

The background of the slide is a composite image. The top left shows a line of yellow school buses. The bottom left shows a classroom with desks, chairs, and a blue wall decorated with colorful balloons and framed pictures. A large white diagonal shape cuts across the center of the slide, containing the main title and date.

# Local Accountability Design Guide: Regional Evidence of Implementation & Impact

June 3, 2026

# What's Inside the Guide?

- Working definition of local accountability\*
- Design & technical-quality essentials
- Theory of change + aspirational outcomes
- Phase-by-phase action steps and strategies
- Kentucky district spotlights + deep-dive case-studies
- Toolkit of templates & resources for starting, spreading, and sustaining



## LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGN GUIDE AND TOOLKIT



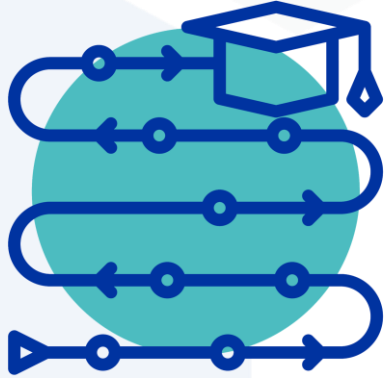
**Portrait of a  
Learner**

**Vibrant  
Learning**

**Performance  
Assessment**

**Local Indicators  
of Quality\***

# An Actionable Framework



**DEFINE**  
Success for Students



**DESIGN**  
Vibrant Learning Experiences



**DEMONSTRATE**  
Student Success



**DEFINE**  
Local School District Success



**DESIGN**  
An Interactive Accountability System



**DEMONSTRATE**  
Local School District Success

*This continuum was created by the University of Kentucky's Center for Next Generation Leadership based on learnings directly from districts across the Commonwealth.*

# Defining, Designing & Demonstrating Student Success

Define Success for Students	Design Vibrant Learning Experiences for Students	Demonstrate Student Success
<p>The school district forms a local coalition of key stakeholders including members of the district and community. Stakeholders are asked, "What do we want students to know, be like and be able to do when they leave us?"</p> <p>Employing the habit of co-creation, the group prioritizes and defines the knowledge, skills and dispositions that describe a successful learner in the community.</p> <p>These actions may lead to the development of a <i>Portrait of a Learner</i>.</p>	<p>The local school district creates systems and structures to support educators, students, parents, and community partners in the instruction of the agreed upon knowledge, skills and dispositions that define student success.</p> <p>Students are provided opportunities to engage in relevant, authentic and joyful learning experiences. These opportunities culminate in the application of knowledge and skills demonstrated through personalized products.</p>	<p>The local district and schools implement a performance assessment system that allows for the collection of artifacts that exhibit the student's progress toward mastery of the defined knowledge, skills and dispositions. This body of evidence reflects the student's learning and growth through vibrant learning experiences.</p> <p>Students regularly exhibit their learning to authentic audiences and may defend their learning at key transition levels.</p> <p>The school district may choose to report the results of the culminating defenses of learning to the public to increase reciprocity around the agreed upon competencies and content.</p>

# Defining, Designing and Demonstrating Local Accountability

Define Success for the Local School District	Design an Interactive Local Accountability System	Demonstrate Success of the Local School District
<p>The school district forms a local coalition of key stakeholders including members of the district and community. The local school district and community stakeholders establish the definition of success for the school system by deciding upon specific components that are most important to all stakeholders – students, parents, educators, employers, and local government.</p> <p>This local conversation may lead to the development of a local accountability system that includes a commitment to regularly report the district’s progress toward specific goals connected to the agreed-upon components.</p>	<p>Based upon the defined success indicators, the local school district creates a platform that displays the status of the agreed-upon components of a successful school district.</p> <p>The local school district creates systems and structures to gather the data connected to the defined components.</p> <p>The data may be both qualitative and quantitative with a focus on vibrant learning opportunities for students as well as the experiences of families, educators and community members.</p>	<p>To sustain reciprocity in the community, the local school district regularly updates the progress of the agreed-upon components success while continually seeking feedback on the local accountability system from all users. When necessary, components may be revised; displays may be refined; and new data may be considered. The local accountability system serves as a tool for continuous improvement, communication and celebration.</p>

# Action 1: Define Success for Students

## Russell County Schools



*Russell County community members participate in small group discussions to capture a set of values for what they believe student success looks like.*

- Designed welcoming, inclusive Community Design Team meetings
- Prioritized intentional planning by building on a preexisting structure of early morning sessions with a shared breakfast meal.
- Consistently engaged 50+ diverse stakeholders across three sessions, including parents, students, government and business leaders
- Captured further input from 243 respondents via survey.
- Fostered fellowship and meaningful dialogue around the core question: “What do we want students to know, be able to do, and be like?”
- **Result: Deep community ownership with students at the center and a Portrait of a Learner that reflects the heart of the district**

# Portrait of a Learner (PoL) - Progress & Impact

## Key Implementation Supports:

- Co-facilitating collaborative design sessions with families, local industry leaders, and students to define the essential skills needed for post-secondary success.
- Leading district strategic planning sessions to ensure the Portrait of a Learner is not just a poster on the wall, but a driving force behind curriculum and instruction.
- Developing student-friendly language and visuals to embed PoL competencies into daily instruction
- Presenting the local Portrait to Boards of Education to secure formal adoption and community-wide commitment.

