



Perspectives

VOLUME 33 | WINTER 2022

The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

A Meaningful Diploma

Schools Taking Ownership To Link Learning, Adult Success

Applied, “deeper learning” experiences using projects to tap students’ interests are taking root in an increasing number of Kentucky schools and districts. Curiosity and creativity are becoming fuel for stronger academic understanding and real-life skills.

Hands-on learning connected to big ideas work well for educators seeking outcomes beyond mere passing grades. Deeper learning experiences complement efforts to go beyond state requirements and testing to assure student mastery of academic standards, provide re-teaching to make sure that students fully understand fundamentals, and improve efforts to address individual learning styles and needs.

More engaging learning experiences and achieve-



Chemistry teacher Brianna Greenhill talks with students at Rowan County Senior High in a lab testing properties of water. The experiments were part of a project exploring essentials for life on Earth or possibly other planets.

ment goals grow from local desires to deliver more meaningful education experiences and a diploma that connects with adult success.

In response to an interconnected, technological world,

See **DIPLOMA**, Page 4

PARENT LEADERSHIP

Commonwealth Institute Celebrates 25 Years, Reaching 2,650 Fellows



Since 1997, the Prichard Committee's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership has offered free training to help family members better understand the structure and goals of public schools. The institute's fellows plan local projects to spread involvement and boost student achievement.

who we are

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is an independent, non-profit, nonpartisan group of volunteers who have worked since 1983 to improve education. The group provides information and materials to educators, policymakers, and Kentuckians on a variety of student achievement and public school issues. The committee is not affiliated with Kentucky state government. It is named for the late Edward F. Prichard Jr., a lawyer from Paris, who in 1980 led a citizens' committee on improving Kentucky's universities.

Time for a Jolt to Recharge Education Progress

Like Marty and Doc in the 1985 science-fiction blockbuster “Back to the Future,” we find ourselves returning to the past to ensure the Big Bold Future we know can be ours!

This year brought blow after blow, showing Kentucky losing ground to other states on important indicators of education progress.

While much of this traces to the upheaval of the COVID pandemic, we started seeing signs of decline in 2017. To get Kentucky back on track, we must focus on COVID recovery but also rethink education to meet the future with



By Brigitte Blom
President & CEO

greater strength, resilience — and sustainable progress. Consider the following examples of hard-won progress lost:

■ 29th in fourth-grade reading — a fall from 22nd in 2019 and a high of 8th in 2015;

■ 28th in eighth-grade reading — a drop from 25th in 2019 and a peak at 12th in 2011;

■ 34th in fourth-grade math — a fall from 30th in 2019 and 21st in 2015;

■ 41st in eighth-grade math — down from 36th in 2019 after reaching 33rd in 2011.

Because COVID had a disproportionate impact on those with fewer resources, Kentucky, a poor state, was likely hit harder than other states. Our losses likely could have been worse. We should acknowledge the strength in our systems that kept us from outright free fall — and meet our declines in the rankings with resolve to work smarter and harder — together and without division.

We must also recognize that test scores in reading and mathematics are not all that parents, students, communities, and businesses expect from a world-class public education. The 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act defined seven capacities required of students (with an eighth added in 2000). These include the durable and transferable skills that will serve students in a changing economy and world. Communication, leadership, critical thinking, and collaboration are among these skills.

While we don't — and arguably shouldn't — try to boil these skills down to standardized tests, a diploma should

ensure meaningful evidence of skill development. Students should practice and be able to articulate how they developed these competencies. A “meaningful diploma” must assure that Kentucky's students are prepared to succeed.

Our work, as a citizen-led, nonpartisan and independent organization — is the same as ever: striving to create conditions for success and progress. That means advocating for the policy and investment solutions that strengthen our system, like passage of the 2022 Read to Succeed Act and the General Assembly, so far, meeting our six-year Big Bold Ask investment requests for early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary.

It also means supporting and amplifying local solutions to the needs of students and families — a Groundswell for community and family engagement. Communities need to be at the table.

Sustainable improvement will not be just the work of our school districts, early childhood providers and postsecondary institutions. It requires all of us to be part of the solution.

While we won't be traveling back to the future in a DeLorean, we are indeed looking for a lightning bolt to restore our momentum. That jolt can come from Kentuckians uniting around a shared commitment, putting the pedal to the metal, and accepting nothing less than reaching that Big Bold Kentucky Future, together!

**Rejuvenation
should mean
renewed
academic
gains, plus
new attention
to wider
success skills
and support
for local
solutions.**

Prichard Adds 6 Members

The Prichard Committee added six new members from across the state at its annual business meeting in October.

Terence Clemons and Laurel Raimondo Martin of Lexington, Sandi Curd of Corbin, Gayle Hilleke of Cold Spring, Haley McCoy of Richmond and Jennifer Washburn of Benton were approved as members, bringing the statewide group's total membership to 149.

