

Andy Beshear
Governor



Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and
Labor Cabinet

Robin Fields Kinney
Interim Commissioner of Education

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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May 6, 2024

Contessa Orr, Superintendent
Muhlenberg County Public Schools
510 W Main
Powderly, KY 42367

Dear Superintendent Orr:

As you know, one goal of Kentucky Statewide Consolidated Monitoring (KSCM) is to help create opportunities for the programs in our schools and districts to look at new ways to collaborate and collectively meet our ultimate goal: increasing student achievement while closing gaps and positioning our students to be college- and career-ready. The team members from your visit have engaged in this collaborative process in order to produce the attached Consolidated Monitoring Report.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted monitoring in the Muhlenberg County School District. During this process, KDE program staff, utilizing program-specific monitoring tools, conducted on-site visits for the following programs:

- Title I, Part A
- Title II, Part A
- Title III, Part A
- Title IV, Part A
- Title V, Part B
- Alternative Education Programs
- Gifted and Talented
- Preschool

Each program involved in the KSCM has an impact on our goal. For example, Title II, Part A focuses on improving teacher and principal quality to ensure that all students have equal access to highly qualified and effective teachers and leaders. Title I programs provide not only funding, but also guidance on working with disadvantaged students.

This report is the result of what can be best described as a “snapshot” of the district taken during our visit. It begins with identifying “effective practices.” These are individual program practices that the team felt were effective, and in some cases innovative. We strongly suggest that the practices identified be submitted to the [KDE Best Practices website](#).

Each district program has already been provided an individual report as required by federal or state law. All findings will need to be addressed by district program areas as specified in the individual reports.

In the meantime, if you have questions regarding specific program monitoring requirements, please contact the individual program contacts listed in this report. If you have questions concerning the consolidated monitoring process, please contact [Erin Sudduth](#) by email or by phone at (502) 564-3791, Ext. 4021. Information regarding education programs within the state of Kentucky may also be found at the [KDE website](#).

Thank you for your work in improving Kentucky’s education programs to better serve our children.

Sincerely,

Kelly Foster, Ed.D.
Associate Commissioner
Office of Continuous Improvement and Support

KF/TR/ES/vb

Attachment: Consolidated Monitoring Report for Muhlenberg County Public Schools

2023-2024 Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Report

District: Muhlenberg County

Date(s) of Visit: Feb. 13-15, 2024

Team Leads:

- Title I, Part A – Shashawna Williams
- Title II, Part A – Sean Murphy
- Title III, Part A – Kaiman Triplett
- Title IV, Part A – Lalah Brewer
- Title V, Part B – Shashawna Williams
- Alternative Education Programs – Leticia Porter
- Gifted and Talented – Kathie Anderson
- Preschool – Andrea Bartholomew

Effective Practice No. 1: Community

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Title III; Title IV, Part A; Gifted and Talented; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 1

Title I and Title II coordinators in Muhlenberg County actively consult a wide variety of stakeholders when deciding how to spend program funds. These stakeholders are given the opportunity to consult, design, implement and continually improve the supported activities. The district continues to develop new ideas to increase stakeholder engagement in the process. The staff working with English learner (EL) students focuses on the social and emotional well-being of students to provide a sense of belonging to focus on the whole student. The team works diligently to meet the needs of EL students and their families. The preschool program hosts many events throughout the spring and summer in coordination with Head Start, the Muhlenberg County Early Childhood Council and their Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSCs). Health and developmental screenings are offered for these students during the events. Additionally, the Gifted and Talented (GT) program is very active in the community and partners with the Felix Martin Foundation to offer community camps, community service opportunities, student tutoring and care packages for children in the local hospital's emergency room.

Effective Practice No. 2: Parent and Family Engagement

Program(s) Addressed: Gifted and Talented; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 2

Preschool parents in Muhlenberg County are provided many opportunities for connection throughout the school year. For example, preschool parent and family engagement nights occur monthly and include parent education, child activities centered around Early Childhood Standards and community information to support families. The district communicates with parents and families by posting the GT program's policies and procedures, handbook, and links to forms and available opportunities for students in the GT program on the district's website. The district hired an additional teacher to work with GT students in response to the district parent survey feedback.

