

# COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools

July 24, 2020

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## **Flexibility for Assigning Staff in the COVID-19 Instructional Setting**

As school and district leaders prepare to safely re-open schools, precautions to enable in-person instruction will necessitate flexibility for staffing and assignment of teachers. This document addresses some of the common scenarios schools may face regarding teacher assignment and certification, as well as flexibilities school districts may utilize to address these issues.

### **Digital Learning Provider**

As districts begin the 2020-2021 school year, a variety of digital platforms are being considered throughout the Commonwealth. Though a Teacher of Record should be assigned to digital platforms, significant flexibility exists for who may serve as that teacher.

- Districts can use a digital learning provider such as Apex, Edgenuity, Odysseyware and others to deliver content instruction to students.
- Any certified teacher, not a substitute or instructional aide, can serve as the Teacher of Record to facilitate the course.
- In Infinite Campus, the district would mark the Teaching Method as “Digital Learning Provider” and the Instructional Setting as “Online” or “Onsite Classroom.”

### **Teacher of Record and Additional Instructor**

Compliance with social distancing guidelines may require a class of students to be separated into multiple classrooms. Every course must have a Teacher of Record who has been assigned the lead responsibility for the students’ learning in a subject/course. An additional instructor may also be assigned to support and assist with instructional learning in collaboration with the Teacher of Record.

- The Teacher of Record must be certified to teach the content and population of the course, but any certified teacher can serve as an additional instructor.
- When social distancing requires the use of multiple classrooms, the Teacher of Record could still be the primary teacher for both classrooms, but an additional teacher (certified in any area) could facilitate the additional classroom.
  - Some districts are exploring streaming their teachers to students at home and those socially distanced to other classrooms. Any certified teacher would be able to facilitate those additional classrooms required by social distancing.
- Additional information is available [online](#).

### **Course Permissions**

Many certificates have the ability to teach additional courses beyond the certificates’ content and grade level restrictions. Grade level permissions can be found in the [Certification Reference Guide](#). Examples include:



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- Elementary and middle school certified teachers can teach Reading in all grades.
- Middle school math certified teachers can teach Algebra up to 11th grade.
- Middle school science certified teachers can teach Intro to Chemistry/Physics, Integrated Science and Earth Science at the high school level.

School and district administrators can check teachers' permissions and cross reference against the valid course numbers available in the [Kentucky Department of Education Searchable State Course Code Database \(SSCCD\)](#) using the advanced search option.

### **Teaching Up/Down Grade Levels**

Teaching certificates are issued with grade level restrictions, which allows the teacher to teach the content to specific grade levels. However, some additional flexibility exists within those restrictions:

- Elementary teachers with the 1-8 certification can teach all subjects up to 8th grade.
- Elementary teachers with K-4 or P-5 certification can teach up to 6th grade if 6th grade is housed in the same building as one of the grades listed on the certificate.
- Middle school teachers with the 5-8 certification can teach 4th/5th grade combined and can teach certain courses through 9th grade.
- Secondary teachers with the older P or S codes (7-12 certificate) can teach down to 6th grade in the content if 6th grade is housed in the same building as 7th grade.

### **Emergency Certification**

In accordance with [KRS 161.100](#), when a district is unable to secure qualified teachers for a position, the district may request an emergency certificate for an individual to fill that position. An emergency certificate is issued for one-year and is limited to the position and district for which it is issued.

- If a district has a teacher and needs that teacher to teach outside of his/her certification area, the district can request an emergency certificate for that teacher if there are no other qualified candidates.
- This would require the district to submit an application, partially completed by the teacher, to the Certification Branch in KDE's Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness (OELE) to process. There is no fee for this application.
- [16 KAR 2:120](#) limits an educator to one emergency certificate. If the educator previously held an emergency certificate, the district may request a waiver from the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) for issuance of a second emergency certificate.

### **HQ Certification**

Highly Qualified, also known as CA-HQ, is a route to adding a certificate extension or endorsement to a valid teaching certificate. This route is established in [16 KAR 2:010, Section 6](#) and is permitted in the areas of English, mathematics, sciences, foreign languages or social studies. Health and physical education areas may be added only for those teachers holding the



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correlative certificate. This route can be used to add middle school or high school certification or extend a middle school certification up to the high school level.

- Based on the action of the EPSB at its April 13 meeting, if a fully certified teacher meets the requisite 45 points (combination of coursework, experience, professional development and awards) and only lacks the Praxis, the teacher may be issued a one-year certificate to teach in the new area.
  - There is no fee for the one-year certificate. The teacher would have to complete the Praxis before renewing the certificate.
- Secondary teachers holding the full five-year certificate currently can extend their certificates down to add 5-9 certification within the content area. If the teacher has a major in the content, he/she does not have to do the point calculation and is not required to take the Praxis. This would qualify the teacher for a regular 5-year certificate upon application and payment of the certification fee.
- The teacher must submit an application, verified by the superintendent, to the Certification Branch to process.

### Waiver Requests

[KRS 161.028\(1\)\(r\)](#) allows a superintendent to submit a written request to the EPSB to waive a requirement that is established in an administrative regulation promulgated by the EPSB.

- If a district is not able to meet their certification needs through the options above, the superintendent may submit a request to the EPSB identifying the specific waiver needed and the exceptional circumstances justifying the waiver.
- Staff of the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness (OELE) will work with interested districts to review the its needs, ensure there are no other options available and assist the district with submitting a request to the EPSB.

As the needs for the 2020-2021 school year evolve, OELE staff will continue to review the certification issues and challenges and work to find regulatory flexibility that may be needed throughout the Commonwealth.

If you have any questions, please contact Certification Branch Manager Crystal Hord in the Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness at (502) 564-5846 or [crystal.hord@education.ky.gov](mailto:crystal.hord@education.ky.gov).

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