



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education Continuation Task Force

SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: JUNE 1, 2020

ATTENDANCE:

Jon Akers, Melissa Biggerstaff, Rhonda Caldwell, Eddie Campbell, Tonya Crum, Jim Flynn, Ronda Harmon, Nancy Hutchinson, David Johnson, Stephanie Little, Brian Lovell, Brent McKim, Leon Mooneyhan, Martin Monson, Ronnie Nolan, OJ Oleka, Jackie Risdén-Smith, John Settle, Benjamin Wilcox

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item: Welcome

Presenters: Kevin C. Brown, Interim Commissioner
Karen Dodd, Chief Performance Officer
Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Interim Commissioner Brown welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. Brown reminded the group to provide feedback in the Teams chat.

Feedback:

None.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Re-entry Guidance: Teaching and Learning Stage 1

Presenters: Krista Hall, Division Director
Misty Higgins, Program Consultant
Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Krista Hall and Misty Higgins presented information about reopening and academic resources that have been provided through a series of webcasts. The webcasts provided guidance to teachers about analyzing the curriculum they were able to cover during the 2019-2020 school year to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year. Recommendations about how leaders can support teachers during this process have been provided in the guidance. The webcasts have been packaged with the accompanying resources and are available on [KDE's COVID-19 webpage](#).

Feedback:

- The sessions were very clear and teacher-friendly, but this isn't simple work. Having someone onsite in the school or district to get people started would be very helpful.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Superintendent Needs-Sensing Survey

Presenter: Hannah Poquette, Strategic Data Analyst
Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Hannah Poquette explained that a series of needs-sensing surveys will be deployed within the next few weeks in partnership with the [REL AP \(Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia\)](#). The purpose is to obtain feedback on needs across the state that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data will help KDE align its efforts with those of other education stakeholders and meet districts' needs. Superintendents will be surveyed first and address policy development, trauma-informed approaches, general needs of school leaders, information technology and distance learning. Task force members provided feedback about superintendents' needs in the areas of policy development, general needs and timelines for guidance.

Feedback:

- Grading in a non-traditional setting/hybrid approach is an area of need.
- Superintendents need policy guidance on funding issues that impact transportation and remote learning.
- Superintendents have learned that if schools do not follow the state guidelines when reopening, liability insurance will not cover them if staff or students get sick. There also are liability concerns regarding special education. Any recommendations need to be defined carefully.
- The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) has released a guidance document regarding liability issues for higher education and is working on guidance for K-12 schools.
- Safety is an area of need.
- Decision rules regarding minimum re-entry operational policies would be very helpful.
- Superintendents need guidance on how to make decisions about instructional format and schedule (e.g., in-house vs. online and five days vs. two days direct instruction) to use when returning to school.
- The Kentucky School Board Association (KSBA) has advised districts not to make permanent changes to policy based on a (hopefully) temporary situation. KSBA reminded districts that portions of council policies not based on statute can be waived. Districts should work with board counsel before making policy changes.
- Questions have been received from employees who are concerned about the health implications of returning to work and what their choices are if they or family members are in any of the high-risk categories.
- Superintendents need guidance on reopening issues – e.g., calendar, NTI prep, in-person with social distancing, access to personal protective equipment (PPE), liability relief and a sundry of funding challenges.
- Broadband access for remote learning is an issue.
- Currently, sick day policies are very specific. Districts have questions about staff who are fearful of returning to work or if they have an underlying health issue and doctors have advised them not to return to onsite work.

Commissioner Brown reminded task force members that insurance policies are governed by contract and board counsels can assist with issues. Some information being obtained from insurance representatives could be inaccurate. The SREB and KSBA are distributing guidance for districts and local boards that should help all parties understand the coverage contracts and policy implications.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: School Health Updates

Presenters: Angela McDonald, Education Nurse Consultant
Office of Finance and Operations, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Reopening considerations have been discussed with district health coordinators since schools closed in March 2020. Districts are encouraged to have a flu plan, and that was used as a starting point. School nurse protocols will remain similar to current practices, with nurses finding ways to expand care with limited resources.

Guiding questions were provided to school nurses about policies and resources, such as protocols for staff showing symptoms, Infinite Campus documentation, alternate plans for students who need nebulizer treatments and mental health referrals. A network of school nurses across the country has been helpful for sharing resources and best practices. KDE meets with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) regularly as Healthy at School guidelines continue to be developed. KDE also serves as a liaison between DPH and our state schools (Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf), since they are residential programs and have unique needs.

Question: What are your suggestions when there is no school nurse onsite?

Answer: Work carefully with the district health coordinator to implement a plan that defines protocols and procedures. A school nurse should always be available by phone when there is no school nurse on site.

Question: Is training available for schools with no onsite nurse?

Answer: District health coordinators can provide training as well as local health departments. This is a good idea and KDE can assist if needed. The National Association of School Nurses is developing training resources for staff and parents that will be posted on [KDE's COVID-19 webpage](#) when it becomes available.

