

Perspectives

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The Prichard Committee

Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

Regional Sessions Seek Solutions



In October and November, the Prichard Committee convened seven regional gatherings and one online session to identify promising local strategies and challenges as schools rebound from pandemic setbacks over the past two school years. Above, Prichard member Hilma Prather speaks at a session in Somerest, her hometown. Below, participants at the regional meeting in Bowling Green.



viewpoint

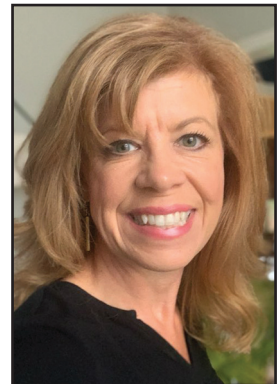
Reason for Hope

Reason for Hope is the title of a much-loved book on my shelf by Jane Goodall. Often when I'm feeling overwhelmed, worn, and weathered, that title pops into my head, and I'm reminded to look for reasons to be hopeful.

As we traveled the state this fall, it's clear families, educators, and community leaders are looking for the same. Some are more hopeful than others, and all are looking for solutions — solutions that will spark HOPE, strengthen resolve, and signal forward, positive motion.

Economist Joseph Schumpeter, in the early 1990s, coined the phrase “creative destruction” for the process of innovation and entrepreneurship that leads to new and better ways of doing things, leaving dated and less efficient ways behind. By its nature, the notion of creative destruction seeks to find hope in the demise of the old and the rise of the new.

Mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, in the 1970s, discovered fractals: patterns that exist at the deepest level while on the surface there appears only chaos and



By Brigitte Blom
President & CEO

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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.

EXCELLENCE WITH EQUITY

New Kit Focuses on Access, Participation, Results

A new Equity Toolkit designed to inform citizens and public audiences about equity issues in education is available from the Prichard Committee. The group worked with an Equity Coalition comprised of about 140 members from across the state to identify data and strategies to enhance conversations about achievement and fairness in public education.

“The goal is to be able to present to a local group and advocate on behalf of equity in public education with the tools to do that work,” said Chaka Cummings, manager of K-12 and equity policy at Prichard.

The kit should help local citizens frame a productive conversation with school leaders and other education advocates about the strategies and goals for addressing achievement gaps reflected in education data — from test scores to class enrollment trends to issues like discipline and access to supports.

The toolkit points out that performance disparities need to be addressed in Kentucky schools and should not be overshadowed by hot-button political debates about racial discussions in classrooms. The kit notes that approaching equity means focusing on equal access and participation in education connected to achievement data.

Cummings said that wide input from the Equity Coalition informed the materials, which are organized as presentation slides that can be easily shared and understood by local audiences or individuals.

More information is available at prichardcommittee.org.



Chaka Cummings, the Prichard Committee manager of K-12 and equity policy, spoke on a panel about the future of education at the 2021 Kentucky Education Summit in Louisville. The two-day event was sponsored by the state education department. Fayette County parent leader Penny Christian, a Prichard Committee member, also spoke on the panel. *Photo courtesy of KDE.*

Cummings Joins Prichard Staff

Chaka Cummings joined the Prichard Committee this year as manager of K-12 and equity policy. He is a graduate of Berea College and the University of Kentucky and is pursuing a doctorate in higher education studies at UK. He previously worked as a middle school social studies teacher and diversity, equity, and inclusivity co-chair at Sayre School in Lexington.

HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

Owensboro Foundation Taps Prichard to Build Pre-k Expansion Consensus

The Prichard Committee brought together community partners from Daviess County this summer to launch a unique “landscape analysis” of early childhood supply-and-demand issues in the area and to work toward solutions that could be shared across the state.

The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro announced a \$500,000 multi-year grant earlier in 2021 to work with Prichard to identify opportunities, needs, and solutions. It is part of a \$4 million early childhood education initiative by the foundation.

The goal is to make high-quality early childhood options accessible to anyone with children age 5 and younger, according to Ben Gies, director of early childhood policy and practice at the Prichard Committee.

The Prichard Committee partnered with the University of Kentucky’s Martin School of Public Policy and Administration to produce an analysis that will set the stage for expansion and improvements. It also assembled 40 community leaders to study challenges, and draft priorities and

strategies. Awareness, access, funding, and space are all issues — plus bolstering the early childhood workforce — that will be addressed over the next four years.

Gies Joins Prichard Staff

Ben Gies, a former member of the Jefferson County school board, joined the Prichard Committee in April as director of early childhood policy and practice.

