



Commissioner's Report
Commissioner Jason E. Glass, Ed.D.

Dear Kentucky Board of Education members:

As I close my first few weeks as commissioner of education, I want you to know how happy I am to be back home and how honored I am to be helping move our schools forward with you and Team KDE.

First, I want to let you know that the public release of the School Report Card for the 2019-2020 school year will be Oct. 14. The districts will receive a chance to view all the data, which will be under embargo, on this Friday, Oct. 9. You will receive an email from with how you can take a look at the data to be prepared for any questions that may arise.

I do want to point out that the School Report Card release will look different this year due to COVID-19. Kentucky's COVID-19 Assessment Waiver Request to the U.S. Department of Education suspended the majority of state testing and accountability calculations for the 2019-2020 school year. A school and a district's star rating, as well as a school's federal classification, will remain the same this year as it was for the 2018-2019 school year.

I participated in my first Team KDE meeting from my office in the Sower Building on Thursday, Sept. 24. It was a great meeting with staff and the conversations were honest, engaging and very helpful to me as I continue to learn about the agenda and each of the valuable members of the team. We also had part three of our anti-bias training with Dr. Roger Cleveland of Eastern Kentucky University. I am looking forward to our Team KDE Meeting later this month, where I will continue to learn about the agency and the talents and skills each member brings to our team.

As we think about all that faces the department, our schools and students, I know this has been a tough time for us all and I sincerely appreciate everyone's efforts to educate, feed and support Kentucky's students. We must continue to do what we think is best for our students and communities. We must continue to answer difficult questions that have no clear-cut solutions. We must continue to communicate, listen and learn.

These are unprecedented times and everyone at the department must stand ready to help all our districts as the school year begins. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, apply for any waivers offered by the federal government to help our teachers and students, provide more guidance and continue to be a resource for our schools and districts, regardless of where education is taking place.

I wish I could predict what will happen over the next several months – but no one can. The department will need to remain adaptable as conditions change to keep learning going while also keeping everyone safe.

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This seems hard because it is. These feelings are normal and I am experiencing them, too. As you know, my family relocated to Kentucky during this pandemic and my own children are starting school remotely, missing their friends and unable to make new ones, so I understand how difficult this is for all of our parents, educators and communities. We need to be patient and kind with each other as we forge a path forward. There will come a time when this virus does not rule our lives.

As we look toward rebuilding our economy, budget cuts are likely when the legislature reconvenes in January. Tough economic times are ahead, but know that I will always be an advocate for Kentucky's public education system and the work we do to make the lives of students better. I will fight for the funding we need to keep moving forward.

These first few weeks on the job, I've intentionally been doing a lot of listening. As this is not my first entry into a new organization and role, I've developed a protocol to get the conversation going and help me learn more about the educational context in Kentucky.

I want to share with you that we released a need Kentucky Education Feedback Survey this week. This survey, which is aimed at all education stakeholders, asks three questions you are getting used to hearing from me:

- What should we keep?
- What should we stop?
- What should we start?

I hope you will encourage everyone in your community to take a few moments and make sure their voices are heard. It will be open through Nov. 20.

I believe public education is one of the greatest success stories in our nation's history. Education runs deep in my family, as my grandmother, both my parents, my sister and I were all public school teachers in Kentucky. Public schools are the launching pad for our state's next generation of teachers, entrepreneurs and business and community leaders.

I look forward to working together to help all our state's children fulfill their dreams.

Sincerely,

Jason E. Glass, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

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The KDE Welcomes New Staff

New staff who joined the KDE since the board’s August regular meeting are listed below by office:

Office of Finance and Operations

9/8/20: Juli Martin/Division of District Support/ Student Tracking & Data Branch

Office of Continuous Improvement and Support

10/1/20: John Hill/ Division of Student Success/Safe and Supportive Schools Branch

Office of Assessment and Accountability

10/1/20: Eric Terkperthey/Division of Accountability Data & Analysis /Data Management Branch

10/1/20: Benjamin Riley/Division of Assessment and Accountability Support

Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf Updates

Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB)

The KSB enjoyed a wonderful first day of virtual classes through nontraditional instruction (NTI) on Aug. 24. One parent posted the following: “Teachers and therapists – one word – Wow!!! As an organized person I am blown away by the level of preparation that was required to pull this off! A laptop, a tablet, all programmed and ready to go, all materials Brailled and in print (for mama). Each activity in a baggie and labeled. Y’all are amazing!”

The implementation of NTI is a schoolwide effort, from the administration to paraprofessionals and dorm staff. Dorm staff and paraprofessionals are providing support to teachers and students during virtual instruction by helping to prepare materials, checking in on individual students and supporting all instruction. Student attendance has been high during NTI.



KSB students participating in NTI.