## Statewide Progress Snapshot (as of April 2026):

- Was 23 → Now **19** districts currently unengaged\*
- Was 71 → Now **30** districts currently in the Starting phase
- Was 64 → Now **49** districts currently in the Spreading phase
- Was 15 → Now **75** districts currently in the Sustaining phase

*\*It is important to note that 'unengaged' refers specifically to a lack of formal data sharing or confirmed partnership with our team, rather than a lack of activity within the district itself.*

## Statewide Celebration:

**58% growth** in districts moving into implementation - have an established portrait and are actively incorporating it into current systems, instruction, and performance indicators.

# Action 2: Design Vibrant Learning Experiences



*Community members meet with students and discuss their plans, priorities and opportunities in Hardin County.*

## Hardin County Schools

- Instruction is centered around authentic, community-connected projects (PBL) aligned with HQIRs
- Grades 6-12 implement PBL (and Problem BL for math)
- All middle & high school students explore 40+ CTE pathways
- The district presents VLE awards to celebrate teachers providing high-quality instruction. Categories like “Real-World Innovation” and “Ownership & Growth” recognize practices that promote student agency through tools such as protocols, rubrics, collaborative work, and authenticity.
- ***Result: A shared belief among staff that the district has to craft daily experiences that allow all students to learn and practice competency skills.***

# Vibrant Learning Experiences (VLE) - Progress & Impact

## Key Implementation Supports:

- Training leaders and educators on designing standards-aligned, meaningful, and engaging learning experiences for all students
- Transforming traditional instruction into dynamic practices that strengthen Tier 1 instruction and foster deeper understanding of knowledge and skills
- Co-creating Project-Based Learning (PBL) modules and aligning VLEs with High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs)
- Supporting planning for district-wide student defenses, exhibitions, and showcases of learning

## Statewide Progress Snapshot (as of April 2026):

- Was 67 → Now **9** districts currently unengaged\*
- Was 49 → Now **84** districts currently in the Starting phase
- Was 42 → Now **61** districts currently in the Spreading phase
- Was 15 → Now **19** districts currently in the Sustaining phase

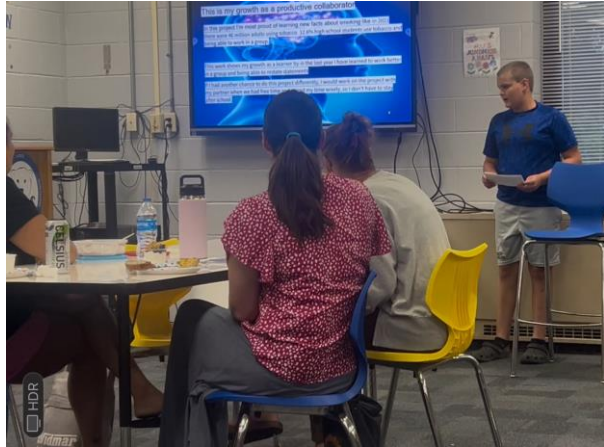
### Statewide Celebration:

**87% reduction** in unengaged districts as the majority of districts are providing vibrant experiences for their students.

# Action 3: Demonstrate Student Success

## Bracken County Schools' Performance Assessment System:

- Performance Assessment is a key objective of the district's revised 2024-2029 Strategic Plan
- Staff attended the Design Guide and Toolkit Rollout at NKCES and The Path to Local Accountability Professional Learning Series, facilitated by the Regional Innovation Specialist Team
- Engaged with multiple districts statewide to study performance assessment systems and apply key insights to local context
- **Results: Bracken County Middle School successfully implemented 8th Grade Defenses of Learning in May 2026 and established a plan to scale to grades 5 and 12, while also incorporating Exhibitions of Learning across additional grade levels.**



A Bracken County Middle School student defends his learning in front of a panel of educators and community members.

# Performance Assessment - Progress & Impact

## Key Implementation Supports:

- Building foundational understanding among teachers regarding the purpose and value of performance assessments
- Facilitating teacher work sessions to co-develop interdisciplinary performance tasks aligned to standards
- Providing calibration support and feedback to teachers piloting capstone performance tasks and Defenses of Learning
- Supporting systemic planning for Defenses of Learning (DoL) implementation and sustainability across schools

