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Now is the time for us to come together in support of educational transformation and equality within the commonwealth. The COVID-19 pandemic has left a lasting impact on education across the United States, and Kentucky has not been spared.

Early indicators of the state’s declining performance in key educational benchmarks were apparent even before the pandemic struck. However, the crisis intensified and compounded pre-existing challenges, amplifying the urgency to address them.

In 2015, Kentucky reached its peak with 40 percent of fourth graders reading proficiently, but by 2022, this number plummeted to 31 percent, causing the state’s ranking to fall from 8th to 29th. Similarly, in math, Kentucky’s ranking for proficient eighth graders slid from 33rd in 2011 to 41st in 2022.

These learning losses have exceeded the national average, resulting in long-term economic repercussions for both students and the state. In fact, according to a recent study from the Hoover Institution, Kentucky’s pandemic-induced learning losses will lead to a total economic loss of 2 percent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), or nearly $135 billion.

While educational rankings can give us one piece of the puzzle, the true measure of success lies in the mastery of real-life skills, like communication, leadership, critical thinking, and collaboration.

To get back on track with our educational gains and secure real-world success for our students, we must provide them with a solid foundation of skills that will help them thrive in an ever-changing economy and world.

Kentucky needs a groundswell of communities responding to the unique needs of students locally and to spur action from the top down to implement data-informed policies to create a more equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education system.

The following pages of our 2022 Annual Report highlight the impact the Prichard Committee continues to have on improving education outcomes in Kentucky. The work of the Prichard Committee—a citizen-led, nonpartisan and independent organization—is to create conditions for success and progress in education. That means advocating for policy and investment solutions that strengthen our education system. It also means supporting and amplifying local solutions to the needs of students and families.

Our Groundswell Initiative for community and family engagement aims to do just that. It is a call to action for all stakeholders – educators, parents, community leaders, and policymakers – to work together to improve education in Kentucky.

The stakes are too high, and the potential rewards too great, to let this opportunity pass us by. Let us embrace our big, bold future and pave the way for a stronger education system for all Kentucky children.

Brigitte Blom, President & CEO
LOCAL MOMENTUM BUILDS TO DELIVER UPDATED SKILLS, RELEVANT LEARNING

Schools across Kentucky are in the midst of a pivotal overhaul: moving beyond the outdated world of worksheets, multiple-choice tests, and sit-still-for-a-long-lecture learning. Groups of teachers, entire schools and some districts are opting for a fast-forward to meet a pair of fundamental needs:

> Employers report that new workers are seriously ill-prepared for modern productivity. Collaborative and flexible workplaces need nimble employees who can analyze situations and information, work together to solve problems, and be ready to make changes or customize products. Those skills have taken hold in higher education, civic enterprises, and social interaction. However, schools working in a subject-by-subject, passive mode where facts are disconnected from current conditions, controversies or curiosities are out of sync with the world of work.

> Today’s generation of students are known as tech-savvy natural networkers. They find information in new ways from unexpected sources and binge on interests at all hours. Yet, schools working in a subject-by-subject, passive mode where facts are disconnected from current conditions, controversies or curiosities are out of sync with the students they serve.

Realizing that schools are out of tune — and that testing and accountability plus state laws and regulations reinforce traditional approaches — many educators are opting for updates that redefine expectations and engage students. Their goals are better preparation, stronger achievement, and schooling that draws students and teachers into explorations rooted in community and current issues.

The Prichard Committee is focused on state and local movement toward a more meaningful diploma. It is vital to update the system to better serve all students and deliver the fundamentals — and provide advantages — for adult success.

SPECIAL REPORTING SERIES AVAILABLE NOW

Starting last fall, we visited innovative classrooms across the state. Interviews with dozens of teachers, students, administrators, employers and more are captured in a series of four stories offering an up-close view of new approaches. Go inside classrooms bringing learning to life while practicing modern fundamentals of productivity. The series showcases emerging issues, new techniques and challenges involved in making durable skills and deeper learning available to all students.
RETHINKING NECESSARY SKILLS AND ENGAGING EXPERIENCES to better prepare students for challenges to learn, work and thrive beyond high school. Visits to schools in Rowan and Jefferson counties offer glimpses of active, relevant learning experiences and how educators are equipping students as communicators, collaborators, problem solvers and more.

UPDATING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS with local “graduate profiles,” greater student voice, and new connections to employers and communities. The Shelby County district is working with even its youngest students to reset expectations and classroom experiences. Over the past decade, the growing move toward deeper learning and durable skills has grown from grassroots conversations about local needs and how schools can better serve students and communities.

RENEWING PROFESSIONAL POSSIBILITIES as educators explore creative options for learning experiences and personalized connections that will spark student interest. The experiences of teachers in Marshall and Fayette counties show how creating deeper learning for students also boosts engagement and relevance for educators.

MAKING STRONGER PERFORMANCE MAINSTREAM by expanding engaging and effective learning environments to replace outdated approaches and preparation. Bringing learning to life and delivering durable skills is now a priority in the state education department’s strategic plan. Regional education cooperatives are playing a key role with school-level coaching and support. A visit to Allen County shows 11-year-olds using local economic development issues as a focal point for social studies concepts. Leaders in the move toward transforming schools share challenges to making promising approaches a fixture of teaching and learning.

