

UNITED WE LEARN:

*Hearing Kentucky's Voices on
the Future of Education*



UNITED
WE LEARN

Investing in Kentucky's Future, One Student at a Time



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION

Context and Origins of this Report

In the spring of 2021, Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Kentucky’s commissioner of education and chief learner, staged a series of stakeholder engagement efforts that led to the formation of the Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education (KCAE). The coalition is a diverse group of stakeholders that includes families, students, teachers, school and district leaders and community members from across the state. This group was charged with:

1. Coming together as an inclusive group, building relationships with one another, inquiring together and working together to lay the foundation for statewide learning and innovation.
2. Creating the ***United We Learn: Hearing Kentucky’s Voices on the Future of Education report*** that captures themes from the “Keep, Stop, Start” survey (also known as the Kentucky Education Feedback Survey) of stakeholders, the Commissioner’s Virtual Listening Tour and the coalition’s own empathy interviews, as well as the collective imagination about where education can and should go in the future.
3. Defining a set of questions that local districts can use to guide their learning and innovation as they try to move closer to the future state. These questions are gathered in a document called the ***KCAE Learning Agenda***.
4. Creating a ***Co-Creation Guidebook*** that captures the lessons KCAE members learned about being on this especially inclusive design team. This will provide guidance to local school districts about how to co-create with students, their families and the community.

The *United We Learn: Hearing Kentucky’s Voices on the Future of Education* report is one of the key deliverables of the coalition. However, the process of the coalition is just as critical as what the coalition learned. Therefore, this summary will describe not only the report’s key findings, but also answer key questions about the coalition’s process:

- How was the coalition set up for success?
- How was the coalition formed?
- How did the coalition do its work?
- How will the products of the coalition be used?

As a coalition representing the diversity of the Commonwealth, we hope readers connect not only with the insights on education, but also the process by which those insights were generated.

How was the coalition set up for success?

From the outset of his tenure, Glass has oriented the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) toward listening and learning. KDE conducted a series of listening tour events across the Commonwealth and launched a survey that asked educators what the department might “Keep, Stop, Start.” The tour and survey asked people across the state to reflect on and offer insights across a range of areas. In reviewing the data, it is clear there are some themes in people’s experiences with education in Kentucky. People are concerned about:

- Communication and relationship-building;
- Celebration of and attention to diversity, equity and inclusion of different cultures;
- Partnership, trusting relationships and engagement with families;
- Connection with students and individualized and personalized learning experiences;
- Mechanisms that provide timely and constructive feedback; and
- Standardized testing.

How was the coalition formed?

The coalition was composed using an inclusive model – a third of members appointed directly by the department, a third of the members through an open application and a third of members through a random selection of citizens across Kentucky. The coalition believes this approach generated a representative selection of key stakeholders. The coalition’s membership is more racially diverse than Kentucky as a whole, and represents students, families, teachers and school, district and community leaders.

How did the coalition do its work?

The coalition used an inclusive thinking process that started with empathizing with different stakeholders in the education system. The focus areas identified during the listening tour and survey helped the coalition develop questions they used when they conducted empathy interviews. The empathy interviews allowed members to hear the stories of stakeholders so they could better understand their key needs and insights about what is working and what is not. In an empathy interview, rather than asking people what they think the right solution is to the problems coalition members identified, questions were asked to help members learn about what people experience, how they feel and what they see as the root cause of problems. Questions were asked such as:

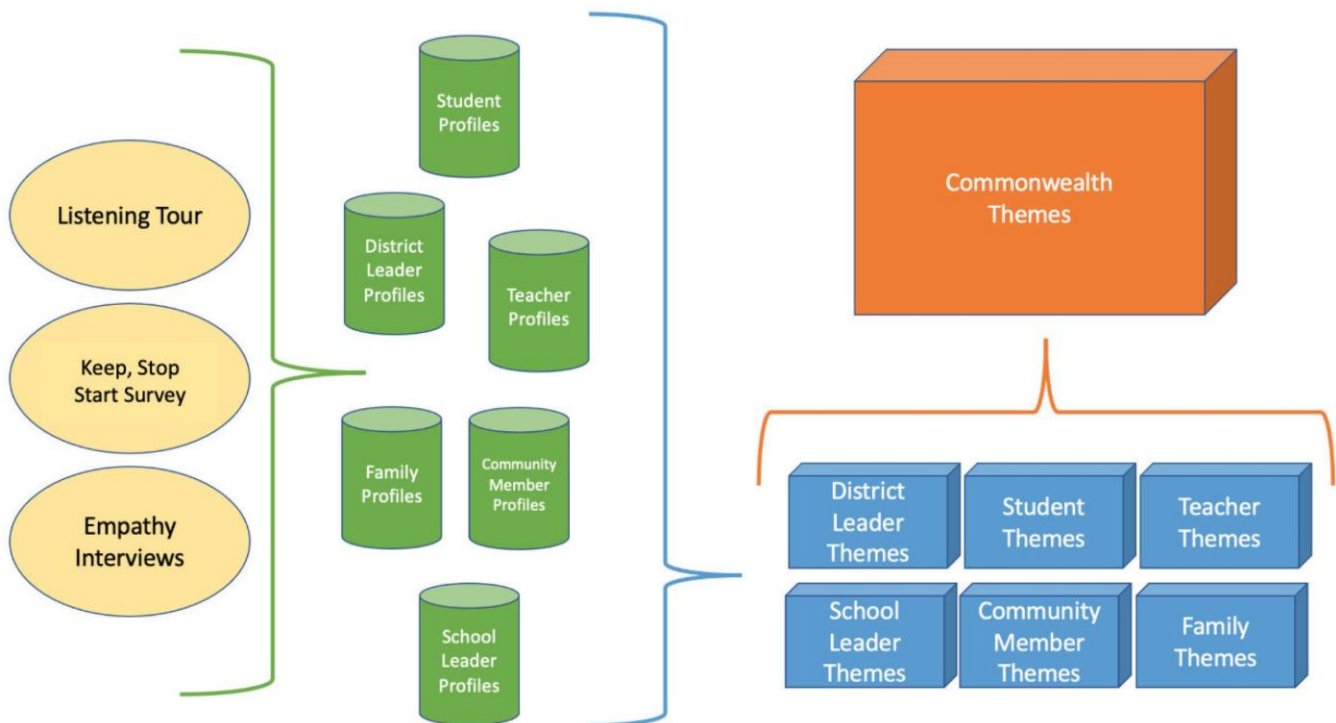
- “Tell me about the time when you felt the school really knew you as a parent and/or knew your child well and it made learning better?”
- “Tell me about a time when the partnership between you and your teacher really wasn’t working? What was happening, and why do you think it played out that way?”

The coalition made a special effort to reach out to students and families who may have less access to opportunities or public processes due to work constraints, geographic location or discomfort with schools. The coalition also periodically worked in stakeholder-alike groups so family members could take the lead on describing what coalition members heard from families, students could take the lead on describing what members heard from students, and so on.

Ultimately, the coalition created stakeholder profiles to capture key themes and insights from the perspective of students, families, teachers, school and district leaders and community members. The coalition then used a consensus model that required 90% agreement to determine which set of profiles to include in this report. There were no circumstances in which 10% or more of the total group felt a profile was not accurate.

