



Commonwealth Education Continuum

2021 Annual Report

A COLLABORATION OF KENTUCKY'S EDUCATION AGENCIES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION | COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION | EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CABINET

500 AIRPORT ROAD, 1ST FLOOR FRANKFORT, KY 40601 502-892-3000

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Purpose

In order for students to earn degrees and credentials that lead to sustainable, competitive-wage careers, it is imperative that their educational experience, from preschool through postsecondary education, provides an equitable opportunity to successfully transition to the next level.

The Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC) was formed out of the moral imperative to strengthen the education pipeline. Co-chaired by Lt. Governor Jacqueline Coleman, Council on Postsecondary Education President Aaron Thompson, and Education Commissioner Jason Glass, the Continuum consists of 28 members whose expertise ranges from early childhood to the workforce (see Appendix A). CEC members met quarterly to achieve the following outcomes and approximate timeline: February – establishment of annual objectives; June – midterm progress report; September – report on legislative and policy recommendations; and December – annual progress report. CEC leadership and members are supported by a continued partnership with Education Strategy Group (ESG).

To further understand the diverse needs of the state and seek actions to improve Kentucky's education system, the CEC created three workgroups with distinct focus areas at its April meeting. The workgroups include: Early Postsecondary Opportunities, Educator Workforce and Diversity, and Successful Transition to Postsecondary. The workgroups met monthly to develop recommendations, implementation plans, key inputs and strategies, and viable policy proposals to present to the CEC in consideration of its efforts. The workgroups were co-chaired by the following leaders: Early Postsecondary Opportunities – Commissioner Jason Glass and KCTCS President Paul Czarapata; Educator Workforce and Diversity – Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman and WKU College of Education Dean Corinne Murphy; and Successful Transition to Postsecondary – CPE Pres. Aaron Thompson and Kentucky Board of Education Chair Lu Young (see Appendix A).

Overview of Work Accomplished

During its initial meeting in January 2021, CEC members focused the work of the Continuum around an annual objective to develop and execute a specific plan to activate the biggest levers for increasing successful student transitions into postsecondary. The work that began in the CEC workgroups honed in on how to accomplish this objective. The focus of the workgroups centered on the following:

April

Information sharing by ESG on the Unlocking Potential Framework and national trends, sharing and revising workgroup objectives and focus areas, and starting to lift up key challenges.

May

A re-centering on workgroup objectives and focus areas, sharing and discussing the structure and process for the first workgroup deliverable, co-creating an aspirational vision, continuing to build a list of challenges, and starting to build a list of potential strategies.

June

Exploration of the initial findings from stakeholder engagement efforts, finalizing the first workgroup deliverable, and lifting up key questions or considerations for other workgroups.

August

Discussion on the key takeaways from the thought partner feedback session on the emerging recommendations, and further refinement and prioritization of the recommendations to account for implementation considerations.

November

Review of state agency-related action steps and requests, and further consideration of agency-level implementation efforts to inform the next meeting of the full Continuum.

Stakeholder Engagement

In an effort to elevate the voices of the communities most impacted by the work of the CEC, ESG, in collaboration with CPE, held a series of interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders from across the state while the workgroups were meeting. Coordinated with the eight regional educational cooperatives to ensure geographical diversity, the questions centered on the three workgroup areas: Early Postsecondary Opportunities, Educator Workforce and Diversity, and Successful Transition to Postsecondary. Further, the regions were charged with the recruitment of participants who were from schools and districts with economic and racial diversity. A total of 166 individuals participated in the stakeholder interviews and focus groups: 120 from the K-12 sector and 46 from higher education. The insights gleaned from these engagements supported the CEC in developing a set of recommendations grounded in the interests, needs, and challenges experienced by the communities it serves. See Appendix A for more information on who participated in the interviews and focus groups and the key takeaways.

Additionally, in July, the CEC shared the stakeholder insights and workgroups' emerging recommendations with thought partners, which include a group of individuals who expressed interest in the CEC's work. Thought partners bring a variety of experiences and include higher education faculty and administrators, high school administrators, education research and advocacy organizations, nonprofits, and chambers of commerce. The thought partners were invited to a meeting to review the stakeholder engagement takeaways and see the working list of emerging recommendations. During this meeting, the thought partners were able to ask questions and provide feedback on the emerging recommendations. Additionally, the thought partners completed a survey to help prioritize and refine the recommendations.

