



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education Continuation Task Force

SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: MAY 4, 2020

ATTENDANCE:

Jon Akers, Melissa Biggerstaff, Eddie Campbell, Tonya Crum, Jim Flynn, Brooke Gill, Ronda Harmon, Nancy Hutchinson, Mary Ann Jennings, David Johnson, Eric Kennedy, Brian Lovell, Leon Mooneyhan, Ronnie Nolan, OJ Oleka, Tony Peavler, Stephen Pruitt, Amy Razor, Mary Pat Regan, Jackie Ridsen-Smith, Mary Ruble, Kerri Schelling, John Settle, Julian Tackett, Benjamin Wilcox, Wayne Young

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. The task force has been helpful providing feedback and disseminating information to districts as they continue to engage and instruct students from home. Moving forward, efforts will focus on summer programming and preparing for the 2020-2021 school year. Topics under considerations were outlined:

- Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES} Act Funding – KDE submitted the official application for funding over the weekend
- Summer feeding and enrichment opportunities
- Reopening – districts will receive guidance presenting scenarios for safe reopening
- Mental health issues

Feedback:

None.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: CARES Act Funding

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

Summary of Discussion:

KDE is seeking feedback from task force members with this guiding question in mind: How can Kentucky educational partners assist districts with pandemic recovery efforts while receiving CARES Act funding?

Associate Commissioner Robin Kinney reviewed details of the CARES Act, which was effective March 27. The discussion focused on two pots of money, the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEERS) Fund and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. Details about each funding source, including allowable expenses and ideas for local education agencies (LEAs) to consider, can be found in the [presentation](#) used during the meeting. KDE is preparing guidance documents for districts.

GEER Fund:

- Remote learning/technology and feeding are focus areas
- KDE is requesting to use GEER funds to assist all school districts
- Districts should consider short- and long-term needs as options are considered

ESSER Fund:

- Funds are distributed through the Title I-A formula, but are not constrained by Title I-A spending requirements
- The flexibility of these funds is unprecedented
- Districts are encouraged to continue paying salaries; caution is urged when using temporary funds for hiring purposes
- Some funding will be held at the state level

Equitable Services for Non-public Schools:

- Covers GEER and ESSER funds
- Funding must remain under control of public school districts

Kinney asked the group to consider ways their agencies can partner with KDE to fulfill the goals of the task force. Partnerships are key since staffing capacity is lean at the state and local levels. There may be opportunities to coordinate efforts and enter contractual agreements to make a bigger impact and provide effective support.

Feedback:

- It is great that higher education has been included in this request for GEER funds, as higher education has been facing the same challenges as K-12 regarding getting students remote learning resources and opportunities.
- Educational cooperatives are also limited in resources to help at this level of magnitude, so any available funding through CARES Act funds would help increase capacity.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Summer Learning

Presenter: Dr. Amanda Ellis, Associate Commissioner, Office of Teaching and Learning
Dr. Kelly Foster, Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support
Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Maintaining a focus on summer programming has always been critical due to “summer slide,” and this year is no exception. KDE is providing summer supports in the following ways:

- Read Up literacy program provided in conjunction with the summer feeding program
- Summer support website with resources to use with families, including KET and library resources as well as recordings of guest readers
- Partnering with several national organizations to provide guidance and resources to districts about summer programming and re-entry to the school year

Ellis and Foster asked the group for feedback on the guiding question: What are the biggest barriers preventing the provision of meaningful summer learning for students?

Question: Are there going to be expanded summer feeding sites this year considering the number of families impacted by the layoffs and job loss?

Answer: There already has been an increase in districts participating in summer feeding, as several were approved when the pandemic started. Further information about the number of sites will be provided. The Read Up literacy program also resulted in increased participation at the current summer feeding sites.

Feedback:

- Districts are projecting many of the same barriers they currently face: access to all students (technology, face-to-face, etc.), social distancing, identifying students and their gaps, etc.
- Limited access to public libraries may be a problem. Many parents rely on the programs they offer to keep structure around reading activities.
- Fatigue is an issue; kids, families, teachers and administrators are exhausted.
- Enrichment is important, but personal protective equipment (PPE) and in-person testing/screening will pose barriers.
- Funding will be a concern, with many expecting mid-year cuts next school year.
- The libraries sent a reopening plan to the governor’s office so they may have limited availability. Further information is forthcoming.
- Kentucky’s summer feeding program is a model shared with other Southern Regional Education Board states.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Re-entry in the Fall

Presenters: Dr. Amanda Ellis, Associate Commissioner, Office of Teaching and Learning
Dr. Kelly Foster, Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support
Gretta Hylton, Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning
Kay Kennedy, Program Consultant, Office of Finance and Operations
Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Office of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Ellis:

- Focusing on academics
- Every student will have struggles and gaps

- Encouraging strong core instruction over interventions
- [Instructional planning series](#) for districts began last week, next webcast May 6, 2-3 p.m. ET.

Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Dr. Foster:

- Feedback from the task force will help shape the content of forthcoming guidance so it is useful for districts

Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Gretta Hylton:

- U.S. Department of Education made recommendations to Congress to not allow waivers for a free, appropriate public education or least restrictive environment (LRE); the only waiver recommended was for the transition timeline from Part C to Part B
- A decision from Congress is forthcoming
- Districts must begin planning for compensatory education and contingency planning within Individualized Education Programs for the future
- Clarification: extended school year (ESY) services are only to be used for recoupment and retention of skills already taught, not missed services, so ESY cannot replace compensatory education
- A series of weekly webinars have been offered in conjunction with the special education cooperatives and can be viewed on OSEEL's [COVID-19 Resources page](#)
- Preschool numbers are likely to increase significantly due to job loss

Office of Finance and Operations, Kay Kennedy:

Feedback is being sought in the following areas of focus.

- Operations – student transportation, health and feeding
- Facilities – deep cleaning and disinfecting of buildings
- Supplies – PPE, cleaning supplies
- Health – vulnerable populations within staff and students
 - Students may not be able to get physicals, dental exams and vaccines
 - Many staff are in the high-risk age category and/or struggle with other health problems

Question: Is there a plan from the state (governor's office or KDE) for health precautions and safety related to re-entry? Even things as simple as hand washing protocols at every grade level should be considered, in addition to mental health and curriculum/instruction.

Answer: Yes. Concerns about all issues around facilities operations are part of the framework being developed.

Feedback:

- Green River Regional Education Cooperative has scheduled work sessions with instructional leaders at the elementary, middle and high school levels to support this work.
- There have been questions about a need for some focus on gifted and talented education students who may not be getting the support/challenge they need via NTI.
- Addressing health and safety concerns for all students and educators is an enormous issue, even before instructional issues are addressed.
- Part of the discussion should include the strong possibility that families won't be comfortable sending their children back to school even if schools are open for in-person

instruction. Districts may need to consider how to simultaneously continue NTI for those students who want to remain enrolled in their public school but don't feel safe in the school setting.

- The top priorities should be learning loss for all student groups, accelerating learning, fear of illness, obtaining supplies, alternate re-opening strategies and funding issues.
- Feedback indicates that educators are very concerned for the safety of medically fragile students
- Statute, regulations and local board policies may need to address students who cannot return to in-person instruction, whether by choice or necessity.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Mental Health

Presenters: Miriam Silman, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support
Dr. Damien Sweeney, Office of Teaching and Learning
Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Dr. Damien Sweeney reviewed the sources of COVID-19 stress, such as anxiety about illness, limited connections with others, limited access to normal coping strategies and uncertainty. Sweeney also reviewed how stress manifests in students and staff. It's imperative that district and school staff continue to check in with students, especially those with known trauma at home. Schools can build their guidance and supports around awareness, building resilience and crisis planning.

Miriam Silman discussed how districts can focus on building resilience in staff and students through the areas of connection, safety, nutrition and exercise, competence, empowerment and self-regulation.

Sweeney and Silman explained several strategies districts should consider while supporting students, families and staff during the summer and when school resumes.

Details can be found in the [presentation](#) used during the meeting. A virtual crisis plan is linked in the presentation.

Question: What are some of the best ways to get this to everyone in school districts across the state?

Answer: This information will be presented to KDE's advisory groups and possibly recorded for district use. Resources are available through KDE and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Resources for families can be geared for use with staff.

Question: Many students are not attending their mental health sessions with community partners right now and getting them to come in during the summer is always a challenge. Has the state considered promoting the use of telehealth during the summer to offer students mental health support? We are thinking about how we can use our mental health counselors/ therapists over the summer to support students and families.

Answer: Telehealth is the new norm and there's no reason it can't continue over the summer for students, even if they are being seen through "school-based" services. All behavioral health providers should be equipped to offer telehealth and should have billing in place. There are clear ways to manage confidentiality, privacy and billing. All the Community Mental Health Centers are on board with this. They can manage intakes, therapy, medication management and case

management virtually and in-person, as indicated. The only barrier may be if a student was receiving services through a contract where the school was paying for the therapy. In that case, the student may have to re-enter services as an individual case with a billing mechanism set up. That should not be a barrier; if a student needs services and an agency refuses to continue for financial reasons it would be considered unethical behavior. If private providers are too expensive, some kids might need to switch to the community mental health center.

Feedback:

- Maybe a silver lining can be urgent attention to, and actions to address, mental health issues as described in this presentation. Students and adults have been needing this.
- This was very helpful presentation. KET is in the process of compiling youth mental health resources into a self-paced professional development format to release later in May.
- Diagnosing the social and emotional needs of students is being interpreted as large-scale assessment. It should be clarified that social and emotional needs are included in diagnostic work. Even academic needs should be assessed at the classroom level rather than relying on large-scale assessments.
- Training students on social and emotional learning training may help them better understand what they are experiencing and feeling.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Review and Adjournment

Presenter: Kevin C. Brown, Interim Commissioner of Education

Summary of Discussion:

A link to the exit slip was sent via chat to gather feedback that may not have been shared during the meeting, as well as asking for topics we need to discuss. Moving forward, topics will include various scenarios for reopening, cleaning and disinfecting buildings and contingency planning for a possible resurgence. Task force input is being sought on these topics and others that may be needed.

Commissioner Brown thanked everyone for their participation in this task force and for their work to support their groups.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2020, 1-3 p.m. ET. Group members should send feedback or questions to [Commissioner Brown](#) or [Karen Dodd](#).

Feedback:

Topics for future meetings should include summer learning, re-entry plans, social and emotional supports right now and in the fall, and ideas to reach the hard-to-reach.