

Empowering Kentucky Students with Truly Individualized CCR Planning



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Bullitt County Public Schools sits just south of Louisville, Kentucky. The district is the seventh largest in the state and serves 13,000 students. With multiple expansion projects underway, Bullitt County reflects the diversity and complexity of a growing community while maintaining a sharp focus on preparing every student for life beyond graduation. As a sign of that commitment, the district has created a leadership role dedicated to overseeing readiness and innovation, and has invested in tools to ensure students have access to the best possible supports. Among those investments is the SchoolLinks platform, now deployed across all middle and high schools as a comprehensive system to help students plan for their futures beyond high school.

At North Bullitt High School, counselor Stephanie Burba has seen firsthand how SchoolLinks is transforming the way counselors can support students. In her fourteenth year in education—and fourth as a counselor—Burba oversees a wide range of responsibilities, from coordinating work-based learning (WBL) and dual credit opportunities to supporting 504 plans and academic scheduling. She is also the counselor assigned to 10th and 12th grade students. Burba's greatest passion, and the area where she believes her impact is most profound, is postsecondary planning. A guiding principle for Burba is to work towards helping her students move from making a postsecondary “transitional plan” to truly creating a “transformative plan” to guide their future. With SchoolLinks, that vision has become much more attainable.

Unlocking the Promise of Individualized Learning Plans

A key part of this work has been utilizing SchoolLinks to strengthen students' Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs). Most states, including Kentucky, now require ILPs for every high school student. In many places, however, they amount to little more than a compliance exercise. In Bullitt, however, SchoolLinks has transformed ILPs into a powerful tool that genuinely supports student and counselor success.

Rather than existing as static documents or a series of boxes to check, ILPs in Bullitt now capture students' evolving goals and interests in more detailed and nuanced ways along with progress toward meeting those aspirations. Within the platform, counselors can easily run reports, see what students are exploring, and connect them with experiences that align to their plans. This shift has allowed the district to realize the true

Unlocking the Promise of Individualized Learning Plans Cont.

promise of ILPs—guiding students in meaningful ways toward futures that reflect who they are and what they want to achieve. This is especially helpful for students whose longer term career goals extend beyond the eight traditional career pathways offered at the high school as counselors are able to help connect them with career-centered experiences that align with their passions.

The impact is felt far beyond the counseling office. Bullitt is lucky to have industry partners approach them with internships or work-based learning (WBL) opportunities for students. In the past, they would have relied on informal or ad hoc mechanisms to find students. But with SchoolLinks, Burba no longer has to rely on guesswork. With the ILP database, the school can instantly identify students whose documented interests make them a strong fit and easily connect them to these valuable opportunities.

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And the use of SchoolLinks to support ILPs has extended the opportunity for input and collaboration across the entire school community. Burba noted that parents find the system simple to use and are able to sign off on ILPs, comment, or ask questions directly within the platform. This is especially valuable because it keeps families informed, ensures alignment between school planning and family expectations, and encourages meaningful conversations at home about postsecondary goals. Bullitt has found that this level of transparency and engagement is vital to the quality and application of ILPs; it has turned what could simply be a state requirement into a cornerstone of personalized college and career readiness (CCR).

Course Planning and Work Based Learning that Catalyze Student Success

Building on the progress Bullitt has made in using ILPs to elevate both individual and school-wide planning, the district is now preparing to launch the Course Planner within SchoolLinks. Burba sees this as a game-changer for both students and counselors. Instead of piecing together course selections year by year, students will now be able to map out all four years of high school aligned to their Individual Learning Plans. This forward-looking approach will give students a roadmap that can be revisited and adjusted as their goals evolve. For counselors, it creates space for more meaningful conversations—not about whether a student has the right number of credits, but about whether their chosen courses set them up for the college and career pathways they envision.

This shift is especially exciting for Burba. In past years, she has spent her summers buried in a huge binder filled with paperwork—manually auditing every senior transcript to ensure no one was missing a credit. It was painstaking work that left her exhausted and anxious that a single oversight might jeopardize a student’s diploma. With Course Planner, those audits will be updated in real time, instantly flagging gaps for counselors, students, and families. She exclaimed, “I’m really excited about Course Planner because maybe I’ll finally get a summer break next year!” Beyond saving counselors

from burnout, the tool also helps schools better prepare on a systemic level, projecting class enrollment needs years in advance so students can access the Career and Technical Education (CTE) and CCR courses at the right time for their trajectory.

The district has also integrated SchoolLinks for their work based learning management in recent months. Previously, Bullitt County relied entirely on paper contracts, forms, and timesheets—a

system that often created lags in information sharing and processing. Burba explained that with that system, a student could lose a job and weeks might pass before the school even knew. At the end of last year, she asked the district WBL coordinator for a digital solution. After reviewing multiple platforms, the district chose SchoolLinks because it integrated seamlessly with the ILPs and transition plans students were already using, and it was the most affordable option. Employers now engage directly through the platform, keeping everyone connected in real time. This has made WBL management smoother, more accessible, and ensures that students do not fall through the cracks.

Making Counselors More Effective

Burba reflected that one of the most powerful components of the SchoolLinks implementation has been in how it extends her reach and makes her work more effective. With a caseload of nearly 600 students, it is not possible to meet with every student as often as they need. Burba noted that it was so enlightening to see what SchoolLinks could do for her in her own job, sharing “I realized quickly, this is what I need to be effective.” SchoolLinks gives her insight into student needs and interests that would otherwise be impossible to track at scale. SchoolLinks has become her primary communication tool, helping students connect with her and the counseling team about both college and career opportunities. She sees SchoolLinks as “our tool to open all these different conversations” with students.

The positive impacts have been felt throughout the instructional and support staff as well. English teachers are using the resume builder with students, while others are utilizing SchoolLinks lessons to teach soft skills that are essential for employability. CTE teachers have been thrilled by the functionality to support students in accessing CTE coursework at the right time to maximize growth. Burba has also encouraged teachers to integrate SchoolLinks into existing lessons whenever possible, so students get consistent practice using the platform.

A Return on Investment that Extends Far Beyond the School Walls

Reflecting on the impact SchoolLinks has had on her district, Burba emphasized that the return on investment (ROI) is both wide-reaching and deeply meaningful. In Bullitt, the platform has truly transformed their college and career readiness culture and success. She summarized that “SchoolLinks is making me more effective at making sure our students are graduating with a plan that’s feasible, interesting to them, and will provide them with financial security for their whole life.”

Burba frames her work in terms of preparing students not just to graduate, but to thrive. “Our goal is to make sure we’re not graduating students into poverty...we want to make sure they have a transformative plan so they know what their next steps are.” She described her vision for every student who enters her office: “My goal is to have every student leave as a better human than when they entered.” SchoolLinks helps make that vision a reality by connecting students to opportunities, giving families a way to engage, and ensuring postsecondary planning is thoughtful, personalized, and sustainable.

The ROI is also felt at the systems level. SchoolLinks reduces counselor burnout by automating manual processes, gives schools tools to plan ahead for career-connected, and ultimately strengthens the local economy. “We think about workforce development—that is what SchoolLinks is doing for us,” she explained. Burba sees the platform as a tangible manifestation of the district’s student-first values—it is an “investment in our students” that will yield benefits for decades to come.

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