

New Skills for Youth

KENTUCKY

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Kentucky was one of 10 states selected to participate in New Skills for Youth (NSFY), an initiative enhancing state efforts to increase the number of learners across the country who are prepared for success in both college and career. Between 2016 and 2019, Kentucky strengthened its career readiness system through NSFY by:

Fully aligning all career pathways with labor market priorities

Kentucky transformed and phased out virtually every career pathway that was not well aligned with labor market demand. Kentucky leveraged data from the Kentucky Center for Statistics to inventory, evaluate and justify the development and continuation of high-quality Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways. Kentucky put incentives in place to encourage participation in its vision for career readiness. Schools and districts can use state and federal funding to support career pathways only if their programs are aligned with priority industries or top occupations.



Implementing the regional career academy model

Kentucky converted shared-time area technical centers and locally operated career and technical centers into regional career academies — full-time schools where students receive both academic and career instruction — to remove barriers to access for learners. The regional career academy model is particularly valuable for students in rural regions, who often do not have access to numerous and varied high-quality career pathways in their home districts. By encouraging collaboration among multiple school districts and local employers, the regional career academy model leverages existing regional resources to help provide equitable access to career readiness programs across the commonwealth.

“ In the three years I have been at the academies, we have undergone a **transformation from a traditional high school system to a career academy model**. Our students always had the potential, but now they also have the opportunity given to them by a dedicated group of teachers, administrators, community partners and business leaders. **And when kids have pathways to success, they will exceed your expectations.** ”

— LaMargaret Johnson, Student,
Bryan Station High School

Improving CTE teacher induction and support

In 2017, Kentucky upgraded its New Teacher Institute program to provide more consistent supports to increase educator retention rates, especially in low-income and rural areas lacking professional development infrastructure for teachers. While new teacher induction previously consisted of a short bootcamp-style course to prepare teachers to enter the classroom, the new format consists of a comprehensive two-year program. Teachers in the program participate in face-to-face and online meetings, engage in school-based mentorship initiatives, and receive support from nearby faculty in the state university system. Additionally, the commonwealth changed regulations to provide better incentives for individuals who want to teach, such as improving the incoming teacher rank and consequently the salary a person is eligible for.

Expanding access to dual credit opportunities aligned to learners' career pathways

The commonwealth moved to reduce barriers to entry for dual credit opportunities and minimize "random acts of dual credit." In 2016, Gov. Matt Bevin established the Kentucky [Dual Credit Scholarship](#) (DCS) program through an executive order, providing funding for high school juniors and seniors to complete up to two dual credit courses free of charge. Following the success of DCS, the governor then expanded the Work Ready Scholarship executive order to allow for two free CTE dual credit courses per year for students in grades 9-12 in addition to the two free courses through DCS. The two scholarships were adopted into legislation by Kentucky's Legislature. To further incentivize the completion of dual credit opportunities, Kentucky integrated dual credit into the state accountability system through its [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) state plan](#). To ensure consistency of standards across postsecondary institutions, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) issued [guidance](#) specifying that CTE dual credit courses must be approved by the commonwealth, aligned to secondary CTE course standards, and within the learner's career pathway to be included in the accountability system.

MAJOR STATE POLICY WINS

Executive Order 2016-378 (2016) [↗](#)

Through this executive order, Kentucky launched the DCS program, which allows any high school senior in the commonwealth to pursue dual credit for up to two courses, at no cost to the student, in general education and CTE courses in state-approved career pathways leading to industry-recognized credentials.

Senate Bill 1 (2017) [↗](#)

This law addressed accountability, standards and industry-recognized credentials. For example, the law requires KDE to review academic standards every six years to ensure that standards and assessments align with postsecondary readiness and CTE standards. The law also added a Postsecondary Readiness indicator to the state accountability system to credit students for earning a passing score on a college entrance exam, completing college credit or articulated college credit, participating in an apprenticeship or earning an industry-recognized credential.

New Graduation Requirements (2018) [↗](#)

Under new graduation requirements, students choose one of eight Graduation Qualifiers, which are criteria that students must meet to graduate high school. Students can meet the criteria by earning an industry certification, engaging in early postsecondary opportunities, and participating in work-based learning opportunities.

Kentucky ESSA Plan (2018) [↗](#)

Kentucky leveraged ESSA to further promote college and career readiness in its accountability system. Kentucky's ESSA plan put in place the Transition Readiness indicator, which includes attainment of the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions to successfully transition to the next level.

Kentucky NSFY Impact *by the Numbers*

100%

Percentage of career pathways in the commonwealth aligned with labor market priorities

150%

Increase in CTE dual credit enrollment from 2015-16 to 2018-19

90%+

New occupation-based teacher retention rate achieved during NSFY (an increase from 69% prior to NSFY)

200+

Number of employer partnerships developed during cohorts one and two of the regional academy model



“This is the perfect example of a win-win scenario. Thanks to the academy model and strong business-school partnerships with companies like UPS, **our students earn real-world learning opportunities, while our business partners gain the advantage of future employees** who are not only knowledgeable of but experienced on the equipment and machinery used in their industry.”

— Dr. Marty Pollio, Superintendent,
Jefferson County Public Schools



Sustainability Strategy



Kentucky has enacted multiple pieces of legislation to promote the sustainability of the efforts made under NSFY. Kentucky has an accountability system that values college and career readiness. Additionally, the governor has created the Kentucky Works Collaborative, a council that is focused on aligning all of the commonwealth's workforce and education efforts into a unified strategic plan. In June 2019, legislators convened a taskforce to examine Kentucky's CTE funding system. Recommendations emerged from this taskforce to design legislation that would include a system for locating and funding programs and future centers, a mechanism to transition area technical centers to local or shared governance, creation of a funding mechanism for equipment upgrades, and a structure for continuous improvement and expansion of CTE in Kentucky. Moving forward, Kentucky intends to leverage the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) to strengthen and expand the work completed under NSFY.

Kentucky NSFY Local Impact: Four Rivers Career Academy

One beneficiary of Kentucky's NSFY grants is Four Rivers Career Academy. The academy serves students from three school districts and offers five career pathways. While the program was initially designed to serve high school juniors and seniors, the academy received funding and support from KDE in 2018 to restructure as a regional career academy, allowing the program to reach students as early as eighth grade. In partnership with the Four Rivers Foundation, a community-based organization founded to support students in the four rivers region, the academy has been able to expand access to dual credit opportunities. Many students graduate with up to 30 hours of postsecondary credit.

ABOUT NSFY

NSFY is a \$75 million national initiative developed by JPMorgan Chase & Co. As part of this initiative, the Council of Chief State School Officers, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group worked with states to improve their career readiness systems. NSFY consisted of two phases. During Phase One (March-October 2016), states conducted a comprehensive needs assessment and developed action plans to examine and transform their career readiness systems and expand the opportunities available to learners. During Phase Two (January 2017-December 2019), states executed their three-year plans to transform their career readiness systems.