



2025-2026 Phase Two: The Needs Assessment for Schools_11072025_09:40

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Mercer County Senior High School

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United States of America

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Understanding Continuous Improvement: The Needs Assessment for Schools

The Needs Assessment Diagnostic will facilitate the use of multiple sources of data to determine the current reality and establish a foundation for decision-making around school goals and strategies. Once completed, the diagnostic will lead to priorities to be addressed in the comprehensive school improvement plan to build staff capacity and increase student achievement. The needs assessment is to be conducted annually as an essential part of the continuous improvement process and precedes the development of strategic goals (i.e. desired state).

While the focus of continuous improvement is student performance, the work must be guided by the aspects of teaching and learning that affect performance. An effective improvement process should address the contributing factors creating the learning environment (inputs) and the performance data (outcomes).

The needs assessment provides the framework for all schools to clearly and honestly identify their most critical areas for improvement that they will address later in the planning process through the development of goals, objectives, strategies and activities. 703 KAR 2:225 requires, as part of continuous improvement planning for schools, each school to complete the needs assessment between October 1 and November 1 of each year and include: (1) a description of the data reviewed and the process used to develop the needs assessment; (2) a review of the previous plan and its implementation to inform development of the new plan; and, (3) perception data gathered from the administration of a valid and reliable measure of teaching and learning conditions.

Protocol

1. Clearly detail the process used to determine the priorities of this year's needs assessment. Include the following information in your response:

- names of school council members, leadership teams and stakeholder groups (i.e., Family Resource Youth Service Centers, community partners such as civic and business organizations, etc.) involved in the process
- a timeline of the process
- the specific data reviewed and analyzed
- how and where the meetings were documented.

Data results from the 2024-25 school year were the third full results that we have received since the 2018-19 school year due to COVID-19. Results are reviewed and analyzed during the following school year meetings: School-Based decision making council meetings, School Leadership team meetings, Instructional MTSS team meetings, School Administrative team meetings, and District Administrative team meetings. Stakeholders of Mercer County Senior High School review the data to drive the process of developing goals, objectives, strategies, and activities for school improvement. The members of the school council are Mike Floro, Ekambaram Elumalai, Kendra Rowland, Andrew Ashford, Todd Davis, and Andrea Whitenack. The members of the school leadership team are Andrew Ashford, Ekambaram

Elumalai, Christina Emmanuel, Alexandria Edwards, Joe Smith, Adrienne Dye, Miranda Goodlett, Scottie Alford, Stacy Davis, and Kendra Rowland. The members of the MTSS Instructional team are Stephanie Abrams, Austin Cocanougher, McKenzie Coleman, Charles Collins, Cody Cox, Alexandria Edwards, Dr. Ekambaram Elumalai, Stacey Isaacs, Dr. Kathi Lawrence, Daniel Perea, Dr. Jenny Putnam, Dr. Katrina Sexton, Samantha Shepherd, Joe Smith, Adam Sowder, and Lisa Rudzinski. The members of the school administrative team are Mike Floro, Brian Rowland, and Lisa Rudzinski. The members of the district administrative team are Jason Booher, Jason McAlister, Esther Hayslett, Dr. Kathi Lawrence, and Jay Anderson. The school council, school leadership team, school MTSS team, and district administrative team meet monthly. The school administrative team meets weekly to address the needs of the school. Minutes are kept during the school council and MTSS meetings. Notes are kept during the school leadership team, district administrative team, and school administrative team meetings.

Review of Previous Plan

2. Summarize the implementation of the goals, objectives, strategies and activities from the previous year's comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP). What was successful? How will your results inform this year's plan?

The goals from the 2024-25 CSIP included:

- 1) To reduce the percentage of Novice from 24% to 19% in 10th grade Reading scores and to reduce the percentage of Novice from 22% to 17% in 10th grade Mathematics scores.
- 2) To reduce the percentage of Novice from 37% to 30% in 11th grade Science scores and to reduce the percentage of Novice from 28% to 20% in 11th grade Social Studies scores, and to improve the Combined Writing index score of all students from 76.5 to 80.0, as defined by the indicator rating averaging On-Demand writing assessment with the Editing and Mechanics assessment in 2024-25.
- 3) To continue to reduce the percentage of Novice in all content areas for all English Language Learners.
- 4) To improve the Quality of School Climate and Safety Goal from 71.6 to 75.
- 5) To improve the Postsecondary Readiness (academic and career) score from 104.6 to 107.0 by 2024-25).
- 6) To improve the graduation rate goal from 95.7% to 99.0% by 2024-25.
- 7) To reduce the percentage of Novice in the gap group of "Economically Disadvantaged" on the Kentucky Summative Assessment Math section from 30% to 25% in 2024-25.

