



2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for Districts_09292025_14:47

2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for Districts

Hickman County
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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?

Hickman County/Clinton, Ky — size, communities & location

- Size & location: Hickman County is a small, rural county in far-western Kentucky (the Jackson Purchase region) on the Mississippi River; total land area ≈ 242 sq. miles and population was 4,521 (2020 Census). It is one of Kentucky's least densely populated counties and its county seat and largest town is Clinton; the other incorporated city is Columbus. The county contains a number of small unincorporated communities (e.g., Moscow, Oakton, Spring Hill).

Recent changes (last ~3 years)

- Population & economy: The county's population has been essentially flat to slightly declining in the most recent estimates and small population declines and shifts in median household income have been reported year-to-year.
- Education context since the pandemic: Like most Kentucky districts, Hickman County has been participating in state and federal recovery efforts (ESSER/ARP funds, tutoring/summer programs at the state level).

Hickman County School District — size & staff

- District size (students): The district total at about 717 students (PK–12). The district operates PK–12 configuration across two schools.
- Staffing: Hickman County has 55 FTE classroom teachers and a total district staff of about 128, giving a student-teacher ratio around 13:1.

Demographics — students, staff, community

- Students (race / subgroups / economic need):
 - Racial makeup (district level, recent years): roughly ~81% White, ~9% Black, ~2–3% Hispanic, ~7% Two+ races, based on state/district summaries
 - Free/reduced-price lunch: FRAM report show a substantial portion of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch at ~61%.
- Staff: the district's staffing is small and typical of a rural district (dozens of certified teachers and support staff). Full time employees counts provide the best snapshot (≈55 teachers, ≈128 total staff). Small districts like this often

have staff performing multiple roles; recruitment and retention of certified staff is a recurring rural challenge.

- Community (residents): the county's median age is relatively high (~mid-40s), and the community is majority White with Black and small Hispanic and multiracial populations. Median household income estimates vary between sources. Census Report denotes a recent median household income around mid-\$60k in one estimate but other local sources report lower figures. Poverty and limited economic opportunity are factors in parts of the county.

Unique features & challenges of the community the district serves

Geographic & Natural Features

- Mississippi River Border: Hickman County is one of only a few Kentucky counties directly on the Mississippi River, giving it rich river history and fertile floodplain farmland.
- Smallest Population in Kentucky: With just over 4,500 residents, Hickman is one of the least populated counties in the state. This creates a very rural, tight-knit community atmosphere.
- Columbus-Belmont State Park: Located in the town of Columbus, this park is a historic Civil War site (sometimes called the "Gibraltar of the West") and is part of the Civil War Heritage Trail.
- Rolling farmland & wetlands: Agriculture dominates the landscape, with corn, soybeans, and wheat as leading crops. Wildlife areas and wetlands along the Mississippi also provide hunting and outdoor recreation.

Historical & Cultural Features

- Civil War Significance: Columbus was heavily fortified by Confederate forces in 1861; remnants of earthworks and chains once stretched across the Mississippi River to block Union gunboats.
- Oldest town in the Jackson Purchase region: Columbus was one of the earliest settlements west of the Tennessee River, giving the county deep historical roots.
- Close-knit rural traditions: The small population means strong community ties, multigenerational family connections, and local events (county fair, school athletics) that bring people together.

Community & Lifestyle

- Strong Agricultural Identity: Farming is central to the local economy and culture; many families are connected to agriculture.
- Education at the center: With only one school district and fewer than 1,000 students, the schools are a focal point of community life and pride.

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- **Rural Challenges & Resilience:** Like many rural counties, Hickman faces challenges such as limited healthcare access, aging population, and fewer job opportunities, but the community is known for resilience, neighborliness, and supporting its schools.

In short, Hickman County's Mississippi River heritage, Civil War history, agricultural economy, small population, and strong sense of community identity make it uniquely different from most other Kentucky counties.

Challenges

- **Declining / aging population:** an older median age and small population make maintaining enrollment and funding more difficult over time.
- **Economic constraints & student needs:** higher proportions of students eligible for free/reduced lunch and limited local economic opportunities can affect academic supports, out-of-school resources, and access to enrichment.
- **Access & infrastructure:** rural distance, transportation logistics, and broadband access can limit remote learning options, access to blended learning resources, and community services.

