



REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In service to the
Kentucky United We Learn Council's
Moonshot

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Version 4.0

Prototype for
Discussion and Consideration



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION



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Introduction

Background

The [Kentucky United We Learn Council](#) envisions new systems of assessment and accountability, first articulated in the [United We Learn report](#). Over the past 18 months, the Kentucky United We Learn Council has been learning, discussing, collaborating, studying and deliberating to develop and refine its recommendations related to a new future for assessment and accountability in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. During the July 2024 convening of the Kentucky United We Learn Council, the council considered a number of prototypes that describe how Kentucky might revise its assessment and accountability systems to align with the council-adopted moonshot: “To build a prosperous Kentucky, we will launch an accountability system that is meaningful and useful to all our learners.” Following that meeting, the prototypes were refined into a single prototype that offers a set of possible launching pads into the future of assessment and accountability in Kentucky.

The reimagined assessment and accountability systems will prioritize innovation, personalization, local and student voice, and incorporate vibrant learning experiences (VLE). The Kentucky United We Learn Council defines VLE as, “In partnership with families and communities, students are agents of their own learning, engaged in relevant, authentic and joyful learning opportunities. Vibrant learning honors students' cultural wealth, gifts and interests. Vibrant learning culminates in the application of knowledge and skills demonstrated through personalized products.”

The Kentucky United We Learn Council has developed a number of design principles that anchor its work in a set of shared values (See Appendix A for complete list). As the council members move forward with studying the options for new systems of assessment and accountability, we will be evaluating the system design in light of these principles. Importantly, we will be seeking to understand how the changes impact various student groups and unique communities. The council places great importance on advancing equity and improving opportunities for all students, including a focus on racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners.

The Kentucky United We Learn Council is considering the assessment as well as the accountability system. Assessment systems gather evidence on what students have learned and can do. Accountability systems should support improvement by cultivating relationships between the entities that have an interest in improving education. Families and caregivers, policymakers, educators and community members should have access to trustworthy information that allows them to support improvement of the student experience. The council seeks to design a reimagined system for school evaluation and feedback aligned with these principles that reflects community values and supports schools in meeting their communities' needs and goals.

Policy Landscape

Currently, Kentucky’s assessment and accountability systems are deeply impacted by state and federal requirements for assessment and accountability. As depicted in the [Comparison of Federal and State Assessment Requirements \(ky.gov\)](#), both require statewide summative testing of students in academic content areas that measures the depth and breadth of the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)*. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that students in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school participate in statewide assessments of reading and mathematics, and that students take a science assessment once per grade span. In Kentucky, state law also requires students to be assessed in writing, social studies, a college readiness assessment, and a kindergarten screener. Federal law also requires that students who are English learners take an English language proficiency test annually. As assessments change, Kentucky must submit them for federal approval through an [Assessment Peer Review Process](#).

Kentucky is also required by [federal and state accountability](#) laws to develop an accountability system that comprises a number of distinct indicators that are combined to produce a summative rating of a school’s performance. These requirements are satisfied by a single accountability system in Kentucky and this system, including information about how the state satisfies federal assessment requirements, is described in a consolidated state plan (CSP) that the Kentucky Department of Education submits to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for review and approval. If the state wishes to make changes to its assessment or accountability system, those changes must be documented in the CSP and re-submitted to USED for review and approval.

Per state law and regulation, changes must also be routed through various advisory bodies and depending on the change, may necessitate legislative and/or action by the Kentucky Board of Education. It will take several years to accomplish amendments to current law, secure federal approval and fully implement revisions to the current assessment and accountability systems. A future vision of accountability includes separate state and federal accountability systems. So that Kentucky may create space to value Vibrant Learning Experiences through state measures and minimize the focus on federal requirements.

When legislative changes occur, they often have a fiscal impact. Changes within the prototypes – such as accreditation, collection of evidence and additional reporting – will impact human resources and implementation costs at the school, district and state level. The fiscal impact caused by any legislative changes will need to be part of the ongoing discussions and advocacy.

Structure of this Document

This document comprises four sections. In a change from prior versions, there are no “compiled” prototypes that span accountability and assessment. Instead, the document focuses on the vision, stakeholder feedback, options for system change, and relevant study questions in four key areas: state accountability, federal accountability, assessment and reporting. This format allows for action within each area.