Comment: Guidance for residential programs also would be useful for residential childcare centers (e.g., Methodist Home for Children and Maryhurst) where students live and typically attend school on campus.

Response: Guidance is still being developed and will be posted on [KDE's COVID-19 webpage](#) when it becomes available.

Feedback:

None.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Feedback from the Superintendents' Webcast

Presenters: Robin Kinney, Associate Commissioner, Office of Finance and Operations
Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Associate Commissioner Robin Kinney updated the task force about information shared during the last superintendents' webcast. Partners from the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), including Dr. Steven Stack, explained the current statewide situation. A vaccine will not be available for the start of the 2020-2021 school year, so basic principles around social distancing, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and personal hygiene must be followed to the maximum extent possible. DPH recognizes that districts are trying to reduce the risk of infection for staff and students while increasing the ability to effectively contact trace. The significant challenges facing districts were acknowledged and there was discussion about the tension between bringing kids together for effective instruction amid concerns about social distancing and public health. Primary issues superintendents expressed concern about were transportation and attendance funding.

Comment: Superintendents are trying to reopen schools but are concerned that may not be possible without going against or stretching public health guidelines. They are looking for answers about NTI, transportation, attendance and other issues that affect funding, staff and students.

Response: KDE is feeling that tension as well. Several questions have been received asking for the minimum requirements to meet public health guidelines when conducting in-person instruction. Those answers are being sought from DPH. Other decisions must be made based on community, district and school needs. DPH has reminded everyone that realistically, people will continue to get sick. The guidelines are a way to mitigate risk and keep safety as the top priority while educating students.

Question: Is there a sense of how many districts are strongly considering opening early?

Answer: Several task force members reported that none of their districts are considering an early start and more are considering the late start option provided through the "boat dock bill" ([17RS Senate Bill 50](#)).

Feedback:

- Task force members reported that groups of superintendents are working together to brainstorm solutions to begin school. There is a critical focus on the human and financial resources school districts will need to reopen under current public health guidance and whether they can afford to open.
- Superintendents still are concerned about the teacher shortage issue.
- Superintendents are asking about the contractual issues for certified and classified staff related to [17RS Senate Bill 50](#).

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Task Force Member News

Presenters: Jon Akers, Executive Director, Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS)
Tonya Crum, Senior Director of Education, Kentucky Educational Television (KET)

Summary of Discussion:

Guidance from KCSS will align with KDE and DPH guidelines. Training and school assessment will not occur on-site in districts, but online services are being ramped up.

Top priorities being addressed are transportation and emergency drills. If more families than usual drive their children to school, there will be issues with overcrowding and possibly early drop-offs. KCSS is recommending that students not be permitted on campuses until staff are present, and then go straight to their classrooms as opposed to gathering areas.

Suggestions also are being provided to address emergency drills with social distancing. There are concerns about custodial staff being able to maintain extra sanitizing requirements. Akers provided a word of caution about private companies who contact schools and charge a lot of money for “the answer.” KCSS will provide training for new district safety coordinators on June 10 and an update training for current district safety coordinators on June 11. Both trainings will be held virtually.

Tonya Crum shared a [list](#) of resources and professional development sessions released through KET. Emphasis is being placed on mental health issues. Virtual physics labs also are available and could be useful for distance learning at the high school level.

Feedback:

None.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Review and Adjournment

Presenter: Kevin C. Brown, Interim Commissioner of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Brown reminded task force members that member news will be a recurring agenda item and participants are welcome to share about topics of interest to the group. On alternating Mondays when this group is not meeting, the Superintendents Advisory Council will meet, giving superintendents the opportunity to provide feedback.

Foster reviewed the list of guidance documents being released throughout the summer:

- **May 25:** Social and Emotional Learning
- **June 1:** Teaching and Learning Phase 1 and Evaluating Students Upon School Re-entry
- **June 8:** Alternative Learning Models and Transportation
- **June 15:** CTE and Intermittent Closures
- **June 22:** Food Service, Traffic, Emergency Drills, Social Distancing in Schools and Exceptional Learners
- **June 29:** Performance-Based Instruction
- **July 13:** Teaching and Learning, Phase 2
- *Additionally, KDE will share the DPH guidance document when it is released.*

A link to the exit slip was sent via chat to gather feedback that might not have been shared during the meeting, as well as asking for topics we need to discuss.

Commissioner Brown thanked everyone for their participation on this task force and their work to support their groups. The next meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2020, from 1-3 E.T. Group members should send feedback or questions to [Commissioner Brown](#) or [Karen Dodd](#).

Feedback:

- The media coverage of the dangers and deaths attributed to the virus greatly complicates contingency planning by school districts for the fall semester. Parents are understandably concerned about placing their children on buses and their return to classrooms.
- The Kentucky Association of School Superintendents has established a repository for district reopening plans. It is a resource for sharing and collaborating around district reopening planning.
- Please make sure directors of education cooperative receive all guidance documents.
- The reopening guidance is a great first step. The next step is more direction around specific options for consideration. Thank you for all your hard work KDE.