Felicia Cumings Smith of Frankfort was elected as a new member of the Prichard board of directors.

reaching us

Perspectives is published as a print and an e-mail newsletter. Contact us to be added to our mailing lists or suggest others we might add.

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Awards of Excellence Honor Agency, Civic, Policy Successes

The Prichard Committee presented its Award of Excellence to four recipients representing the longstanding work of a state agency serving families and students: two longtime civic leaders in Eastern Kentucky, and a pair of lawmakers who spearheaded passage of a bill to expand support for reading instruction.

At its annual meeting in October in Berea, the group recognized the contributions of the state's Family Resource and Youth Service Centers by presenting the award to the state agency that administers the program, overseeing 888 centers serving more than 1,200 schools.

Jean Rosenberg joined the Prichard Committee in 1982 and has been deeply involved, along with her husband,

John, on education issues. They have also been instrumental in providing legal aid in Eastern Kentucky, including establishing the Appalachian Citizens Law Center in Whitesburg. The Rosenbergs also founded the East Kentucky Science Center and Varia Planetarium on the campus of Big Sandy Community and Technical College.

"Since arriving in Prestonsburg in 1970, they have worked to empower people to have a voice," said Brigitte Blom, the Prichard Committee president and CEO.

The award was also presented to Rep. James Tipton and Sen. Stephen West for their efforts ensuring the successful passage of the \$22 million Kentucky Read to Succeed Act in this year's legislative session.



**Melissa Goins with program managers
Lisa McKenzie and Doug Jones, with
Brigitte Blom and Clay Ford**



**John and Jean Rosenberg
of Floyd County**



**Rep. James Tipton, R-Taylorsville, and
Sen. Stephen West, R-Paris, with
Brigitte Blom and Clay Ford**



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Brigitte Blom,
PRESIDENT & CEO

Communication, Leadership Among Top Ky. Work Skills

A new analysis of skills that Kentucky employers are seeking in job postings shows that communication and leadership skills are regularly requested for available positions.

The Prichard Committee commissioned America Succeeds to analyze skills employers are seeking. The resulting study of 885,000 open positions over the past two years found that 74 percent requested at least one durable skill, and 42 percent requested at least three.

In order, the top five skills sought in Kentucky:

- **Communication**, from presentations to social media
- **Leadership**, such as project management
- **Metacognition**, including planning and multi-tasking
- **Critical Thinking**, from research to troubleshooting
- **Collaboration**, like teamwork and coordinating roles

Six of the 10 skills appearing most frequently in Kentucky postings were considered durable skills, involving work habits or applying knowledge, the analysis found.

Brigitte Blom, president and CEO of the Prichard Committee, said that a greater emphasis on durable skills is needed in Kentucky classrooms. "These skills will be important wherever Kentucky students find themselves in the future," she said.

The Prichard Committee has made a more meaningful diploma a central focus and is working on specific recommendations.

A Meaningful Diploma

Continued from Page 1

Kentucky schools and districts have been drafting new "graduate profiles" pledging academic success plus skills like problem solving, communication, adaptability, citizenship, and more.

"We started down this road by asking what we are expecting students to master and what skills our community is wanting in high school students," explained Brandy Carver, the former Rowan County Senior High principal who now serves as the district's director of professional learning and districtwide programs. Carver said that the updated focus points educators toward stronger connections with employers and the community while boosting student engagement.

She said that the district is committed to producing graduates far better prepared for the world beyond high school.

While proficiency in reading, writing, math, science, and other academic fundamentals is essential, good grades are an inadequate measure of the know-how needed to thrive as adults. Examining 82 million job postings in 2019 and 2020, the group America Succeeds, based in Denver, found that skills in communication, leadership, self-management, and critical thinking were the most common attributes sought in postings across all job categories.

The non-profit group developed a list of "durable skills" most needed in today's workforce. Employers want to see that job candidates can use what they know — collaboration, creativity, communication, critical thinking — along with characteristics like leadership, fortitude, character, growth mindset, self-awareness, and personal management.

The group said that in an economy that values agility, "students and workers will need to commit to 'up-skilling' and 're-skilling' as they respond to economic shifts and disruptions."



Special Report Profiles Schools Boosting Learning, Skills



At Heritage Elementary, fourth graders discussed ways that skills like critical thinking, collaboration and communication help them achieve as learners and citizens.



Teachers like Kalli Colley at South Marshall Middle said that infusing durable skills and active learning has boosted creativity and connections with students.

In its 2021 report, “The High Demand for Durable Skills,” America Succeeds calls on state policymakers and school leaders to ensure students are ready for the job market.

“The best preparation in the face of uncertainty and rapid innovation is a combination of academics, digital literacy, and durable skills,” the report stated. “We need intentional, strategic policies and practices that strengthen the linkages between education and workforce.”

