April 13, 2020

Corey Keith, Superintendent
McCreary County Public Schools
120 Raider Way
Stearns, KY 42647

Dear Superintendent Keith:

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

During the 2019-20 school year, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted monitoring in the McCreary County School District. During this process, KDE program staff, utilizing program-specific monitoring tools, conducted on-site visits for the following programs:

- Title I, Part A
- Title II, Part A
- Title IV, Part A
- Title V, Part B
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Alternative Programs
- Preschool

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

These programs and the others engaged in consolidated monitoring can work together to achieve more collaboratively than any of them could alone.

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

In addition, the monitoring team collectively discussed the findings and concerns of each program to identify Opportunities for Improvement. This represents a consolidation of findings reported by individual programs that were similar in nature and therefore present a potential opportunity for collaboration between identified programs. Each of these concerns has been identified by at least two program areas. Each district program has already been provided an individual report as required by federal or state law. All findings will need to be addressed by district program areas as specified in the individual reports.

In the meantime, if you have questions regarding specific program monitoring requirements, please contact the individual program contacts listed in this report. If you have questions concerning the consolidated monitoring process, please contact Brenda Considine at (502) 564-3791, extension 4045, or via email at brenda.considine@education.ky.gov. Information regarding education programs within the state of Kentucky may also be found at www.education.ky.gov.

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

Sincerely,

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

KF/TR/BC/vb

Attachment: Consolidated Monitoring Report for McCreary County Public Schools

2019-2020 Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Report

District:	McCreary County
Date(s) of Visit:	Jan. 14-16, 2020
Team Leads:	

Title I – Erica Tipton	*Preschool – Stephanie Ernst*
Title II, Part A– Kris Jarboe	*Career and Technical Education – Karla Tipton*
Alternative Programs – Donna Montgomery	*Gifted and Talented – Did not monitor on-site during the 2019-2020 school year*
English Learners (EL) – N/A	*IDEA –Roger Lacy*
Title IV, Part A—Lalah Brewer	*Title V—Erica Tipton*

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 1

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	**Title I**		**IDEA**	**X**
	Title II, Part A		**Career and Technical Education**	
	Title III/English Learners		**Alternative Programs**	
	Title IV, Part A		**Gifted and Talented**	
	Title V		**Preschool**	**X**

Communication

The IDEA and preschool teams noted that several district staff members were very responsive and thorough in complying with KDE requests before, during and after the on-site visit. Several district staff members maintained good communication with the KDE monitoring teams and sent requested documents in a timely manner. When the monitoring teams pointed out some problems during the on-site visit, the preschool administrative assistant and director of special education addressed the issues immediately, showing a desire to comply with requirements and openness to critical feedback.

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 2

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I		IDEA	
	Title II, Part A		Career and Technical Education	
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	X
	Title IV, Part A		Gifted and Talented	
	Title V		Preschool	

<u>Climate and Culture</u>

The McCreary Academy provides a warm and caring environment for students. Although the school has dealt with some turnover among staff within the last year, the positive climate has been maintained. The alternative programs monitoring team noted strong mutual trust, respect and support among staff members, and consistent communication between the staff and district administration.

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 3

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I		IDEA	X
	Title II, Part A		Career and Technical Education	X
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	X
	Title IV, Part A		Gifted and Talented	
	Title V		Preschool	

Student Services

The alternative education monitoring team observed that students have at least one adult in the academy they can talk with if needed. The district provides additional supports, such as:

- A mental health therapist who is available to work with students as needed;
- An InTrust counselor who comes to the schools; and
- Contracted community mental health services.

Mentoring processes were noted at the district's alternative program and Whitley City Elementary School for some students.

The career and technical education monitoring team observed that McCreary Central High School has created a program that helps students plan for and to be successful after graduating high school. The Beyond the Diploma program connects students to previous graduates, colleges, business and industry, the military and technical training schools. The program utilizes partnerships with Gear-Up, Trio Talent Search and KHEAA as well to ensure students are prepared. This program is an example of effective partnerships and a replicable practice that could be shared with other districts across the state.

