



Commonwealth Education Continuum 2024 Annual Report



Commonwealth
Education Continuum





About the Continuum

Launched in 2021, the Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC) – Kentucky’s P-20 Council – is a nationally recognized, cross-sector initiative designed to address persistent gaps and improve transitions throughout the state’s education system, from early childhood to postsecondary education and into the workforce. Kentucky is one of only eight states with an established P-20 council, positioning the Continuum as a leader in fostering collaboration among education and business leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to create a seamless and effective education pipeline.

Co-chaired by Lt. Governor Jacqueline Coleman, Council on Postsecondary Education President Aaron Thompson, and Education Commissioner Robbie Fletcher, the Continuum consists of members whose expertise ranges from early childhood to the workforce (see Appendix A).

Since its inception, the CEC has engaged over 1,700 stakeholders through active participation in workgroups, interviews, focus groups, and design teams, ensuring diverse voices contribute to the development of meaningful strategies. With a consistent quarterly meeting attendance rate exceeding 80%, the Continuum demonstrates a strong commitment to sustained, collaborative progress.

To further drive public engagement and awareness, the CEC has shared over 450 outreach posts across social media platforms. Through the guidance and development of the CEC Data Team, a real-time data dashboard was created to track progress across key focus areas, promoting transparency and data-driven decision-making.

To further understand the unique needs across the Commonwealth and identify actionable strategies to strengthen Kentucky's education system, the CEC established a series of focused workgroups. These groups reflect the Continuum's evolving priorities each year and engage a broad range of stakeholders including experts, in targeted, cross-sector collaboration:

- **2021:** Early Postsecondary Opportunities, Educator Workforce, and Postsecondary Transition
- **2022:** Ninth Grade on Track, Access to Early Postsecondary Opportunities and First-Year Postsecondary Success
- **2023:** Early Childhood and the development of the CEC Data Dashboard
- **2024:** K–16 Competency Skills Alignment, Postsecondary Affordability, Postsecondary Advising, and strengthening the Education Administration Workforce

These workgroups are essential to the Continuum's mission, enabling in-depth exploration of key challenges and driving innovative solutions across Kentucky's education pipeline.

Mission

The Commonwealth Education Continuum exists to remove barriers throughout the system to ensure students can access a seamless P-20 education journey. The Continuum supports actions that lead to Kentuckians earning the necessary degrees and credentials to succeed in the workforce, elevate our communities, and increase economic opportunity. The CEC achieves this by:

- Convening cross-sector partners,
- Monitoring and reporting progress,
- Identifying and advocating for policy solutions, and
- Accelerating action.

Vision

The Commonwealth Education Continuum champions an agile education system that serves Kentuckians from cradle to career. We aspire to be the most seamless education system in the nation, where Kentuckians have access and opportunity to earn quality degrees and credentials that lead to prosperous careers and fulfilling lives.



Key Accomplishments

► Educator Workforce

Strengthening Kentucky's educator workforce—including both teachers and school leaders—is a central priority to strengthening the educational opportunities for students. A robust and well-supported pipeline of educators is foundational to student achievement and overall school success. Since 2021, CEC-led and supported efforts have yielded several notable advancements:

- The **Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB)** extended **Praxis test score eligibility from 5 to 10 years**, reducing barriers for teacher candidates and improving retention within the certification pipeline.
- The **University of Louisville's C4 Summer Bridge Program** for future educators reported a **97% retention rate**, demonstrating the effectiveness of early engagement strategies in educator preparation.
- A **CEC-convened workgroup completed a comprehensive statewide study** of principal preparation and support, resulting in detailed **recommendations for improving leadership development**, including enhanced preparation programs and professional support structures for aspiring, new, and experienced principals.
- The KDE revised the **GoTeachKY** website and launched a campaign to promote the teaching profession.

These initiatives reflect the CEC's ongoing commitment to strengthening Kentucky's educator pipeline through evidence-based policy recommendations and targeted program support.



► Postsecondary Advising

Recognizing the critical role of high-quality, personalized advising in students' successful transition to postsecondary education, the CEC supported the launch of the Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA) in 2022. The KAA provides targeted professional development for school advisors, counselors, and Family Resource/Youth Service Center (FRYSC) coordinators to close information gaps and expand awareness and access to postsecondary opportunities.