The Prichard Committee emphasizes excellence in education and the path to a larger life. The Meaningful Diploma series informs an important conversation with up-close examples and explanations of key issues. It’s a topic gaining steam and overdue in Kentucky’s drive to make sure students and communities prosper.

Author: Lonnie Harp
Lonnie covered education for the Courier Journal and the Lexington Herald-Leader. He worked as a reporter and editor at Education Week in Washington, D.C. He has served as a school board member and was a parent member of a school SBDM council.
Governor Beshear signs Family Engagement in Education proclamation


In 2022 the Prichard Committee brought together an all-star cast through the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools to create a way to celebrate and highlight Kentucky schools that prioritize family and community partnership. Partners included Learning Grove, National Center for Families Learning, Partners for Rural Impact, Kentucky Department of Education, and the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood along with multiple families and educators across the state. This group created the Family Friendly Schools certification process.

To meet certification criteria, schools engaged in a process to assess and improve their family engagement practices. First, they formed a team that included parents, teachers, and a school administrator. Team members took online modules about family engagement, evaluated their school using a self-assessment tool, gathered information from families and made changes based on family feedback. The team could go back and reevaluate their school after they made changes. After this, if they scored high enough on the self-assessment, they applied for certification and reviewers determined if they received their certification.

During a panel presentation at the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, principals from certified schools discussed how the process strengthened their family engagement practices. Jill Handley, principal at Kenwood Elementary transitioned from “one-off” family engagement to a system that is integrated and planned and moving them from doing “for families” to doing “with families”. Anne Cox, principal of Reidland Elementary, shared how using the self-assessment helped her team have valuable and rich conversations about their practices.
GROUNDSWELL ACTIONS

DAVIESS COUNTY - Based on the 2021 Letter from Kentucky Teachers, Daviess County Public schools chose to tackle the calls to action: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Meaningful Family Engagement. Shiryl McAdams and Shelly Hammons focused on the topic of purposeful and meaningful family engagement by conducting a district-wide collaborative in which all staff were invited to join. The Family Engagement Collaborative centered on the “why” of transforming family engagement from parent cheerleaders to family advocates. Members of the collaborative journeyed through Powerful Partnerships and Beyond the Bake Sale while completing “try-outs” each week with families.

BOONE COUNTY - While working within the growing Hispanic population in Northern Kentucky, Theresa Cruz, Learning Grove’s Hispanic Family Engagement Coordinator and members of the Hispanic community recognized that there are gaps in the education and healthcare system that are not being filled. After recruiting additional members including community-based organizations, parents, private organizations, higher education and school districts to come together, F.I.E.S.T.A. was born.

F.I.E.S.T.A.: families, inclusion, education, society, traditions and access – all the things that are important to the Hispanic community – is a grass roots community group that focuses on identifying needs in the Hispanic community. They meet monthly to plan community events, share resources and brainstorm ways to meet current needs while building capacity and creating leaders within the community.

F.I.E.S.T.A. is committed to supporting NKY Hispanic families, reaching into the community and lifting members into leadership roles steering the work and supporting self-sufficiency.

BELL COUNTY - In Bell County High School students of Dr. Jarryd Boster’s Fundamentals of Art Design course and Jonathan Neely’s GEAR UP Student Leadership Team teamed up to create a short story, “How to be a Bobcat”, to teach elementary students about what it means to be a Bobcat, the high school’s mascot. Dr. Boster’s students created the book to include students from multiple races, backgrounds, and abilities to teach students about positive character traits and the importance of goals. The student leadership members added goal setting pages on having better character, how to treat others, and how being a good Bobcat can help them meet their career aspirations.

Kentuckians Working To Improve Education Outcomes at the Local Level

The counties in GREEN below are the areas of the state where we currently have Groundswell members. Our goal is to cover all 120 counties. The YELLOW bright spots indicate a community working towards making a difference at the local level. The RED dots indicate schools that have been designated as Family Friendly Schools.

DAVIESS COUNTY - Based on the 2021 Letter from Kentucky Teachers, Daviess County Public schools chose to tackle the calls to action: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Meaningful Family Engagement. Shiryl McAdams and Shelly Hammons focused on the topic of purposeful and meaningful family engagement by conducting a district-wide collaborative in which all staff were invited to join.

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Total Property & Equipment: $1,169
Other Assets: $4,143,910
Total Current Liabilities: $289,019
Total Long-Term Liabilities: $144,612
Total Liabilities and Net Assets: $4,467,534

REVENUE
$1,283,332
Grants & Contracts: $1,348,310
Contributions: $241,296
Interest & Dividends: $55,582
Miscellaneous: $118,564
Unrealized and Realized Gains on Investments: ($516,420)

EXPENSES
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2022 Beverly Nickell Raimondo Leadership Award presentation:
Pictured are Christa Cronin, Alana Morton, Maria Kenner, Tony Raimondo,
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