There were, however, some differing perspectives about specific components of profiles as the coalition worked. In those cases, the group deferred to the stakeholder-alike coalition members on whether to make a targeted revision. So, for example, if a district leader felt a specific component of a family profile should be reworded, the members of the coalition who were family members were asked whether they wished to accept or reject that suggestion. The group went with their decision and then presented the complete profile back to the full coalition to see if there was 90% consensus that the profile accurately portrayed data collected through the various processes.

This visual helps explain how the data collection methods, profiles and themes relate to one another in this report.



How will the products of the coalition be used?

The coalition as a whole feels these sets of profiles represent the experiences, views, needs and insights of people from across the Commonwealth. These profiles are the basis of the current state descriptions in this report. The coalition used the profiles to identify themes for each stakeholder group and themes from across the Commonwealth. The future state portion of the report considers these themes and paints a picture of what the ideal system of education in Kentucky would look like if we responded to them.

A team of coalition members also developed a Learning Agenda, a set of questions the state and local communities need to explore in order to get from current circumstances to the future vision. To support these Local Laboratories of Learning teams, the coalition also created a Co-Creation Guidebook that will help them through the process of inclusive design. The Partnership Guide uses the insights from the current state, the aspirations of the future state, and the questions from the Learning Agenda to guide the design process.

KDE will learn alongside districts, capture and share local insights and connect districts to one another to deepen learning and evaluate how the current state system supports the scaling of potential innovations.

Commonwealth Current State Themes and A Vision for the Future

After months of listening to students, families, teachers and school, district and community leaders from across the Commonwealth, the Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education captured shared views about the current state of education and our shared vision for the future.

Themes surfaced across all stakeholder groups and have significant implications for what we need to learn, where we might innovate and how we should work together as we design the future of education in Kentucky. We call these statewide insights “Commonwealth Themes,” and for each theme, the coalition has used the insight to describe a vision for the future state of education in the Commonwealth.

What will we observe and experience in the ideal future state if we build on these strengths or address these issues?

Learners in the Commonwealth will thrive if we:

Stakeholders believe that everyone is trying and everyone is working hard. Students are trying, teachers are trying, and families and communities are trying. School and district leaders and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) are all working hard on behalf of Kentucky’s students. There is a reverence for education and educators in Kentucky.

Go from “random acts of improvement” to common visions, deep partnership and shared responsibility.

We envision all stakeholders, representing the incredible diversity of Kentucky, feeling more satisfied by their hard work. Educators, district leaders, families, students and communities have had the challenging conversations required to name a set of common aims and coordinate their shared efforts.

Schools are a hub of community and they could do more to expand relational trust and public trust more globally.

Replace transactional relationships with reciprocal connections between communities and schools.

We envision the school building as a place for people to learn together, gather and celebrate. School is viewed as “ours” and not “mine” across lines of culture, language and ability. Each school houses a network of trusting relationships that work together to support the success of students and families. This network has mechanisms for genuine accountability for the creation of a trusting, sustaining and effective culture of partnership. Educators and community members alike understand their shared responsibility for creating a culture of trust.

The culture of schooling does not sufficiently welcome, foster or facilitate the kind of collaboration that might expand trust. The commitment to efficiency, impartiality and authority get in the way of authentic, learner-centered and community-centered collaboration and partnership.

Move from “command and control” to “systems of trust and partnership.”

We envision education institutions that close the distance between layers of educational hierarchy and foster true partnerships across the community. All members of the community use leadership practices that foster authentic collaboration and group work among diverse stakeholders in ways that are productive and culturally responsive. Individual strengths and differences are valued as essential to effective collaboration. People closest to the work are empowered to create equitable solutions. All levels of the system take on the responsibility of learning from and scaling great ideas and approaches.

Inequities in opportunities and outcomes persist, despite the efforts of students, families, educators, system leaders and communities. These inequities exist along lines of geography, identity, language and ability. It is important to learn more about the root causes of these inequities.

Respond to inequity in a systematic way that reflects the uniqueness of people and places.

We envision a Commonwealth where all members of the community understand that every child and family has a unique story, that each story has both strengths and vulnerabilities, and these stories do not define everything about who they are and what they are capable of. Communities understand the stories of students and families and acknowledge the tremendous challenges they overcome and the strengths they bring to their work. Communities, families and students all work together to expand opportunity and eliminate the barriers that have inhibited equitable outcomes.

The system doesn't really know, see or value each stakeholder as an individual. This was as true for students and families as it was teachers and leaders. There are similar feelings from communities - that the system doesn't adequately see, know or value the aspirations, assets and challenges of the community.

Know people as more than statistics and involve them in inquiry about inequities.

We envision hallways and classrooms where young people, teachers and families feel comfortable being themselves, being curious and taking some intellectual risks. Communities, local educators and state officials all maintain persistent curiosity about the root causes of gaps in opportunity and achievement. They continue to learn about the felt experience of inequitable access and update their vision of what the pursuit of equity means. They make ongoing investments of time and other resources to keep learning from and devising and testing new approaches with families, local educators and innovators from around the Commonwealth and beyond.

While there are significant efforts made to communicate and provide students and their families with data that promotes continued learning, few stakeholders feel that communication and feedback are currently promoting a shared understanding, mutual trust and partnership.

Share information that builds partners in improvement, rather than targets for “shaming and blaming.”

We envision a shift from a system that tabulates, classifies and blames to a system that uses evidence of learning to foster improvement and shared learning at every level. Districts, schools and teachers feel accountable to students and families for student learning. Families and students receive accurate and useful feedback in modes and languages that meet their needs. They trust the information they receive and see local and state educators as trusted partners.

The current approach to state and federal accountability and assessment sends a message of distrust, breeds competition and plays a powerful role in making stakeholders feel like numbers or cogs in a machine that ultimately is accountable to state and federal entities.

Create conditions where everyone can fail and improve by learning from one another, instead of competing.

We envision a future where teachers use valuable data sources to support each other to improve, with a sharp lens toward disparities in outcomes. We envision teachers who feel trusted enough to be vulnerable with students and families. Teachers invite students and families into conversation about the data, and then into partnership, where they learn from one another about the best way to support each young person. Schools examine their data in partnership with other schools, with the same critical eye toward disparities and the same partnership around solutions. Districts partner with other districts and invite families and communities into creative problem solving about how to better serve students' needs. The state and federal systems support these local efforts and lead the Commonwealth's equity-focused agenda by facilitating the spread of good ideas, good work and productive partnerships.

There is a hunger for schools to help students pursue – and feel valued in pursuing – a broader range of pathways toward professional, civic, financial and personal independence

Go beyond a narrow set of subjects and create pathways that facilitate Individual fulfillment AND collective prosperity.

We envision a future where students, schools and communities understand that individual fulfillment is a component of collective prosperity. Schools regularly partner with communities to support a broad range of professional, civic, cultural and financial learning opportunities that contribute to personal independence and community prosperity.

There is a hunger for local accountability and assessment systems that portray a more complete picture of each student, and value the investment teachers, school leaders and local school boards make in providing relevant, personal and joyful learning opportunities to each young person in their community.

Make assessments go beyond a snapshot of a whole child to reflect what communities need to do to cultivate learning.

