



2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for Districts_09082025_14:51

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Middlesboro Independent
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Description of the District

Describe the district's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the district serves?

The Middlesboro Independent School District is guided by its vision of "Where Everyone Matters" and its mission of "A Relentless Dedication to Motivate and Inspire Student Success," which will serve as the foundation for future initiatives and support the district's goals. Established in 1896, the district is located on the Kentucky side of the Cumberland Gap, near the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, in a city believed to be the only one built inside a meteorite crater. Our community faces several challenges, including a current population of 9,383—a decline of over 1,200 residents since the 2010 Census—and an unemployment rate of 8%. The primary employment sectors in Bell County are manufacturing (21.6%), retail (19%), and construction (11%), with an average weekly wage of \$595, below the state average of \$778. Notably, half of the county's working residents commute outside for jobs, while a significant number (3,883) commute into the county. With a total population of 24,097, Bell County ranks among the five poorest counties in the nation, particularly following the decline of the coal industry. In light of this, Middlesboro is looking to boost tourism, especially through the nearby Cumberland Gap National Park, and the recent opening of the Cumberland Gap Tunnel offers new opportunities for growth. Middlesboro is not only historically significant as the birthplace of ragtime music in the early 1890s, but it also boasts the oldest continuously played golf course in the world, the Middlesboro Country Club. Our school district comprises three A1 schools, serving a total of 1,065 students. We also operate an alternative school called New Horizons and a Department of Juvenile Justice Program that provides online and direct instruction. Additionally, we collaborate with the Bell/Whitley Community Action Agency to offer a birth-to-preschool program within our district. Our dedicated staff includes 91 full-time classroom teachers, 65.93% of whom are female and 34.07% male, with an average teaching experience of 12.3 years. An impressive 71.9% of our teachers hold a master's degree or higher, including five with doctorates. The student-teacher ratio is approximately 12:1 compared to the state average of 15:1. The student population consists of 82.7% identifying as white, while other groups make up 17.3%. 7.1% of our student population is identified as homeless, while 81.7% is identified as economically disadvantaged. Our district consistently maintains an average graduation rate of 95%, with many students continuing their education at local community colleges or state universities, including Lincoln Memorial University in neighboring Claiborne County, Tennessee. All schools in our district participate in the "Community Eligibility Option" feeding program, ensuring that all students receive free meals; without this program, over 80% would qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Currently, our district is a recipient of the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Grant, in partnership with Partners for Rural Impact, which provides additional resources to enhance literacy from prenatal stages onward. Furthermore, we have received the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools initiative for middle and high school students, equipping all 5-12 graders and educators with

Chromebooks, 24/7 Wi-Fi access, and professional development alongside technology instruction coaches. Through these initiatives, we are committed to improving educational outcomes and empowering our students and community.

District Stakeholders

Identify and describe the district's stakeholder groups. How does the district ensure stakeholder involvement and engagement in the improvement planning process?

The staff, students, parents, and community of the Middlesboro Independent School District face numerous challenges that impact our educational environment. Residing in an impoverished area marked by high unemployment, declining population, and significant changes in family structures, we are also grappling with the effects of substance abuse. Census data reveals that over 70% of grandparents in Bell County are responsible for their grandchildren, highlighting the strain on family dynamics. Furthermore, only 65.1% of individuals aged 25 and older hold a high school diploma, falling short of the state average of 81.7%. The percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree stands at just 11.2%, compared to the state average of 20.6%. Alarming, 32.5% of Bell County residents live below the poverty line, significantly higher than the state average of 18.1% and the national average of 15.1%. In the recent Kentucky Child Well-Being Rankings, Bell County ranked 110th out of 120 counties, making it the 19th poorest in the state and situated within the Promise Zone. These rankings consider education, health, economic security, and family/community factors, underscoring the message that economic well-being is crucial for children's success. As noted in the report, "The cornerstone of how kids do is economic well-being," emphasizing that the stability and security of a child's environment directly influences educational achievement and health outcomes. Despite these challenges, we are committed to our responsibility of educating our students and preparing them for college and career readiness. With targeted support and intervention, we believe we can help our students overcome barriers to learning and become successful, productive citizens. As a district, we prioritize stakeholder involvement in our improvement planning process through surveys, a CDIP planning committee that includes parent and community representatives, and ongoing community outreach efforts.

District's Purpose

Provide the district's purpose statement and supplementary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs, including the year in which they were last reviewed or revised. Describe how the district embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students and how stakeholders are involved in its development.

Mission Statement

The Middlesboro Board of Education is committed to a relentless dedication to motivate and inspire student success.

Vision Statement

Where Everyone Matters

The mission and vision were established during the 2013-2014 school year. Last year, the culture committee reviewed these statements, and currently, the board is in the process of reviewing the mission statement and vision with plans to revise them involving all stakeholders.

The Middlesboro Board of Education embodies its purpose through various program offerings that support student success, including:

Comprehensive Curriculum: A well-rounded curriculum designed to engage and challenge students, fostering critical thinking and creativity.

Extracurricular Activities: Diverse options that encourage personal growth, teamwork, and leadership

Support Services: Programs aimed at addressing the individual needs of students, ensuring that everyone receives the necessary resources to succeed.

Community Engagement: Initiatives that strengthen partnerships between schools and the community, promoting a supportive educational environment.