Key accomplishments since 2022 include:

- Reaching over **80% of Kentucky school districts** through professional learning sessions, webinars, and ongoing support.
- Collaboratively developing the **Kentucky Postsecondary Advising Framework** with K–12 and higher education partners.
- Creating a **College and Career Advising Toolkit**, accessed more than **9,500 times**.
- Hosting **monthly webinars**—viewed over **400 times**—featuring participation from **16 Kentucky colleges** and **6 school districts**.
- Awarding over **\$500,000 in grants** to school districts to enhance advising services.
- Presenting KAA initiatives to **15+ national and state professional organizations**.
- Establishing a **23-member cross-sector Community of Practice** to foster innovation and alignment across the advising ecosystem.

KAA exemplifies Kentucky's commitment to building a more informed, supported, and college-ready student population through systemic, statewide collaboration.



► Early Postsecondary Opportunities and Dual Credit

Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs), such as dual credit programs and Advanced Placement (AP), are effective tools for increasing college readiness while reducing both the time and cost to earn a degree. These programs help students build academic momentum and broaden access to higher education. In response to their growing importance, the CEC has taken a proactive role in advancing EPSOs across Kentucky.

Key initiatives and outcomes include:

- **Established the nation's first dual credit attainment goal**, setting a target for 50% of Kentucky high school graduates to complete at least one dual credit course.
- **Released the Early Postsecondary Opportunities Toolkit**, now actively used by **330 educators and stakeholders**.
- Formed a **Dual Credit Community of Practice** with **60+ cross-sector members** from education and government to promote collaboration and best practices.
- Distributed over **\$86,000 in grants to 33 local programs** to enhance dual credit success and promote postsecondary enrollment
- Advocated for **continued investment in state-funded dual credit scholarships, resulting in \$21.5 million** administered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) in 2023.

These strategic efforts are helping more students access and benefit from early college experiences, reinforcing Kentucky's commitment to educational advancement and workforce readiness.



► Summer Bridge Programs

Summer bridge programs are targeted pre-college experiences designed to support incoming students as they transition into postsecondary education. These programs provide essential academic and social resources for students who may have had limited access to college-readiness opportunities in high school, helping to strengthen college enrollment and persistence through strategic orientation.

The CEC prioritized summer bridge initiatives with measurable impact across Kentucky's campuses. Key outcomes include:

- **Over 1,200 students** participated in **40 CEC-sponsored programs** across **27 institutions** during 2021–22 and enrolled in college the following fall.
- Since 2022, the CEC has awarded **\$6.5 million in grants** to support summer bridge programming, which also generated **\$315,000+ in additional tuition revenue** from returning students.
- Bridge students demonstrated **stronger fall-to-fall persistence** across key populations, including academically underprepared, low-income, and underrepresented students. Six institutions reported **persistence rates above 85%** for bridge participants in at least one year.
- **Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS)** programs showed notable success: **12 out of 17 programs had higher persistence rates** for bridge students compared to their overall freshman class.

These outcomes underscore the value of summer bridge programs in strengthening college readiness and student success from day one.



► FAFSA Completion and College Access

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a vital step in ensuring college access and affordability. It unlocks eligibility for federal grants, loans, work-study programs, state scholarships, and institutional aid. Recognizing its importance, the CEC recommended increasing FAFSA awareness and completion across the state.

Key initiatives include:

- The **Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA)** established a statewide partnership team focused on expanding FAFSA outreach and increasing completion rates.
- KHEAA provided **extensive support**, including **web-based resources**, **in-person assistance locations**, and **training opportunities** for students, families, and educators.
- **Collaboration between the Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA) and KHEAA's outreach team** enabled broader dissemination of FAFSA information and support tools to schools and communities.
- A **joint media campaign by GEAR UP Kentucky and KHEAA** produced a television commercial promoting FAFSA completion, which has **aired over 137,000 times** on public television and continues to reach audiences statewide.

These coordinated efforts are helping more students and families navigate the financial aid process, increasing access to higher education opportunities across Kentucky.



► Futuriti: Kentucky's Career & College Planning Platform

Launched in early 2025, Futuriti is Kentucky's comprehensive, user-friendly online platform for career and education planning. Developed through a cross-agency partnership among the CPE, KDE, and KYSTATS, Futuriti is designed to support informed decision-making for students, adults, and workforce professionals across the Commonwealth.

