

Andy Beshear
Governor



Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman
Secretary
Education and Workforce
Development Cabinet

Kevin C. Brown
Interim Commissioner of Education

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Dear Kentucky Public School Families:

Just because you know bad news is coming doesn't make it easier to swallow and so it was this week when Gov. Andy Beshear [recommended that in-person classes be suspended](#) through the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

In my mind, I knew it wasn't going to be possible to reopen school buildings this spring. The risk remains too great for our students and for our communities, just as it was when the COVID-19 emergency began in March.

In my heart, I hurt for the students who are missing so much in the final weeks of the school year, and for the families who are hurting for their children.

There are so many events that mark the final weeks of school. The traditions of proms and graduations. The awards programs that celebrate students' achievements. The end-of-year parties filled with sugary snacks and smiles. The hugs shared on the last day of school. The class trips, field trips and field days that are so prevalent during the spring.

As the governor has said so often, "we can't be doing that," no matter how much we all wish we could.

What we can do is continue to give our very best for the children who depend on us. That means me; that means all of us at the Kentucky Department of Education who are focused on educating, feeding and supporting Kentucky's students; that means all of the teachers, principals and staff members in your school and district who are working hard for your children in ways they had never imagined.

And yes, that means you, too. Monday's announcement did not end the school year. School is continuing every day in homes across Kentucky thanks to your efforts.

We know it hasn't always been easy, and we know that for some of you, nothing about it has been easy. We know there are times when your child isn't focused – or when you aren't focused. We know fatigue has begun to creep in for many of you. We also know, however, just how important your work is, and so do you.

Some of our districts will have their final non-traditional instruction (NTI) days soon, while other districts have a couple of weeks or perhaps a month or more to go. Stay the course. Finish the school year strong and help your children do the same. Keep working hard for your children.

Now here's an update on some things that have happened at the Kentucky Department of Education this week:

In conjunction with the governor's announcement Monday, KDE released a plan designed to maximize instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The [Education Continuation Plan](#) allows districts to continue to use the Non-Traditional Instruction Program for the remainder of this school year and grants relief for districts as they attempt to reach the equivalent of 1,062 hours of instructional time – the minimum number of hours required by state law during a school year.

Districts will be able to count all NTI days used during this school year – including NTI days used before the current closure period – as seven-hour equivalent days. That will allow all districts to end instruction by May 29, and most are expected to finish by mid-May.

The governor also said holding events such as graduations and proms in their traditional formats would not be possible due to restrictions on mass gatherings. He recommended two options for graduation ceremonies: a virtual ceremony, which he said is the safest option, and a drive-in ceremony like the services being held by many churches. Schools may choose to defer in-person graduations to summer or fall, but there is no guarantee that restrictions on mass gatherings will be lifted by then.

KDE is developing guidance for schools and districts to use as they plan these events, but those decisions will be made at the local level by district leaders and local boards of education. We will have our guidance to superintendents by Monday.

We asked our staff and our districts to begin examining the summer outreach services schools and districts provide to consider how those services might be delivered in non-traditional ways during a time when in-person gatherings might still be restricted.

It is too early to tell whether the school closure period might be extended into the start of the 2020-2021 school year, but in a virtual meeting of [KDE's Principal Advisory Council](#) on Wednesday, we advised districts to begin planning for how to proceed if some or all students aren't allowed to be in their school buildings at one time come August.

On Thursday, our [superintendents were briefed on the emergency relief funding](#) their schools will receive through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and how that money can be used to address the impact the COVID-19 emergency has had on elementary and secondary education.

We continue to work hard every day for your children, and we appreciate that you're working every bit as hard. We will get through this together. We are #TeamKentucky.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin C. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kevin C. Brown

To stay up to date on resources and news about what is going on in Kentucky's education system related to COVID-19, make sure you check out [KDE's website](#) regularly. The website contains vital information during this time of uncertainty, including frequently asked questions for parents and schools, new resources for educators and feeding sites in each district.