

SCHOOL ON FIRE

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the School on FIRE model?

In 2012, Eminence Independent Schools (EIS) was struggling to meet state benchmarks for graduating students who were both college and career ready. Superintendent Buddy Berry and his team decided it was time to transform the school's learning model. After interviewing faculty, staff, and every student in the district, they realized that learning needed to be more personalized and authentic. Utilizing the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Six Critical Attributes for Innovative Learning Systems, Berry created the School on FIRE Model (Framework of Innovation for Re-Inventing Education) The model focuses on four key areas:

1. Mastery Model of College and Career Readiness
2. Student Agency
3. Next Generation Skills
4. Surprise and Delight

Ultimately, EIS adopted a "Yes, And..." culture where students have an extremely rigorous school experience *and* an engaging, fun, hands-on, minds-on interaction with content. There are now clearly defined Eminence Exemplars--standards a student must meet in eight key areas--for every grade level, kindergarten through 12th grade. All EIS graduates meet these Exemplars in addition to all of Kentucky's Core Academic Standards. We encourage you to read more about both the [Six Critical Attributes for Innovative Learning Systems](#) and the [School on FIRE model](#).

How do we know the School on FIRE model really works?

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the measure by which schools, districts, and states are held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2012, Eminence Independent Schools (EIS) hadn't met its AYP goal in years and only 39% of its seniors met state benchmarks for college and career readiness. After the implementation of the School on FIRE model, EIS has gone from not meeting its AYP to performing in the top 5% of school districts in Kentucky. In 2014, EIS was the first district in the state to achieve a 100% college and career ready rate, and the only district to accomplish this in consecutive years.

EIS has graduated 250 seniors since the implementation of School on FIRE. 249 of those students have gone on to college or some other postsecondary experience; 1 is serving in the US military.

Why would School on FIRE work outside of Eminence?

We know that School on FIRE is working in a district with a 38.2% poverty rate. While Jefferson County has a similar poverty rate, the racial demographics are significantly different. Though education studies have shown that racial demographics have specific challenges in educating children, the more significant factor in affecting educational outcomes is poverty status - an area where the two districts are on similar playing fields. Additionally - and of extreme importance to any innovation - the community of Jefferson County is ready for change. Our initial research efforts have led us to believe the community would embrace and support the new school.

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How could a School on FIRE come to Jefferson County?

The Fund and EIS are currently working with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), the Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA), and the Jefferson County Public Education Foundation (JCPEF) to bring School on FIRE to a Jefferson County elementary school. The most likely option will be for an existing school to adopt the School on FIRE model. There are several schools that are interested and we are designing an application and selection process for approval by the JCPS Board at their July meeting. The school will still be managed by JCPS, and will not be a charter school.

Other options could include opening a new JCPS school using the School on FIRE model, opening a new School on FIRE in Jefferson County that is managed by EIS, or opening a School on FIRE in Jefferson County as a charter school (either a new school or conversion of an existing school). Our overriding preference is to work with an existing JCPS school to adopt School on FIRE, and we are well on our way to achieving that goal.

How would a School on FIRE in Jefferson County be funded?

The exploratory discussions and development of our implementation recommendation are being funded through a grant from The Gheens Foundation. If all parties agree to move forward with bringing the model to JCPS, we will dive more deeply into budgeting requirements.

EIS adopted School on FIRE with no increase to its current budget, and no additional fundraising. A key piece of the School on FIRE model is the capacity to think differently about a school's budget and to utilize existing funds in new and more effective ways. Our goal would be to implement School on FIRE in Jefferson County with no change to a school's budget. There may be requirements to update/alter a school's facilities and/or add technology; if we find those necessary, JCPEF will lead the effort to fundraise privately for those resources.

There will be a cost (\$60,000 per year) for professional development and project support during the first three years of a School on FIRE implementation. These costs will be borne by JCPS, and we may work with JCPEF to fundraise privately to cover them.