



Robin Fields Kinney
Interim Commissioner of Education

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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May 28, 2024

Heather Spillman, Superintendent
Hickman County Public Schools
416 Waterfield Drive North
Clinton, KY 42031

Dear Superintendent Spillman:

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 Hickman 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
- 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 Hickman County Public Schools

2023-2024 Statewide Consolidated Monitoring Report

District: Hickman County

Date(s) of Visit: March 5-7, 2024

Team Leads:

- Title I, Part A – Erin Sudduth
- Title II, Part A – Jason Howard
- Title IV, Part A – Lee Bowling
- Title V, Part B – Shashawna Williams
- Alternative Education Programs – Christina Watford
- Gifted and Talented – Kathie Anderson
- Preschool – Taysha Oglesby

Effective Practice No. 1: Community

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

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 1

The schools are the center of the community and function as a central location for community members to meet. When something happens in the community, many turn to the district and schools for support. High school students have access to mentoring programs and job shadowing opportunities throughout the community. Outside agencies such as the police department, agriculture businesses, banks, etc. participate in a reality store for seniors to help prepare them for a variety of post-secondary pathways. The district partners with Madisonville Community College to bring interpreters to work with English learner children and parents on a weekly basis. The district allows many routes to teacher certification and recruits heavily from within the community through a multitude of strategic partnerships.

Hickman County High School and the Alternative Education Program (AEP) have established a partnership with the West Kentucky Educational Cooperative for the Stop and Connect Grant. This grant is designed to connect school and community resources to enhance student safety and support through activities such as digital cyber literacy training as well as mental health and wellness support. The Stop and Connect Grant also provides Tassel Connect, a direct reporting service available to all students at the high school and in the AEP which connects students and parents with counselors, administrators, resource officers and other staff members. Mental health services are provided to AEP students by two community agencies.

Gifted and Talented (GT) students have many opportunities to be involved in the community through programs such as Habitat for Humanity. Hickman County participates in a GT consortium with three other districts to provide more opportunities for students. The Cookie School is a popular activity through the consortium in which GT students come together to make and bake cookies. Students learn about math and language while also exercising their creativity and critical thinking skills through the Cookie School.

Effective Practice No. 2: Parent and Family Engagement

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

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 2

The district and schools work to foster positive relationships with families through the Title I, Part A program. Parents and families feel comfortable sharing thoughts, opinions and concerns with the district and school staff whether through formal meetings and conferences or informal conversations when they see one another around town. Title I, Part A parent and family engagement events are well-attended.

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The AEP regularly communicates with families through phone calls, emails and in-person meetings. Staff are consistent in their efforts to keep caregivers informed of students' academic progress as well as the requirements for reintegrating into the traditional classroom setting. The AEP receives communication at the same time and in the same manner as the A1 school. The culture of the AEP is clearly centered around building relationships with students, families and the community and the school-based decision making council is supportive of the program's mission and purpose. Parents of preschool students can participate in the Born Learning Academy which provides six parent sessions focused on preparing children for kindergarten. In addition to the Gifted Student Services Plans (GSSPs) and progress reports, parents of GT students also receive a program newsletter four times a year. A GT program introduction letter is sent home at the beginning of the school year.

Effective Practice No. 3: Professional Development

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

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 3

The homeless coordinator works closely with the Family Resource and Youth Service Center (FRYSC) to help educate staff across the district on the definition of students experiencing homelessness. The district recognizes the importance of including non-instructional staff such as bus drivers and food service staff in these conversations. Classified staff have the opportunity to participate in professional development. GT staff conducted a professional development session for all staff regarding the Primary Talent Pool (PTP) program and its role in GT services.

Effective Practice No. 4: Leadership

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

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 4

Multiple staff members spoke highly during Title I, Part A interviews regarding the positive changes that have taken place over the past two years under the leadership of the new superintendent. The Title I coordinator takes the time to explain program requirements to principals to ensure they understand why they may be asked to complete a certain activity or save a specific piece of documentation. Understanding "the why" behind a requirement helps to increase the intentionality in its completion; it becomes more than a box to merely check off. The district was very proactive in addressing compliance issues, reaching out to Title I staff prior to reports being issued to start working on required actions immediately. School level leadership provides effective oversight and collaboration with the AEP. Responsibility Centered Discipline practices have been implemented in the AEP and teachers meet with students individually to provide direct instruction and individualized support as needed. The GT coordinator and teachers meet with the superintendents of the districts participating in their consortium multiple times throughout the year to discuss program plans and review student data.