Gies will lead the group’s early childhood public policy work and the Strong Start KY Coalition, in addition to working to expand access to quality early childhood services.

He is a graduate of Bellarmine University and the University of Louisville, now working on a doctorate in leadership and policy at Vanderbilt University. Gies previously worked as the Policy and Advocacy Director for Kentucky Youth Advocates and was a teacher in Oldham County.



Gies

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

New Network To Test Wider Supports for Student Learning

A new learning network will test expanded family engagement strategies at 60 Kentucky schools in 20 districts over the next two school years under the guidance of the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools, a Prichard Committee program.

The peer learning group will look for ways that family engagement can drive stronger student outcomes.

Beginning this fall, school leaders began using a menu of training and services to enhance local efforts and will participate in surveys each spring to measure improvement. The network is a combination of group learning

sessions, small-group coaching, and increased access to resources for expanding family engagement.

"To grow students we have to know students, and no one knows our students better than their families," said Jay Brewer, superintendent of Dayton school district. All three schools in the district are participating.

In partnership with the Prichard Committee, local family engagement efforts are being supported by staff from Berea Partners for Education, Daviess County Schools, the Kentucky Department of Education, Learning Grove, and the National Center for Families Learning.

FAMILY FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

Schools across the state recently joined a learning network focused on family engagement. The group is comprised of:

BEREA Berea Community Elementary | **BOONE COUNTY** Jones Middle | **CAMPBELL COUNTY** Campbell County High; Campbell County Middle; Campbell Ridge, Cline, Crossroads, Grant's Lick, and Reiley Elementary | **DAVIESS COUNTY** Burns Middle; Audubon, Burns, Country Heights, Deer Park, East View, Heritage Park, Highland, Meadow Lands, Sorgho, Southern Oaks, West Louisville, and Whitesville Elementary | **DAYTON** Dayton High; Dayton Middle; Dayton Elementary | **FAYETTE COUNTY** Lafayette High; Leestown Middle; Arlington Elementary | **FLOYD COUNTY** Floyd Central High; Duff-Allen Central Elementary | **FORT THOMAS** Moyer Elementary | **GALLATIN COUNTY** Gallatin County Upper Elementary | **HARLAN** Harlan High; Harlan Elementary | **JEFFERSON COUNTY** Carrithers Middle; James Academy

(middle); Kenwood, Shelby, and Portland Elementary | **JENKINS** Jenkins Independent Schools | **LUDLOW** Goetz Elementary | **MENIFEE** Menifee Central K-8 | **PADUCAH** McNabb Elementary | **POWELL COUNTY** Bowen Elementary | **PULASKI COUNTY** Pulaski County High | **ROWAN COUNTY** Rowan County High; Rowan County Middle; Rodburn Elementary | **WASHINGTON COUNTY** Washington County High; Washington County Middle; North Washington, and Washington County Elementary | **WILLIAMSBURG** Williamsburg Independent School | **VIA PARTNER AGENCIES** Altamonte Early Learning and River City Early Learning in Covington through Learning Grove; Erlanger Early Learning through Learning Grove; B&G Fowler Child Development Laboratory through Berea College.



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PRESIDENT & CEO

ANNUAL MEETING

Speakers Offer Advice on Enhancing Civic, Economic Focus

Building a local atmosphere for greater civic engagement and adaptation to changing economic conditions were the focus of speakers at the Prichard Committee's annual meeting this fall, with interviews shared on the internet in response to the COVID pandemic.

Sensitivity and understanding of local communities is an important part of creating lasting civic ownership and significantly changing systems like education, said Rich Harwood, founder of a Maryland-based organization that works to build civic alliances across the country.

**Harwood**

Getting results means understanding people who feel left out, left behind, or in need of support. Listening and responding to local concerns is a key to building belief in one another and improving civic culture, he added.

"Too often, solutions are imposed from outside or plugged in from one community to another," Harwood said. "We need to act on people's aspirations to create better lives for ourselves, our neighbors, and communities."

Harwood said that most people are eager for a sense of connection and belonging, despite current divisions and mistrust of leaders.

PREPARING FOR FUTURE NEEDS

Susan Elkington, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky and a Prichard Committee member, said that as communities focus on education, they need to look ahead to realize ways that economic and technological

**Elkington**

change will require different sets of skills and knowledge for students and workers.

"Imagine what it's going to be like when our students starting kindergarten now graduate from high school and college," she said. "It's not going to be like anything we can imagine today." Teamwork and collaboration will only grow in reach and importance. Elkington added that community leaders need to follow the lead of business in addressing current challenges while simultaneously investing in the future and providing space and support for creativity.

