



Dr. Robbie Fletcher
Commissioner of Education

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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July 17, 2024

Tom Gambrel, Superintendent
Bell County Public Schools
9828 US Hwy 25E
Pineville, KY 40977

Dear Superintendent Gambrel:

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

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted monitoring in the Bell 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 V, Part B
- Alternative Education Programs
- Gifted and Talented
- Preschool

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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

KF/TR/ES/vb

Attachment: Consolidated Monitoring Report for Bell County Public Schools

2023-2024 Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Report

District: Bell County

Date(s) of Visit: April 23-25, 2024

Team Leads:

- Title I, Part A – Erica Tipton
- Title V, Part B – Shashawna Williams
- Alternative Education Programs – Leticia Porter
- Gifted and Talented – Kathie Anderson
- Preschool – Veronica Brown

Effective Practice No. 1: Community

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 1

The Bell County School District is supported by an active and generous community. Partnerships with government agencies and non-profit organizations extend learning beyond the classroom and provide resources to address the diverse needs of students and families. Through the support of the “Handle with Care” program, the local sheriff’s office offers timely communication to the district when a student’s family may be in crisis. Life skills training courses such as cyber safety, nutrition, mental health or anti-drug awareness are offered in the 4-H parent education programming. The Elgin Foundation provides the means for the district to address mental health and basic physical needs for vulnerable families. The collaborative relationships maintained by the district leverage the strengths of the community and provide equitable opportunities, empowering students and families with vital life skills and knowledge.

Effective Practice No. 2: Student Services and Plans

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

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 2

Bell County demonstrates a commitment to closing student achievement gaps through the intervention software provided with Title V, Part B funds. Gifted and Talented (GT) students benefit from specialized services, including engaging activities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) provided at a central location once a week. The district plans to enhance these opportunities by partnering with a former astronaut next school year, further inspiring and enriching the educational experiences of its students. In both instances, Bell County concentrates on targeted supports for students that are tailored to each student’s achievement level and goals.

Effective Practice No. 3: Professional Development

Program(s) Addressed: Title V, Part B

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 3

The district recognizes the importance of ensuring teachers have the knowledge and training necessary to effectively implement technology and software resources. Professional learning is provided to teachers so that intervention software purchased through Title V, Part B funds can be used with intentionality to meet student needs.

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Effective Practice No. 4: Climate and Culture

Program(s) Addressed: Title I, Part A; Alternative Education; Gifted and Talented

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 4

Data from student Quality of School Climate and Safety Surveys demonstrate a positive climate and culture in Bell County. The district's emphasis on mental health supports underscores its commitment to whole-child well-being. Alternative education program (AEP) evidence and interviews highlight the positive culture and supportive relationships which create an environment of trust between staff and students. Surveys indicate students in the AEP feel comfortable with their teachers and receive the help they need. The AEP teacher makes efforts to get to know students personally and continues to check on their progress after they exit the program. AEP leadership is encouraged to support and promote these initiatives to build positive relationships with students. Classroom teachers appreciate the services provided to GT students and the GT teacher is grateful for the collaborative spirit that allows students to receive specialized GT services outside of the general education classroom. The mutually beneficial relationship between classroom teachers and the GT teacher provides a positive climate and culture among GT students and the staff who serve them.

Effective Practice No. 5: Equity Initiatives

Program(s) Addressed: Gifted and Talented

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 5

Bell County's identification for the Primary Talent Pool (PTP), a program to provide early enrichment for kindergarten through 3rd-grade students who may be referred to as high-potential learners, saw a 50% increase in participation. Identified students increased from 53 students to 119 students from 2023 to 2024. This increase can be attributed to new staff members and a focus on equal access procedures, such as reviewing all K-3 assessment scores and diagnostic testing and training elementary staff on the characteristics of high-potential learners.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 1: Parent and Family Engagement

Programs Addressed: Title I, Part A; Alternative Education

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

Families are not involved in deciding how Title I parent and family engagement funds are used or which activities would be helpful in supporting learning at home. While Title I is intended to be a school-level program, the parent and family engagement activities at the school level were conducted mainly by outside agencies including 4-H, the University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service, Partners for Rural Impact, Save the Children and GEAR UP Kentucky. Schools lacked the resources and knowledge needed to meet parent and family engagement requirements, actively engage families or meet identified needs of families. The AEP staff self-identified parent and family engagement as an area of improvement, recognizing that most communication with caregivers is limited to phone calls and only pertains to student enrollment, attendance or behavioral issues.