Many Kentucky schools are moving in that direction.

This summer, the state’s eight regional education cooperatives, which support school district operations, launched a major campaign to train and support educators in spreading “deeper learning” experiences and assessments. The co-ops received a \$24.5 million grant from the state’s education-focused COVID-relief funds for a three-year effort to support local “deeper learning” experiences. Of 171 Kentucky school districts, 167 joined the effort.

“We see this as a collaborative response to reimagine school for all and accelerate student learning,” said Bart Flener, a former superintendent who directs the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative in Bowling Green.

Pandemic shutdowns and remote learning caused administrators to consider new approaches that would improve student success, he said. For co-op leaders, spreading concepts like durable skills and more interesting learning experiences fit the moment.

Observers say that the drive for more meaningful school outcomes is well underway in many areas. Education leaders have been initiating local conversations about essential skills, expanding internships and community service opportunities to connect schools and communities, and supporting classroom outcomes that stretch beyond one-dimensional test scores or an outdated high school diploma.

“We’ve got an opportunity right now to say let’s look at success in a different way,” Flener said. “Vibrant learning experiences — more collaboration and innovation — are about how students can use what they know in new situations they are going to face in real life.”



Panel Shares Insights on Skills

Educators from school systems focused on expanding students’ skills shared their experiences at the Prichard Committee’s annual meeting in Berea. Pictured from left are Justin Bathon, chair and associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership Studies at the University of Kentucky; Contessa Orr, superintendent of the Muhlenberg County district; Shalonda Foster, executive administrator of teaching and learning for the Jefferson County Public Schools; and Brian Creasman, superintendent of the Fleming County district.

Orr said that emphasis on skills and applied learning has grown from realizing that schools need to see beyond test scores. Foster added the new emphasis is helping students to identify who they are as learners and recognize whether they are mastering academics and skills. Creasman said recent graduates said they lacked skills necessary to succeed beyond high school. “We’ve really stretched ourselves to understand what is really needed by students.”

A four-part series on the Prichard Committee’s Ed. Blog examines how “deeper learning” and durable skills are growing in Kentucky schools. Stories highlight implications for students and teachers, plus state and local action to improve outcomes.



The STEAM Academy High School was created in 2013 to incorporate early college courses, community internships, and project-based learning to build student engagement.



At the district’s Intermediate Center, sixth graders build a prototype of a drive-in theater, part of a project about enterprises that could boost the local economy and quality of life.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Schools Earn 'Family Friendly' Certification for Inclusive Work

Gov. Andy Beshear and Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman joined the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools in November to recognize 32 schools and one early care center that earned new Family Friendly certification.

Schools recognized demonstrated intentional efforts in relationship building, communication, shared responsibility, advocacy, and community partnerships. They also developed family engagement action teams with plans and evidence for taking next steps to deepen equitable family engagement in their school and community.

The recognition was part of a larger effort to increase family engagement in schools. Sixty Kentucky schools are part of a Family Friendly Learning Network that connect across schools. One-on-one coaching is provided by Kentucky Collaborative staff and partners.

Principals expressed gratitude for help in realizing what they are doing right and where they can improve.

"Family-school engagement is essential at an early stage but, without focused effort, often wanes. Being connected to a feeder school that honors and builds this engagement throughout pays dividends for secondary school support," said Tyler Reed, Frankfort High School Principal, in congratulating Second Street School. Both are among the 2022 certified schools.

Find all schools certified and learn more about the process at prichardcommittee.org/familyengagement/.

Expanded Family Supports Needed To Prepare Students, Author Says

Preparing more students for success in education beyond high school, careers, and adult living will require greater attention to services offered beyond the traditional school day, according to author Nate Hilger, who researched education outcomes and childhood experiences for a new book.

Speaking at the Prichard Committee's annual meeting in Berea in October, Hilger said that preparing children is an immensely important job. Yet most of the time available for the task falls outside school hours and relies on parents who are often overburdened and feel ill-equipped to nurture skills that they don't possess themselves, he added.

"The vast majority of time in children's lives is managed by parents in their spare time on their own dollar," said Hilger, author of "The Parent Trap: How to Stop Overloading Parents and Fix Our Inequality Crisis." Boosting outcomes like income,

Raimondo Award Honors CIPL Staff



The community support coordinators over the 25-year history of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership was honored with the 2022 Beverly Nickell Raimondo Leadership Award.

Pictured at the September event where the award was announced are, from left, Christa Raimondo Cronin, Alana Morton, Maria Kenner, Tony Raimondo, Lutricia Woods, and Laurel Raimondo Martin.

The award is named for the late Beverly Raimondo, who launched the Commonwealth Institute and led the network of community support staff members. The coordinators recruited participants, delivered training, and assisted in projects and local activism by parents who graduated from the institute.

