aspects of accountability and assessment, we recommend a process of interrogation at the local and state levels in the Commonwealth, involving a broad group of stakeholders through a modified liberatory design process.

THE HOW

The coalition of educators, families, and community leaders who come together in this process will work together to expand the voices who participate in and influence the design of a statewide education vision that aligns with the Kentucky Board of Education's equity vision. The Board and Commissioner will host a series of Listening Tours this Spring across the Commonwealth. Simultaneously, a coalition supported by the department and CIE will proceed with a parallel set of meetings, deepening the shared vision through an additional empathy process. Ideas and insights from the Round Tables will be fed to the coalition so they can be incorporated, along with the insights they uncover in their in-depth process, to create a draft vision. This vision will be taken back out to the round tables as shown in the following diagram. Finally, with another round of input from the

round tables, the coalition will create a final draft vision statement draft to give to the board, along with their other phase one deliverables (outlined fully in the Phase 1 description below).

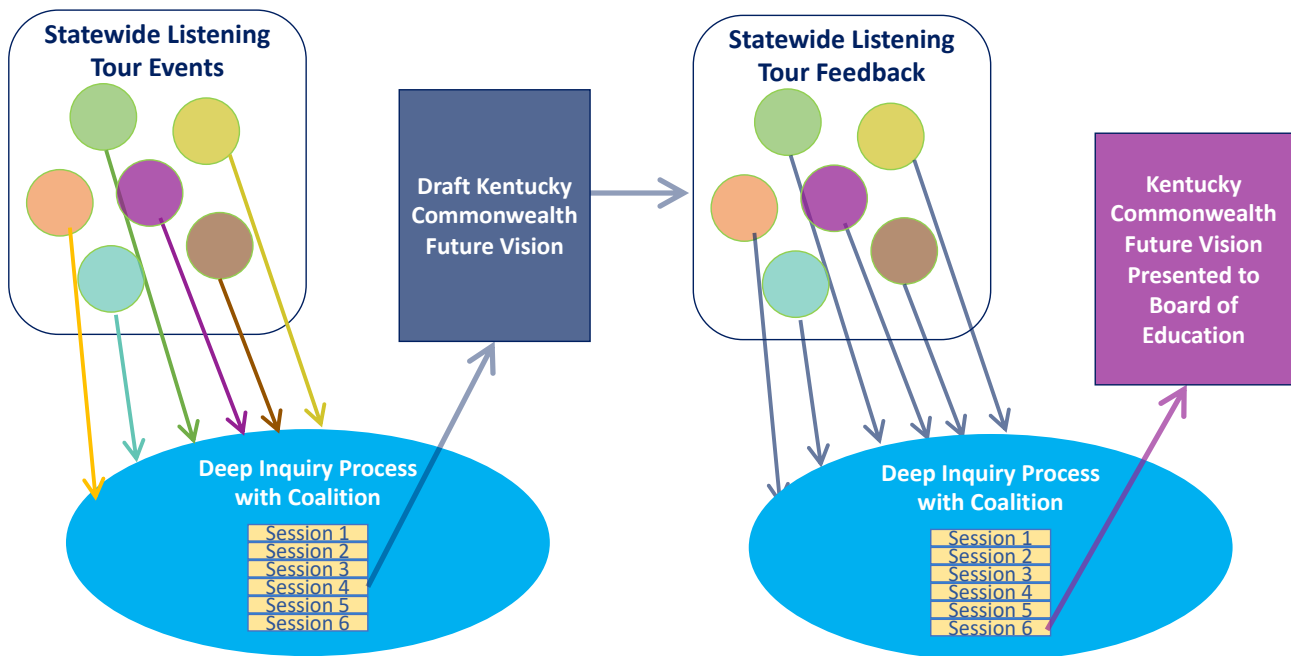


Figure 1

In their deeper process, coalition members will have the opportunity to interview a wide range of families and learners. These interviews will help the coalition be responsive to the prominent roles families and other community members are playing in the education of children as we all work together to overcome COVID. Families and members of the community who have been supporting learners through periods of remote learning have unique knowledge about the ways in which our approach to teaching and learning, as well as assessing, are really impacting the growth, development and identity of our state’s young people. They can also see more clearly than anyone looking out from Frankfort how the performance of our schools impacts the health and vitality of their communities as a whole. As the KBE indicated in their equity resolution, “Every voice deserves to be heard,” and, “the Kentucky Board of Education will amplify our voice in support of minority students, their families and minority educators. We will not only listen to their concerns and aspirations, but we pledge to leverage those concerns and aspirations to inform our actions.”

