Kentucky Department of Education

Update on COVID-19 and Elementary and Secondary Education

Kentucky General Assembly
Interim Joint Committee on Education
June 2, 2020

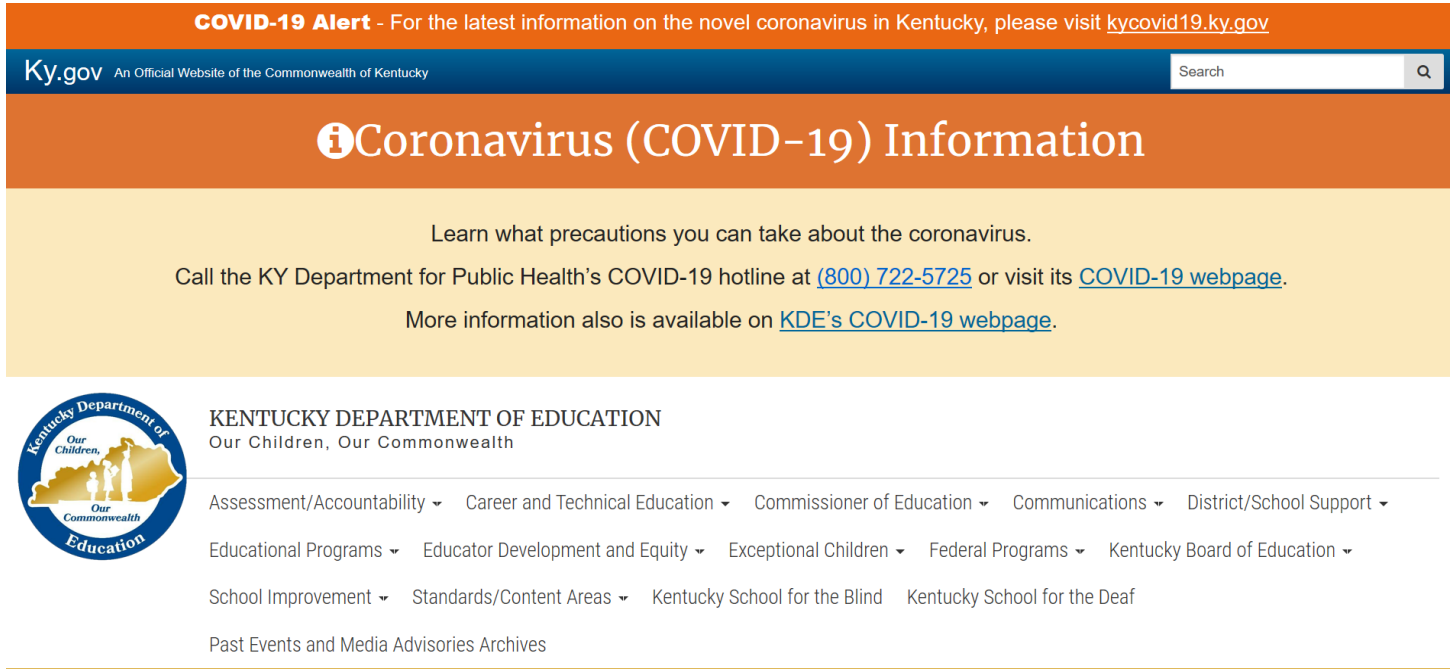
COVID-19 and P-12 Education

The Governor's Executive Orders, the actions of the General Assembly (specifically Senate Bill 177), and the Kentucky Board of Education have worked to provide the support and relief necessary for local school districts to marshal resources to meet the needs of our students, their families, local district staff, and communities across the Commonwealth.

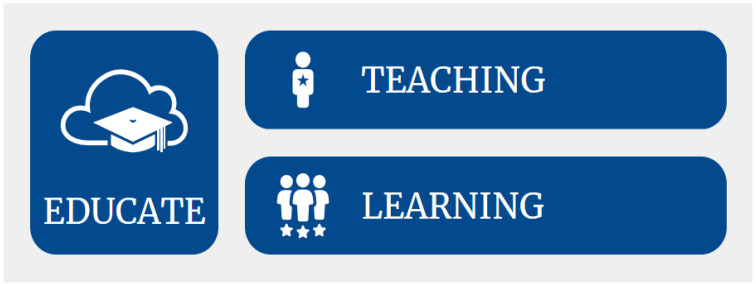
COVID-19 and P-12 Education

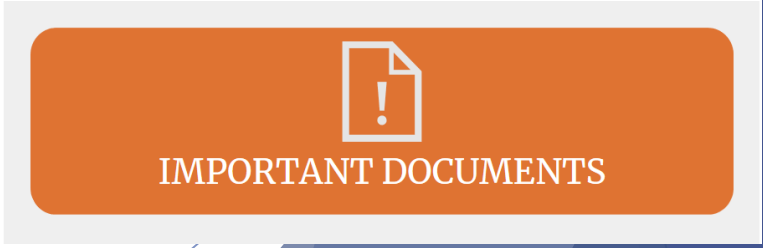
The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) continues to work closely with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) to provide accurate information, strengthen our preparedness and response efforts as the 2019-2020 school year concludes, and plan for the summer and reopening of schools in the fall.