"Bev's team were the original builders, laying the foundation and vision of the Commonwealth Institute. Bev's legacy lives through our continued efforts to ensure parents have a seat at the table," said Brigitte Blom, President and CEO of the Prichard Committee.

"Bev's vision allowed us to be ground breakers and innovators," said Kenner, on the CIPL staff from 1998-2004.



Hilger

home ownership, education level, and more require better coordinated services and expanded opportunities outside of school time.

"We are all shareholders in each other's children," Hilger said. Greater family care and options for students — from tutoring to summer programs to financial aid — should be state and local priorities. While Kentucky has supplemental services for children and families, he said that web of supports for families often falls short of equipping students with needed life skills.

Advocacy for families and expanded child development strategies should garner as much interest and support as support for retirees or the elderly. He said that governments need to recognize the payoff of improving young people's prospects.

"Bigger government for kids might be one of the smartest ways to get smaller government for adults," Hilger said.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Funding Lapse Vexes Child Care

Kentucky's child care providers find themselves "on shaky ground," as temporary pandemic funding will soon end.

An updated report from the Prichard Committee, "A Fragile Ecosystem IV," shared results of an August survey of 500 child care providers and concluded that budget action by lawmakers is necessary to avoid a crisis.

"Without a plan to keep the child-care sector from plunging off a post-American Rescue Plan funding cliff, providers again find themselves facing impossible choices," the report stated. Even with pandemic funding infusions, 9 percent of licensed programs permanently closed. At the same time, providers experienced a shortage of adults to fill child-care jobs.

The report said that prior to the pandemic, half of Kentuckians lived in an area lacking child-care options. The short supply was a factor in keeping adults out of the workforce, earlier surveys found.

A survey last year showed that almost half of parents surveyed said they quit, declined, or changed jobs since March 2020 because of issues with child care.

The August report said that public and policy awareness are needed to avoid a child care emergency. "A strong workforce depends on child care access for working families," the report concluded. "Even today, over 45,000 Kentuckians continue to struggle due to a lack of child care and early education access and affordability."

Find the report at www.prichardcommittee.org.

GROUNDSWELL INITIATIVE

Community Profiles Can Inform Local Discussions

New profiles updated with 2022 school accountability results and current socioeconomic data are now available for all Kentucky school districts on the Prichard Committee website.

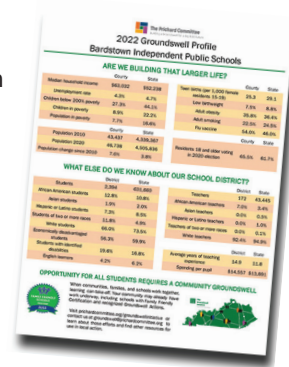
The Groundswell Profiles are designed to spark local conversations about education priorities and quality of life issues. The Prichard site also provides a Study and Source Guide to help citizens make sense of the data and take steps toward a local conversation about strengths and needs.

The three-page local data summary includes local and state results on 10 key education indicators, from preschool enrollment to postsecondary degrees.

The profile breaks down results on seven indicators based on family income, disability status, and for students with special needs.

In addition, results are shown based on gender, English language status, and racial background.

Community health and population data, as well as school district facts, are included. Profiles for each district are available at www.prichardcommittee.org.



Groundswell Summit Celebrates Citizen Action to Improve Schools



Community members from across Kentucky gathered at the Prichard Committee's Groundswell Summit in June in Erlanger. Parents, students, teachers, and education leaders shared strategies and insights over two days of sessions. Education Commissioner Jason Glass, top right, described the education department's United We Learn goals to engage communities. "Content knowledge is not sufficient," he said. "We know that things are overdue for change at scale."



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Show Your Backing To Move Ky. Ahead



Harvie Wilkinson
Prichard Committee
member

It has been almost 40 years since a group of concerned citizens came together to initiate major changes in Kentucky's K-12 education system. In an era of significant reform, the Prichard

Committee has been a constant. This group of citizens has been at the forefront of an important chapter of Kentucky's drive to deliver a brighter future for our students.

I joined in 2003, and I've been proud to share this commitment to championing adequate and equitable funding for all children, college and work readiness, student voice, parent and family involvement, expanded early childhood education, closing achievement gaps, relevant assessments and more.

SUPPORT THE PRICHARD COMMITTEE

Your tax-deductible gift can advance the mission and work of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. Use this form or the QR code below to make your contribution.

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We still have much to do. Education funding needs still remain. Student achievement needs to rise. Too many gaps have widened.

To improve, all of us need to be better informed to advocate effectively for education improvements. The Prichard Committee has the resources

and programs to help steer Kentucky towards a Big Bold Future. Will you please join me in supporting the outstanding work of the Prichard Committee?

Our students and citizens certainly deserve every opportunity to succeed in this highly competitive world!