2019-2020 Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Report

Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I	X	IDEA	
	Title II, Part A	X	**Career and Technical Education**	
	Title III/English Learners		**Alternative Programs**	
	Title IV, Part A		**Gifted and Talented**	
	Title V		**Preschool**	
Common Issue				

Community

The district's Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 20) Title I application states the district engaged in "timely and meaningful consultation with teachers, principals and other district leaders" in the development of the Title I plan, and that "collaboration occurred in leadership meetings and school level meetings." The district's FY 20 Title II, Part A application further states, "During the summer prior to the start of school community shareholders such as local law enforcement, the public library, business owners, the county attorney, the local judge, and the court designated working (sic), are invited to participate in a review of the upcoming school year. Topics include areas for improvement, roles in supporting the community and collaborating with the school district, as well as developing a schedule for ongoing consultation." The KDE monitoring teams did not see evidence that stakeholder engagement occurred to a significant extent. The district did not provide examples of communication between the central office and the schools or between the central office and community stakeholders.

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)

The district should begin to engage the community and stakeholders beyond the district office and schools. The monitoring teams recommend the district review the requirements around consultation across federal programs to allow for the coordination of efforts and program funding. Whatever the path the district chooses to take to engage stakeholders, the monitoring teams agreed that community feedback from a survey, town hall meeting, focus group meetings or some other means should drive discussions as the district assesses needs and develops plans for how it will build relationships with the community moving forward.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 2

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I	X	IDEA	
	Title II, Part A	X	Career and Technical Education	
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	
	Title IV, Part A		Gifted and Talented	
	Title V		Preschool	X
Common Issue				
Parent and Family Engagement While parents do have the opportunity to participate in their child's education through Infinite Campus, progress monitoring through grades and through annual ARC meetings for IDEA for participating students, the evidence did not show that the district meets program requirements for parent and family engagement. Evidence did not show the district creates opportunities for meaningful family engagement or for parents to share their feedback on school- or district-level programs or program planning. Preschool parents in particular do not have the opportunity to participate in home visits.				
Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)				
The KDE monitoring teams recommend the district review the programmatic requirements around parent and family engagement to develop a plan for better parent involvement. The district should work collaboratively to understand the importance of parent and family engagement, perhaps even offering some professional development across the district on specific topics related to parent and family engagement. Conducting a root cause analysis might help increase understanding of the need and uncover reasons why the district has not built a more robust parent and family engagement program thus far. In planning for family engagement, the district might consider allowing time before the school year starts to hold preschool screenings and student transition activities, and build some time in the spring calendar to allow teachers to conduct preschool home visits.				

Opportunity for Improvement No. 3

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I		IDEA	X
	Title II, Part A	X	Career and Technical Education	
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	
	Title IV, Part A	X	Gifted and Talented	X
	Title V	X	Preschool	X

Common Issue
Finance   Monitoring teams noted several areas of concern which may stem in part from a lack of internal controls. For example, district spending in the indicated programs was not aligned to approved applications or to documented needs. Furthermore, the district made many unallowable expenditures.

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)
The monitoring team recommends district staff members attend training on federal education programs to ensure requirements are met and expenditures are allowable. This training should include information which will help the district develop a strong system of internal controls. A system of internal controls would help address issues the monitoring team noted such as clarifying the roles and responsibilities of individual staff members (for example, district coordinator or finance officer) and ensuring sufficient oversight is provided over financial processes. KDE Title IV-A staff members have offered to provide financial support to send some district staff members to a national conference during which these topics will be discussed, and the district has agreed to attend. KDE will continue to collaborate with the district to ensure staff receive training.   The district should develop and adopt processes to ensure the applications for the indicated federal programs are approved early in the school year. Expenditures must be paid for during the grant period in which they occur. Strong fiscal processes will help the district avoid transferring funds between projects toward the grant award period.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 4

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I	X	IDEA	
	Title II, Part A	X	Career and Technical Education	
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	X
	Title IV, Part A		Gifted and Talented	
	Title V		Preschool	X
Common Issue				

Policy and Procedure

The district did not submit any policies or procedures related to Title II, Part A. The Title I monitoring team noted a lack of policies and procedures in several areas such as allowability of costs. In some cases, policies and procedures that the district provided were outdated by more than 10 years. The alternative education monitoring team noted that entrance and exit procedures were last revised in 2015. Procedures are not clearly developed or consistently followed across the district. For example, preschool classes were observed with no aide as required. Required student-teacher ratios were not being followed.