We envision a future where communities have developed a vision for student success and community prosperity that expands the pathways to success made visible to students and their families and inspires deep partnerships and a shared responsibility for improvement. Assessment systems help students, communities and schools feel known in their full context and valued for their full range of assets and capabilities. Assessments help educators maintain a deep focus on improving outcomes for those who have been least served without constraining the outcomes we value to those we can most easily measure by standardized tests. The statewide system cultivates and honors local visions for success and local processes for improvement, and supports communities learning from each other in meaningful ways. The citizens of Kentucky understand the connection and value of the educational system to generating prosperity and the current strength of that relationship.

The hardship of COVID-19 has created a strong appetite among stakeholders to reflect on what we have been doing and imagine and move toward a better future.

Don't go "back to normal"; embrace the hard questions and answer them as united communities.

We envision a future where communities have asked the hard questions and included all stakeholders in answering them. They have moved forward, and not back. Moreover, they have practiced collaborating with their community and are becoming fluent at the practices of ongoing collaboration and co-creation with the communities they serve.

Stakeholder Themes, Visions and Profiles

It is important to see where these Commonwealth Themes came from. The remainder of this report shares data organized by the stakeholder groups that informed the coalition.

This section follows a pattern for each stakeholder group. First, it shares the stakeholder group themes identified by the coalition and the paired future state vision statements. Following the themes is the collection of profiles the coalition built for this stakeholder group to synthesize data from survey, listening tour and empathy interviews. Each profile is provided in this template.

Stakeholder's Descriptive Name		
QUOTES: Which 2-4 quotes give us a picture of who this stakeholder is?	COMPELLING NEEDS: What does this stakeholder need from the education system? Re: assessment and accountability specifically?	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS: What insights does this stakeholder have about what is working/not working?

Profiles were created by combining quotes from different interviews that help paint a picture of a typical Kentuckian’s experience with public education. This has a few implications that may be confusing unless we explain them up front.

The left column contains direct quotes. The language may be a little unclear at times, as these quotes were gathered conversationally. We think the meaning can be discerned and that preserving the integrity of the quotes was more important than ensuring polished grammar. Secondly, there are sometimes quotes that refer to “she” or “he” when the name of the profile is the opposite gender. This is because the quotes came from several interviews and we didn’t want to change the quotes. When choosing profile names, the coalition tried to be descriptive and vary gender and ethnicity throughout. We interviewed a wide range of people and we hope the names connote that wide range.

In creating these profiles, it is normal that some quotes are used in more than one profile. Grouping a particular quote with different quotes paints a different picture. The coalition reviewed the set of profiles and determined that each repeated quote is part of a distinct profile that offers some distinct insights about education in Kentucky. And lastly, in some student profiles you will find a quote from a parent – this was not a mistake; it was a quote from a parent that illustrated a student experience.

You also may see this happen between parents and teachers. There are people who are both teachers and parents of school-age children, so sometimes their quotes refer to both roles and may be part of either a parent or teacher profile. Read the full set of quotes, think about that type of person’s experience and consider the insights and needs their story illuminates for each of us as we try to drive education forward.

Although the coalition did hear from a broad range of Kentuckians, when local communities do their work, coalition members expect that while local teams will find many of these profiles to be useful and relevant in their context, they will also do their own empathy work and may create additional profiles. As new profiles are generated, updates to this document will be posted on the project website.

Student Stakeholders

Student Themes about the Current State and Their Vision for the future

Themes about the Current State

Students need supports that focus on their holistic well-being because of the anxiety and pressure associated with being a young person.

Students are not statistics and shouldn't be seen as a statistic.

There is a need for connection between education professionals and students; "coaching" opportunities do not arise often enough.

Students need a pathway to take charge of their own learning because they feel disconnected, leading to a lack of motivation.

Students should be included when decisions are being made. Inclusivity during decision-making is important when developing student learning environments.

The Desired Future State

Schools implement programs and collaboratively design their communities so that supporting the emotional/social and academic well-being of students is their primary job.

Students demonstrate their learning in different ways that capitalize on each student's individual strengths, which helps them own their learning and teachers support student growth. This includes approaches that cultivate the strength in the diverse identities, cultures, languages and abilities of Kentucky's young people.

Assessments are relevant to student lives with real world currency and relevance.

Strong relationships between educators and students are the norm and structures align to ensure every child is surrounded by a network of caring relationships. Marginalized communities that used to experience high turnover have received the support they need to sustain a stable teaching force that allows relationships to flourish.

Students will have a learning environment in which they create and guide their own journey, incorporating diverse interests that span everything from mental health and wellness to financial literacy to citizenship.

Students will be active decision-makers in their education with opportunities for student- and adult-initiated co-creation.

Whole Hannah

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>Most of my teachers won't even say my name right or give me a nickname. I don't say anything because my dad said never cause trouble.</p> <p>Sometimes I just wish I had a choice. I am in high school and each year we read a classic. I can never relate to these stories; there are no people like me in these stories. I read and do my work, but wish many times I could suggest books we spend six weeks on. Books with boys like me.</p> <p>One time I remember was when my school would offer high-level math classes, they wanted the math classes to be focused on standardized testing and I really wanted math to be about application to the real world. I asked why we weren't doing more projects and things beyond test prep. But at the time I didn't think I could do a lot to change things, so I ended up just doing the work.</p> <p>We take surveys all the time. They ask how we feel about our teachers and are they working with us, do we feel like we are learning and do we have people we can go to. I feel like nothing really changes after the surveys.</p>	<p>This student needs to be seen as a WHOLE person with identity, capability, strengths and potential.</p> <p>This student needs strong, caring, respectful relationships with adults at school.</p> <p>This student also needs to be able to explore student choice and student identity in their academic studies.</p> <p>This student needs to be given room to learn a broader range of content and skills.</p> <p>This student needs to be invited regularly to share their view of what is important to learn, what is working and what is not.</p> <p>Paired with the need for voice, this student needs to see that people listen and things sometimes change in response to what they say.</p> <p>Needs content in school that reflects their actual experience and invite her to identify what that content would be.</p>	<p>There are both policies and behaviors that prevent students from being seen, known and listened to.</p> <p>Knowing names, being curious about home culture and values, and doing things to give young people permission to speak up when adult actions hurt them all are important.</p> <p>Urgency and pressure related to testing and accountability leave little room for these behavior changes.</p> <p>There are both policies and behaviors that limit the scope of their learning.</p> <p>Accountability pressure leads to narrowing academic focus for students across achievement levels.</p> <p>There is a tension between relevance and teaching classical content.</p>

Anxious Aisha

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>When we do K-PREP, the teachers stress us out. Maybe we wouldn't feel as stressed out or as inferior to others who do better.</p> <p>I had panic attacks in middle school and the counselor was really helpful because I knew I could go to her to calm down and talk about it.</p>	<p>This student needs access to encouraging and uplifting teachers and counselors to help them manage the stress of the school environment.</p> <p>Stress around the time of testing is also something unique – this student needs some social-emotional learning (SEL) support in general, but also SEL and practical support for this time in particular.</p>	<p>Some students feel pressure to perform in state testing and it can be traumatic.</p> <p>Some students are negatively impacted by the level of stress teachers carry regarding state assessment.</p> <p>Student mental health is really important.</p>