Each section opens with an “aiming for the moon” vision that intends to align with the overall Kentucky United We Learn Council moonshot. In recognition both that there is significant energy and interest in moving the Kentucky United We Learn Council moonshot forward, and that some moonshot goals will need time to implement, the sections then present a “launch pad” option for initial work toward the moonshot. These options can be accomplished in a shorter term while related work is underway toward reaching the broader moonshot. The sections each conclude with a table that illustrates the connection between stakeholder input, design principles created by the Accelerating Innovation Standing Committee of the Kentucky United We Learn Council for assessment and accountability, possible changes - or options for changes - to these systems, and possible study questions that can inform the approach to the next phase of work.

Kentucky United We Learn Assessment and Accountability Prototype

State Accountability

Aiming for the Moon

The Kentucky United We Learn Council envisions an accreditation-style model for the state’s accountability system alongside the basic requirements needed to meet federal law. The reimagined accountability system will emphasize transparency and continuous improvement by providing school and district leaders, families, and communities with information on a broad set of school quality domains, which could include:

Table 1. Potential Domains of a School Quality Evaluation Framework

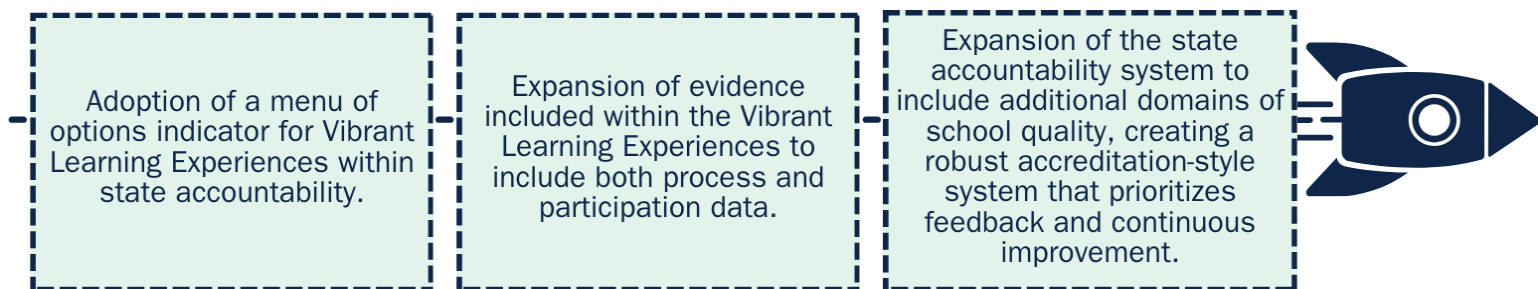
Academic Outcomes and Growth, + Portrait of a Learner (POL) Competencies	Vibrant Learning Experiences	Teaching and Leadership	School Culture and Student Well-being	Community Connections and Post-secondary Readiness	Locally Determined Criteria (optional)	Locally Determined Criteria (optional)	Locally Determined Criteria (optional)
State-developed rubrics evaluate using a mixture of state-required and locally-specific evidence. For each indicator, some evidence would be required (e.g., growth metrics in reading and math), other evidence would be locally determined (e.g., evidence of community engagement).					Fully local criteria and evidence.		

Schools will gather and share evidence of school quality relative to each of the domains for review and feedback. All evidence will be publicly reported and all outcome data will be disaggregated by student groups. An external evaluator, the local board of education, and district

and school leaders would work collaboratively to set goals based on the evidence, as well as accompanying school improvement strategies and needed state support. Schools will update and re-submit their evidence of quality as it becomes available to the external evaluator for formal evaluation at regular intervals, at least once every three years.

Importantly, this involves elimination of the color rating system currently in place. In its place, a new state accountability system that better aligns with the Kentucky United We Learn moonshot will drive the dialogue, goal setting and improvement efforts related to school quality.

Flight Path for Sustainable State Change



Launch Pad

A fully developed and properly functioning accreditation-style accountability system will require significant investments and statewide capacity building. To allow time to build the infrastructure for this kind of system across the commonwealth, Kentucky may initially operationalize and implement this system for a single domain - Vibrant Learning Experiences - before expanding to the other domains.