District Stakeholders

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

Key stakeholder groups the district engages (explicitly referenced on district pages and common to district improvement structures):

- Students (all grade levels / student leadership groups)
- Parents & families (including Family Resource Center advisory groups and family engagement advisory teams)
- Teachers & school staff (certified teachers, support staff)
- Board of Education / elected officials (regular public board meetings, agendas, minutes).
- Local businesses & community partners (workforce/WorkReady partnerships, community organizations, religious and political organizations)
- State education entities & grant/federal program monitors (KDE monitoring, ESSER/ARP oversight), West Kentucky Educational Cooperative

How the district ensures stakeholder involvement & engagement in improvement planning

The district uses multiple formal mechanisms to involve stakeholders in planning and improvement:

1. Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (CDIP) — the district posts a CDIP, executive summary and needs assessment and states that it is developed annually “by a diverse group of stakeholders”; that language indicates the district solicits input from staff, families, and community members as part of plan development.
2. Family engagement structures — the district maintains a Family Resource Center and convenes an advisory council / family engagement advisory team; the Parent & Family Engagement Policy describes annual meetings and advisory input. These structures provide regular opportunities for families to influence priorities.
3. Public Board meetings & transparency — regular, posted board of education meetings with published agendas/minutes and live streaming enable public observation and comment. These meetings are a formal route for community stakeholders to raise concerns and influence policy/budget decisions.
4. Federal program monitoring & consolidated reporting — KDE monitoring (Title I/II/IV, preschool, etc.) and the district’s consolidated program report require public documentation and often stakeholder consultation in the use of federal funds. Kentucky Department of Education
5. Community partnerships & outreach — the district references community/ business partnerships and posts resources (report cards, improvement plans) publicly so partners can review and engage; district communications (websites, newsletters, advisory councils, family resource center meetings) are used to solicit stakeholder feedback.

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, vision, and related content for Hickman County:

- Mission of Hickman County School District: The mission of the Hickman County School District, in partnership with the citizens of Hickman County, is to provide a positive, healthy, and safe environment, which will allow all students to learn and achieve at high levels in terms of academic performance, social skills, creativity, independent thinking skills, and physical well-being. The Hickman County School District may be considered a small district with a long history of academic excellence, student achievement, and community involvement. Improving facilities, equipment, curriculum and

instructional strategies allows the district to meet or exceed the responsibility to students, their parents, and the community. The Hickman County School District will continue to provide excellent educational opportunities to allow students to achieve at a high level.

- Vision / Strategic Plan (District): From the district's Strategic Plan: The Hickman County School System inspires and supports students and staff with high expectations, ensuring every student gets quality support.
- Another version of the Mission (Strategic Plan): We exist to fully engage and nurture every student's mind, body, and character, ensuring they are well-prepared for success in education, work, and life.
- Values / Focus Areas / Beliefs (Strategic Plan): The strategic plan articulates several core focus or "pillars" or areas:
 1. Instructional Climate
 2. Teaching Effectiveness
 3. Cultivate All-Round Students Hickman K-12
 4. Additionally, goals include maintaining a safe and welcoming environment, supporting mental health, improving facilities and implementing safety/security plans; investing in professional development; increasing teacher retention; increasing student participation in CTE/extracurriculars; setting high expectations; and working with local businesses for student exposure.

How the District Embodies the Purpose / Expectations and Program Offerings

Here are several ways Hickman County Schools puts its mission, vision, and values into action, including the expectations for students and what programs support those expectations.

1. Curriculum & Instruction & Academic Rigor

- All curricula are aligned with the Kentucky Program of Studies and Common Core Academic Standards.
- Use of research-based assessment programs in classrooms, regular data analysis, and annual revision of school/district improvement plans.
- The strategic plan's focus on teaching effectiveness and instructional climate (including supports, safety, and facility improvements) supports the expectation that teachers deliver high-quality instruction and students are in environments conducive to learning.

2. Whole Child / Mind-Body-Character

- The mission explicitly includes social skills, creativity, independent thinking skills, physical well-being along with academic performance.
- Programs such as Coordinated School Health, including mental health support, health education, and safe, positive school climate, show that the district values more than test scores.

3. Advanced Opportunities / Dual Credit

- Falcon Academy: high school students can take dual credit college classes; importantly, the program pays for every class for every student, so cost isn't a barrier.
- Career & Technical Education (CTE): offerings to prepare students for work, post-secondary education, etc.
- Flight Lab: lab that provides authentic hands-on modules for students to explore potential jobs or fields of study

4. Expectations of Equity & High Expectations for All

- The mission states "allow all students to learn and achieve at high levels" and mentions resources needed "regardless of socio-economic status, race or gender."
- The strategic plan's pillars and goals include supporting every student (e.g. "every student gets quality support") and increasing opportunities for extracurriculars / career readiness.

5. Safe, Positive, Supportive Environment

- Safety, mental health, facility improvements, ensuring physical safety, consistent discipline, etc. are part of the strategic plan's objectives.
- The district offers tools like Tassel Connect so students have a means to reach trusted staff regarding issues affecting their wellness, safety, belonging.