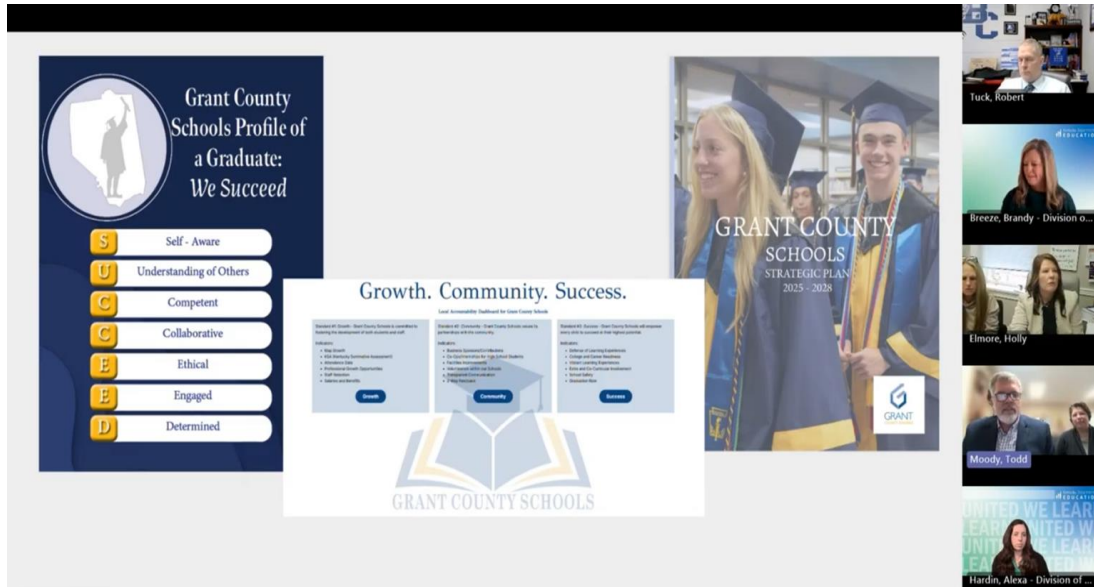
## Statewide Progress Snapshot (as of April 2026):

- Was 119 → Now **75** districts currently unengaged\*
- Was 22 → Now **48** districts currently in the Starting phase
- Was 22 → Now **34** districts currently in the Spreading phase
- Was 10 → Now **16** districts currently in the Sustaining phase

### Statewide Celebration:

**56% growth** in active implementation with more districts now embedding student-led conferences, creating competency indicators, running mastery-based grading systems, or assessing student defenses.

# Action 4-6: Define, Design, Demonstrate School District Success



Screenshot from KDE Lunch & Learn Webinar showing Grant County's "Profile of a Graduate" and Local Accountability Dashboard

## Grant County Dashboard

## Grant County Schools

- Partnered with local community to develop local indicators of quality via town hall meetings. Produced a public-facing dashboard representative of their 3 standards: Growth, Community, and Success.
- District leaders collaborate with co-ops and other district leaders statewide to share technical details for developing local indicators and dashboards, allowing others to scale similar models without starting from scratch.
- **Results:**
  - **Moved beyond compliance to create a local vision for education that truly resonates with their community. By stripping away "education jargon" to make strategic plans accessible to everyone, this district is proving that transparency builds trust.**
  - **Students experience a system centered on growth, community, and success, where they track their progress, engage in real-world learning through community partnerships, and take ownership of their learning.**

# Local Accountability - Progress & Impact

## Key Implementation Supports:

- Leading professional learning sessions for district leaders focused on the purpose and potential of local accountability systems
- Engaging leaders in conversations about meaningful and manageable implementation approaches unique to their contexts
- Framing local accountability as the overarching goal, helping leaders connect all aspects of the Portrait of a Learner and Vibrant Learning work
- Organizing learning visits to districts that have successfully implemented local accountability elements to provide tangible examples

## Statewide Progress Snapshot (As of April 2026):

- Was 150 → Now **134** districts currently unengaged\*
- Was 13 → Now **24** districts currently in the Starting phase
- Was 6 → Now **4** districts currently in the Spreading phase
- Was 4 → Now **11** districts currently in the Sustaining phase

### Statewide Celebration:

**85% increase** in districts entering a co-creation phase to begin stakeholder engagement and define what success means locally.

# How to Learn More:



## Rockcastle County Video: Community-Based Accountability System

## Visit the KDE “[How It’s Working in Districts](#)” Webpage

- Local Accountability Videos
- Lunch & Learn Recordings

## Join us for the 2nd Annual Vibrant Learning Collaboratives (VLCs)

- 7/20 - University of Kentucky
- 7/21 - Gateway Community & Technical College
- 7/23 - Murray State University
- 7/27 - Morehead State University
- 7/28 - University of the Cumberlands

# Beyond the Bubble Sheet

Kentucky students are more than data points; they are producers of **learning evidence**.

We are shifting from a system that labels students to one that empowers them to **demonstrate their knowledge and skills**. Districts are developing ways to tell their whole story.

Through personalized coaching, strategic partnerships, and responsive resources, KDE is committed to providing supports for a high-quality, rigorous path to prove that students are ready for the world.



*A student at Lawrence County High School demonstrates an aeronautics simulator for community members.*