In reviewing the 2024-25 CSIP Goals, improvements were made across the board. While some areas did not meet the set goal parameters, there were huge gains achieved.

In area 1, the goal of 19% or less novice in Reading was achieved (16%). Also, in goal 1, the goal of 17% or less novice in Math was not achieved. However, there was a decrease in novice from 22% to 19%.

In area 2, the goal of 30% or less novice in Science was not achieved (36%).

However, there was a decrease in novice from 37% to 36% and this was above the state average in Novice Science Scores (47%). Also, in goal 2, the goal of 20% or less novice in Social Studies was not achieved. However, there was a decrease in novice from 28% to 23% and this was above the state average in Novice Social Studies scores (37%). Also, in goal 2, the goal of achieving a KSA Indicator rating (Index Score) of 80.0 was not achieved. The 2024-25 Combined Writing Indicator rating was 75.6. Despite being a 0.9 point decrease from the 2023-24 SY, our indicator rating of 75.6 was still well above the state average.

In area 3, we did not have enough ELL students to qualify for state or federal reporting during the 2024-25 SY.

In area 4, the goal of achieving a QSCS score of 75 was achieved. Based on the 2024-25 KSA survey data, Mercer County Senior High School achieved a QSCS score of 77.3.

In area 5, the goal of achieving a Postsecondary ready score of 107, was not achieved (104.8). However, this was still very successful because any score above 100 indicates that every senior that was eligible to graduate was postsecondary ready. The difference in the positive points above 100 are only increased by bonus points from students who gain industry bonuses due to certification attainment.

In area 6, the goal of achieving a 99% graduate rate was not attained. However, we did see an increase in graduation rate from 95.7 to 97.1. Also, every senior that was eligible to graduate, graduated.

In area 7, the goal of reducing the amount of novice in the gap group of economically disadvantaged to 25% on Reading was attained (19%).

The results (both positive and negative) will be used to guide the decisions for our 2025-26 school year CSIP goals.

Trends

3. After analyzing data trends from the previous two academic years, which academic, cultural and behavioral measures remain significant areas for improvement?

Example of Trends

- Behavior remains an area for improvement, as referrals have increased in the last two years from 204 in 2023-2024 to 288 in 2024-2025.
- Reading for students in our gap groups remains an area for improvement because the district saw an 11% increase in novice scores in reading among students with achievement gaps from 2024-2025.

We will look at data from the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school year to strive for improvement in all areas. It is extremely important to continue to decrease our percentage of students in the novice and apprentice categories and increase our percentage of students in the proficient and distinguished categories in all areas. We have to continue to focus on the subgroup categories Disability, Economically Disadvantaged, Two or More Races, Hispanic/Latino, and African Americans. It is imperative that we continue to move our gap students from novice to apprentice or proficient in all areas. Particular focus needs to be given to our students with disabilities in math, reading, and writing. Study Skills classes and co-teaching classes in Math and English for our students with disabilities are being utilized to give more individualized instruction to our students. Study Skills classes and co-teaching classes in Math and English for our lowest scoring freshman, sophomores, and juniors are focusing on skills necessary to succeed in these content areas.

With a transition from ACT to SAT in the state of Kentucky for the 2025-26 SY, our Freshman, Sophomores, and Juniors are using the Mastery Prep program in order to strengthen their skills in the areas of Reading/Writing and Math. Teachers will use the data curriculum resources from Mastery Prep to help guide their instruction. This data will also be used for individualized intervention daily. With the addition of Daytime ESS, we will also be able to target and provide interventions for our students below grade level in Reading and/or Math.

Postsecondary readiness will continue to be an area of emphasis for our school in 2025-26. With 20% of the school accountability score coming from this area, and the maximization of all 100% of those 20 points at our school over the past 2 years, we have to continue to achieve industry certification bonus points to score above the 100% value.

We will continue to monitor, encourage, and push our students in their career pathways. Qualifying and completing these pathways will allow students to take End of Program assessments and/or be eligible to receive the aforementioned industry certifications.