Owning it Owen

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>One time I remember was when my school would offer high-level math classes – they wanted the math classes to be focused on standardized testing and I really wanted math to be about application to the real world. I asked why we weren't doing more projects and things beyond test prep. But, at the time I didn't think I could do a lot to change things so I ended up just doing the work.</p> <p>Sometimes I wish I had a choice. I am in high school and each year we read a classic. I can never relate to these stories.</p>	<p>This student needs to feel some ownership of their learning.</p> <p>High school students don't have much of a choice in class work, or school work. Sometimes, rather than giving all power to the teachers, this student feels like they should have a choice in their work. They should be able to choose from different options. And they need to be consulted in creating those different options.</p>	<p>Ownership of learning and authenticity or relevance of learning matters to students and leads to engagement and readiness.</p> <p>Blame coming down in the system can constrain what schools offer and the degree to which students have choice/ownership.</p>

On-Track Mack

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I feel I learned more of my people skills in school. Having to interact with people, especially people you don't like, teaches you things. Learning to deal with them in a respectful manner is preparing me for interacting with others in the workplace. Group work, where they don't let you pick your groups, you still have to learn and work to get the job done. You just have to push past whatever you don't like to get the job done.</p> <p>I do not like getting up early in the morning, but nobody does. I feel like it is designed the way it is because it works.</p> <p>People that aren't as motivated to get their work done would probably ask for less work or less time in the classroom. I don't like school, but I like school because it is required. I like the social aspect. But it boggles my mind that there are those students who are failing just because they can. I want to succeed and I don't understand those who don't care.</p>	<p>This student wants to be ready for adult life and they need practice with adult responsibilities, even if they aren't fun.</p> <p>This student would like to be recognized for their contribution.</p> <p>This student needs a school environment that reverses the messages they've internalized about the game of school, and instead recognizes different experiences and ways of being valued by the education system.</p>	<p>Learning to collaborate with others is important and needs to be taught and supported.</p> <p>Clear roles and responsibilities as they relate to school accountability also are important.</p> <p>Accountability should cause schools to make sure kids who play the game of schooling well actually are ready for life after school.</p> <p>If something is actually important to life readiness, make all students accountable. If it isn't really important, then don't.</p>

Hands-On Harry

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I explain to them (teachers) that my son feels hopeless if all he has to look forward to is studying, grades and writing. He doesn't like it and only does well when tinkering or building. School isn't set up for that.</p> <p>She was very frustrated that school favors those with natural skills for traditional academics and wonders where her son fits in without those skills. He has other skills.</p> <p>What if a school focuses on project-based learning which I know is controversial right now. My school does this and we might not have as high ACT scores, but we have a majority going on to college and lifelong skills.</p> <p>She was excited that the district is offering career training beginning in 8th grade. She was informed of the all-day opportunities, which will benefit students like her son.</p> <p>I am frustrated that the only classes middle school children are offered are English, math, science and social studies. Then they alternate between P.E. and music. This is for all three years of middle school.</p>	<p>This student needs meaningful learning opportunities that are hands-on, have a connection to the real world and are broader than just the traditional academic skill areas.</p> <p>The student needs assessments that show evidence of learning in those opportunities so they can be recognized for those skills, supported to grow and feel a stronger sense of purpose.</p> <p>This student needs a greater range of choices and options. This could be within classes, both in terms of what they delve deeply into and how they learn and demonstrate learning. Course or program choices also could be offered within schools or even across schools within the district. They need to be in a learning environment that aligns with their interests and how they learn.</p>	<p>If everything is standardized, students like this cannot find a place where they fit.</p> <p>Schools and districts need to be accountable for providing a range of options.</p> <p>Everybody is unique, and a standardized system holds students back.</p> <p>Secondary programming needs to become more flexible. Collaboration across districts may be needed.</p>

Family Stakeholders

Family Themes about the Current State and Their Vision for the Future

Themes about the Current State

The Desired Future State

Families need to be known, understood and valued in ways that value their full identities and experiences, not just so they can be enlisted to improve their children's performance.

Families experience a system that seeks to know, understand and value them in ways that honor their full identities, languages and experiences.

Families need a reciprocal way of communicating and collaborating around their young people's interests, strengths, needs and feedback, because they feel reduced to an oversimplified set of metrics and confined to antiquated communication systems.

Schools welcome and seek family input and involvement with their student(s) as well as with other students. "It takes a village." Schools make it easy for families to participate in and encourage their student's growth and development by providing meaningful feedback and engaging in dialogue with each family (in modes and languages that work for the family).

Families need multiple modes of communication in multiple languages because they don't all use the same systems and the channels are not equally reliable.

Schools facilitate family engagement by providing multiple and varied means and opportunities for communication. The community has systems for communication that honor how different families prefer to communicate and engage.

Families expect to be partners in their children's education because neither families nor schools can do everything alone. Educators at all levels need to explain what partnership means and looks like, and support different types of engagement from different families in ways that are culturally responsive. All families care about their children, but some families do not feel welcomed into partnership.

Schools provide ongoing, proactive, compassionate and responsive opportunities for partnership, always asking, "What haven't I asked you that I need to know?" Schools, districts and communities have established common expectations for partnership and the responsibilities of every stakeholder.

Families acknowledge that it's not easy for teachers.

Schools create systems for families to engage with educators and support staff as human beings, promoting authentic conversation and encouraging empathy and respect for one another.

Accuracy-Seeking Alan/Stone-Walled Steven

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>My teacher gave no feedback at all. Students put in the effort and nothing was given back in return to students.</p> <p>I have reached out for help to the principal and the guidance counselor and they listen but do nothing to help me or my children. I am frustrated because it could be so much better for my kids</p> <p>I remember specific instance with one of my children in middle school. The teachers were doing home visits, going over what was going well down to standard level. They shared 2-3 things she really need to work on between now and next test. The conversation was about the test, but also very specific about really critical areas you can focus on and will make a difference for you.</p> <p>Communication in other languages is critical so that difficult conversations can happen for the improvement of the learning experience of the students.</p>	<p>The family member has an overarching need for two-way communication between the school and the parent. Educators need to provide useful information regarding his student’s learning. Listen to the parent and hear his concerns.</p> <p>This family member needs information he can trust to tell him what and how well his child is learning and in what ways, and how well his child’s school is improving.</p>	<p>This family member seeks feedback about how his child is doing and how the child can improve from his teacher, counselor and principal, but feels this is not forthcoming.</p> <p>This family member does not trust that the state assessment system gives him the information to help his student learn and improve.</p> <p>While families acknowledge that communication changes as students move up in grades, there seems to be little consistency or intentionality to how it changes.</p>

Distrustful Donna

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>He wasn't the best student, but we thought moving him into this school would help him both academically and athletically. Instead, he was held back. So then, when we moved to the newest school, we found out that he is behind. He wanted to play football in college, but how is that going to happen now? The schools failed him.</p> <p>I explain to them (teachers) that my son feels hopeless if all he has to look forward to is studying, grades and writing. He doesn't like it and only does well when tinkering or building. School isn't set up for that.</p>	<p>The family member needs reliable contact regarding how her student is doing and a conversation as to how he might succeed, given his talents and limitations.</p> <p>The family member needs the school to understand the full range of her child's aspirations.</p> <p>The family member is searching for partnership in pursuit of her and her child's aims, not just the school's.</p>	<p>This family member has lost trust in the system and is in danger of disengagement.</p> <p>This family member is used to trying to figure out processes and find the right information but resents the constant need to sort out what the real story is and what is relevant to her child's needs.</p>

