



Commissioner's Report
Commissioner of Education Jason E. Glass, Ed.D.

Dear Kentucky Board of Education members:

Happy new year to each of you! As the 2021 calendar year has begun, I hope that you find inspiration in all that these next few months hold for us as a state and nation. While 2020 proved to be a challenging year, I have a renewed hope that the pandemic may soon be behind us and that our students, educators and families may once again find some level of normalcy. Regardless, this worldwide pandemic has not stopped our education community from innovating, and I am confident that educators will come out of this crisis even more prepared to revolutionize the way we approach teaching and learning.

To that end, in an effort to gather input on long-term aspirations for our education system, I am excited to announce that I will be conducting a virtual listening tour beginning April 6 through May 6, 2021. Nine (9) sessions will be held across the Commonwealth, one in each cooperative region and one in the city of Louisville. Sessions will be in the evening and will last approximately 90 minutes.

We are in the early planning phases of this work and more information will be forthcoming in the coming weeks. I hope to see many stakeholders engaged in these virtual meetings and I look forward to the rich dialogue that will inform our continuous improvement efforts.

It is also with great pleasure that I welcome Dr. Meredith Brewer to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) leadership team. Beginning Feb. 1, Dr. Brewer will serve as the new KDE Director of Education Policy. In this role, she will serve as the executive director for the Kentucky Board of Education and as the federal liaison with the U.S. Department of Education. She also will work with the KDE Director of Government Relations and key policy staff on the development and execution of education policy. To learn more about Dr. Brewer's background, visit Kentucky Teacher to read a recent [article](#) that announced her transition to this new role.

Sincerely,

Jason E. Glass, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education



KDE Welcomes New Staff

New staff who joined KDE since the board's December regular meeting are listed below by office:

Office of Assessment and Accountability:

1/4/2021: Selwyn (Tony) Igwe, OAA/Accountability Data and Analysis/Data Management

Office of the Commissioner:

1/5/2021: Chuck Truesdell, Commissioner's Office

Office of Career and Technical Education:

1/4/2021: Robert Nolan, OCTE/Student Transition & Career Readiness/Career Programs and Pathways

1/4/2021: Tom Welshans, OCTE/Student Transition & Career Readiness/Career Programs and Pathways

Office of Finance and Operations:

1/1/2021: Marshall Smith, OFO/District Support/Financial Management

1/16/2021: Allan Coldiron, OFO/Budget & Financial Management/Procurement

Office of Legal Services:

1/16/2020: Kara Beth Bales, Office of Legal Services

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Federal Funding and Guidance

It was announced in early January 2021 that Kentucky will receive \$928 million in the second round of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) federal funding. This funding is part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, which is the largest and most flexible allocation of discretionary K-12 funding in history. The second round of ESSER funds (referred to as ESSER II) for the Commonwealth equates to four or five times the allocation per district under ESSER I funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was passed in March 2020. School district allocations will be based on previous Title I allocations. ESSER II funds can be used for eligible expenses dating back to March 13, 2020 and will be available for obligation through Sept. 30, 2023. The new funding can be used for two additional purposes:

- Addressing learning loss due to COVID-19, including payment for methods of assessment and tracking; and
- Repairs and improvements to school buildings related to health needs and cutting disease transmission.



Staff across the various KDE offices have been working since early January to update the agency's ESSER guidance to reflect these new provisions. Official release of this guidance is set for Feb. 9.

Updates Regarding Kentucky's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Consolidated State Plan

Two important tasks have been ongoing related to Kentucky's federal ESEA Consolidated State Plan.

The first relates to a State Plan Addendum pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic that was submitted to the United States Department of Education (USED) on Jan. 26, 2021. Last year USED provided a waiver to states surrounding assessment, accountability, school identification and reporting requirements for the 2019-20 academic year, due to the COVID-19 emergency. The waiving of such requirements impacts how states will implement their ESEA consolidated state plans in 2020-21; thus, the required State Plan Addendum is intended to account for these one-year changes and how they will impact Kentucky's timelines for school identification and reporting requirements.

Additionally, the passage of Senate Bill 158 (2020) made significant changes to the state's assessment and accountability system, as well as school improvement procedures. Once these changes are formalized by the KBE through administrative regulation revisions, KDE staff must proceed with amendments to the ESEA State Plan to ensure alignment with state law. The KDE's target date for submission of a revised ESEA State Plan to USED is March 8, 2021.

Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf Updates

The Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) are continuing to provide virtual instruction to students across the Commonwealth. While both schools have developed reopening plans, due to the increasing COVID-19 cases across the state, KSB and KSD remain closed, with only essential personnel on campus through the end of February. Staff at both schools spent time in November reviewing individual student level data and determined additional supports needed for some students. Based on these determinations, Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) meetings were held to discuss the additional supports needed. ARCs determined some students need face-to-face instruction in addition to the virtual instruction provided by the schools. Based on the recommendation from the Kentucky Department of Public Health (KDPH), the state schools are providing this small group instruction to students within the students' counties of residence. For those students living in Jefferson (KSB) and Boyle (KSD) counties, small group services may occur at the school. For students living in other counties, the state schools' staff are collaborating with students' local school districts to provide a location for small group instruction. The schools are following the Kentucky Department of Education's [Guidance on Safety Expectations and Best Practices for](#)

[Kentucky Schools \(K-12\)](#), the [Exceptional Learners and Preschool](#) guidance and the [Welcoming Students for Orientation and Targeted Services](#) guidance when providing this small group instruction to students.

Kentucky School for the Blind

In conjunction with the KSB Charitable Foundation and the Louisville Downtown Lion's Club, KSB staff delivered holiday meals and gifts to all 65 KSB students and families.

Angela Powell, a former teacher of the visually impaired in Hardin County, was hired as the new Outreach Consultant for the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC) area. Angela comes to KSB with twelve years of experience in special education and is a native of Grayson County.

Even though KSB is forced to continue with virtual instruction during the Pandemic, students continue to shine! On December 17th, Macy Spigelmire, 8th grade student, won the third-place medal for the North Central Association of Schools for the Blind (NCASB) Forensics Conference Championship in the Serious Prose category. The championship was held via Zoom and included students from schools for the blind in Ohio, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri and Illinois. Logan Armstrong will begin working to become a braille transcriptionist through KSB's World of Work Program. Logan will be working virtually with staff from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and KSB to support him throughout the program.

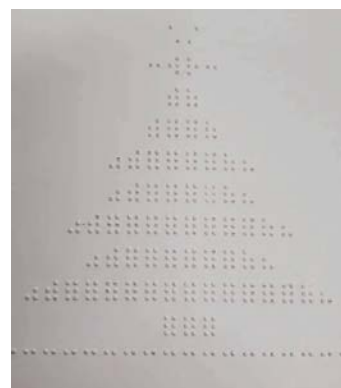
Theo Tibke made a braille Christmas tree using his Perkins Braille writer.



Pictured above: Macy Spigelmire with her third-place medal.



Pictured above: Logan Armstrong



Pictured above: Theo Tibke's braille Christmas tree.

Kentucky School for the Deaf

This year KSD held its first Virtual Holiday program performed by students to share with staff, families and the community. The program can be accessed at this [link](#).

While KSD continues with virtual instruction, the school is focused on enhancing virtual instruction for all KSD students. During the month of December, the leadership team conducted KSD Colonel Walk-Throughs. This team consisted of leadership staff from KSD and KDE. The team conducted a total of 10 virtual observations and observed one-third of the teaching staff. Highly effective teaching strategies were observed and celebrated.

Staff are utilizing [Danielson's Framework for Remote Teaching](#) to support virtual teaching and learning. Teachers participate in weekly formative assessment reflections to emphasize the importance of assessment. Teachers are asked to daily document formative assessments to gauge learning. The KSD curriculum coach and principal will use this data to show collective and grade level growth.

KSD is continuing to offer virtual American Sign Language (ASL) tutoring to families.

Caitlin Buckley, teacher at KSD, has been teaching students about an artist who has Chromesthesia, a condition where a person sees color when hearing sound. Caitlyn commissioned the artwork below and one of her students, Kaelan Barrett, recreated it as a sweatshirt. Students in Caitlyn's class are excited to interview the artist on January 25th. Caitlin, in her third-year teaching at KSD, is a tremendous team member and asset to the school. She makes real-life connections using engaging methods to move students to become stronger readers and writers.



*Pictured Above: Kaelan Barrett, student at KSD
wearing the sweatshirt he created.*



Updates on Kentucky Tech District of Area Technology Centers (ATCs)

The Area Technology Centers (ATCs) have begun staff vaccinations, with the majority of schools completing the first round. On January 11th, 2021, the 51 ATCs implemented hybrid schedules in order to serve students face-to-face. The hybrid schedule enables the ATCs to provide and maximize in-person instruction, while adhering to the [Guidance on Safety Expectations and Best Practices for Kentucky Schools \(K-12\)](#). Virtual instruction is concurrently offered to students who have elected a virtual option and to students in feeder districts who have not yet returned to face-to-face instruction. ATCs are working to provide remediation to students, as needed, with after-school options for targeted intervention.

ATC and locally-operated career and technical education (CTE) leadership training opportunities are being planned for the spring and summer of 2021 to include monthly sessions focused on leadership efficacy. Virtual sessions will include notable experts in leadership and offered to CTE administrators throughout the state. ATC field staff have also started an Aspiring Leadership Cadre for CTE instructors desiring to move into leadership roles. The goal of the Cadre is to grow CTE leaders from within, providing a greater CTE foundation and knowledge of the profession for new leaders.

February is national Career and Technical Education month which is designed to highlight CTE achievements across the country. The Office of Career and Technical Education will be sharing student accomplishments throughout the month to celebrate Kentucky CTE students.