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

Parent and family engagement efforts should be developed with greater intentionality, addressing the specific needs and requests of families. The district should assist schools with surveying families and caregivers to identify ways the schools can equip families to work toward academic achievement goals at home. After evaluating the feedback, the district is encouraged to help schools create an action plan

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that will effectively address the identified needs. Ensuring that schools have the necessary resources, tools, funds and knowledge to address identified needs and implement effective parent and family engagement strategies is critical. The district is encouraged to use the resources and tools referenced on individual reports, such as the Title I parent and family engagement checklists and templates, to better train principals on program requirements. The district should consider offering professional learning to staff on how to collaborate and partner with families, and is encouraged to seek out resources offered through the [Prichard Committee's Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools](#) webpage. Multiple methods of communication should be used to keep families engaged. Encourage staff to use all available means – phone, email, social media, newsletters, messaging apps and any other ways of communicating that are meaningful to families. Communication should be ongoing and should help families to stay informed about their student's learning progress, ensuring they are active participants in the educational journey. Reaching out to share positive news with caregivers will help strengthen the relationship between families and schools.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 2: Policies and Procedures

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

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 2

Some of the policies and procedures required under Title I, Part A were missing or did not contain all of the information required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). For example, the district and school parent and family engagement policies do not contain all required information, including the involvement of families in the development of the policy. The district does not currently have a completed foster care transportation agreement that is developed collaboratively with the local child welfare agency. Written procedures for awarding credit and partial credit for all coursework satisfactorily completed by students experiencing homelessness are being developed, but many required components are missing. The district has not created procedures to ensure the allowability of purchases made with federal funds. The district does not have procedures in place to ensure accurate documentation of time and effort for staff paid fully or partially with federal funds.

The district does not have internal procedures to ensure that funds reserved for students experiencing homelessness under Title I, Part A are spent in a timely manner. As a result, homeless funds have not been spent for fiscal years 2023 and 2024. Funds reserved for meeting the needs of the students experiencing homelessness should be spent in the school year for which they were appropriated to ensure that barriers to learning are removed for these students and equitable opportunities are offered.

The district partners with a neighboring district to implement equitable services at the participating private school, but formalized procedures and a collaborative agreement are not in place to define roles and responsibilities within the arrangement. Therefore, the district does not have in place a procedure to ensure that the academic needs of Bell County students attending private schools are being effectively addressed.

The district and AEP leadership have not established written procedures for implementing the Individual Learning Plan Addendum (ILPA) required by 704 KAR 19:002.

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

Developing internal processes and procedures outlining how the district will complete program tasks is an essential component of effective program implementation. Written processes and procedures should

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go beyond listing program requirements to include specific details describing the steps the district will take to ensure all requirements are met. Processes and procedures should be written in a manner that is easily understood by all staff. Detailed fiscal management procedures provide the necessary oversight for allowable and timely spending. Documenting existing practices enables other staff members to help complete tasks in the event of an unforeseen absence. Detailed processes and procedures also provide more continuity during staffing transitions. The district and schools should refer to the resources provided within the individual program reports when revising existing policies and procedures or creating new ones.

It is recommended that the district check in with the Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) on a consistent basis to ensure that it maintains current laws and policies. Ensure that all applicable staff are aware of policies within the district's policy manual. It is recommended that all staff who share responsibilities toward program implementation are informed of the requirements within the program. Use the available resources on the Kentucky Department of Education webpages to help staff deepen their understanding of program requirements and how their specific assignments contribute to that program.

AEP students in long-term placements, defined as more than 10 days, who do not have an individualized education program (IEP) must have a documented ILPA in Infinite Campus within 20 school days. ILPAs can be strengthened to provide AEP students with a roadmap for success. Providing more thorough support can help students to improve their academic, behavioral and social-emotional goals so that they can successfully return to the A1 high school setting.

ILPAs must be locked in the student information system when completed. The transition planning process is essential to ensure minimal interruption of educational services and learning for students and this should be detailed in the ILPA. All stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students and caregivers should be able to articulate how the ILPA is used in the program.

Final Overview

Bell County demonstrates a commitment to fostering individual student success. By engaging the community, the district utilizes resources to address student and school needs, bridging gaps and striving to provide equitable opportunities for all students. The district places an emphasis on student mental health, fostering a culture of care and concern for the holistic well-being of every child.

Student motivation, participation and academic success is improved when families and caregivers are engaged as active stakeholders. Fostering open communication channels and actively addressing identified needs and challenges can contribute to furthering positive student outcomes. Providing professional learning opportunities for staff who oversee family engagement at both AEPs and Title I schools will help them become fully aware of the requirements, expectations and purposes for engaging families. An increased understanding of program intent will allow staff to take ownership of family engagement programming. By empowering school leadership and staff to actively involve and collaborate with families and caregivers, the district can create a more integrated approach to family engagement.

Formalizing processes and procedures can help demonstrate program compliance and ensure the consistent implementation of effective practices. Additionally, by strengthening existing policies and procedures, the district can more effectively serve its students and community.

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Bell County prides itself on offering well-rounded opportunities that nurture both academic achievement and essential life skills, preparing students for success in the classroom and beyond. By strengthening a commitment to comprehensive family engagement, as well as a commitment to program implementation and accuracy, the district will lay a strong foundation for sustained student success and community partnership.