

Fayette County Public Schools Career and Technical Education Institutional Review Report

Conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education
Office of Career and Technical Education
November 2015

Executive Summary
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Process Summary

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted a study of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs within the Fayette County Public School district during the week of November 2nd through the 9th, 2015. The review was organized at the request of the district's superintendent. KDE's study consisted of teacher and school administrator surveys, desk audits of the current CTE data, on-site reviews of the five comprehensive high schools and the three technical centers within the district, facilitating a local business and industry forum, and conducting interviews with school administrators, guidance counselors, central office staff, and local board of education members.

The institutional review was guided by four main categories of research questions: career & technical programs of study, instructional practices, guidance/scheduling practices, and alignment of CTE programming with workforce needs.

Key in the review was an effort to understand the programming factors that contribute to current accountability performance in the area of career readiness. Critical metrics in the district's career readiness accountability component, as provided in the District Report Card, include:

- Of 2,296 seniors who graduated from FCPS high schools in 2015, approximately 78% (1,779) had enrolled in one or more CTE courses
- Approximately 37% (839) of seniors had continued along a CTE pathway long enough to achieve "preparatory status," and thus become eligible to earn the "career ready technical" designation
- Approximately 20% (461) of graduating seniors achieved the "career ready technical" designation
- Approximately 6% (134) of seniors graduated having earned the career readiness designation

Summary of Findings

In the area of *CTE Programs of Study*, notable *strengths* included the wide variety of curriculum pathway options for Fayette County students, and the number of opportunities students have to learn through work-based learning placements and within school-based student enterprises. These efforts to ensure learning take place in as authentic a context as possible are important to high quality implementation of the CTE instructional program. *Opportunities* for improvement in this area included development of systems that:

- better monitor high school student matriculation through CTE pathways and toward "preparatory/completer" statuses
- better align and supervise work-based learning alignment between workforce needs, curriculum programs, and student readiness
- increased alignment/opportunities to include dual/articulated credit in current and future CTE curriculum pathways

In the area of ***Instructional Practices***, notable strengths included the general implementation of a professional learning community approach to instructional planning, general use of data in instructional decision-making among teams, and inclusion of core academic teachers in curriculum programming at the three CTE Centers. *Opportunities* for improvement included expansion of the district's data focus to include systems that track and monitor career-readiness among students across the district, deeper collaboration between academic and CTE teachers as they plan integrated instructional units for students, and increased use of Career and Technical Student Organizations (e.g., FFA) as a student engagement strategy at the five comprehensive high schools.

In the area of ***Guidance/Scheduling Practices***, strengths included assignment of guidance counselors at the three CTE Centers. *Opportunities* for improvement included increasing the overall district knowledge around CTE programming across the district, improving general understanding of the student Individual Learning Plan (ILP) as a tool for academic planning, and improving general academic advising to align academic planning with student post-secondary aspirations.

In the area of ***Workforce Alignment***, strengths included effective use of program advisory committees among pathway programs at the three CTE centers. *Opportunities* for improvement included implementation of program advisory committees among pathway programs at the five comprehensive high schools, increasing and improving partnerships among industry leaders and the schools/district, aligning CTE pathway programming with workforce needs in the community & region, and increasing the number of opportunities students have to earn industry-recognized certifications as the result of completing CTE programs.

Recommendations

Upon completion of the review, team members offered the district the following recommendations:

- 1) Develop robust and compelling resources that assist with the education, marketing, and promotion of CTE that can be utilized by all shareholders.
- 2) Explore ways for the district to implement collaborative and consistent scheduling practices.
- 3) Strengthen opportunities for work-based learning experiences.
- 4) Expand dual and articulated credit opportunities for the various CTE career pathway offerings within the district.
- 5) Ensure the establishment of school-level program advisory committees for every CTE program within the district.

- 6) Examine the gaps and overlaps in the alignment of the district's CTE system and local / state workforce needs.

District Response

The district's global response to address opportunities for improvement and the review team's series of recommendations has best been captured under our participation as partners in Commerce Lexington's/Business Education Network's partnership with Ford NGL to create a community-wide focus on alignment of workforce needs and educational programming. The goal of this project is to, over time, transform high school programming in a way that provides a direct link between student post-secondary aspirations and their high school learning experience. This "transformed" approach to education will address a number of needs outlined in the institutional review, including:

- Developing a "pathway culture" in which students enter high school with a clear vision of each step of their academic program and how it leads to employment/higher education
- Aligning CTE programming with workforce needs
- Increasing CTE enrollment, and working to reduce the perception that career & technical education is not appropriate for all students
- Redefining the definition of school/business partnerships around a common goal of better preparing students for success in the workplace
- Clarifying and better aligning the P-12 and post-secondary learning programs, and opening more opportunities for dual/articulated credit for students participating in CTE pathway programs