Frustrated Fred

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I'm in this alone right now. There is not a direct person to contact or email.</p> <p>There was no consistent daily feedback or weekly feedback from the online instructor, just assignments and due dates.</p> <p>School communication is critical because the community talks about schools. There are community Facebook groups that are popular, and they tend to be negative. This negative slant was not Mrs. A's specific viewpoint, but many people complain that they don't know what is going on in their schools.</p> <p>My daughter in 2nd grade. I would like to know what all she's supposed to cover in 2nd grade so I can understand what she's learning and how far along she is. That's not well-presented right now. I would like to know what I could be doing to supplement what is happening in school. Parents shouldn't put it on Facebook, but that's most of what you see out there. Don't count families out – they want to be more engaged like that. We don't need to have low expectations of parents.</p> <p>Relationships should be closer between schools and families. There should be partnerships, collaboration, cooperation.</p>	<p>This family member would like the educators in his student's school to see him as a partner in supporting the child's learning. This requires an ongoing dialogue with the school as to how he can support his student's learning.</p> <p>He seeks regular opportunities to give and receive feedback.</p> <p>He also would like to see communications that meet people where they are.</p>	<p>Grade reports alone do not provide the kind of information that a caring parent needs to feel good about their student's school and individual progress.</p> <p>There may be multiple sources of frustration under the umbrella of "communication," but they have the common root of not feeling known, understood or valued for their experience, language, identity or culture.</p>

Whole Human Holly

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>As a teacher, my district has been extremely supportive both times I had children. Not only have they done standard maternity leave, but they have gone above and beyond in lifting weight off of my shoulders. This made me feel more than a staff member, but a part of a family.</p> <p>His students received the P-EBT funding for food, but he experienced difficulty accessing their accounts. The counselors at school were able to give them the directions needed to access the funds. They were in need of these funds and the information provided immediate help that his family needed.</p> <p>She says that building relationships with school personnel has been beneficial, but her work schedule makes it difficult to come into the school building.</p> <p>For instance, one friend has a kid who is very sensitive and is on the autism spectrum. It is very important for them to find a school that is accepting of all students and that takes bullying seriously.</p> <p>It's hard to engage them too because they are busy. I have tried emails and texts and newsletters. I would send smoke signals if I thought it would be successful. There are a lot of things that draw the attention of not only teachers, but also parents.</p>	<p>Families (and students and staff) need systems that recognize and support their beautifully complex, busy, challenging, full human experiences. They need schools that see their job as not just producing academic outcomes but providing communities of care for students, families and staff.</p> <p>Families need assessment and accountability systems that set the conditions for those kinds of communities of care to thrive.</p> <p>Families need a communicative and receptive assessment and accountability system that will take personalized action to support the unique and complex identities of each stakeholder.</p>	<p>Assessment and accountability are not just about test scores. Both need to be responsive to how schools and districts create communities of care where the learning and development of students and the needs of adults are all supported.</p>

Concerned Cora

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>The pivotal moment came when I was working as a social worker at the same elementary school my daughter attended. I happened to be sitting at my desk. It was lunch time. I looked out the window and saw her taking the garbage out with the janitor because they couldn't come up with anything else for her to do! I remember thinking, 'This cannot be her future.'</p> <p>I'm just tired of going to these [IEP] meetings where it's all talk and he still can't read and he still is getting called to the office all the time. I think they don't know what to do either, but they should. They got all those experts.</p> <p>As the parent of an autistic child, feedback is often focused on what is wrong or what my child is struggling to do. Feedback needs to be strength-based feedback that ties into long-term goals instead of focusing primarily on what my child is struggling with. Balance is key, and as parents we are also looking for what our children will need to do in the future.</p> <p>The speech teacher always went out of her way to learn about her son's medical condition and the teacher always adapted her speech techniques to his condition.</p>	<p>This family member needs an intentional and frequently monitored plan between she and the school to support her child with disabilities and equitably support the child toward a meaningful future. She wants educators to be held accountable for providing relevant and personalized supports for each child based on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or other needs,</p> <p>She needs consistent and ongoing communication with a caring/prepared teacher at the school who knows her child's strengths and limitations, the child's IEP and can regularly respond to questions.</p> <p>This family member needs an inclusive culture where a student with disabilities and/or ongoing medical conditions is integrated fully into the student learning community.</p>	<p>The family member wants to see her student cared for as a person and a learner and integrated within an inclusive learning community. So far, she is not seeing this happening.</p> <p>She recognizes that there are caring adults in the school who know and respect her student, and when they are involved, this can go a long way to address her child's needs.</p> <p>Teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development is limited in providing teachers and staff with resources and knowledge to effectively support students with disabilities.</p>

Adriana the Advocate

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>Her son is a very bright child who is kind and curious and she does not want his disability to define him or his school experience, but she feels that too often his disability drives conversations and decisions about his education. She has advocated for him to have access not just to regular ed. classrooms, but also honors and AP classes, which she describes as an uphill climb. She feels that her son’s case manager, a teacher at the school, also understands his strengths and weaknesses and advocates for him, although initially that was not the case.</p> <p>Her daughter was struggling with reading while she was on the virtual learning platform this past fall. She was struggling with most everything about the program she was using, but particularly with new vocabulary words. She found a different reading platform and purchased it for home use instead of the one provided by the school. Over the course of 4 months, her daughter improved reading fluency from 16 to 60 words per minute.</p> <p>The child wasn’t being challenged enough. The parents advocated and challenged the school to move past their bias. Parents sometimes know their children better than the school. The key is that parents and schools work together to promote student success. Teamwork makes the dreamwork.</p>	<p>This family member needs school systems that are deeply curious about their children, not just their deficits and skill gaps, but about what they can do and different ways they can be supported to thrive.</p> <p>This family member needs partners at school who work with them and appreciate what they as parents understand about their child, their child’s potential and gifts, what works well with their child and strategies to try.</p> <p>This family member needs not only high-quality assessments and data, but also accountable relationships and communication that helps interrupt existing biases about who their children are and provides insights into what they can do.</p>	<p>Families need an opportunity to co-create projects, curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>Families need a triangulation of data points to determine success and instructional next steps.</p> <p>Families and students need a variety of assessments to determine success and needs.</p> <p>Families want to be partners in helping their children learn academic content.</p> <p>Families sometimes need help understanding state standards and what signifies evidence of learning. Schools need to help families by equipping them with this information.</p>

Adriana the Advocate (continued)

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>The child said she was tired of doing the same old things over and over, like printing her name and letters. The school kept questioning whether or not she could read. They even doubted the results of the tests that showed she was only a few grade levels behind. We told the school to believe the tests. We mentioned that the child texts to communicate at home in addition to sign language.</p>		

Connected and Concerned Contessa

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>There is constant communication with parents about academics AND behavior. This takes place through email, phone calls, text, Remind App, Infinite Campus (which is updated at least weekly) and regular conferences.</p> <p>The school year just ended. I have the app on my phone that sends me updates for both kids so I know when they haven't turned something in on time or if they get a bad grade.</p> <p>I remember specific instance with one of my children in middle school. The teachers were doing home visits, going over what was going well down to standard level. They shared 2-3 things she really need to work on between now and next test. The conversation was about the test, but also very specific about really critical areas you can focus on and will make a difference for you.</p> <p>Her teachers were proactive and communicating with me. They are actually trying to push her more.</p>	<p>This family member needs multiple modes and channels of communication with schools to give and receive information about how students are doing, blending the just-in-time data that technology makes available with more personalized conversations about strengths, challenges, feedback and ways to offer support.</p> <p>She needs a variety of modes of communication (home language, non-school lingo) to share actionable results. Test scores can be communicated and found in various ways. Results need to be student- and parent-friendly. Feedback to parents/students to describe what the results mean.</p>	<p>Constant academic and behavioral communication between school and home is working. Families like the variety of modes of communication. Partnership and accessibility to the school are important.</p> <p>Families want to help their children be successful and need information and partnership with the school to do that well.</p>

Teacher Stakeholders

Teacher Themes about the Current State and Their Vision for the Future

Themes about the Current State

Teachers need resources, tools and support to communicate with students and families effectively because teachers want to build relationships with families and understand the need for families to be more informed.

