Research Topics and Research Questions

Topic	Subtopic	Question
Academic preparedness	Continuity of instruction	1. To what degree do teacher absences influence student learning? 2. What strategies exist for staffing schools with high-quality teachers, given pending retirements? 3. What are the causes of student absences? 4. *What is the relationship between student attendance and measures of academic success, such as GPA and ACT scores?
	*High school graduation	5. *At what point are students dropping out? And for what reasons? 6. *What strategies are available to retain students in grade 9?
	*Dual credit	7. What are the relationships among dual credit and student enrollment and persistence in college? 8. Do students who take college-level courses in high school attend and persist in college at a higher rate than those who do not?

*Indicates priority area for stakeholders (** and *** reflects a greater number of votes by stakeholders when asked to vote for their highest priority areas during previous workshops)

Topic	Subtopic	Question
College awareness and access	Activities to encourage enrollment and success	9. *Which interventions provided by higher education institutions (for example, college fairs, peer mentoring) can increase high school students' likelihood of enrolling and later persisting in college? 10. What is the relationship between exposure to authentic experiences and college enrollment?
	***Non-academic skills and competencies	11. *What soft skills, such as attendance, are associated with persistence in college? 12. *What activities in K–12 provide students with life skills needed to complete a college degree? 13. *How does behavior in high school and middle school relate to college enrollment and persistence?
	*Student characteristics and experiences	14. What student characteristics are associated with persistence? 15. What is the relationship between exposure to authentic experiences and college graduation rates?

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Topic	Subtopic	Question
Career awareness and access	Pathway and industry certification alignment with regional opportunities	16. What are the skills that existing industry are looking for? 17. What are the job opportunities in Eastern KY (current and projected); in surrounding counties (such as London, Richmond, Lexington)? 18. Why do students pick pathways/industry credentials (because of job options or because they enjoy the topic?) and what are the barriers? 19. What are the high-demand and high-growth jobs associated with different student skill sets, interests, and industry credentials? 20. What programs or practices are available to encourage students who earn industry credentials to put those credentials to use in a related occupation?
	**Outcomes associated with career pathways and industry certification	21. What percentage of students who get an industry certificate get a job in that topic area? 22. *How does training, coaching, or technical support build capacity to provide students with authentic experiences in occupations, careers, and industry sectors that do not yet exist in eastern Kentucky? 23. Who has benefited from career pathways (high vs. low performing students)? 24. To what extent do students who earn an industry credential enter occupations that are related to those industry credentials?

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Social support	*Teacher professional development and skills	25. *How are districts preparing teaching staff to identify and react to students who have experienced trauma?
	*Student skills	26. *What resources and strategies are most effective for *rural students* to be proactive (teaching SEL skills and coping strategies)?
	**Parents	27. What parent characteristics (education level, parent employment status/history, years of employment, attendance at school events) affect college application and persistence? 28. *From parents' perspectives, what are the key barriers to college application, enrollment, and persistence for their children? 29. *What programs or practices are shown to increase parents' support of postsecondary persistence and completion for their children?

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