"That continuous learning that we expect for students is something that adults and organizations do," she added.

EMPHASIZING COMMON GROUND

In another keynote presentation, Kentucky Secretary of State Michael Adams spoke about efforts to increase civic involvement, voting, and civic education.

**Adams**

He underscored that listening to others is essential in building stronger public involvement. "It's important to build empathy," he said.

"We've got to find things that we have in common that are not politics," Adams said. "We're Kentuckians. Let that define us."

The annual meeting discussions are available at prichardcommittee.org/annualmeeting/.

As 2021 Teacher Fellows Finalize Work, 2022 Group Named

The Prichard Committee convened 11 Kentucky teachers as a 2021 cohort of Teacher Fellows. The group is finalizing an updated statement to inspire policymakers and local school leaders.

The group has worked in four subgroups based on priority areas from the letter produced by 2020 Teacher Fellows: family engagement, student engagement, anti-racist teaching, and teacher well-being and mental health.

The 2021 fellows include Renee Boss of Woodford County, Natalie Croney of Warren County, C.J. Fryer of Beechwood, Kiara Gray of Jefferson County, Brison Harvey of Fayette County, Tori Howard of Jackson, Kevin Presnell of Madison County, Noraa Ransey of Calloway County, Jami Reynolds of Hardin County, and Casey Salyers of Johnson County. Lauren Hill of Fayette County is serving as facilitator.

"To realize the promise of teacher leadership, opportu-

nities like this fellowship propel teachers into new spheres of influence that enable us to practice the necessary skills and acquire the knowledge only fieldwork can teach," Hill said.

The group's work and projects will be shared in the weeks ahead. In addition, the 2022 Teacher Fellows were recently announced. The cohort is comprised by Carly Baldwin of Boyd County, Rob Collins of Greenup County, Jim Davis of Warren County, Ashleigh Glickley, Debra Glover, and Amanda Thompson of Jefferson County, Christine Holajter of Scott County, Amanda Klare of Beechwood, Charlene Martin of Johnson County, Stacie May of Rowan County, Bridget Powell of Marshall County, and Andy Smith of Fayette County.

The 2020 letter and more information are available at prichardcommittee.org/pcfellows/.

Viewpoint

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complexity; nature is full of fractals. Fractal mathematics gave rise to Chaos Theory — popularized by the well-known Butterfly Effect — that small changes in conditions can lead to drastic — albeit, nonlinear — results. Fractals remind that us that in the midst of seeming chaos, there is order and that our small actions can and do have impact.

As we continue to see our way through the chaotic, complex, and uncertain environment that is the early 21st century, embracing innovation and entrepreneurial thinking is necessary to produce stronger, more effective, and more equitable learning environments. The smallest adjustments born from our understanding of the needs of students and families will begin to spark hope — and these can have far-reaching ripple effects in communities and across the state. A few of note from 2021, include:

■ In Owensboro-Daviess County, community leaders are designing a “high-quality early childhood ecosystem” to meet the needs of little learners and their families and to ensure the area is a thriving community for the future (See the story on Page 2).

■ Across the state, 60 schools and childcare centers are participating in the Family Friendly Schools Learning Network to strengthen family engagement as core strategy to strengthen their community and student outcomes (See the story and list of sites on Page 3).

■ In the Ashland area, community leaders have

hatched a “big bold plan” through partnership between school districts and community organizations to help students recover from learning loss and the loss they experienced from social isolation.

■ The Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education is building innovative ways to support deeper learning and intrinsic motivation in students from the ground up in a subset of districts, which will grow over time.

As we move into 2022, the Prichard Committee is dedicating resources to shining a spotlight on local innovation and promising practices. At the same time, we will begin intentionally networking Kentuckians to learn from, and build off, one another — creating Kentucky’s own butterfly effect, otherwise known as a Groundswell.

Without a doubt, we are worn, we are weathered, we are overwhelmed — collectively. By finding Reason for Hope together, we can ensure this time becomes known as the time of Great Transformation, leading to a Big Bold Future where every Kentuckian can thrive, contribute to, and benefit from our shared progress as a state.

‘Embracing innovation and entrepreneurial thinking is necessary to produce stronger, more effective, and more equitable learning environments.’