The SAT test will be given to all juniors in December of the 2025-26 school year to help prepare them for the March 2026 SAT test and give them the extra opportunity to improve their score and meet their benchmarks. We will continue to be a PBIS school through KYCID as we focus our attempts to decrease undesired behaviors and increase desired behaviors. Behavior is monitored by analyzing data on a regular basis by a PBIS MTSS committee using SWIS. A reward system will be implemented to reinforce positive behaviors based on MCSHS expectations that are reinforced throughout the year in all classes. PLC's meet on a monthly basis as the departments continue to build common assessments and analyze student data and instructional practices to improve student achievement. Curriculum and instruction

must continue to be delivered in a way that requires students to use higher level, critical thinking skills in all content areas. MCSHS also has access to one instructional coach that assists our Math, English, Science, and Social Studies departments in developing assessments and lessons to increase rigor and relevance in the classroom. Chromebooks have been purchased and assigned to all of our students to allow MCSHS to be a 1:1 technology school.

Current State of Academics and Climate and Culture

4. Describe in narrative form the current academic state of the school using precise numbers and percentages as revealed by multiple sources of your most recent outcome data. Cite the source of data used. Consider the following data sources:

- Kentucky Summative Assessments
- Benchmark assessments
- Formative assessments
- Graduation rate
- Progress in achieving English language proficiency
- Student access to high quality instructional resources, advanced placement courses, dual credit courses, career and technical education courses, before/after school and summer programs, preschool, full day kindergarten

Example of Current Academic Narratives:

- Thirty-four percent (34%) of students in the achievement gap scored proficient on Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) in reading. Local benchmark data indicates that 32% of all students receive Tier II intervention in reading.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of our students scored proficient in math on the KSA compared to the state average of 57%. Local formative assessments show 53% of students are on grade level in math.

Data used to determine the current academic state of Mercer County Senior High School was taken from the Kentucky Department of Education's Kentucky Summative Assessment results and accountability system. With the 2024-25 school year data being the fourth year of consecutive data from the same accountability model from the Kentucky Department of Education, Mercer County Senior High School was able to evaluate trends in our academic areas and compare them on a level comparison basis with years past.

Mercer County Senior High school has maintained the rating of a "high-performing" (Blue or Green) high school each of the past 3 years. The 2022-23 and 2024-25 school years both culminated with a top level "blue" status rating by the Kentucky Department of Education. In 2023-24, Mercer County Senior High school narrowly missed the "blue" rating by only 3.2 points.

As part of the priority plan at Mercer County Senior High School, we have set goals to lower the percent of novice KSA scores, in both Reading and Math, to 15%.

The ACT given to 11th grade students in the spring of 2025 showed a composite score of 18.8, in comparison to a 19.2, the previous year. With the state moving to the SAT, we have set a composite goal score of 1030 for our current 2025-26 11th grade students on their March state assessment (which is the equivalent ACT composite score of 20).

From the 2024-25 SY data, Mercer County Senior High School did see a small dip in ACT scores compared to the prior year. ACT Reading score maintained a 19.4 in comparison to the 19.4 from the previous year. ACT English dropped 0.6 points, at a 17.4 in comparison to 18.0 the previous year. ACT Math increased 0.1 points to an 18.8 in comparison to a 18.7 from the previous year. ACT Science composite dropped 0.9 points, at a 19.1 in comparison to a 20.0 from the previous year. The percentage of MCSHS students meeting the state benchmarks on the ACT actually went up slightly from the previous year with Reading coming in at 47%, English coming in at 47%, and Math coming in at 44%. The Math percent was an 8% gain over the previous year's data.

Kentucky Summative Assessment saw some major gains in overall indicator ratings from the 2024-25 school year scores, compared to the previous 2023-24 school year.

In 10th grade Reading, the academic indicator increased from 70.5 to 74.9. In 10th grade Math, the academic indicator increased from 66.5 to 73.4. In 11th grade Science, the academic indicator increased from 36.9 to 49.2. In 11th grade Social Studies, the academic indicator increased from 64.3 to 69.0. In 11th grade Combined Writing, the academic indicator fell slightly from 76.5 to 75.6.

In reference to novice reduction on the Kentucky Summative Assessment test, novice in Reading fell from 24% to 16 % with the state average being 26%. Novice Math fell from 22% to 19%, with the state average being 30%. Novice Science fell from 37% to 36%, with the state average being 47%. Novice Social Studies fell from 28% to 23%, with the state average being 37%. Novice Combined Writing fell from 13% to 10%, with the state average being 18%.

In reference to proficiency rates (the percent of students in the testing grade that scored proficient or distinguished), English was 59%, which was a 4% gain from the previous year. Math was 54%, which was a great gain at 8% from the previous year. Science was 32%, which was an unbelievable 21% gain from the previous year. Social Studies was 52%, which was a 4% increase from the previous year. Combined Writing was 54%, which ended up being a 7% decline from the previous year.