Effective Practice No. 5: Climate and Culture

Program(s) Addressed: Title II, Part A; Title V, Part B; Alternative Education; Preschool

Highlight of Effective Practice No. 5

The new teacher program provided by the district is viewed as a strength by Title II auditors. The district utilizes the majority of its Title V, Part B funds to provide a curriculum designed to cultivate a sense of belonging and engagement among students. The curriculum has already had a positive impact in

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reducing attendance and behavior issues. The AEP environment is safe, clean, pleasant, physically accessible and supportive of student learning. Students have access to caring, trusted adults who support them during their time in the AEP. The AEP teacher is viewed positively by students and many return to visit him for support after exiting the program. Interactions between preschool teachers and staff and students are respectful, positive and nurturing.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 1: Finance

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

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 1

Auditors for Title I, Part A, Title II, Part A and Title IV, Part A noted alignment issues when comparing the program application budgets in the Grant Management Application and Planning (GMAP) system with the amounts budgeted and actual amounts spent in MUNIS. The spending of Title I, Part A set-aside funds for students experiencing homelessness and parent and family engagement are not consistently being tracked in MUNIS, making it difficult to determine if the full set-aside amounts have been spent. The spending of Title II funds was not always logged properly to ensure funds were paid from the correct source. Title IV, Part A funds were used to purchase a potentially allowable program, however it was not part of the approved GMAP application. The day-to-day fiscal management for programs (entering purchase orders, paying invoices, logging expenses, etc.) is not handled by the finance officer and there was a disconnect between the finance officer and the individual managing the funds.

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

The district was very receptive to the recommendations and suggestions shared by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) during the Title I, Part A interview. Additionally, the district began working to fix Title II misalignment issues as soon as possible, prior to the report being issued. The district should develop processes for the regular review and comparison of the GMAP application budget and actual spending in MUNIS. GMAP and/or MUNIS should be updated accordingly when spending plans change. KDE recommends reviewing GMAP and MUNIS alignment on at least a quarterly basis. Expenditures should be closely tracked to ensure they are paid out of the correct funding source. Additional meetings between all individuals working on finances would help ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding federal spending.

Opportunity for Improvement No. 2: Policies and Procedures

Programs Addressed: Title II, Part A; Alternative Education

Summary of Opportunity for Improvement No. 2

The district lacks proper internal controls for Title II funds. Invoices that were cited as Title II expenditures in GMAP were not included in the MUNIS report. An additional review of invoices revealed that invoices and purchase orders do not designate which funding source is to be used for the purchase. This practice was common on invoices reviewed by Title II auditors dating back to fiscal year 2022, indicating the deficiency has existed for a long time. There is little discussion of program expenditures between the finance officer and Title II coordinator. The collaboration on purchase orders and the alignment of GMAP and MUNIS is minimal.

Processes and procedures for the AEP are underdeveloped and lack clarity. The district has not established policies required by 704 KAR 19:002, including procedures for regular district monitoring of

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the AEP. Although a mission and vision have been established for the involuntary component of the AEP, they are underdeveloped for the voluntary and virtual components of the program. The eligibility requirements and the entry and exit procedures for these program components are unclear. The implementation and completion of the Individual Learning Plan Addendum (ILPA) requirement had not been fully implemented at the time of the visit. The AEP handbook indicates elementary students are placed in the AEP, however there is no information about what an AEP for elementary students would entail. Data management and utilization practices, including the collection and use of behavior data, related interventions and student voice data specific to the AEP are underdeveloped as indicated on the self-reflection assessment. The current procedures do not allow AEP students to have choice or selection in food and prohibits students from bringing water bottles to school.

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

The policies and procedures reviewed for Title I, Part A and Title IV, Part A are well-written and provide clear direction for implementation. The district should refer to the content and style of these documents when developing processes and procedures for other programs. Processes and procedures for Title V, Part B were developed leading up to the monitoring visit and the district is eager to begin fully implementing them. The district became aware of the ILPA requirement during the monitoring visit and began working to establish a process to ensure compliance immediately. Using the existing processes and procedures as models will help the district develop detailed documents for Title II, Part A and the AEP. Written processes and procedures will not only ensure program requirements are met but also will facilitate a seamless transition in the event of staffing changes in the future. Strengthening procedures between federal programs and the finance office will also help address the financial opportunity for improvement identified in this report. Processes and procedures must go beyond simply listing program requirements by describing the steps the district will take to ensure those requirements are met. The district should develop processes for providing AEP staff members with professional development opportunities to ensure program requirements are met. The current procedures regarding AEP students' access to food and water should be revised to reflect more inclusive practices. KDE recommends providing AEP students the opportunity to go through the lunch line prior to the A1 students so they can still choose their meals.

Final Overview

Hickman County Public Schools serve as a hub for the community, providing support to students and their families in a variety of ways. The passionate and caring staff work diligently to meet the needs of all students. AEP staff freely meet with students during their planning periods to provide additional support as needed. GT teachers as well as AEP staff report have a collaborative relationship with the district. The district pursues additional grants that support student improvement such as the Stop and Connect Grant. Grants like these allow the district to provide innovative programs such as Tassel Connect which seamlessly connects students to a variety of district staff for assistance and/or crisis intervention. The district understands the importance of documenting program compliance, saving all program documentation for seven years, which is beyond the five years recommended by KDE as a best practice. The district has cultivated a continuous improvement mindset and staff are open to advice and resources on how to improve program implementation. Staff for several programs reached out to KDE following the visit to begin proactively working on issues discussed during interviews. KDE is confident that the district's dedication to providing the best services possible to its students will allow them to turn opportunities for improvement into strengths and further strengthen existing best practices.