Prioritized Recommendations and Actions

Stakeholder insights, thought partner feedback and state agency implementation considerations helped to narrow the list of emerging recommendations developed during the first half of the year. The final, prioritized set of recommendations for each workgroup is listed below. This list also includes action steps for state agencies as they begin to implement each of the recommendations.

Successful Transition to Postsecondary

Employ more postsecondary transition advisors to help students plan for and transition to postsecondary education.

- a. Create a statewide program to strengthen postsecondary transition advising practices through the creation of local communities of practice, and state and national networks in order to aid school counselors, college and career coaches, and Family Resource and Youth Service Center Coordinators in better understanding the ever-changing postsecondary landscape and opportunities across the state.
- b. Implement the Kentucky Advising Academy to provide a free comprehensive series of face-to-face and virtual professional learning and resources, centered on postsecondary advising, for school counselors and Family Resource/Youth Service Center (FRYSC) coordinators that will support students, families and professionals.

Create a comprehensive communications campaign to better equip high school students with the necessary knowledge to successfully transition to postsecondary.

- a. Pilot a letter or notifications to send students each year of high school, via Infinite Campus and other methods, that outlines institutions they may be eligible to attend and important postsecondary transition steps and opportunities for that year.
- b. Create a statewide web-based resource hub for targeted audiences to access resources and information regarding early postsecondary opportunities, postsecondary institutions, career pathways, financial aid information, etc.

Catalyze a statewide, cross-agency campaign to improve FAFSA completion rates and access to FAFSA data for schools and districts.

- a. Establish a standing cross-agency committee to explore and evaluate agency-level efforts and achieve FAFSA completion goals.
- b. Develop and provide FAFSA-related training and resources on a statewide scale to better equip school counselors, postsecondary transition advising teams and other partners.
- c. Increase participation in the USDE's FAFSA Completion Initiative (FCI).

Expand institutional capacity to support students as they transition to postsecondary.

- a. Continue summer bridge programming grants and expand opportunities to the summer before junior year through grants issued to institutions of higher education.

Early Postsecondary Opportunities

Ensure every high school student has access to at least one early postsecondary opportunity and the support to successfully complete, particularly those students and families who have been traditionally underrepresented in early postsecondary opportunities (EPO).

- a. Develop a toolkit (containing suggested outreach, ways to identify students using data, how to establish and scale partnerships, advantages of EPO opportunities, differences among program types, steps to enroll, and supports to improve student success) -- along with professional development -- for K-12 schools and districts to advise students and families.
- b. Develop an online interactive advising tool to provide user-friendly guidance on the availability of EPO (a catalog documenting courses, credentials, etc.) and how they will transfer to various in-state institutions -- aligned to the web portal mentioned above.

Increase state funding to cover the cost of early postsecondary opportunities for all students, including equity grants for low- and middle-income students and families.

- a. Issue equity grants to local districts based on eligibility criteria, allowable uses of funds, and an application process.
- b. Provide state funding to cover the fees of EPO exams for all students.

Strengthen local and regional partnerships among high schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce to expand access, advising, and support to early postsecondary opportunities.

- a. Re-establish the Dual Credit Advisory Council to revisit policy and guidance around partnerships to improve student access, advising and supports.

Educator Workforce and Diversity

Launch a compelling campaign that highlights the importance and benefits of entering the teaching profession.

- a. Promote Go Teach KY via social media engagement on all platforms, the Ed Rising newsletter and Educator Development newsletter.
- b. Broaden reach through the production of creative and innovative PSAs and the GoTeach KY Frenzy.
- c. Promote “WHY I Teach” podcasts to feature working teachers at various career stages.

Enhance the recruitment to increase the number of teachers with an emphasis on underrepresented groups.

- a. Provide funding for the Substitute/Service(Pre)Teacher/Support Paraprofessional Teacher Engagement and Professional Pipeline (STEPP) to support development and implementation of a school/district initiative and the innovative use of substitutes and/or pre-service teachers and paraprofessionals.
- b. Implement the Project Early Entry Plan to encourage and support innovative efforts of schools and districts to improve the pipeline of teaching-learning pathway participants by providing access to introductory opportunities into the teaching profession for middle and high school students.
- c. Recruit military and JR ROTC participants to pursue teaching opportunities in computer science and other CTE fields.
- d. Administer “Grow Your Own” grants to encourage innovative district programs to inspire high school students.
- e. Propose regulatory changes to increase the Praxis validity time frame to 10 years and update the standards for admission to educator preparation programs.
- f. Provide cultural competence facilitator training through the education cooperatives for all K-12 districts.
- g. Administer Commonwealth Educator Diversity Program grants to promote innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining teacher candidates to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce.