Expectations for Students

- Engage actively in their learning and take ownership of their academic journey.
- Demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, and their educators.
- Participate in school activities and contribute positively to the school community.
- Strive for excellence in all areas, both academically and personally.

Stakeholder Involvement

The development of the mission and vision involved extensive collaboration through the District Planning Team, which included:

- Parents and Teachers: Providing insights from both perspectives to ensure a holistic approach.
- Instructional Coaches and Principals: Offering expertise on effective teaching practices and leadership
- District Office Administrators and Community Representatives: Ensuring alignment with community r
- Family Resource and Youth Service Center Coordinators: Bringing attention to student welfare and su

The current review process involves all stakeholders, allowing for comprehensive feedback and input. This inclusive approach ensures that the revised mission and vision truly reflect the values and aspirations of the entire Middlesboro community.

Notable Achievements

Describe the district's notable achievements in the last three years.

Elementary School Over the past three years, the elementary school has made significant strides in academic performance. Based on internal data and recent performance trends, we anticipate another positive change in our rating when KSA (Kentucky Summative Assessment) results are released. We anticipate meeting our goal of raising combined reading and math scores.. These improvements highlight the school's strong commitment to student learning and achievement. In addition, the elementary school has begun the process of becoming nationally STEM certified through NISE.

Middle School Over the past three years, the middle school has demonstrated steady growth and consistency. Quality and school climate have remained positive and consistent, supporting student engagement, safety, and overall satisfaction among students and staff. Based on internal data and recent performance trends, we anticipate academically that reading and writing will increase, while math scores will remain stable, reflecting effective instructional practices and curriculum alignment. In addition, the school achieved a major milestone by becoming nationally STEM certified with NISE.

High School The high school has achieved significant progress over the past three years. Based on internal data and recent performance trends, we anticipate that reading will see another slight increase, while social studies and writing will significant increases. These gains reflect the effectiveness of instructional strategies and the dedication of both teachers and students, demonstrating the school's continued commitment to academic excellence and student success.

Areas of Improvement

Describe areas for improvement that the district is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Elementary: Areas for Improvement Despite recent gains, reading and math remain areas needing further attention. The school recognizes that while progress has been made, sustained efforts are necessary to close gaps in these foundational subjects. **Goals for Improvement** Looking ahead, the focus will be on continued novice reduction in reading and math, reducing apprentices in science, and moving more students into the proficient and distinguished levels. To achieve this, the school will implement targeted programs for reading and math, including personalized learning plans and additional tutoring. Supports will also include enhanced professional development for teachers, data-driven instructional practices, and expanded interventions through MTSS. The overall goal is to reach an index of 70 or higher, fostering a learning environment that promotes continued growth and academic excellence.

Middle School: Areas for Improvement While reading and math scores have remained stable, math saw an increase in novice students, making novice reduction a primary focus. Social studies continues to be a focus area, with 48% of students performing at the novice level. Writing showed slight improvement, particularly in

8th grade, likely due to the implementation of a dedicated writing block; 5th grade has implemented a similar block this year. **Goals for Improvement** The school aims to increase its overall index within two years by improving performance across all subjects. Efforts will focus on reversing declines in science, social studies, and writing through curriculum enhancements, targeted professional development, and tailored interventions such as after-school programs, tutoring, and differentiated instruction. Regular assessments and data analysis will guide instructional adjustments, while continued attention to school culture will support a positive learning environment that promotes student growth and achievement.

High School: Areas for Improvement and Goals While the high school has shown improvement in science, social studies, and writing, there is still room to grow in these areas. Math scores have held steady, with a goal to reduce novice students to 20% or less. Looking ahead, the school aims to elevate its overall index to at least an 81.0 through targeted interventions and curriculum enhancements. Improving performance in science, and social studies remains a priority, with a goal to raise the index in these subjects along with writing to by implementing curriculum revisions, increased professional development, and engaging learning experiences. By focusing on these areas, the high school is committed to fostering an environment where all students can excel academically and be well-prepared for their future.

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Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

The district has implemented a comprehensive strategic plan underpinned by clearly defined non-negotiables, a structured PLC framework, pacing guides, a unit planning tool, and HQIRs across all content areas. Each school incorporates dedicated intervention time into its schedule, while district-wide initiatives, including a newly developed walkthrough tool and planned learning labs, support continuous teacher growth. Instruction is intentional, standards-aligned, and delivered with fidelity, with the overarching goal of increasing student achievement and reducing chronic absenteeism by 5 percent.

Family and community engagement is a key priority, with initiatives designed to involve parents in educational activities and decision-making processes to support student learning. The district is also advancing its STEM focus, with the middle school recently achieving national STEM certification through NISE, the elementary school currently in the certification process, and the high school scheduled to begin in the 2026–27 school year. Technology is a significant strength, with a 1:1 student-to-computer ratio. Partnerships with VILS have provided fully equipped STEM labs, including VR headsets and 3D printers, while the high school is creating a maker

space for all content areas, featuring a podcast station and VR tools for career exploration. Each classroom is outfitted with interactive panels, and teachers effectively leverage programs such as iXL, iReady, and Study Island to enhance instruction. Early literacy initiatives, such as the Imagination Library, provide books to children from birth to age five, further supporting student growth. Collectively, these efforts ensure an inclusive, engaging, and innovative learning environment that promotes student achievement, instructional excellence, and continuous growth.

Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)
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