The platform connects education pathways to real labor market outcomes—aligning individual goals with state economic and workforce needs. Its mission is to empower more Kentuckians to pursue postsecondary credentials and training that lead to higher earnings and long-term career success.

Key Highlights:

- Developed with input from over **1,200 stakeholders**, including students, counselors, educators, employers, and adult learners.
- Features comprehensive data on **700+ career paths**, including wages, job demand, and required qualifications.
- Provides detailed information on **college costs, debt, and completion outcomes** by institution, as well as all academic pathways offered at Kentucky's public and private postsecondary institutions and high schools.
- Promoted statewide through **middle and high schools, Kentucky Career Centers, and adult education offices**.
- Accessible at **futuriti.org**, the platform serves as a centralized hub for education planning, financial aid, and job opportunity resources.



Our Priorities Moving Ahead

As the Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC) enters its fifth year, the vision remains clear: to build an agile, cradle-to-career education system that empowers every Kentuckian to pursue a prosperous career and fulfilling life. While progress has been made, our work continues—driven by the evolving needs of students, educators, and communities.

Building on the momentum of the past year, the CEC will continue to shape policy and practice in six key priority areas:

► **Partnerships for Career Exploration and Workforce Development**

Foster deep collaboration among education, business, and community partners to expand work-based learning opportunities and address Kentucky's future workforce needs.

► **Career-Aligned Advising**

Broaden the use of Futuriti to help students make informed decisions about their postsecondary education and career paths. Expand the reach of Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA) tools, training, and collaborative networks to strengthen advising statewide.

► Educator Workforce

Implement key recommendations from the recent principal workforce study and promote effective strategies to recruit, prepare, and retain high-quality teachers and school leaders.

► Early Postsecondary Opportunities

Expand access to dual credit and other early college opportunities, especially for students with limited access.

► Data-Driven Impact

Leverage the CEC dashboard and partner data to identify high-impact strategies, track outcomes, and inform continuous improvement across initiatives.

► Postsecondary Affordability

Enhance awareness and access to financial aid, increase FAFSA completion, and promote financial literacy to make postsecondary education more accessible and sustainable.

Through a collaborative, data-informed approach, the CEC is making a measurable difference—from increasing dual credit participation and improving advising frameworks, to sparking critical conversations and building partnerships across sectors.

With continued leadership and investment, we will advance a seamless, supportive education system where every Kentuckian—regardless of background—can access opportunity, achieve their potential, and contribute to a thriving Commonwealth.

Appendix A

CEC Membership

Leadership

Co-Chair Aaron Thompson, president of the Council on Postsecondary Education

Co-Chair Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, Kentucky

Co-Chair Robbie Fletcher, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education

Membership

Sen. Stephen West, Kentucky Senate Sen.

Rep. James Tipton, Kentucky House of Representatives

Jamie Link, secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet

Madison Silvert, board chair of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Sharon Porter-Robinson, board chair of the Kentucky Board of Education

Mason Dyer, president of the Association of Kentucky Independent Colleges and Universities

Heather Bushelman, board president of the Kentucky School Counselor Association

Sherlyn Bratcher, Advisor Coordinator Green River

Jo Carole Ellis, executive director of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

Eddie Campbell, president of the Kentucky Education Association

Rhonda Caldwell, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators Dr. Jim Flynn, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents

Beth Hargis, associate commissioner of the Office of Career and Technical Education, Kentucky Department of Education

Ryan Quarles, president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Justin Mitchell, board chair of the Education Professional Standards Board

Robert Hayes, director of the Student Transitions and Family Programs, University of Kentucky Vacant, P-12 student representative

Lynn Baker, executive director of the Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood

Alisher Burikhanov, executive director of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

Jenny Sawyer, executive director of admissions, University of Louisville

Corinne Murphy, College of Education dean of Western Kentucky University

Robert Jackson, president of Murray State University

Ashli Watts, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

Kathleen Christian, president of the 16th District PTA

John Gregory, executive director of the Office of Adult Education, Education and Labor Cabinet

Matt Berry, executive director of the Kentucky Center for Statistics



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