Surveys, Summaries Share Schools’ Pandemic Takeaways

The “Learning through COVID” series on the Prichard Committee’s website summarizes 2020 and 2021 surveys cataloging the impact of the pandemic on education and provides examples of best practices for recovery. The materials include perspectives from child care providers, parents, educators, and students, plus five lessons learned during the pandemic:

More high-quality child care options for families of all income levels are needed; the child care system and its workers are essential; in K-12 schools and colleges, inequities based on student groups remain starker than ever; built-in mental health supports in K-12 and college need to be funded and prioritized; and the digital divide must be closed at all costs.



Russellville High teacher Tanya Mullen leads a biology class in March after the school resumed in-person classes.

Find various reports and resources from the series at prichardcommittee.org/covid-surveys/.

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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PARENT LEADERSHIP

First-Ever Spanish Institute Makes Deeper Connections

Over the past three years, Ana Reid, who grew up in Honduras, had tried to catch on to routines at the schools her children attend in Kenton County. Fluent only in Spanish, she worked to understand school procedures and learn about events and expectations. She and her young children and school officials were trying, she said, but she had always felt far behind.

This year provided a turning point. Focused training about the structure of Kentucky's education system and the basics of her local school system helped create a firm handle on how she can be involved with her children's education — and elevated the possibilities she sees in her own life.

"The relationship before was very disconnected about how to do things. I had no idea who could help," Reid said, describing her link to her children's education.

Over the past year, Reid joined a pilot group of Spanish-speaking parents in a first-ever bilingual adaptation of the Prichard Committee's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. Over more than two decades, the program has provided comprehensive free training for parents across the state to build understanding of fundamentals of Kentucky's education system — from state testing and academic standards to improvement planning and school decision making.

The 2021 institute selected a group of parents whose children are identified as English Language Learners in their schools. Reid said that the immersive experience delivered a huge step forward.



Jason Glass, the Kentucky education commissioner, spoke with members of a Spanish-language Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership.

"Things that I felt were impossible for me, now they are part of my life and my lifestyle," Reid said in an interview. "Knowledge is power. Your learning experience gives you the power to take action, and it defines your opportunities as a mom and a part of your immediate community."

Reid was among 12 parents to complete the pilot class. This fall, she stayed involved, helping with a Parent Camp for other family members eager to learn more about schools. She is assisting a new cohort at 2022 Commonwealth Institute sessions aimed at Spanish-speaking parents.

"It opened my eyes to all of the challenges that parents face," said Laura Beard, a senior coordinator for family engagement at the Prichard Committee who helps lead CIPL. A language barrier adds challenges to understanding schools' routines and how learning issues are addressed, from drop-off

See SPANISH, Page 7

Freeman, Longtime Louisville Advocate, Wins Raimondo Award



Bonnie Lash Freeman, an abiding champion of family engagement and education, was honored with the 2021 Beverly Nickell Raimondo Leadership Award from the Prichard Committee.

Freeman, a Prichard Committee member, is retired from the National Center for Families Learning where she managed various programs and grants focused on family literacy development. She served on Kentucky's State Board of Education from 2004-08.

"Bonnie has been dedicated to the same principles that Beverly held dear — that every parent has a voice," said Tony Raimondo, husband of the late Beverly Raimondo, who led the Prichard Committee's groundbreaking parent leadership work.

"Bonnie is an incredible educator and advocate for equity and racial justice," added Prichard Committee member Mary Gwen Wheeler of Louisville. The award was presented to Freeman this fall.

GROUNDSWELL INITIATIVE

Citizens Describe Local Action

The Prichard Committee's Groundswell Initiative grew to include more than 1,300 citizens this year.

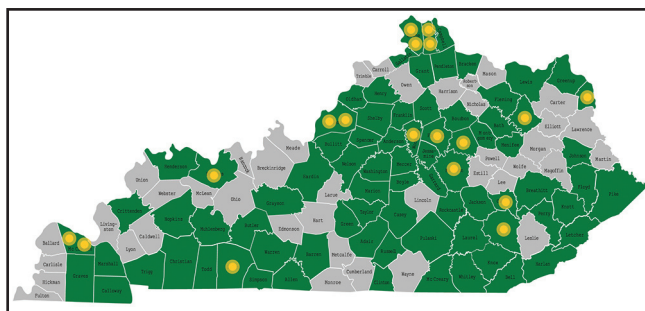
The effort is designed to reach any citizen interested in resources on education topics across the early childhood to postsecondary spectrum. The goal is to support and encourage local conversations and activities that will build public action for better education outcomes.

Several Groundswell members shared examples of local work at a Prichard Committee meeting in September:

■ In Ashland, Prichard Committee and Groundswell member Norma Meek worked with her local YMCA to highlight topics from preschool issues to preparation for the ACT college-entrance exam. The group also worked to expand volunteer efforts by students and adults to support education locally.