In regards to Graduation rate, Mercer County Senior High School has posted 95% plus rates over each of the past four cohorts.

2021-22 - 98.3%; 2022-23 - 95.7%; 2023-24 - 95.7%; 2024-25 - 97.1%

Mercer County Senior High school boasts up to date and current High-Quality Instructional Resources. Recently, the science curriculum was updated with new textbooks and supplemental resources in grades 9 through 11.

Dual Credit and **AP** classes are mainly available to students after the 9th grade with a few Agriculture dual credit courses offered at the Freshman level. During 2024-25, MCSHS had 179 students enrolled in 637 Dual Credit courses. Also, last school year, there were 69 AP tests taken, across 8 AP courses, with a 76% pass rate, the highest in school history when there were at least 20 tests taken.

5. Describe in narrative form the current climate and culture conditions of the school using precise numbers and percentages as revealed by multiple sources of your most recent data. Cite the source of data used. Consider the following data sources:

- Educator and school staff retention rates
- High-quality professional learning opportunities
- Chronic absenteeism
- School climate
- Behavior
- Staff and student access to mental healthcare
- Family and community involvement

Example of Current Climate and Culture Narratives:

- Teacher attendance rate was 84% for the 2024-2025 academic year. 2023-2024 Impact survey data shows that 71% of staff feel like they belong at our school.
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) of families participated in a family engagement activity during the 2024-2025 school year.

The current climate and culture of Mercer County Senior High School is extremely high based on student survey data. When looking at the Quality of School Climate Safety survey answered by all students in grades 10 and 11 during the 2024-25 Kentucky Summative Testing cycle, MCSHS tallied record high numbers in both reported categories.

Climate scores came in at 80.3 from the 2024-25 SY, compared to the following 3 years scores, at 75.1, 74.7, and 64.4.

Safety scores came in at 74.2 from the 2024-25 SY, compared to the following 3 years scores, at 68.0, 68.7, and 58.7.

Major Behavior Referrals have been on a downward trend for each of the past 7 school years at Mercer County Senior High School. Data reported from Infinite Campus and the school's SWISS behavior software show the following results:

2018-19 - 833 referrals

2019-20 - 792 referrals

2020-21 - data excluded due to pandemic

2021-22 - 652 referrals

2022-23 - 582 referrals

2023-24 - 657 referrals

2024-25 - 560 referrals

Strengths

6. Plainly state, using precise numbers and percentages revealed by current data, the strengths of the school.

Example:

- We have active partnerships with twelve community organizations and businesses.
- Eighty-three percent (83%) of certified staff have participated in high-quality professional learning through the Kentucky Reading Academies.

Mercer County Senior High School had **all-time high** scores in Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies from the 2024-25 Kentucky Summative Assessment Data.

Mercer County Senior High School had an all-time low percentage of students score "novice"

Mercer County Senior High School had the **lowest** number of major behavior referrals (since data tracking began 7 years ago) during the 2024-25 school year.

Mercer County Senior High School has achieved a "**high-performance**" school rating each of the past 3 years, with a top "**BLUE**" rating from the Kentucky Department of Education in 2024-25 and 2022-23.

Mercer County Senior High School had **all-time high** numbers of students enrolled in Dual Credit courses during the 2024-25 school year.

Mercer County Senior High School had **all-time high** pass rates on Advanced Placement Exams during the 2024-25 school year.

Mercer County Senior High School had 14 students score a 30 or higher on the ACT during the 2024-25 school year.

Mercer County Senior High school has 48 certified staff members with an average of 12 years teaching experience per teacher.

Mercer County Senior High School offers 20 in-person Dual Credit courses taught, in-house, by MCSHS teachers.

Leverages/Assets

7. Explain how the district will utilize its strengths and leverages, including community resources and assets (i.e., colleges, community partnerships, businesses, industry, etc.) to improve areas for improvement listed above.

Examples:

- We will coordinate efforts with our community partners to meet the behavior needs of more students.
- We will utilize the knowledge gained from the Kentucky Reading Academies to develop a reading action plan to target students in our achievement gap groups.

Mercer County Senior High School will continue to build upon the success achieved in Academics, the Arts, and Athletics during the 2025-26 School year.

Our district has instituted a reduced rate, \$2 a mile field trip rate, for all instructional field trips for the 2025-26 school year. This reduced cost field trip opportunity will aid in making all of our students more well-rounded, giving them educational opportunities outside of the traditional classroom.