Percentage of VLE Indicator

The state accountability system will incorporate a new Vibrant Learning Experiences indicator intended to support the spread of deeper and more meaningful learning experiences for all students across the state. The indicator will capture the percentage of students engaged in one or more of the following student-centered learning experiences:

- Student capstone projects
- Student-led conferences
- Service-based learning experiences
- Work-based learning experiences
- Student defenses of learning
- Personalized learning pathways (e.g., career connected learning, independent study, dual enrollment)
- Another locally-proposed, state-approved option

This indicator is aimed at providing student-centered learning experiences for all students and valuing those experiences. This indicator will be calculated and reported annually for all schools (i.e., elementary, middle, high school).

Kentucky will build capacity in schools to offer vibrant learning experiences that involve professional development, leadership development, and collaborative networks. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) will engage with an inclusive set of education stakeholders to co-design a coherent set of resources and support for schools to adopt student-centered learning practices. To support the validity of this indicator, KDE will engage deeply with education stakeholders to develop a set of policies and procedures that ensure equity in opportunity across the state.

Moving Toward Accreditation-Style Indicator

Schools will engage in a self-evaluation process to rate their progress in providing high quality VLE for all students. They will submit evidence in favor of their ratings, and the process will be supported and corroborated via regular state audits. Reporting for this indicator will include rubric ratings on each domain and may also include participation in VLE.

To complete the self-evaluation process, schools will employ a rubric that represents a progression toward rigorous and more meaningful learning opportunities that meet grade-level standards for their students. It will do this by providing information to schools about where they fall along a continuum of implementing vibrant learning experiences for their students.

There is flexibility in how schools operationalize vibrant learning for their students. The state will identify high-leverage processes and practices that support quality implementation of VLE for all students.

Local Accountability Model

From stakeholder input, another approach has emerged involving local accountability. A local model emphasizes the importance of community-driven initiatives and localized decision-making. This approach advocates for greater involvement of local stakeholders in an accountability process, ensuring that the unique needs and priorities of each community are addressed effectively.

A local accountability system, as defined by the Kentucky United We Learn Council, is the set of system-management policies, instruments, resources and practices that district leadership uses to engage in school improvement work with their schools. This work generally extends beyond the minimum required to comply with federal accountability mandates and includes broader efforts for school improvement. Parental engagement, community partnerships and non-academic

considerations of school quality that affect schooling experiences are key components of a local accountability system.

Local accountability would include common components like vibrant learning experiences and reporting of data by student groups as well as aspects tailored to the specific needs of the community. By responding to community feedback and focusing on transparency and continuous improvement, districts develop local accountability models that provide a holistic view of school effectiveness. These models aim to offer a broader picture of a school's performance by considering multiple facets of educational quality. The goal is to create an accountability system that is transparent, includes critical pillars of a district's work, and provides stakeholders with clear, meaningful data about the district's efforts and progress.

Design Principle	Stakeholder Input	Possible System Change
Principle 8: Design for transparency, trust and reciprocal accountability	Federal accountability should be minimized, and state accountability should change, but input is mixed regarding the direction for the state system.	<p>Long-term transition toward an accreditation-style accountability system that is designed around a common set of domains that align with the moonshot vision and that allows for local flexibility in including additional domains.</p> <p>Evaluation and reporting will focus on transparency and supporting continuous improvement of local efforts to provide vibrant learning experiences and rigorous academic instruction to all students.</p>
<p>Principle 2: Design with marginalized students at the center</p> <p>Principle 5: Design for local flexibility</p>	It is important <i>both</i> to expand access to VLE and to ensure those opportunities are high quality.	The state indicator for VLE would include participation or quality evaluation of VLE. All data would be reported for all students and by demographic and target populations.
<p>Principle 7: Design for sustainability</p> <p>Principle 11: Design with policy in mind</p>	Including VLE in state accountability lifts it up as a policy priority.	The VLE indicator is included in the state accountability system to allow for state-level support and policy action. This is in contrast to including the indicator in the federal (ESSA) accountability system.
Principle 12: Design to minimize opportunities for system corruption	Avoid overall ratings that allow for ranking of schools.	No longer employ the color rating system for state accountability.