Increase teacher and administrator retention and advancement opportunities with attention to underrepresented groups.

- a. Continue and expand new Teacher Support programs.
- b. Continue to provide National Board-related supports to include professional learning and building a teacher network.
- c. Continue the IMPACT Survey so districts and schools can use the data to support retention-related efforts.
- d. Ensure all public K-12 educators have access to the KAET Competency Modules to assist in the development of more effective and equitable practices to meet the needs of all students.

Looking Ahead

Based on feedback from workgroup and CEC members, the Continuum will develop an annual objective at its first 2022 meeting. Workgroups then will be established to further explore focus areas and achieve the annual objective. Throughout the year, the CEC will revisit the 2021 prioritized recommendations identified in this report to consider successes and opportunities, as well as consider how the implementation efforts of these priorities might inform future workgroup needs. Attention also will be paid to the outcomes of the 2022 Kentucky Regular Legislative Session and how that might impact future CEC efforts.

Appendix A

Commonwealth Education Continuum and Workgroup Membership 2021

Commonwealth Education Continuum Members

Co-Chair Dr. Aaron Thompson, president of the Council on Postsecondary Education
Co-Chair Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, secretary of the Workforce and Development Cabinet

Co-Chair Dr. Jason E. Glass, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education

Sen. David Givens, Kentucky Senate

Sen. Max Wise, Kentucky Senate

Rep. James Tipton, Kentucky House of Representatives

Luke Mentzer, board chair of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Dr. Lu Young, board chair of the Kentucky Board of Education

Dr. OJ Oleka, president of the Association of Kentucky Independent Colleges and Universities

Kyle Thomas, board president of the Kentucky School Counselor Association

Gene Hutchins, executive director of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

Eddie Campbell, president of the Kentucky Education Association

Dr. Rhonda Caldwell, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators

Ronda Harmon, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils

Dr. Jim Flynn, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents

David Horseman, associate commissioner of the Office of Career and Technical Education, Kentucky Department of Education

Dr. Paul Czarzata, president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Lisa Rudzinski, board chair of the Education Professional Standards Board

Kerri Schelling, executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association

Robert Hayes, director of the Student Transitions and Family Programs, University of Kentucky

Logan Justice, P-12 student representative

Amy Neal, executive director of the Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood

Dr. Dallas Kratzer, grant program manager of the Cyber Security and Workforce Development Outreach, Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs

John Lyons, interim executive director of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

Jenny Sawyer, executive director of admissions, University of Louisville

Dr. Corinne Murphy, College of Education dean of Western Kentucky University

Dr. Robert Jackson, president of Murray State University

Kathleen Christian, president of the 16th District PTA

Priyadarshini Chandrashekhar, postsecondary student representative

Early Postsecondary Opportunities Workgroup Members

Sandra Baker, Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Dan Connell, Morehead State University
Brad Hall, University of the Cumberlands
David Horseman, Kentucky Department of Education
Eugene Hutchins, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
Carla Kersey, Kentucky Educational Development Corporation
Marybeth Lawson, GEAR UP Kentucky
Dr. OJ Oleka, president of the Association of Kentucky Independent Colleges and Universities
Meredith Rozanski, Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce
Jenny Sawyer, University of Louisville
Rep. James Tipton, Kentucky House of Representatives
Christine Tarquinio, Louisville Metro Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Kathleen "Kakie" Urch, University of Kentucky
Dr. LorryBeth Wilson, West Kentucky Community and Technical College