KDE has created a COVID-19 webpage that is accessible and updated each day with pertinent information and resources for our schools and students.



COVID-19 and P-12 Education





Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI)

At the governor's request, in response to advice and recommendations from DPH, school districts across the state *voluntarily* closed to in-person classes.

Districts utilized the Non-Traditional Instruction program. The program began as a pilot in 2011, then went statewide in the 2014-2015 school year. Through the 2018-2019 school year, more than 1,500 instructional days were saved for Kentucky school districts through NTI programming, including a record 510 instructional days during the 2017-2018 school year and 399 instructional days during the 2018-2019 school year.

Senate Bill 177 provides an unlimited number of NTI days, which may include virtual or distance learning.

At a special meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) on March 18, KBE granted a blanket waiver to the NTI regulation so districts not currently participating in the NTI program could go through an abbreviated application process and explain how they would deliver quality, non-traditional instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 year.

KDE's Emergency NTI Guidance for Schools/Districts

National School Lunch Program

KDE applied for a waiver to extend alternate meal service to students in the case of extended closures due to COVID-19. Approval was granted on March 14 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), allowing Kentucky schools to continue to serve students meals following the guidelines of the Summer Food Service Program and National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option at state-approved sites.

USDA clarified that the waiver applies to situations where non-traditional instruction is being carried out through virtual learning as school buildings are closed and students are unable to go to their physical school to attend classes. The waiver allowed KDE to provide meals to students during non-traditional instruction.

In March, 4,679,843 meals and snacks were served with an average daily participation of 238,981.

In April, 11,435,966 meals and snacks were served with an average daily participation of 303,936.

KDE's Division of School and Community Nutrition is working with superintendents and district school nutrition staff on planning for summer meal programs across the state. Families can visit their district's website or social media account to learn more about meal availability in their area.

KDE's Find a Feeding Site During COVID-19 School Closures

Statewide Assessments and Accountability

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced on March 20 that students impacted by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic can bypass standardized testing for the 2019-2020 school year. KDE's application to waive standardized testing was approved by ED and KDE notified all Kentucky public school superintendents on March 24 that K-PREP testing for the 2019-2020 school year had been canceled.

The annual testing window during which the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) is given is within the last fourteen (14) instructional days on a school district's calendar. Since student performance, as measured by assessments, is required to be used in statewide accountability systems, any state that receives a one-year waiver from testing also may receive a waiver from the requirement that the data be used in the statewide accountability system due to the national emergency. KDE included the exemption from school and district accountability and specific public reporting requirements in its waiver request.

Accountability data typically is released in the fall. For this year, all federal ratings and supports will remain the same until after the next testing cycle in the spring of 2021.

The list of schools qualifying for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) also will stay the same.

End-of-School Year Procedures

As the 2019-2020 school year ends, school districts developed procedures to return items to students and have students return school materials such as computers, textbooks, band, and sports equipment.

KDE issued guidance to help schools wrap up the school year safely for students and staff. While keeping the following guidelines in mind, each school determined its own plan, taking into consideration the number of students and the layout of school buildings.

KDE recommended each local district consult with local public health officials taking into consideration the current COVID-19 situation in their respective community.

COVID-19 Emergency Guidelines for End-of-School Procedures

Additional guidance documents provided to local districts:

- Considerations for the Senior Class of 2020
- Considerations for Instruction
- Considerations for Professional Learning
- Considerations for Mental Health and Wellness
- Considerations for Assigning and Reporting Grades

Graduation Requirements

The Governor's Executive Order 2020-243, issued on March 18, grants cabinet secretaries and agency heads the power to waive or suspend statutes related to the current state of emergency. Under that authority, KDE issued a waiver that suspends the requirement that students who plan to graduate from high school in 2020 pass a **civics test**, as well as certain requirements for completing an early high school graduation program.

The waiver suspended KRS 158.141, which requires students to pass a 100-question civics test to graduate from a Kentucky public high school, for the 2019-2020 school year. While most students scheduled to graduate at the end of the current school year had already completed this requirement, a small number of students had not done so prior to the suspension of in-person classes that began March 16.

The suspension of this statute removes a barrier for students who otherwise would graduate this spring.

Graduation Requirements

The waiver also suspended KRS 158.142 (3)(a), which details the requirements for completing an **early high school graduation program** and receiving an Early Graduation Scholarship Certificate for use at a Kentucky public two-year community and technical college or a Kentucky four-year college or university.

The suspension also excluded current high school juniors who declared their intent to participate in the early high school graduation program prior to January 1, from end-of-course (EOC) examinations.