Although interviews revealed the district holds data retreats to review student test data, there were issues with data the district provided for IDEA, alternative education (behavior data) and Title I (low-income student numbers). The lack of policies and procedures, or policies and procedures not being communicated or followed, may have contributed to some of the problems found in the data the district submitted. For example, the monitoring teams noted inconsistent understanding of what constitutes problem behavior and how to reinforce positive behavior through a system of positive behavioral interventions.

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)

The monitoring teams recommend the district develop, communicate and ensure the consistent implementation of policies and procedures. It might be helpful to develop a districtwide behavior matrix and policy that should be implemented with fidelity. KDE and Ky ABRI (Kentucky Academic and Behavioral Response to Intervention) offer training and support on behavior for school districts.

The monitoring teams also recommend that district staff members attend professional development to increase understanding of data requirements. For example, KDE offers training on data requirements and posts data standards on web pages that include definitions. KDE staff members also are available to provide technical assistance and guidance on the data required for their programs.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 5

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I	X	IDEA	
	Title II, Part A	X	Career and Technical Education	
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	
	Title IV, Part A	X	Gifted and Talented	
	Title V		Preschool	

Common Issue
Professional Development
Professional development offered in the district does not adequately align with documented district needs. Many professional development expenditures the district made were unallowable for the program from which they were paid. In Title II, Part A, and Title IV, Part A, professional development expenditures were unallowable and created a supplanting issue. The IDEA monitoring team noted many of the district IDEA trainings were online, which may not be the best delivery method. Finally, the preschool monitoring team found the district does not provide professional development related to the nature and needs of young children and their families, including those with special needs, in violation of the requirements of 704 KAR 3:410 Section 7 (5).

Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)
The district should work with the KDE staff and use KDE resources to develop a professional development system to ensure coordination of effort, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. The monitoring teams also recommend the district focus available finances for the actual costs of professional development rather than extraneous expenses such as food and travel. Make sure professional development costs align with documented needs and are allowable. The district should consider surveying teachers for their needs as well. The alternative programs monitoring team recommends that since instruction for students at the alternative school is currently 100% online, the staff working with this program may benefit from professional development on project-based or blended learning so students have the opportunity to learn through other means besides online.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 6: Leadership and Communication

Programs Addressed *(Check all that apply.)*	Title I	X	IDEA	
	Title II, Part A	X	Career and Technical Education	
	Title III/English Learners		Alternative Programs	X
	Title IV, Part A	X	Gifted and Talented	
	Title V		Preschool	

| **Common Issue** |
| **Leadership and Communication**
 The monitoring teams did not see evidence of a communication structure in the district. The teams noted a lack of communication between the central office and school principals. In many cases principals were unaware of program requirements, the amounts of their schools' funding allocations or how monies were being spent. |
| **Common Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)** |
| District leadership should provide more guidance and support to school principals about program requirements and available funding from all sources. District leadership and administrators at A1 schools need to be more consistently involved in the transition of students in and out of the alternative program, especially to reduce the number of students rotating in and out of the alternative program. |

Final Overview

| The district faces both challenges and opportunities moving forward. Despite the challenges, it was evident to the monitoring teams the superintendent and school principals have the students' best interests at heart. The teams also noted strengths upon which the district can build. By strengthening relationships and trust with families and the community, implementing a system of internal controls, improving communication, establishing a system of professional development and documenting and following policies and procedures, the district can increase the effectiveness of all programs. The KDE monitoring teams appreciate the cooperation and responsiveness of the district staff. |