Effective Practice No. 3: Student Plans and Services

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title III

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 3

The district behavior team meets regularly to discuss the impact of prescribed behavioral interventions on students. The liaison for foster care and homeless education is a member of the Family Accountability, Intervention and Response (FAIR) team and meets frequently with social services, the county attorney and the Pennyroyal Center, a local mental health service provider. The liaison also

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conducts frequent visits to local campgrounds and other places where families experiencing homelessness are known to frequent. He works with these families to provide educational services by providing onsite school enrollment. He also visits the schools of currently enrolled students experiencing homelessness on a weekly basis. Muhlenberg County is in the process of developing a support group for students experiencing homelessness. In response to their growing EL population, the staff incorporates a data and support tracking system that is utilized during regular EL meetings to ensure that students are receiving the most appropriate services. This allows them to collect data that provides next steps to aid in students' progress.

Effective Practice No. 4: Professional Development

Program(s) Addressed: Title V, Part B; Gifted and Talented; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 4

The Title V program allocated 60% of the FY2024 budget for training for teachers. All staff are given the choice to participate in GT professional development opportunities provided by the district, including the Berg Experience where specific GT professional learning is provided. Muhlenberg County also works with the Early Childhood Regional Training Center to provide quality professional development for preschool staff such as trainings on Early Childhood Standards, special education and classroom behavioral supports.

Effective Practice No. 5: Leadership

Program(s) Addressed: Gifted and Talented; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 5

The preschool coordinator participates in state-level and regional meetings and is available to her staff. Preschool program leadership actively engages with stakeholders, the community and other related state agencies. The preschool coordinator follows all policies and procedures as required by state regulation and ensures the requirements are communicated effectively to staff. She also provides direct support to the program. Staff working with GT students feel supported by the superintendent's positive interest in the program.

Effective Practice No. 6: Climate and Culture

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 6

Muhlenberg County strives to tap into each learner's strengths and areas for growth by encouraging students to take risks and helping them understand that making mistakes is a normal part of the learning process. There is a climate of respect among the preschool teachers. Preschool teachers know that the preschool coordinator and the elementary school principals value the work they do with the students to help prepare them for kindergarten.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 1: Finance

Programs Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Title IV, Part A; Title V, Part B

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

Numerous alignment issues were identified when the fiscal year 2024 MUNIS reports were compared to the approved Grant Management Application and Planning (GMAP) application budgets for Title I, Title IV and Title V. Title I, Part A funds reserved for students experiencing homelessness as well as

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parent and family engagement are not being spent in a timely fashion during the year in which they are reserved. District personnel whose salaries are paid with Title II funds were not performing the work referenced in the approved GMAP application. Specifically, the lead teachers at Muhlenberg High School are performing the duties of department heads in addition to their teaching responsibilities.

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s) for Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

The establishment of more frequent, formal meetings between program coordinators and the finance officer to align program spending will assist the district in spending funds in an approved and timely manner. It is recommended that this occurs at least quarterly. Collaboration from leadership in all areas will ensure that all students' needs are being met and allow for the frequent evaluation of whether funds can be shifted to an area of greater need. A detailed purchasing manual that allows for the maintaining of internal controls in the disbursement of Title II, Part A funds is already in use by the district. The district may consider creating similar manuals or processes to provide instructions on budget alignment and allowable spending for all federal programs. The preschool budget is being used effectively and is in line with the GMAP application. Individuals working with the preschool program budget may be able to provide support to other programs as they work to strengthen budget processes.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 2: Policies and Procedures

Programs Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title V, Part B; Alternative Education

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 2

Several policies and written procedures required under Title I, Part A were missing or did not contain all the information required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The parent and family engagement policies and compacts reviewed at the Title I schools do not contain all the information required under ESSA. The district does not currently have written procedures for awarding credit, partial credit and diplomas to students experiencing homelessness nor does it have a foster care transportation agreement developed with the local child welfare agency. Although the district pays for a portion of the parent and family engagement liaison position using Title V, Part B funds, the appropriate time and effort documentation for this position is not being maintained in accordance with the district's time and effort procedures.