Jessica Belcher, a short course teacher, conducts a daily Wildcat NTI morning message for staff and students. The message is emailed to all students and posted on the KSB's private YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxZ76HFQzXQ&feature=youtu.be>. The message on Fridays includes a fun KSB historical fact to emphasize the 2020-2021 theme of "Journey through the Excellence of KSB."

Belcher and Krystin Price, another short course teacher, are developing a series of videos on the Expanded Core Curriculum. These videos will be posted on the KSB website to provide information to teachers and parents across the state regarding specific skills that compensate for a student's vision loss. The videos will focus on independence, assistive technology, self-determination, Orientation and Mobility, career education and social interaction skills.

The KSB will not participate in fall sports on campus; however, the school is providing an opportunity for students to virtually compete in forensics. Students will compete against the Indiana School for the Blind, Tennessee School for the Blind, Ohio School for the Blind, Wisconsin School for the Blind and Missouri School for the Blind.

Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD)

NTI began on Aug. 24. The KSD surveyed parents in May and again in July to seek feedback on NTI implementation, supports and returning to campus. The leadership team used this information to plan for NTI for the first six weeks of the 2020-2021 school year.

Prior to the first day of NTI, KSD staff conducted a Virtual 101 parent night to share NTI processes and expectations. The school is providing additional supports to parents during NTI, including virtual American Sign Language (ASL) tutoring for families, 24/7 counseling-crisis support, evening support with bedtime stories in ASL, homework support, supervised social media time, and day and evening technical support.

Multiple teams have worked together to provide the best NTI experience possible for students. KSD counselors worked with teachers on ways to embed social-emotional supports during class, as well as how to provide dedicated time across the week to work directly with students. The mental health team continues to meet weekly to respond to students identified as needing additional supports. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team modified the classroom guidelines for success to address the virtual environment.

During the first week of school, the focus was on the PRIDE (based on the expectation that students will be Prepared, Respectful, Involved, Dependable and Empathetic) rules and routines for NTI instruction. Several KSD staff delivered materials, supplies and laptops to students across the state before NTI began and are continuing to deliver supplies and technology when needed.



KSD staff delivering NTI materials



Virtual instruction of KSD PRIDE

KSD staff continue to find ways to connect during virtual instruction. Roll Call – through Google Docs – is a daily routine to support staff virtual connectivity with each other during NTI, to share important information, celebrations and frustrations. Teachers also post questions and complete plus-deltas daily as part of KSD’s continuous improvement.

The leadership team uses teacher feedback to refine and respond to remove barriers so teachers can focus their time and energy on educating students. Tech Tip Tuesday (TTT) is one example of just-in-time learning for teachers. Weekly, TTT serves in place of roll call and provides training on problems identified through deltas or requested by teachers. Recently, a high school student hosted TTT to show teachers how to control a student’s laptop to better provide support during instruction. This was a win-win opportunity for our staff and students!

The campus lighting project is well underway to add to and improve current lighting across campus. This will help to improve campus security and includes emergency lights placed outside of buildings should students be crossing campus if an emergency occurs, such as fire, bad weather or an intruder alert.



Pictures from the campus lighting project.

Both the KSB and KSD spent a lot of time ensuring all students were provided with an opportunity for food service during NTI. Staff delivered meals to students across the state to feed those that requested food for the first two weeks of school. Staff worked with local school districts to develop agreements to feed students from their local district for the remainder of NTI.

Kentucky Tech District of Area Technology Centers (ATC) Updates



Effective Sept. 1, Dr. Beth Hargis assumed the role of KDE Division Director for Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement within the Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE). Former Director Tom Thompson returned to the Breckinridge County ATC as the principal. Dr. Hargis has served as both an ATC principal and central region ATC administrative consultant.

Effective Sept. 28, ATCs are adhering to the “Reopening State-Operated Area Technology Centers for In-Person Instruction” plan developed by the KDE OCTE. The plan was shared with superintendents and ATC principals on Sept. 22 and Sept. 23 respectively.

The Kentucky Tech reopening plan is based on a localized approach, with the Department for Public Health’s (DPH) [COVID-19 Mode of Instruction Metrics for K-12 Education](#) serving as a guidepost for decision-making and implementation of in-person instruction for each ATC. ATCs will monitor the DPH dashboard and communicate with feeder district administration regarding changes in status to ensure smooth transitions in the event of instructional changes. Changes in instructional platforms will be communicated with stakeholders, including parents and students, preceding any change in implementation. Prior to Sept. 28, all 51 of the ATCs provided virtual instruction to students.

Additionally, the Paducah ATC, Wayne County ATC and Mason County Career Magnet Center moved into new buildings this school year. The buildings are providing state-of-the-art facilities and opportunities to further increase student achievement in career and technical education.

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