Teachers need strategies to increase awareness of personal barriers for family engagement because understanding family dynamics and culture will help teachers build a stronger community to better serve students.

Teachers need personalized professional support and an improved approach to mentorships because they feel pressured by competition and have unique strengths and areas for growth.

The Desired Future State

Collaborative learning experiences that have traditionally been only for teachers – such as professional learning communities – also include staff, families and students so all stakeholders are involved.

Teachers will use multiple forms of communication in necessary languages and participate in ongoing professional development to build capacity for communication and family engagement.

The school day/calendar will be structured in such a way that teachers will receive ample time for planning, communicating, collaborating and professional development.

The community supports equitable engagement of all families, considering the many structures that may limit engagement, e.g. work schedules, jargon and norms.

Teachers engage families at the beginning of the year through conversations, home visits and interest surveys, as well as including families and their cultures throughout the school year.

Home visits allow teacher-family relationships to extend beyond the physical walls of the school and give educators unique insight into the lives of each family.

Teachers experience ongoing mentorships throughout educational careers, with a focus on areas of improvement for the mentee and areas of strength for the mentor.

Collaborative Carla		
QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>My child’s teacher has an open line of communication. My daughter was having behavior problems and was seeing a counselor. We contacted the teacher and she was completely open to suggestions from the counselor to use in class. She even kept us in the loop on how those suggestions were working in the classroom.</p> <p>Teachers have to work to have a culture that allows for communication when something is going good and not just when it is bad.</p> <p>The key is that parents and schools work together to promote student success. Teamwork makes the dreamwork.</p> <p>During NTI last year, my daughter’s teacher reached out to her and set up times to talk more casually over lunch via Zoom. She was able to talk about school stuff beyond just class information. I think it made my daughter feel like someone cared about her personally and she was more engaged and felt more connected. I think it even influenced her decision on whether to return in person rather than finish out the school year virtually.</p>	<p>This teacher needs validation from the school system that approaching families in a proactive collaborative way is the central work of great educators, and the tools, time and permission to do so.</p> <p>Teachers need guidance and support, training, modeling and examples on effective communication and conflict resolution.</p> <p>Teachers need to know what types of communication are appropriate.</p> <p>Teachers need a system that incentivizes getting to know their students through building relationships with families.</p>	<p>Effective communication between schools and families enables students’ continued forward progress.</p> <p>Parents care about their student’s progress and deserve effective communication.</p>

Community-Building Carmen

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I think we really need to understand who's in our community and know that people who may not come to the building may be very supportive of schools. Schools can still connect with them.</p> <p>It's one of the most important things for families and schools to be partners. If students feel like those are two separate worlds, they're not going to feel comfortable in either – they should be one world.</p> <p>Our district's biggest challenge is that there is instability in the parents who are engaged. The achievement gap is created by parents who are involved and parents who are not.</p>	<p>This teacher needs to understand and be in partnership with families but understand that not all families can/are comfortable coming into the school.</p> <p>This educator may need help coming to understand the barriers families have to building partnerships.</p> <p>This educator needs ways to connect with families who are experiencing stress and struggle to engage in the traditional ways.</p>	<p>Being in a community can be challenging. It takes explicit and persistent attention to build community.</p> <p>There are factors, such as poverty or personal history as a student, that shape a family member's engagement identity and experience supporting their children at school.</p> <p>Partnership with families experiencing this kind of stress is complex, requires empathy and must be co-designed with families.</p> <p>Teachers desire relationships with parents and the community.</p>

Growth-Oriented Georgia

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>In Kentucky, we began to compete with one another. We created a test and questions so that we could get an overall score to ‘prove’ how good we are. It’s a faulty process. It’s not a good system because then we win or lose, instead of learning what we need to improve on and fix.</p> <p>How can I help them read to get to the standards of my grade level on main idea and comprehension if they can’t read?</p> <p>One of the things that concerns her is her students not being able to read when they reach the grade she teaches. She is working to find alternatives to district-provided resources to help her be a better reading teacher.</p> <p>I just want to make sure I am doing all I can for my students.</p> <p>We have a lot of good mentors within our district. I feel comfortable asking, ‘How should I teach this lesson?’</p>	<p>This teacher needs to feel the system is focusing on helping them and their colleagues improve rather than focusing on how they compare with others.</p> <p>This teacher has real needs in terms of improvement that they are trying to solve on their own.</p> <p>This teacher needs coherent, cross-grade-level plans to teach reading in ways that reach each student.</p> <p>This teacher needs guidance and mentoring to grow.</p> <p>This teacher needs to know how to do a good job and whether they are doing one in supporting students.</p>	<p>The assumption that comparison will drive improvement is not playing out that way for some teachers.</p> <p>There are different ways to bring coherence to schooling. Dictating a single approach brings coherence but leaves some students behind. Having a coherent set of instructional tools that give teachers what they need to meet each student is harder to design and implement, but leaves fewer students behind.</p> <p>Teachers need a clear picture from families and school leadership about what doing a good job looks like.</p> <p>A culture of shared learning rather than judgement among educators is essential.</p>

School Leader Stakeholders

School Leader Themes about the Current State and Their Vision for the Future

Themes about the Current State

School leaders need data from multiple sources to support building relationships with families and community partnerships because they feel by doing so, there will be more family and community voice.

School leaders need multiple forms of descriptive data on an ongoing basis to ensure no student is lost over time. School leaders feel the descriptive data will result in positive change for all students.

The Desired Future State

Families, students, educators, staff and community members feel they are an integral and valued part of the school community. Together, members of the community promote engagement and support for young people and cultivate individual relationships between school staff and families.

Descriptive and granular data would provide information to ensure no student is left behind over time. This would remove the focus on a single state assessment to ongoing evidence of student learning and needs.

