



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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A New Era in Teaching and Learning For Kentucky's Class of 2025

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Kevin C. Brown serves as associate commissioner and general counsel of the Kentucky Department of Education. He is chief attorney for the commissioner of education and the Kentucky Board of Education. As associate commissioner for the Office of Guiding Support Services, he oversees the department's Division of Communications and the Division of Innovation and Partner Engagement, an initiative that focuses on innovations to increase college- and career-readiness of Kentucky's public-school students.

Previously, Mr. Brown was an assistant attorney general (2001 to 2004) and, in 2000 and 2001, served as a law clerk in the Lexington office of Bowles Rice.

In 2012, Mr. Brown was elected chair of the National Council of State Education Attorneys (NCOSEA). As chair of NCOSEA, he served as a member of the board of directors of the National Association of State Boards of Education.

Mr. Brown earned his B.A. in business management from Transylvania University. He received his J.D. from the University of Kentucky College of Law. Prior to law school, Mr. Brown was a staff assistant to then U.S. Senator Wendell H. Ford (D-KY) and a White House intern.

Imagine a school where there are no bells and no schedules. Students move about freely with a set of standards to complete. They select teachers who fit their preferred learning style. Students' learning is 100 percent individualized and they make decisions every day that impact how their learning progresses. Imagine this school allows students to learn from business and industry professionals who teach useable, real-world skills and pass on their experiential knowledge. Students are prepared to enter the workforce with clear expectations and the soft skills to be tomorrow's problem solvers.

This is the vision of Kentucky's Taylor County School District, as expressed in its application to become a Kentucky District of Innovation. In fact, those students in Taylor County are already embarking on this new era of learning, thanks to the flexibility offered by Kentucky lawmakers. The concept of a "District of Innovation" is a statutorily created initiative by House Bill 37, enacted during the 2012 Kentucky General Assembly. The bill is codified as KRS 156.108 and KRS 160.107, and the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has promulgated regulation 701 KAR 5:140 to implement the new law. The



Photo by: Amy Wallot

8th grade student Shelby Napier uses Scratch programming software to create a game during game design class at Bate Middle School in the Danville Independent school district



law allows Kentucky public school districts to apply to the KBE for freedoms and flexibilities in state law and regulation that are normally reserved for charter schools. Kentucky currently does not have a state law that authorizes charter schools. The KBE designated Taylor County, along with the Danville Independent, Eminence Independent and Jefferson County School Districts as the first Districts of Innovation under the new law.

This unique legislation (other states have laws creating individual schools of innovation, but not whole districts) follows Kentucky's opportunity to lead the nation in the development of innovative strategies by being named a lead state in a nine-state consortium called the Innovation Lab Network (ILN), formed by the national Council of Chief State School Officers. Kentucky currently has more than 20 districts participating in the ILN.

What do all these school districts have in common? They are trying to transform their learning system so that children who will graduate in 2025 will participate in a system that:

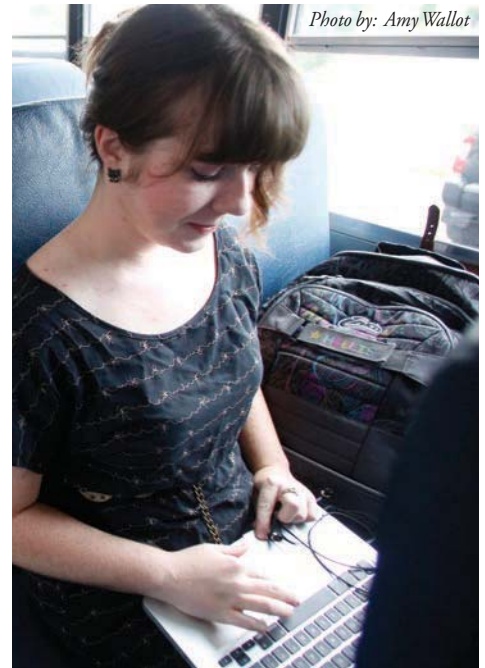
- creates a personalized learning pathway for every child that aligns to his or her learning

Photo by: Amy Wallot



Teacher Scott Walker helps 8th grade student Micha Logan create a computer game during his game design class at Bate Middle School

Photo by: Amy Wallot



Hannah Ellis, a senior at Eminence High School in the Eminence Independent School District, uses her computer on the Wi-Fi-enabled bus on her way to take free college classes

styles and strengths. These pathways will include digital environments, industry-based environments and environments that blur the lines between secondary and higher education;

- focuses on the skills students need to be successful in life (collaboration, problem solving, creativity, adaptability and persistence) and then allows them to progress through their elementary and secondary learning based on when they master these skills and their core academic standards, and not based on an academic calendar;
- holds schools and districts accountable not only for student results on the assessment of the core academic standards, but also on student success in post-secondary life;
- ensures student learning opportunities occur at multiple sites beyond the traditional school building (i.e. home, businesses, on-line) and that it occurs 24/7, 365 days a year;
- prepares teachers for their new role as “learning facilitators,” where they guide students to analyze and understand the content and build the skills listed above. The role of the teacher as the owner and sole deliverer of this content is no longer sufficient; and

- involves the community and businesses in much more intentional ways to create expanded learning opportunities.

The goal of the Districts of Innovation effort is to create a system where every child graduates from high school college- and career-ready. At the state level, successful innovations and best practices within the Districts of Innovation and the ILN will be scaled statewide in order to bolster college- and career-readiness efforts in districts that were not initially involved. With these and other initiatives underway in Kentucky public schools, we are on track to see a new, more effective way of teaching and learning in place for all Kentucky children by 2025. ▽