Mercer County Senior High School will utilize Daytime ESS funds to provide Tier II interventions for students struggling in Reading and Math.

Mercer County Senior High School will begin the preliminary stages of partnering with community partners to develop a local accountability system.

Mercer County Senior High School will continue to utilize and expand on partnering with our vocational school, The Trailblazer Academy, to provide its students with trade skills and industry certifications from the Career and Technical Education Pathways.

Evaluate the Teaching and Learning Environment

Consider the processes, practices and conditions evident in the teaching and learning environment as identified in the six Key Core Work Processes outlined below:

KCWP 1: Design and Deploy Standards

KCWP 2: Design and Deliver Instruction

KCWP 3: Design and Deliver Assessment Literacy

KCWP 4: Review, Analyze and Apply Data Results

KCWP 5: Design, Align and Deliver Support Processes

KCWP 6: Establish Learning Environment and Culture

8a. KCWP 1: Design and Deploy Standards

Schools continually assess, review, and revise school curricula to support the assurance that all students have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for future success.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☐ No

☒ Yes

COMMENTS

In order to reduce Novice performance across the board at Mercer County Senior High School, all curriculum must be cross-referenced to be in congruence with Kentucky Academic Standards and CTE Pathway Course Standards. All teachers at Mercer County Senior High School are required to have an Instructional Planner for each course they teach. This document encompasses not only pacing, but standards and target congruence, assessment congruence to standards, and daily agenda lesson design information. By leading staff to teach with a growth mindset, all Instructional Planners are continuously updated and improved upon.

This area of the Key Core Work Processes will always be a focus for Mercer County Senior High School. It is the belief of the current school administration that KCWP-1 provides the groundwork for all classroom instruction and will always be at the forefront when it comes to monitoring continuous school improvement.

8b. KCWP 2: Design and Deliver Instruction

Instructional programs include consistent implementation of evidence-based instructional practices essential for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional competencies that are aligned to Kentucky Academic Standards and current research.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☐ No

☒ Yes

COMMENTS

Mercer County Senior High School will continue to investigate and implement "Best Practices" in the classroom in order to increase rigor and engagement on a daily basis. It is the belief of all stake-holders at Mercer County Senior High School, that increased rigor and engagement will continue to drive success in all academic areas, which will directly lead to a reduction of novice performance in Reading and Math.

Mercer County High School, in partnership with other district schools, sent several teachers, on multiple dates, to The Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, Georgia to study ways to increase rigor and engagement in the classroom.

During the summer of 2025, all Mercer County District Employees attended a Professional Development training that focused on **15 "Titan Pillars" and "13 Titan Ways"**. These Titan Pillars and Titan Ways were created by Mercer County teachers who attended the Ron Clark Academy. The 15 philosophies or "**Titan Pillars**" were what the attendees at Ron Clark Academy felt all of their teacher's embodied. The 13 "**Titan Ways**" were instructional strategies observed throughout classroom observations at Ron Clark.

Also during the summer of 2025, Mercer County Senior High School staff attended a Professional Development, where David Young, Executive Director of the CKEC, came to MCSHS and presented a seminar to staff on the 3 components of an ideal Lesson.

Throughout the 2025-26 school year, Mercer County Senior High School teachers will continue to revise and update their Instructional Planners to ensure incorporation of these "Pillars" and "Ways". While doing this, our teachers will also cross-referencing the planners to Kentucky Academic Standards and the components of an ideal lesson to ensure perfect alignment.

8c. KCWP 3: Design and Deliver Assessment Literacy

Schools have a comprehensive, balanced assessment system that provides a variety of evidence to support educational decision making and includes four primary assessment purposes: formative, diagnostic, interim/benchmark, and summative.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ No

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

8d. KCWP 4: Review, Analyze and Apply Data Results

Schools communicate and implement a sustainable system for reviewing, analyzing, and

applying data results to ensure a uniform way to elicit, interpret, and act on meaningful evidence of student learning.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ **No**

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

8e. KCWP 5: Design, Align and Deliver Support Processes

Schools establish a framework that organizes systems, data, and practices to promote positive, equitable and inclusive learning experiences for all students.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ **No**

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

8f. KCWP 6: Establish Learning Environment and Culture

Schools intentionally design the learning environment to be inclusive and accessible for all students within a culture where learning and continued growth is the primary focus and foundation for all actions.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

☒ **No**

☐ Yes

COMMENTS

N/A

Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)
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