As we look forward to the next version of accountability and assessment, we must gather and make good use of insights from families and communities. This work with communities does not replace the essential work that the KDE staff can do to help the board and legislature understand how to ensure technical quality and clarity in our accountability and assessment system. Rather, both streams of work must be done simultaneously to one another. The insights from community engaged work should inform KDE’s technical work, and once they receive some direction from the community, KDE’s learning about technical advancements should inform local communities about what is possible now that perhaps was not feasible in the past. This three-phase plan does not describe how the KDE technical inquiry will look; the focus of this document is just the community-engaged strand of work. At the highest level the three phases look like this:

Phase 1: Exploration and Coalition-Building (8 weeks)

Phase one brings together a coalition of people from across Kentucky to reach out to an even larger and more varied group of educators, families, learners and community members to create the following:

- An inclusive shared narrative about the ***Current State of Kentucky Education***
- Elements to be included in a well-informed ***Shared Vision*** of Kentucky's equitable future
- A clear ***Learning Agenda***, with a focus on new ways of considering Community Accountability and Assessment
- A ***Reciprocal Partnership Guide***, based on the coalition's practice with C!E's [equity-seeking tenets](#) and [reciprocal partnership process](#).
- A series of local listening tour conversations will take place virtually, or around the commonwealth, giving a broad range of Kentuckians the opportunity to share their observations and insights about what will make a healthy and thriving commonwealth, and how our schools can play a key role in leading our state toward this more prosperous and peaceful future.

Phase 2: Deep Transformation Work through Local Laboratories of Learning & Synthesis (10-14 weeks)

The local listening tours may continue into August and overlap with the start of this Phase 2 work. The products from Phase One are key assets to support design work of ***Local Laboratories of Learning*** during Phase Two. Local teams of educators, families, learners and community members will have the opportunity to come together and be facilitated in ***reciprocal partnership*** to:

- Identify their aspirations for their young people and their community, using the state coalition's description of the ***Current State of Kentucky Education*** and their ***Shared Vision***.
- Find areas in which their aspirations and the ***Learning Agenda*** intersect
- Generate some number of prototype ideas that they believe will make a significant impact toward their aspirations and contribute to the statewide learning agenda.
- Create plans to implement prototypes and learn about accountability in Phase 3.

Local Laboratories of Learning will also be networked with one another to support quality prototype development, but also and importantly, to learn from one another and teach KDE and KBE about how to be in a ***Reciprocal Partnership***. No matter the local focus, there will be a point in the process when teams determine how the local community and school can hold one another accountable to their plans. This aspect of their designs is going to produce essential insights to inform Phase Three. C!E will synthesize all of these findings in a report and presentation to KBE that makes recommendations about Phase 3 accountability and assessment prototyping. ***A final draft report detailing the Coalition's response to the round table visioning process and findings will be provided to KDE and KBE no later than the end of August***, in preparation for a Final Report by the Board to the public and subsequent Fall presentations.

Phase 3: Gather insights from local inquiries continuing from phase 2. Overtime use those insights to redesign state accountability and assessment (18-24 months)

The ideas generated in the Local Laboratories of learning should be implemented in small scale tests and prototyping in phase 3. In this way, Local Laboratories of Learning will continue to participate in the overall design of the accountability and assessment system. In the report at the end of the second phase of work, C!E will make recommendations about: supports required for each of the Local Laboratories of Learning created in phase 2, how to organize and facilitate a process of bringing local teams together to share learning and surface key accountability insights, and facilitate a process of brining these insights together with the technical research

from KDE. CIE can also help KDE create presentations to inform the public, the Kentucky General Assembly, and work with the US Department of Education, as needed, to either place these new approaches within the current system, or within some new structure that emerges to support this work.