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News Release

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KBE grants waiver allowing all 172 districts to utilize Non-Traditional Instruction amid COVID-19 crisis

(FRANKFORT, KY) – At its March 18 meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education approved waivers that allowed all 172 Kentucky school districts join the Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) Program, which allows education to continue even if school buildings are closed.

State regulation currently requires districts to submit applications to participate in the NTI Program at least 120 days prior to the beginning of a school year. Eighty-three Kentucky school districts were approved to participate in the NTI Program during the 2019-2020 school year. The remaining 89 districts took advantage of an abbreviated waiver opportunity offered last week after schools across Kentucky closed for two weeks to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The waivers, which are only valid for the rest of the current school year, are retroactive to March 10.

“Many teachers have created Twitter and Facebook pages where they are communicating with their students daily,” said Associate Commissioner Kelly Foster of KDE’s Office of Continuous Improvement and Support. “… It’s a little different from county to county, from district to district, but I think everybody is trying extremely hard to provide services to kids.”

Interim Commissioner Kevin C. Brown said state statute limits the number of days districts can use for NTI instruction to 10.

“Nothing can replace the impact of in-person interaction between students, teachers and other school staff,” Brown said. “However, the next best alternative is to ensure that our students receive instruction and enrichment methods through non-traditional methods.

“I am incredibly proud of our veteran NTI districts, as well as those who really stepped up over the past week to submit these emergency applications to us, so that they can take care of the needs of their students during this time.”

Brown said he feels there is enough support in the General Assembly to pass legislation that would give districts an additional 10 days this school year. The

governor also has expressed his support to make any necessary changes by executive action if required.

“We told districts to go ahead and operate as if you have 20 days of NTI,” Brown said. “… If we think we need more than that, we’ll be discussing that as well.”

David Cook, director of KDE’s Division of Innovation, told board members that if school is called off for longer than two weeks and more NTI days are required, districts will not be asked to reapply for the NTI program. At most, he said, they will be asked to send an email to KDE requesting additional days.

For an NTI day to be approved as an instructional day, districts must submit documentation to KDE for each NTI day, including student and teacher participation rates along with evidence of student learning, he said.

Cook also urged teachers and districts to share what they are doing with their students using the hashtag #MyNTIKy to make it easier for educators to find and share new ideas.

Kentucky Department of Education

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