Those exams are paper-based tests provided to school districts by KDE and administered in schools. Due to the suspension of in-person classes and the need to practice social distancing, it was not practical to require early high school graduation program students to report to school for the exams.

The emergency school closures should not prevent juniors participating in the early high school graduation program from completing the program and qualifying for an Early Graduation Scholarship Certificate. The requirements remain in effect for high school freshmen and sophomores.

High School Graduation Options

Kentucky's local boards of education and school-based decision-making councils (SBDMs), in consultation with local health departments and with guidance from KDE, worked to finalize plans for high school graduations.

Districts considered many options about what kind of alternative graduation ceremony would work best in their communities. Options such as virtual ceremonies and drive-in ceremonies have been undertaken. Local districts have engaged with their students and families to find the best solution for each community.

KDE's COVID-19 Emergency Guidelines for Graduation Ceremonies and Related Year-End Activities

High School Graduation Options

"Kentucky's Tribute to the Class of 2020"

KDE also honored Kentucky's high school seniors with a one-hour program that was streamed on Saturday, May 23. Watch the video here.

This tribute included hundreds of photos from across the state of seniors enjoying activities from their 2019-2020 school year.

Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, Rep. Regina Huff, Sen. Max Wise, and many others provided well wishes by video to our graduating seniors.

Education Continuation Task Force

Seeking input from a variety of stakeholders, KDE has formed the Education Continuation Task Force, a group that will serve as a guiding coalition to help facilitate the delivery of services to Kentucky students during the current period of school closure.

The Task Force meets at least once a week to discuss and vet issues facing Kentucky's school districts during this in-person closure period. The Task Force includes representatives of Kentucky's educational cooperatives, educational partner organizations, Kentucky Educational Television, the Southern Regional Education Board and other relevant partners.

This task force is focused on providing timely information, research and instructional resources to school districts as they deal with a school closure of potentially unprecedented length. It also provides rapid information and feedback to schools and districts.

KDE Weekly Webcasts for Superintendents and District Staff

KDE has hosted multiple webcasts each week to disseminate the latest information and field questions from superintendents, finance officers, instructional leaders, directors of special education, directors of pupil personnel and school counselors, among others.

Federal Assistance

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allocates $30.75 billion in emergency education funding to states. Kentucky will receive about $223 million for K-12 education – roughly 4% of Kentucky's annual education budget – from two sources:

$193.2 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), intended to provide local education agencies with emergency relief funds to address the impact of COVID-19 on elementary and secondary schools.

KDE Guidance - Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund

$30 million of Kentucky's $43.8 million share of the Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER), designed to enable the nation's governors to decide how best to meet their states' K-12 and higher education needs.

KDE Guidance - Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund

KDE released the district allocations on May 15, 2020.

CARES Act Funding Matrix

CARES Act Allocations 051520

Teachers Helping Teachers

Another initiative is Teachers Helping Teachers. This resource from KDE's Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness directly connects experienced educators with other teachers to provide virtual coaching and support to help with the stresses of the COVID-19 crisis.

There currently are 80-90 teachers who have volunteered to serve as mentors. The mentors will assist other educators while school buildings are closed and aid in areas such as content planning, finding helpful resources, using technology, and staying connected with students.

Resources for Summer Learning

KDE has launched a series of Summer Support webpages. As summer begins, we must continue to adapt to a new normal and prepare for phased re-opening.

It is important to keep children and students engaged in summer reading and mathematics to support their academic success in the fall. To support parents, families, and caregivers in encouraging summer learning, KDE is providing the following resources.

- Summer Food Service Program
- School and Public Libraries
- Literacy Resources
- Mathematics Resources
- Virtual Read Aloud Series
- Information & Printables for Families and Caregivers
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CSSO) Virtual Summer School Resource Guide

Reopening Challenges

Much is still unknown about how the COVID-19 pandemic will unfold during the summer and into the fall. KDE is encouraging schools to prepare three contingency plans for the start of the school year: an early opening, a traditional opening and a late opening. Reopening will be based on information provided by the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH).

KDE's guidance provides a checklist and information for districts as they consider options and make plans for the 2020-2021 school year, focusing on:

- how to ensure the health and safety of everybody in their buildings;
- how to maintain quality teaching and learning:
- how to support exceptional learners, including gifted and talented students and students in need of special education services; and
- how to continue school and district operations.

KDE Guidance - COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools, Initial Guidance for Schools and Districts

Reopening Challenges

KDE will release additional guidance documents over the next 6 weeks, including:

- Supporting Student and Staff Wellness
- Teaching and Learning - Stage One
- Exceptional Learners
- Alternative Learning Models
- Transportation
- Health and Safety
- Career and Tech
- Intermittent Closures
- Food Services
- Emergency Drills, Traffic, Social Distancing
- Performance Based Instruction
- Teaching and Learning - Stage Two

Questions or Comments

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