Relationship Ray

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I know the power of how a strong relationship makes me feel, so I want my students and teachers feel those relationships also.</p> <p>I think we really need to understand who's in our community and know that people who may not come to the building may be very supportive of schools. Schools can still connect with them.</p> <p>It's one of the most important things – for families and schools to be partners. If students feel like those are two separate worlds, they're not going to feel comfortable in either. They should be one world.</p> <p>If we want more engagement from families and students, we have to reach out to them in their own language, we must understand their culture, as well as their practices and perspectives. Without training on this, it will be impossible for our students and families to feel more engaged and engage more.</p>	<p>This administrator needs support from the district office to assist in the creation of partnerships with scholars and families.</p> <p>This administrator also needs data that will help them create relationships with families.</p> <p>This administrator wants data from needs assessments that comes straight from the families to increase family voice.</p>	<p>Accountability may look different based on the relationship that is needed.</p>

On-the-Radar Richard

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I do think sometimes we get lost. I am a supporter of standardized tests because if we aren't careful, some students will get lost and parents will not be aware of where their student's deficits are.</p> <p>That kind of feedback (test data) lets me know the feedback I am giving is effective and improves their practice, which in turn improves student performance.</p> <p>In Kentucky, we began to compete with one another. We created a test and questions so that we could get an overall score to 'prove' how good we are. It's a faulty process. It's not a good system because then we win or lose, instead of learning what we need to improve on and fix.</p> <p>Descriptive feedback is more helpful than general. The Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) provided more specific feedback for educators on content areas/standards which teachers could use to inform teaching in the next school year. This was lost with the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP).</p>	<p>This educator wants to be sure that no students get lost or go unnoticed.</p> <p>This educator needs some data to indicate whether their work with teachers is resulting in positive changes in student learning.</p> <p>This educator needs assessment tools/practices to illuminate student needs and supports outside of K-PREP.</p>	<p>Ongoing progress monitoring of student learning occurs throughout the school year and is regularly communicated to families.</p> <p>The current system in practice is score-focused and not focused on providing feedback on the actual student learning that occurred (or did not occur).</p>

District Leader Stakeholders

District Leader Themes about the Current State and Their Vision for the Future

Themes about the Current State

The Desired Future State

Because the current system is focused on competition, district leaders need an assessment and accountability system that focuses on communication, connection and collaboration rather than comparing and ranking schools.

Schools within the district are collaborators, not competitors.

Schools' strengths are recognized by the assessment and accountability system, as well as community members.

Schools come together to learn from one another about different aspects of learning experiences.

Community members, parents, students and educators are encouraged to be interested in the success of ALL schools and students, not just one particular school or student.

District leaders need a system that highlights the assets of schools as learning communities, not just spotlighting weak areas.

The accountability system measures/captures what is broadly valued in communities, beyond narrow academic skills.

Accountability system incentivizes learning experiences that foster competencies and 21st century skills as articulated in profiles of a graduate.

Schools and students can readily speak to evidence of their proficiency of agreed-upon competencies, including communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and innovation.

District leaders need a system that measures employability and other valued traits.

Students, teachers and families have a framework and system for understanding the competency of young people in skills related to real-world success.

District leaders need a system that honors personalized pathways for students.

Students are supported in pursuing individual learning goals, aspirations and pathways.

Students co-create assessment tasks and are active partners in their learning.

Board Member Brad		
QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>It is critical to feel welcomed and respected in regard to your culture and language. If we want for families and students to feel part of the education community, we have to do more to engage them in their culture, their language.</p> <p>The struggle becomes the time ..., time to connect, to build those relationships outside of the classroom. How can we find ways to put that time in teachers' and administrators' hands to really foster those relationships? I think a lot of it comes down to time.</p> <p>As a board member, I've always tried to build relationships with parents and encourage them to come into buildings, and we also go to places in the community. It's important to meet in the community where people are more comfortable. That's a shift we need – to get outside the four walls.</p> <p>To improve communication between parents, students and schools, it is critical to recruit and hire staff who sound and look like our students, speak like our students. We must hire bilingual staff, or at least people who can speak different languages).</p>	<p>This district leader needs to know this is a community effort, not an individual challenge.</p> <p>He needs to know that everyone is included, and values connection and communication.</p> <p>This district leader needs a system that connects people, not divides them.</p> <p>This district leader needs the resources and supports to reach out to communities, engaging them in decision-making, including in various languages.</p> <p>This district leader needs to increase diverse hiring practices.</p>	<p>This person has a network in the community, responsive to many viewpoints.</p> <p>This person wants us to remember that schools are ultimately accountable to communities, and school districts are reflective of their communities.</p> <p>Brad understands his responsibility to change the community mindset on the role of school in the 21st century.</p>

Needs-a-New-Path Nelly

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>In Kentucky, we began to compete with one another. We created a test and questions so that we could get an overall score to ‘prove’ how good we are. It’s a faulty process. It’s not a good system because then we win or lose, instead of learning what we need to improve on and fix.</p> <p>Descriptive feedback is more helpful than general. The KCCT test provided more specific feedback for educators on content areas/standards which teachers could use to inform teaching in the next school year. This was lost with K-PREP.</p> <p>This seems to be a primary driver for the current systems. Ranking and stacking schools, districts has real implications for us all.</p>	<p>This district leader needs a local and state system that believes in and supports an innovative approach to assessment.</p> <p>She needs a system that is not a competition.</p> <p>This district leader needs a system that doesn’t focus on ranking schools within the district and districts across the state.</p> <p>This district leader needs a system that provides actionable feedback, not just a score.</p> <p>This district leader needs a system that isn’t based on test scores alone.</p> <p>She needs a system that is relevant to ALL students.</p> <p>This district leader needs a system that values diversity within a district as a strength.</p>	<p>Nelly dislikes how much more emphasis there is on “ranking and sorting” with data rather than using data for improvement.</p> <p>Nelly wants a system-wide approach to accountability, not interschool competition.</p> <p>Nelly knows every district reflects strengths and challenges that could be addressed with more collaboration.</p> <p>She wants a statewide approach to prioritizing the most important elements of curriculum, instruction and accountability, not pressure to cover so much ground.</p> <p>Nelly wants to create a sustainable system of an “irreversible culture” of relevancy.</p>

Standardized Testing Steve

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>I do think sometimes we get lost. I am a supporter of standardized tests because if we aren't careful, some students will get lost and parents will not be aware of where their students' deficits are. I think we need a national, normed assessment. It's about equity.</p> <p>Our district's biggest challenge is that there is instability in the parents who are engaged. The 'achievement gap' is created by parents who are involved and parents who are not.</p>	<p>This district leader needs to feel that equity is being attended to through a system</p> <p>He needs to have their district's work validated through assessment data.</p> <p>This district leader needs to feel that all parents are equal partners in the work of learning.</p> <p>This district leader needs to understand the rules of accountability.</p>	<p>Steve values the information that comes from testing data.</p> <p>Steve may feel that the current system works for most kids most of the time.</p> <p>Steve may currently be benefitting/succeeding under the current system and/or may be worried about what a new system will mean for a previously successful district.</p>

Community Member Stakeholders

Community Member Themes about the Current State and Their Vision for the Future

Themes about the Current State

The Desired Future State

“Us vs. them” can happen within and around schools and communities are looking for different ways to collaborate.

Schools are a consistent anchor and center of the community.

Sometimes partnerships between schools and community members or local businesses are hard to form or sustain.

Communities support schools to be a hub for partnership and a vehicle for building public trust. Schools broker and facilitate partnerships among families, employers, higher education and community leaders. Because schools play this role in the community, citizens have developed deeper trust in educational systems.

Right now, some pathways are better understood and seen as more valuable than others. This leads to some kinds of learning also being more valued than others. Some of the things the community and employers care the most about are not highly valued by schools.

Communities partner with schools to ensure they are places that help all young people learn how to be part of the community in their own way. Communities help each young person be ready to contribute in a way that is meaningful, suits them and leads to their independence in our community.

Sometimes frequent changes in board or superintendent leadership bring with them frequent changes in focus, priority or strategy. This is frustrating and limits progress and impact.