Behavior data is not being formally collected and utilized in decision making for the alternative education program which prevents the use of data analysis in supporting continuous improvement. Although teachers utilize various behavior intervention strategies, the lack of a common behavior process results in inconsistent implementation and can cause confusion regarding expectations. At the time of the monitoring visit, only 3% of students enrolled long-term had a completed and locked Individual Learning Plan Addendum (ILPA). The program uses an ILPA team, but ILPAs do not appear to be part of its culture. Students enrolled in the virtual component of the program currently do not have active ILPAs. Evidence and interviews indicate there are established policies that outline requirements for identifying and enrolling students for the in-person component of the program, however the criteria are ambiguous. Clear criteria and processes for enrollment in the virtual component of the alternative program are also lacking. There is little evidence of established policies that outline a formal exit process that uses data to determine a student's readiness to return to the regular classroom. Additionally, interviews also revealed limited purposeful planning of inclusive practices. For example, students are placed in an isolation room for the entirety of the first five days of enrollment. This is not best practice and may set a negative tone for students as they transition into this program.

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Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s) for Opportunity for Improvement No. 2

The district and schools should refer to the resources provided within the individual program reports when revising existing policies and procedures as well as developing new ones. Checklists, templates and other resources created by the Kentucky Department of Education are available to help ensure the required information is included in documents. Developing internal processes and procedures outlining how the district completes program tasks, such as data tracking, will help staff complete the tasks with fidelity. Internal processes and procedures should be written in a manner that is easily understood by all staff and maintained in a central location that can be accessed by anyone who needs them. As the processes and procedures are developed, the district should share them with staff and provide training when necessary. Regarding specific policy and procedure documentation, it is recommended that the district create and maintain a central storage system which would allow convenient access. It is also recommended that the district provide guidance in the formal documentation and implementation of policies and procedures to facilitate the implementation of all title programs as well as provide consistency for the alternative education program to function effectively and with fidelity.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 3: Communication

Programs Addressed: Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Alternative Education

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 3

During school interviews with principals, the program consultants from both Titles I and II noted a lack of communication between the district coordinator and the school principals regarding the general development and implementation of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s) for Opportunity for Improvement No. 3

It is recommended that the district's program coordinator work consistently with each school principal to develop and implement comprehensive school improvement plans (CSIPs). It may be helpful for all principals to meet as a group with the program coordinator to establish consistent expectations for the CSIP rather than each school working. This should extend to the alternative education program. Commitment to shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning should be evident in documentation and decision making. Consider initiating regular Professional Learning Communities and intentional staff meetings as opportunities for development within the alternative education program. This commitment should always be reflected in communication among leaders, staff and students. It is recommended that district leadership work to include the principal, staff, parents and students in developing expectations for all aspects of the program to create consistency and provide positive outcomes for students.

Final Overview

The Muhlenberg County school district displays a conscientious effort to involve a wide variety of stakeholders to provide input regarding the spending of title program funds. The EL program strives to create a sense of belonging for those students and families. The preschool program has a large presence in the community with its many outreach events. GT students and their families have many opportunities for enrichment and deeper learning. Students experiencing homelessness are sought out and enrolled in a timely manner to ensure that they have appropriate educational services. In addition, the district's provision of professional development opportunities allows teachers of special populations to acquire the training needed to function effectively. The district should consider dividing duties for all federal programs to ensure an ample amount of time and focus regarding the required tasks. Currently, one district staff member is responsible for most all the duties in addition to other duties throughout the

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district which does not allow for the level of focus necessary. In addition, KDE suggests Muhlenberg County to provide the same level of consistency in the expectations for students enrolled in alternative education as other students in the district experience. Furthermore, the district is encouraged to provide more guidance to school principals regarding Title I parent and family engagement requirements and the creation and implementation of CSIPs. Lastly, it is recommended that the district creates formalized processes and procedures regarding the handling of program funds and the educational rights of homeless and foster care students. The monitoring team is confident that the district will continue to grow in identified areas of improvement and will create innovative solutions.