

UNITED WE LEARN

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

A NEW VISION FOR EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY

Students across Kentucky are growing up in a globally interconnected world – one that is increasing in competitiveness and opportunity. For our students to be successful, it is up to us to create learning experiences that prepare them for this future.

While every student has the potential for success, we know that learning opportunities and outcomes have been uneven. Although many students and school districts are thriving, others are struggling, especially those in our traditionally underserved communities and groups.

Families, students, educators, businesses and community members must come together to create a new, student-centered education system that works for everyone. This collective effort is called **United We Learn: Investing in Kentucky's Future, One Student at a Time**.

Kentuckians have asked for major changes in what students experience in our schools so they will develop the skills to be successful workers, entrepreneurs, community leaders and citizens in their future.

We invite you to join in this journey, sharing examples of meaningful learning and engagement in your community and our schools by using our hashtag **#UnitedWeLearnKY** and following **@UnitedWeLearnKY** on Twitter and Instagram.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Over the past year, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) engaged with a diverse group of stakeholders – including students, families, educators and community leaders – about how to meet the needs of all Kentucky's public school students. KDE's efforts have included surveys, the Commissioner's Virtual Listening Tour, the creation of the Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education and the Kentucky Education Summit.



This past year of engagement made it clear that we need to think differently about how education is delivered. Our language and our actions need to reflect this change. Building upon the work of the coalition, KDE and local districts must have clear action plans. We must move from the expectation that “schools will ...” or “districts will ...” to more inclusive language about what we as a state will do together. The KDE strategic plan will outline what the agency will do and what it will seek to do in partnership with communities, districts and schools.



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION



KENTUCKY'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The following vision for Kentucky's public schools was created by the thousands of Kentuckians who participated in the process. It is a vision for Kentuckians, by Kentuckians.

- A lot of good things are happening in Kentucky's public schools, but often they are not done in a systematic way. We will use common vision, and local and statewide partnerships to organize and expand high-quality opportunities for each and every student.
- Schools are central to their communities, but there are obstacles to creating trusting, collaborative relationships. We will listen to each other and intentionally work together to better serve Kentucky's students and communities.
- Education has been focusing more on meeting accountability rules, which makes it harder to take chances and create new partnerships. We will move from focusing on the narrow rules of accountability to be more responsive to the needs and desires of students and local communities, especially those who have been historically underserved.
- There still are inequities both in the opportunities students have and the outcomes they achieve. To make a real difference, we will move from a standardized approach to learning to one that recognizes and values the uniqueness of students and communities.
- Very few people feel seen or heard in the current education system. We will have a system where students are more than statistics and where students, families and teachers feel known and valued beyond their test scores.
- It's important to know where we need to improve and to be accountable, but it's also important to recognize both the strengths and challenges of local conditions and work together to find ways to succeed. We will create a system that shares information in a way that supports everyone in being partners in improvement, rather than "shaming and blaming."
- By asking teachers and students to work in a standardized way, the current system of education does not recognize the complexities of modern life and its effects on the classroom. We will create conditions where everyone feels safe to try new things and improve by learning from one another, instead of competing.
- Schools need everyone to learn about and value a broader set of career goals and pathways to success. We will build a system that goes

beyond a narrow set of subjects and expands what students imagine they could do to find individual fulfillment AND contribute to community prosperity.

- There is a widespread desire for an assessment and accountability system that goes beyond a narrow picture of student success. We will develop local and state accountability systems that work together to learn about and share a fuller picture of how communities are supporting student growth.
- Kentucky's schools should not go "back to normal" and forget all of the lessons learned during the COVID pandemic. We will create a culture that doesn't shy away from addressing tough issues and works to answer them as united communities.



WHERE WE GO NEXT

To bring this bold vision for Kentucky's schools to life, we need a united effort that engages every community and school in the Commonwealth. The changes we need to happen in communities and classrooms should begin today. We do not need permission to begin improving learning experiences for Kentucky's children.

Our work already has begun with Kentucky's Innovative Learning Network. Seven districts – Allen, Fleming, Frankfort Independent, Jefferson, Johnson, Logan and Shelby – currently serve as full Local Laboratories of Learning (L3s), where they are piloting new assessment, accountability and learning approaches. These districts also have formed local and inclusive coalitions to guide their work. We will learn from their experiences and help to bring about the large-scale changes for our entire state.

We call upon every district, school and community to engage with this **United We Learn** effort and help us bring about a bold new era of education in Kentucky.