Communities have established ways to develop coherent and shared priorities that support accountability for long-standing local board members and district leadership. This web of meaningful relationships around a common vision supports system-wide learning, improvement and change.

Community Member Profiles

Trust-Building Terrence		
QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>For a period, we had a stable board and superintendent with clear dedication to roles and this led us to get through some challenging times with ease. We took the initiative to go out in the community as a collective body. ...</p> <p>Our schools have back-to-school bashes at every community or school during the same time there is a major event happening. They give prizes..., have water activities, a DJ there, Slip 'N Slide or a bouncy house – and those are phenomenal. The youth service people are there, counselors are there, principals. It is good fun – a no-pressure way to connect with staff or reconnect with staff in the school your siblings still attend even though you have moved on. Usually (there is) a guest speaker to motivate families and kids.</p>	<p>These community members want schools to play a role in bringing their community together.</p> <p>They want to feel connected to their schools and they want their schools to help them stay connected to their neighbors, to their community.</p> <p>They want schools to contribute to overall public trust.</p>	<p>Longer-lasting connections among board members and the superintendent enable trust-building work.</p> <p>Policies or priorities that make it difficult for sustained relationships among local leaders ultimately impair the building or expansion of trust.</p> <p>Public education investments in community-building, which may seem like diversions from investment in learning, ultimately positively impact trust, and that trust can deepen partnership and learning. This is especially important as we recover from COVID-19.</p>

Edna the Employer

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>The compelling need we hear a lot from our employers that some of the kids that graduate, they have some good work skills, but they don't have good soft skills – on time polite, respectful.</p> <p>In Junior Achievement, we worked on 21st century skills with middle schools. We taught them that hard skills will get you hired, soft skills will get you fired. We would call out what soft skill right now would be getting you fired. It helped raise their level of awareness. You've got to be on time and part of the team.... We talk about the skills, but we don't always help them build them.</p> <p>My son hired on with a big employer. Having these skills led to him staying employed, while others hired at the same time dropped off.</p>	<p>Edna needs know that their community schools understand and value and ultimately teach children “soft” or “21st century” skills.</p> <p>Edna needs to be able to hire and develop talent from within her community.</p>	<p>Partnerships between industry and schools are needed to have the kind of alignment Edna wants.</p> <p>We need to learn more about what makes such partnerships easy or difficult to sustain in both large and small communities.</p>

Clarity-Seeking Claire

QUOTES	COMPELLING NEEDS	IMPORTANT INSIGHTS
<p>The business leaders want to hear that theory of change clearly articulated so the goals programs are after and how that programming is helping to achieve those goals. It is frustrating when they don't have access to that kind of strategic thinking.</p> <p>Community needs to really understand how the input the system desires to implement relates to and will achieve the outputs and outcomes that we are after. We need to understand why they (the educators) believe it will work. We want to hear that from our education experts locally. This is especially true with innovative ideas, programs etc.</p>	<p>Claire needs to see the district's leadership really engage with and work to build relationships and trust with folks in the community. This is the basis of effective communication about innovative strategies.</p> <p>Claire wants to have educators engage with her to really understand what they want to do and why they believe it is a good idea.</p>	<p>There is a connection between being in a relationship, building trust and coming to understand strategic direction.</p> <p>When educators ask people to defer to their expertise, it doesn't build trust.</p>

Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education Members

- **Hussein Almosawi:** Student at Butler Traditional High School (Jefferson County)
- **Kasia Antle:** Teacher at Central High School (Jefferson County)
- **Houston Barber:** Frankfort Independent Superintendent
- **Deshae Barnhorst:** Teacher at Collins Elementary (Boone County)
- **Wallace Caleb Bates:** A recent graduate of Breathitt County High School and former member of KDE's Commissioner's Student Advisory Council
- **Brigitte Blom:** Fayette County, Executive Director of The Prichard Committee
- **Judith Bradley:** Founder and board chair of Jack Be Nimble, a special education advocacy nonprofit, and a member of the KDE's Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council
- **Zhanine Brooks:** Parent, Fayette County
- **Travis Burton:** Director of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- **Heather Butcher:** Johnson County Schools Instructional Supervisor
- **Elijah Campbell:** Student at Paul G. Blazer High School (Ashland Independent)
- **Penny Christian:** Fayette County, 16th District PTA member
- **Mark Daniels:** Corbin Independent Director of Pupil Personnel
- **Alfonso De Torres Núñez:** Teacher at Bloom Elementary (Jefferson County)
- **Arnav Dharmagadda:** Student at Russell High School (Russell Independent)
- **Dena Dossett:** Jefferson County Public Schools Chief of Accountability, Research and Improvement
- **Kimber Doyle:** Student at Warren Central High School (Warren County)
- **Susan Dugle:** Shelby County Public Schools Chief Academic Officer
- **Robbie Fletcher:** Lawrence County Schools Superintendent
- **Stacie Gamble:** Principal of Liberty High School (Jefferson County)
- **Audrey Gilbert:** Student at Frankfort High School (Frankfort Independent)

- **Terra Greenwell:** Principal of Ramsey Middle School (Jefferson County)
- **Abby Griffy:** Marshall County Schools Instructional Supervisor
- **Melissa Hagans:** Retired Fayette County Educator
- **Travis Hamby:** Allen County Schools Superintendent
- **Diane Hatchett:** Berea Independent Schools Superintendent
- **Michelle Hunt:** Fleming County Schools Chief Academic Officer
- **Jennifer Jacobs:** Program Director of the Rise STEM Academy for Girls (Fayette County)
- **Faneshia Jones:** Education Recovery Leader with KDE
- **Jack Jones:** Student at Murray High School (Murray Independent)
- **Michelle Lisby:** Teacher at Southside Elementary (Shelby County)
- **Brenda Martin:** Parent, Greenup County
- **Rep. Ed Massey:** Boone County
- **Sherri Matthews:** Teacher at LeGrande Elementary (Hart County)
- **Susan McAdam:** Parent, Jefferson County
- **Cristina Menchaca:** Parent, Woodford County High School
- **Traysea Moresea:** Greenup County Schools Superintendent
- **Lyndsay Nottingham:** Teacher at Robert D. Campbell and Henry E. Baker Intermediate School (Clark County)
- **Contessa Orr:** Logan County Schools Chief Academic Officer
- **Julie Osborne:** Principal of Whitley County High School
- **Phoenix Peeler:** Parent, Child Aware
- **Sergio Pena:** Student, Jefferson County Schools
- **Rhondalyn Randolph:** Daviess County Community Leader
- **Noraa Ransey:** Teacher at North Calloway Elementary (Calloway County)
- **Kesha Richardson:** Community Action Council for Lexington-Fayette, Bourbon, Harrison and Nicholas Counties
- **Rick Ross:** Mason County Schools Superintendent

- **Rayne Sheppard:** Student at Bell County High School and member of the Kentucky Student Voice Team
- **Matt Shirley:** Metcalfe County Schools Director of Digital Learning
- **Matthew Turner:** Boone County Schools Superintendent
- **Adrienne Usher:** Bullitt County Schools Assistant Superintendent
- **Michelle Walden:** Christian County Public Schools Instructional Supervisor
- **Renita Wilburn:** Teacher at Frederick Douglass High School (Fayette County)
- **Lu Young:** Jessamine County, Chair of the Kentucky Board of Education

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