■ In Louisville, a group backed a local vote to increase property taxes to support the Jefferson County school district. The initiative faced extensive legal challenges, with Groundswell members still actively involved in following the case and working to implement and support increased revenue for the school system.

■ In Covington, Groundswell work combined with a city program to expand broadband access during the pan-



Membership in the Prichard Committee's Groundswell Initiative now includes individuals in the counties shaded green. One goal of the program to expand grassroots education conversations and solutions is to reach every Kentucky county. Yellow dots on the map indicate locations where local projects are detailed on the Prichard Committee website.

demically and launch a city-wide reading and literacy campaign that has also been embraced by teachers.

Expanding support for Groundswell members is an ongoing effort. A Groundswell Education Toolbox is available online, providing background information and links to resources throughout the education pipeline.

Find information at prichardcommittee.org/groundswell/.

Prichard Adds 19 Members

The Prichard Committee added 19 new members from across the state at its annual business meeting in September. The group also approved a new slate of officers and board members.

W. Clay H. Ford of Owensboro became board chair, succeeding **Wynn Radford** of Hopkinsville. **Susan Elkington** of Georgetown was approved as vice chair, and **Gwendolyn Young** of Lexington became secretary/treasurer. Joining the Prichard board for three-year terms were **Jay Box** of Georgetown, **Lonnie Lawson** and **Elaine Wilson** of Somerset, **Derrick Ramsey** of Lexington, and **Julie Tennyson** of Paducah.

Box and Ramsey were among the new members ap-

proved at the September meeting. Others joining the Prichard Committee as members were **Cassandra Akers** of Harold, **Kate Akers** of Taylorsville, **Sharon Baker**, **Kevin Fields Sr.**, and **Rodney Henderson** of Louisville, **Tara Boh Blair** of Mount Sterling, **Jennifer Carroll** of Hazard, **Susan Douglas** of Lexington, **Jeff Hawkins** of Fleming-Neon, **Bonnie Higginson** of Murray, **Todd Holland** of Wingo, **Tara Johnson-Noem** of Covington, **George E. Long II** of Benton, **Terry G. Owens** of Radcliff, **Ryan Salzman** of Bellevue, **Edna O. Schack** of Morehead, and **Rachel Watts Webb** of Nicholasville.

The Prichard Committee also recognized three Life Members for longstanding service and support of improved education: **Becky Goss** of Nicholasville, **Dennis Pearce** of South Carolina, and **Pam Shepherd** of Versailles.

Spanish Institute

Continued from Page 6

procedures to requirements attached to specialized programs. On top of that, parents face challenges such as connecting with translators and completing background checks.

Families from the 2021 ELL CIPL class focused their group project on clarifying background check policies at the state and local levels. Families met with Kentucky Education Commissioner Jason Glass to discuss the barriers associated with

obtaining a background check. KDE released a guidance document in response to families' questions.

A 2022 CIPL program for ELL parents in Boone County launched Nov. 18. In addition, a separate English-language CIPL cohort recently began with participants from Rowan, Jefferson, Madison, Oldham, Laurel, Gallatin, Fayette, Franklin, and Floyd counties. Both sessions will continue through spring 2022. CIPL is sponsored by St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Toyota, the LG&E and KU Foundation, the R.C. Durr Foundation, Inc., and the Charles and Ruth Seligman Family Foundation.

Individual Interest Can Spark Action



Al Cornish
Louisville

I learned about the Prichard Committee in 2006, shortly after moving to Kentucky. I sat down with founder Bob Sexton, and we spent an afternoon discussing the history of the Committee, the status of public education, and his vision for the organization's work.

I have been a proud member ever since. I have met some amazing, passionate, and caring people. We all have the same desire and want the same outcome — to provide a quality education to the students who consume this product called education. I have seen countless innovations around the state not mandated by anyone, but the result of a thoughtful educator challenged with a problem. It

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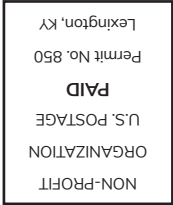
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is a reminder to me that “one person can really make a difference.”

I'm proud that 15 years after becoming a Prichard Committee member, we are still living by the mantra to mobilize citizens for a Big Bold Future.

I encourage you to join me and countless others in our efforts to improve and support public education. You might ask, why? It's because our children deserve the very best in educational opportunities so they have a bright future to be whomever they decide to be!



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