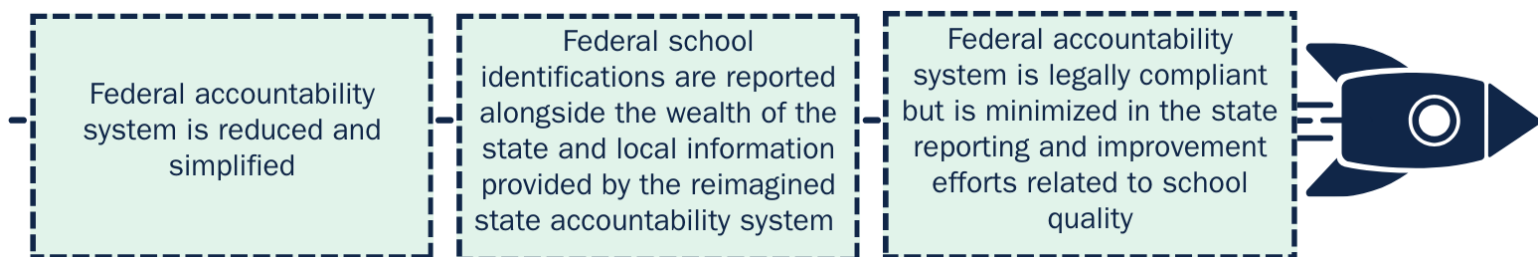
Federal Accountability

Aiming for the Moon

The federal accountability system will have a minimal footprint and minimal impact on the field above and beyond its use for public reporting on disaggregated data by student groups and

identifying the schools in most need of receiving additional federal and state resources and support. The federal accountability system will be reduced to meet the minimal requirements of federal law. Federal data requirements will be reported alongside state data elements in school report cards.

Flight Path for Sustainable Federal Change



Launch Pad

The state will continue to meet federal assessment and accountability requirements, including annual statewide testing in reading and mathematics and gradespan assessments in science. Federal accountability would include the results on state assessments, progress on English language proficiency, quality of school climate and safety, postsecondary readiness (high school only) and graduation rates (high school only) for identification of school support.

The state’s federally-compliant accountability system will be reduced to meet the minimum federal requirements to identify three categories of schools for the purpose of providing resources and support: 1) Targeted Support and Improvement/Additional Targeted Support and Improvement, 2) Comprehensive Support and Improvement, and 3) Meets Requirements. This would eliminate and replace the state’s color-ranking system.

Additional simplifications to the federal accountability system will include replacing the “Change” component with individual student growth. This would send the important signal to students and educators that the state values individual student progress in learning, in addition to student proficiency. Student growth would be based on their standardized assessment performance over years using a valid and widely-accepted model (e.g., Student Growth Percentiles).

Design Principle	Stakeholder Input	Possible System Change
<p>Principle 2: Design with Marginalized Students at the Center</p> <p>Principle 8: Design to Minimize Opportunities for System Corruption</p>	<p>Maintain statewide, comparable data including attention on math and literacy achievement</p>	<p>Maintain a federal accountability system that meets federal law that requires annual, comparable data in math and literacy, in addition to collecting and reporting data on progress on English language proficiency, quality of school climate and safety, postsecondary readiness (high school only) and graduation rates (high school only) for identification of school support.</p>
<p>Principle 11: Design with Policy in Mind</p> <p>Principle 7: Design for Sustainability</p>	<p>Deemphasize competition and rankings across schools</p>	<p>Reduce identification categories to only those required by federal law:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meets requirements 2. Targeted/Additional targeted support and improvement 3. Comprehensive support and improvement

