

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Action/Discussion Item:

Request from Owsley County to waive the list of courses in 704 KAR 3:305, Section 1

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.160 and 704 KAR 3:305

Action Question:

Should the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) grant Owsley County's request for a waiver of the list of courses in 704 KAR 3:305(1)?

History/Background:

Existing Policy. KRS 156.160(2)(a) states: "At the request of a local board of education or a school council, a local school district superintendent shall request that the Kentucky Board of Education waive any administrative regulation promulgated by that board. Beginning in the 1996-97 school year, a request for waiver of any administrative regulation shall be submitted to the Kentucky Board of Education in writing with appropriate justification for the waiver."

704 KAR 3:305, Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation is set up to provide for a high school diploma based on the completion of a required number of courses that are obtained through the Carnegie Unit system. The current regulation more specifically sets up a required set of courses that must be completed for a student to be eligible to "graduate". With the new focus on college readiness and the establishment of benchmarks for college readiness, more and more districts are realizing that a meaningful senior year of high school cannot be achieved without the flexibility to allow students to participate in learning opportunities aligned to their career pathway that may be better achieved without meeting the specific course requirements of 704 KAR 3:305.

Specifically, Owsley County is requesting to be allowed to provide an alternative pathway to meeting the graduation requirements to certain students who complete a locally-designed course of study, personalized to the individual student's needs and interests, that incorporates the breadth of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. Only students who have met the requirements listed below would be eligible for this alternative graduation pathway.

- 1) Successful completion (grade of B or higher) of the four courses (Algebra II, Biology, English II and U.S. History) that make up the high school achievement

- portion of the accountability system per 703 KAR 5:200 and completion of the end-of-course examinations for these four courses; and
- 2) Achievement by the student of being college ready as outlined in 703 KAR 5:200.

This waiver request seeks to allow for changing the makeup of the courses a student completes to meet graduation requirements, not the number of credits.

This waiver request does not serve as an early graduation opportunity. Students wishing to participate in an early graduation program must follow the requirements found in Senate Bill 61 (Enacted 2013).

The Owsley County Schools also agree to:

- 1) Provide KDE with the district's policy regarding individual graduation plans;
- 2) Provide KDE with the conditions under which the district may grant a diploma based on an individual graduation plan and that students shall complete a locally-designed course of study, personalized to the individual student's needs and interests, that incorporates the breadth of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards and by which the student provides evidence of successful demonstration of the competencies expected of a Kentucky high school graduate.
- 3) Submit each Individual Graduation Plan to KDE for approval. Each plan will include the learning opportunities the student shall engage in and how those opportunities will address the breadth of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.
- 4) Keep records showing evidence that these criteria have been met and make available these records as requested by the Kentucky Board of Education. In addition, the Owsley County Schools agree, at the request of the Kentucky Board of Education and after an appropriate length of time, to report to the KBE on the postsecondary success of these students.

Staff Recommendation(s) and Rationale(s):

Staff recommends that the KBE approve the Owsley County request for a waiver of 704 KAR 3:305(1). The waiver would allow for a meaningful senior year personalized to the individual student's needs and interests for any student who meets the eligibility criteria.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Kentucky's focus is now on college and career readiness. The students that would be affected by this waiver have already met college readiness standards. This waiver allows them to personalize their schedule once they have met those college readiness standards to better reflect their chosen career pathway.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

Previously, the Commissioner has discussed with all of his advisory groups the availability of flexibility through Kentucky Board of Education-approved waivers of administrative regulations to further college and career readiness.

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Commissioner of Education

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