Educator Workforce and Diversity Workgroup Members

Terri L. Bradshaw, Kentucky Capital Development Corp
Dr. Rhonda Caldwell, Kentucky Association of School Administrators
Eddie Campbell, Kentucky Education Association
Penny Christian, Kentucky Parent Teacher Association
Dr. Ginni Fair, Northern Kentucky University
Dr. Jim Flynn, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents
Elly Gilbert, Kentucky Department of Education
Dr. Kimberly Haverkos, Thomas More University
Logan Justice, P-12 Student Representative
Dr. Dallas Kratzer, Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs
Vivian Lasley-Bibbs, Kentucky Department for Public Health
Bren Martin, Prichard Committee
Dr. Soraya Matthews, Perspective Education Professional Services
Dr. Sheri McGuffin, AdvanceKentucky
Dr. Margaret Mohr-Schroeder, University of Kentucky
Jessica Romious, Council on Postsecondary Education
Dr. Lisa G. Stephenson, West Kentucky Community and Technical College

Successful Transition to Postsecondary Workgroup Members

Ben Brandstetter, Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
Stephanie Devine, Teach for America Appalachia
Dr. Bob Jackson, Murray State University
Mary Jackson, GEAR Up Kentucky
Shauna King-Simms, Kentucky Community and Technical College System
Barry Lee, Casey County Board of Education
Shawn Lyons, Transylvania University
Elizabeth Mays, EdjAnalytics

Dr. Ebony Muldrow, University of Louisville
Dr. Sarah Ochs, Western Kentucky University
Carolyn Noe, Northern Kentucky University
Samantha Reynolds, Henderson Community College Workforce Solutions
Matthew Ruark, Kentucky Wesleyan College
Sheri Satterly, Danville Independent Schools
Sara White, Berea College

Appendix B
Stakeholder Engagement Participants and Key Takeaways

Participants

A total of 166 individuals participated in the focus groups and interviews. The breakdown of participants was as follows:

Table 1: K-12 Participants by Role

Role	Number of Participants
Counselors	41
Teachers	25
Administrators	27
Students	15
Parents	12
Total	120

Table 2: Higher Education Participants by Role

Role	Number of Participants
College Administrators	8
Financial Aid Administrator	6
Dual Credit Coordinators	20
Education Program Directors	9
Students	3
Total	46

Key Takeaways

The focus group and interview questions centered on the three workgroup focus areas. The following key themes emerged from the conversations with stakeholders:

Successful Transition to Postsecondary

- Counselors do not always have enough capacity to support students with postsecondary planning. Stakeholders called for more personnel, training and partnerships to help ensure all students have access to quality advising.
- Students and families are often overwhelmed by the number of college and career options. They need early and frequent exposure to a variety of college and career opportunities and support in building the academic and other essential skills to ensure they succeed in their postsecondary endeavors.
- Students are hearing a lot of messages about college, career and postsecondary, but there is a need for more unified messaging, more information about different postsecondary opportunities and stronger family engagement.
- Many students and families still struggle to complete the FAFSA and verification, understand the true cost of college, and interpret their award letters.
- Rural students, first-generation college students, DACA and undocumented students, special education students, and students of color often face additional barriers in transitioning to postsecondary, and the final recommendations should ensure all students receive equitable support.

Early Postsecondary Opportunities

- There is significant variability in the number and type of EPO courses to which students have access. This often stems from district challenges around funding, scheduling and teacher credentialing.
- Many students and families are unaware of their options for accessing EPO courses, and advisors play a pivotal role in increasing participation.
- While the state dual credit scholarships and AP fee waivers are valuable, many students and families still face challenges in affording EPO courses.
- There is significant variability in policies between schools and institutions, which can be difficult to navigate. Cross-sector partnerships are key to building effective programs. Career pathway programs and early college programs have been successful ways to increase exposure and create an early entry point into dual credit coursework.
- Academic preparation is a key barrier for students succeeding in EPO courses. While we didn't hear issues around credit transfer for dual credit, counselors called for an easier system for viewing institutional policies. Students and families, however, are concerned about credit acceptance for AP courses, viewing dual credit as a surer bet.

Educator Workforce and Diversity

- There is a need to elevate the teaching profession and provide more opportunities for early exposure to the educator workforce.
- Educator Preparation programs have admissions and financial barriers that students need support and resources to navigate.
- Teacher salaries are not competitive, and there are limited opportunities for advancement.
- Mentoring and early support are valuable to the success of new teachers. Counselors also expressed a need for formalized training and mentoring once on the job.
- Teachers wanted more training and support that focused on topics beyond just standards.
- Positive and safe working environments and administrator-teacher relationships were important for retention.
- Black and Latinx educators and counselors expressed concerns about implicit bias in hiring practices.
- Limited representation of educators and administrators of color makes it challenging to find support when needed.