Assessment System

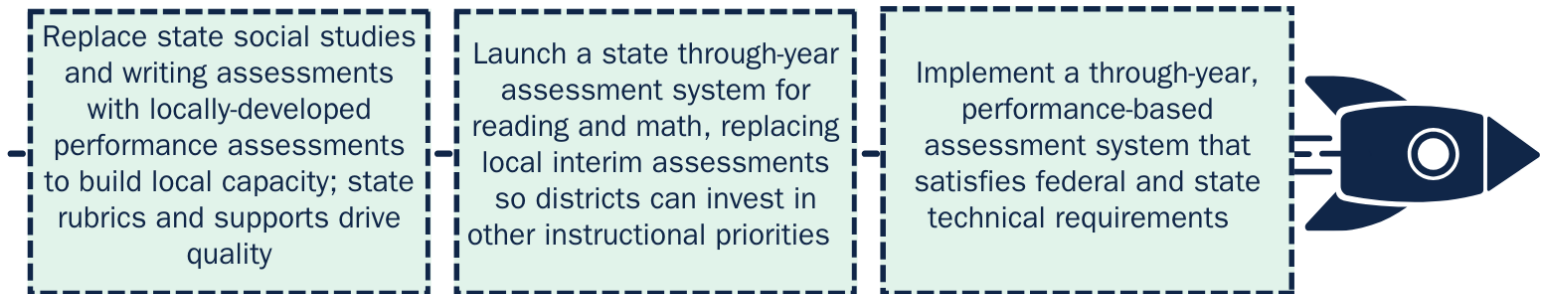
Aiming for the Moon

The Kentucky United We Learn Council envisions a new assessment system that is seamlessly integrated into the learning experience and meaningful to students and educators. An assessment system should provide real-time feedback on student learning so educators can provide targeted support throughout the year. Additionally, assessment items should emphasize authentic demonstrations of learning that give students the opportunity to demonstrate competency of the essential knowledge and skills articulated through Kentucky’s K-12 academic standards and local portraits of a graduate.

To achieve this, the state would develop a through-year performance-based assessment that satisfies federal technical quality standards without sacrificing a commitment to deeper learning

and instructionally relevant results. Students would have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning throughout the year through performance tasks aligned to a learning progression that articulates competency expectations for academic knowledge and skills. Assessments in non-federally-required subjects would satisfy state requirements for quality implementation, ensuring that all students, no matter where they reside in the state, benefit from meaningful, high-quality assessment experiences to validate their learning.

Flight Path for Sustainable Assessment Change



Launch Pad

Implementation of high-quality performance-based assessment systems take time, resources and significant capacity on the part of schools, educators and the state. To work towards building this infrastructure and capacity, Kentucky takes a phased or parallel approach.

Kentucky replaces the statewide social studies and writing assessments from the state assessment system to pilot a performance-based model that values local demonstrations of learning. The state develops a range of supports to help districts build expertise in the design and implementation of performance assessments including development of a statewide rubric that articulates learning expectations across grade levels or bands, professional development for educators to calibrate scoring processes, and sample performance tasks that districts and educators can use to satisfy the local assessment requirement.

While the performance-based model is being developed, the statewide math and reading (and possibly science) assessments are replaced by a common through-year adaptive model that consists of a fall, winter and spring administration. These assessments replace local, interim-assessments in an effort to streamline costs and testing time. Adaptive assessment items adjust based on student performance in order to meet students where they are and provide relevant information for instruction. Assessment administrations are shortened and embedded into the learning experience, ensuring minimal disruption to classroom instruction. Test results for the fall and winter administrations are immediately available to students, families and educators to inform personalized interventions and supports. The spring test administration is used to determine student proficiency for school accountability.

Design Principle	Stakeholder Input	Possible System Change
Principle 1: Design to Support Vibrant Learning Experiences	Reduce state-mandated testing time and interruptions to local instructional scope and sequence	Remove statewide assessments in social studies and writing.
Principle 3: Design to Empower Students as Agents of Their Own Learning Principle 5: Design for Local Flexibility Principle 6: Design to Value the Professionalism of Educators	Build local capacity to implement authentic performance-based assessment	State pilots a local performance-based assessment system in a subset of districts, beginning with social studies and writing with plans to scale statewide.
Principle 2: Design with Marginalized Students at the Center Principle 8: Design for Transparency, Trust and Reciprocal Accountability	Provide timely and actionable instructional information	State-developed, through-year adaptive assessment system in math and reading.
Principle 5: Design for Local Flexibility Principle 7: Design for Sustainability	Free up local resources that are currently spent on locally-purchased interim assessment products	Districts replace local interim assessments with a state-developed through-year assessment. Identify new funding priorities for money previously invested in local interims.

Reporting

Aiming for the Moon

Kentucky's K-12 dashboard fully aligns to the state's accreditation-style accountability system. The dashboard reports both federally required data points and state-level data aligned to the domains of school quality. Schools can customize the report card with locally relevant data points on vibrant learning experiences at regular intervals.