6. Professional Growth & Staff Expectations

- Professional development, mentoring new teachers, improving teacher retention are explicit goals.
- Improving instructional strategies, supporting staff, evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

Stakeholder Involvement in Development of Purpose / Mission / Values

1. Comprehensive District Improvement Plans (CDIP)

- The district posts and shares its CDIP and improvement plans, which include a needs assessment and executive summary. These plans are public and subject to input. hickman.kyschools.us
- The improvement plan development is a process that is “by a diverse group of stakeholders.”

2. Family / Community Engagement

- The “Family Resource Center” and family engagement advisory groups are mentioned on their site. These are structures that include parents/families in advisory and feedback roles.
- The district’s website invites community involvement and provides transparency via reports, report cards, improvement plans.

3. Public Board of Education

- The BOE meetings are public. Agendas, minutes, district report cards etc. are published. Through the board, community and parents have legal avenues to influence policies, mission/vision statements, etc.

4. Program-level stakeholder involvement

- Dual credit and CTE programs likely involve higher education and business partners in design or support. Falcon Academy, for instance, is supported via the Four Rivers Scholarship Program and various donors, showing external community partner involvement.
- Feedback systems like surveys or data analysis that include family are part of the improvement plan process.

Notable Achievements

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

Notable achievements (last ~3 years)

1. Strong expansion and impact of Falcon Academy (dual-credit) — The Falcon Academy continues to put large numbers of students into college courses while still in high school. Recent district figures show dozens of students earning hundreds of college credit hours (example: 49 students taking 328 dual-credit courses in one semester for 857 credit hours; district participates in Four Rivers scholarship support). This program is repeatedly cited by the district and region as a major college-and-career success.

2. Significant dual-credit funding support — External scholarship/grant support (Four Rivers scholarship program and local sponsors) has directly funded dual-credit opportunities (tens of thousands of dollars in recent years), removing cost barriers for students.
3. Technology infrastructure upgrades & security practices — The district's 2025–26 Technology Plan documents concrete steps completed recently: Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for staff, a staff device refresh cycle, and a district Chromebook rollout (Chromebooks planned for grades 7–12 for 2025–26). These moves strengthen digital access and security.
4. Recognition of staff & teacher development efforts — The district has recognized outstanding staff and novice teachers publicly (district “Friend of Education” recognitions and Novice Teacher Awards in 2024–25), reflecting investment in teacher morale and professional recognition.
5. Sustained program compliance and monitoring with KDE — The district participated in KDE monitoring (Title programs, preschool, gifted/talented, alternative education) during 2023–24 and maintains up-to-date consolidated program reporting and ESSER/ARP planning, indicating an active compliance and continuous improvement posture.
6. Expanded outreach & literacy access (community programs) — School Community along with FRYSC and Extension office provide a creative community outreach such as red ribbon week, nerf party, I love to read week, reading trail

Areas of Improvement

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

Areas for improvement the district is actively pursuing (next ~3 years)

1. Raise academic proficiency (reading & math) — District report card snapshots show room to grow in proficiency (elementary reading ~40%, math ~33%; high school reading ~47%, math ~40% per district posting). The strategic plan and CDIP emphasis instructional climate and teaching effectiveness to increase student proficiency. Expect continued focus on targeted interventions, tutoring, and data-driven instruction.
2. Increase teacher retention & teaching effectiveness — The strategic plan names teacher retention, professional development, mentoring and instructional coaching as priorities. The district plans to keep investing in staff development, induction/mentoring for novice teachers, and recognition programs to retain high-quality educators.
3. Expand college & career readiness / CTE access — While Falcon Academy is a strength, the district is pursuing broader CTE and work-readiness connections with local business partners and regional programs. Expect growth in CTE offerings, employer partnerships, and access to dual credit/credential pathways.

4. Improve technology access & digital equity — Already rolling out Chromebooks, device refresh cycles, and MFA, the district's next steps include ensuring reliable student access, teacher devices, classroom-ready technology, and addressing any local broadband gaps that limit at-home learning.

5. Enhance student supports for whole-child needs (mental health & safety) — Strategic plan items call out mental-health supports, safety, and healthier school climates. Continued growth in counseling, Project AWARE/coordinated health initiatives, and school climate programs are targeted.

6. Facilities, transportation, and logistical improvements — The district lists facility improvements and safety/security planning among its goals (these are common multi-year capital and operational areas for small rural districts). Budget and ESSER/ARP funds are likely parts of these plans.

7. Broaden community & family engagement and outreach — The district continues to expand family resource efforts (advisory groups, family engagement policies) and community programs with the goal of deeper stakeholder involvement in student learning and improvement planning.

COMMENTS

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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.

NA

Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)
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