

Dear KECSAC partners:

As you have experienced first-hand, the last several months have significantly altered educational services in Kentucky and across the nation. Your KECSAC partners have been actively engaged with the Kentucky Department of Education and our state agency partners across the Commonwealth to develop and disseminate guidance for continued educational services. Clearly, these guidance documents, over 20 thus far distributed to school districts in Kentucky, will change the way we offer services and educate students. Through all of this, as Kentucky Interim Commissioner of Education, Kevin Brown has noted, “we are all struggling with how children will learn, remain safe and traverse an environment unlike one we have ever experienced.” This is further complicated when applied to state agency children, many of whom reside in private child care agencies or juvenile justice facilities.

As discussed above, along with our partners at the Kentucky Department of Education we have been working collaboratively to release close to [two dozen guidance documents](#) to help school leaders decide how to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year. While this guidance provides best practices and ideas, it is important to remember that flexibility is key as our carefully made plans may need to change as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. And there may not be much notice if COVID-19 infections sharply rise. These guidance documents are broad and apply to every school program in Kentucky. In regards to our specific programs, it is important for us to work with our community partners from DCBS and DJJ to develop program specific plans for continuing educational services for state agency children. Also, please note, the expectations for providing educational services have not changed. We must continue offering high quality, targeted, and relevant educational services throughout this pandemic. There is no waiver of extended days, there is no waiver for the classroom size requirements, and there is no waiver of high expectations or special education services.

While we would like to be able to predict what will happen this school year, we must always focus on what is best to keep students, staff and the community as safe as possible. As you know our extended school calendar began in July, with many programs offering in-person

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services as early as July 2, following the [Healthy at School](#) guidance provided by KDE and the Kentucky Department of Public Health. Other programs began their extended calendar using a virtual format. Both options are allowable as approved by your local board of education in consultation with your partner agencies, however, in delivering educational services via either method, it is critical that our students continue receiving high quality programming.

We encourage you to continue working with your local partnering agency, whether that be a private child care agency or the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, to develop program specific plans for service delivery. While many of our programs operate in school district owned facilities, many others operate in facilities owned by one of our local partners. In these situations, those partnering agencies may have program specific guidelines for how to deliver services, including requirements for ongoing testing of community members entering their facilities, sanitization of classroom spaces, supervision of virtual instruction, etc. By working together to develop program specific plans, we can ensure our students continue receiving the quality education they need and deserve.

In closing, I ask that you please help me in modeling the good behavior of social distancing and wearing a face mask and ensure your students do the same. We all want our schools to reopen safely and our students and children to return to a more normal life. Face masks, social distancing and simply washing our hands can lower the rate of COVID-19 infections in our state. These practices give us a fighting chance of keeping our schools open.

Thank you for protecting our children and our communities as we work together to reopen schools. Together we can make great strides to keep every child safe.

Sincerely,

*Ronnie*

Ronnie Nolan, Ed.D.

Director

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