Flight Path for Sustainable Reporting Change



Launch Pad

The dashboard should include both statewide comparable data, and locally customizable data points. The federal school ratings (i.e., Targeted Support and Improvement/Additional Support and Improvement, Comprehensive Support and Improvement, Meets Requirements) and indicator outcomes will be reported as required. Data on statewide indicators will continue to be disaggregated by student subgroups, including particular attention to racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and English learners. Schools are able to select from a range of data points to include on the locally customizable component of the report card. These may include, but should not be limited to, process-based information, student outcomes on local measures and even examples of authentic student work.

The Kentucky Department of Education will work with districts and stakeholders to design a reimagined reporting system that effectively balances information transparency with accessibility and readability, including answering the questions of what, where and how much information should be included. The new data display will be developed through a multi-step process. It will be modified in the short-term to align with the immediate changes made to the state's accountability system. These include reducing federal data points and introducing a vibrant learning indicator.

The state will establish a pilot to develop a model for a statewide report card. This should incorporate the Local Laboratories of Learning and other relevant stakeholders in a process to design and test a new report card aligned with the state's moonshot vision for accountability. The state should use this pilot prototype to inform the design of the new state report card for all districts across the state.

The report card will be designed with the user at the center. The overall design will be accessible across a broad range of reading levels, languages and devices, including mobile phones.

Design Principle	Stakeholder Input	Possible System Change
<p>Principle 1: Design to Support Vibrant Learning Experiences</p> <p>Principle 5: Design for Local Flexibility</p> <p>Principle 4: Design to Reflect Labor Market Needs in Kentucky and Beyond</p>	<p>Schools should be able to submit individual information to share their vibrant learning experiences, where possible, while not overwhelming users with data points.</p>	<p>Incorporate the new vibrant learning indicator into a new school report card.</p> <p>Create a customizable space for schools to include local information related to vibrant learning experiences in the report card.</p>
<p>Principle 10: Design for Continuous Improvement based on Evidence</p> <p>Principle 7: Design for Sustainability</p>	<p>The report card needs to carefully weigh a number of competing priorities as well as end users.</p>	<p>Pilot a reimagined data display with a subset of districts prior to implementing statewide.</p>
<p>Principle 2: Design with Marginalized Students at the Center</p> <p>Principle 8: Design for Transparency, Trust and Reciprocal Accountability</p> <p>Principle 11: Design with Policy in Mind</p>	<p>The reporting system should allow for data disaggregation and cross district comparison, to a point.</p>	<p>Determine what data points need to be able to be disaggregated by student subgroups.</p> <p>Create a mechanism to allow for cross-district comparison in the new report card.</p>

Appendix A: Design Principles for Assessment and Accountability System Redesign

After completing and reviewing committee members' research into innovative assessment and accountability systems within and beyond Kentucky, the Accelerating Innovation (AI) committee met in March 2023 to articulate an initial set of design principles that will guide the work on the accountability system redesign.

These design principles reflect cross-cutting themes and recommendations resulting from the committee's research, collective experience and expertise, and the aspirational themes identified in the [United We Learn](#) report. Specifically, Accelerating Innovation committee members identified the following 12 design principles, which, in this document, are organized into three thematic clusters:

Theme 1: Prioritize Student Experiences and Outcomes

- Principle 1: Design to Support Vibrant Learning Experiences
- Principle 2: Design with Marginalized Students at the Center
- Principle 3: Design to Empower Students as Agents of Their Own Learning

Theme 2: Value Local Contexts and Expertise

- Principle 4: Design to Reflect Labor Market Needs in Kentucky and Beyond
- Principle 5: Design for Local Flexibility
- Principle 6: Design to Value the Professionalism of Educators
- Principle 8: Design for Transparency, Trust and Reciprocal Accountability
- Principle 12: Design to Minimize Opportunities for System Corruption

Theme 3: Continuously Improve within State Policy Context

- Principle 7: Design for Sustainability
- Principle 9: Design in Alignment with Theories of Action
- Principle 10: Design for Continuous Improvement based on Evidence
- Principle 11: Design with Policy in Mind

At this coarse-grained level, these principles simply represent valuable best practices for innovative system design, but the way these will be put into practice in Kentucky will vary locally as it will be driven by the specific needs and characteristics in these contexts.

The principles articulate a set of priorities to be reflected in the design of any future accountability “system of systems” recommended by the Kentucky United We Learn Council. That is, they act as “north stars” or guardrails for the design of local and state solutions and affect critical aspects of the design, implementation and evaluation process for the resulting local and state systems.