

**EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS PLAN FOR  
KENTUCKY**

**Kentucky Department of Education**

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# Equitable Access to Effective Educators Plan for Kentucky

## Section 1. Introduction

Kentucky is pleased to submit to the U.S. Department of Education the following plan that has been developed to address the need to improve equitable access to effective teachers and leaders. This plan is responsive to the requirement in Section 1111(b)(8)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that each state's Title I, Part A plan include information on the strategies Kentucky will employ to ensure that poor, minority, Limited English Proficient, and special needs students are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) will ensure the Equity Plan is a purposeful, ongoing, dynamic and living document that evolves over time. KDE will monitor and communicate the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders, provide technical assistance for district personnel to support their efforts to implement strategies, engage in a continuous process of improvement that highlights the purpose of the plan and use the results to measure success as well as determine next steps. This plan also outlines the five measures that will be used to evaluate impact of the implemented strategies and explains how data from the measures will be publicly reported to support continuous improvement. Kentucky recognizes how important school leaders are to the continuous improvement process; therefore, the plan will include strategies to address access to effective leaders.

As outlined in Kentucky's approved ESEA Waiver application, Kentucky is committed to improving educational outcomes for all students and has invested focused efforts in improving the quality of instruction across the Commonwealth. To develop this plan, the KDE created an Equity Plan Work Group led by the Division of Next Generation Professionals. This group represents not only offices and divisions across the agency, but also other agencies such as the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) and Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS). The steps taken to prepare this plan are included below:

1. Reviewed Kentucky's approved [ESEA Waiver application](#), including Principle 3, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness.

In order to ensure that Kentucky would be able to measure effective teaching and leading, the state has implemented the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System required by KRS 156.557. As outlined in [704 KAR 3:370](#), the overall rating of a teacher is based on professional practice and student growth. Teachers and leaders receive ratings on both of these measures, and using a matrix model, an overall rating. These metrics will be used as two measures to gauge the impact of Kentucky's equitable access plan.

2. Reviewed existing state policies on hiring, recruiting, retaining, and supporting teachers; funding and staffing of schools and licensure requirements to determine if any barriers existed or new policies were needed to accomplish the goals of the plan. A chart outlining these policies is located in Appendix A.

Kentucky is a local control state. Statutes and regulations create the infrastructure in which districts and schools operate regarding hiring, recruitment (P-12 and higher education), preparation and retention.

3. Provided an Equity Plan overview to the advisory groups outlined in Section 2 and solicited feedback on root causes to equitable access and thoughts on possible strategies to overcome these barriers.

4. Established an Equity Plan workgroup and set a schedule of activities for plan preparation.

5. Outlined key definitions, determined data sources, identified gap groups, and specified metrics.

6. Developed strategies and timelines to address and eliminate existing gaps.

7. Drafted the plan for submission.

## **Section 2. Stakeholder Engagement Efforts**

When Secretary Duncan announced the “Excellent Educators for All” initiative and that states would develop plans to address this issue, the KDE immediately joined in support of this commitment. A planning team met August 6, 2014 to develop a plan of action. This team was comprised of KDE associate commissioners, policy advisors, division directors and staff from across the agency. The tone was set that this work was not that of one particular office or division, but the work of all within the agency. This core team discussed the steps necessary to develop a solid plan to address the equitable access issues that exist in Kentucky. One of the key components identified as critical to the success of the plan was communication. Kentucky was fortunate the Commissioner of Education had already established a mechanism for this to take place. The Commissioner regularly seeks input on education issues from partners through advisory committees and stakeholder groups. These groups have representation including, but not limited to, higher education, unions, civil rights groups, district leaders, principals, pupil personnel staff, teachers, parents, students and non-profit organizations.

While guidance had not yet been released regarding the “Excellent Educators for All” initiative, the Equity Plan work group, established by the core leadership team, began the work of communicating the plan. The kickoff was held August 12, 2014 with the meeting of the Unbridled Learning Guiding Coalition. The development of a statewide plan to address equitable access to effective educators was announced. Additionally, data was shared by the Harvard

Strategic Data Project Fellows regarding turnover rate for newly hired teachers and all teachers in the state of Kentucky. This data created a sense of urgency to develop strategies to address the overall teacher turnover rate in Kentucky, particularly for the highest poverty and minority districts in the state. This first meeting determined direction for the rest of the advisory council meetings.

The Equity Plan work group made contact with each advisory council and reached out to additional stakeholder groups to enlist the assistance with the communication and development of the plan. Each meeting began with an overview of the history of equitable distribution as part of No Child Left Behind. It was explained the focus was on the distribution of highly qualified teachers to ensure that poor and minority students were not taught at higher rates than their peers. It also was explained that the federal definition of highly qualified simply meant teachers held the appropriate certification to teach the course(s) for which they were assigned. Groups quickly recognized that having the appropriate certification was a step in the right direction, but other strategies would be necessary to ensure “Excellent Educators for All.” As is the norm, Kentucky turned to data analysis. Specific equity data was shared and a discussion regarding the possible root causes and strategies to address the equitable access issues ensued. While a table detailing specific feedback has been included in the appendix, a summary of overarching themes that emerged from the stakeholder engagement meetings has been included below.

### **Summary of Stakeholder Suggestions**

#### **Root Causes:**

- Teachers not being prepared to meet the diverse learning needs of all students;
- New and inexperienced teachers are often assigned to work with the most challenging students;
- Screeners are inappropriately used during the hiring process eliminating quality applicants;
- Policies, procedures and contracts are written and implemented in ways that create a revolving door of teachers in high poverty, high minority, and the lowest achieving schools;
- Working conditions that would improve the culture of the school are not correctly or adequately addressed;
- Administrators are not developing and sustaining a collaborative culture that promotes team work and on-going professional support to improve teaching and learning; and
- Leadership opportunities outside the classroom are not available for teachers.

