KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STAFF NOTE
REVIEW ITEM

Topic: Addressing the Whole Child in a Virtual Learning Environment
Date: August 2022
Held In: ☒ **Full Board**
☐ **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**   ☐ **Operations**

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION:

As the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) continues to unpack the findings of United We Learn, the desire for more engaging and meaningful student learning experiences for *all* students is a clear priority among Kentuckians. This need is also true for students who best learn in a virtual environment.

A growing body of research on the virtual learning environment has revealed three distinct overarching themes on how to support the whole child. First, success in the virtual learning environment relies heavily on carefully planned social and academic continuity, including the careful planning of consistent school-wide procedures, expectations and tools. Second, collaboration among a wide variety of stakeholders is vital to ensuring that decisions align with the context of the needs in the community, the school and the student. This includes careful family support in supporting their student both inside and outside the virtual environment to ensure that families have access to the training, communication and materials needed. Third, the online virtual learning environment is most successful when students can engage in meaningful learning experiences that grow students' critical skills as provided in local essential workplace ethics programs (KRS 158.1413).

In the presentation provided to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), objectives have been identified to provide further context behind these overarching themes that drive the long-term academic and social-emotional success of the virtual learner. Resources and practices identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provide access to strategies and practices that are important for all learners and are imperative for the online environment.

Additionally, considerations for future sustainability also are addressed as it pertains to existing policies. KRS 158.4416 identifies services that must be provided to all students, including mental health supports that are essential for in-person and virtual learning environments. There also are opportunities for schools and districts to refer to their local essential workplace ethics instruction program provided in KRS 158.1413 to ensure that equitable access to these skills is a primary consideration of the virtual learning program. Similarly, KRS 158.6451 further provides the legislative goals for Commonwealth schools that ensures that the virtual environment must be compatible with what is established in law for all students. Lastly, considerations for providing ongoing access to professional learning on high-quality instruction, suicide prevention, trauma-informed care and social-emotional learning is key for supporting teachers as

they work within a virtual environment. The intentional examination of local policies already in place allows for deeper examination of the opportunities in which students may be successful long-term.

We are also excited to be joined by the leadership team of Bullitt County Public Schools and the Bullitt County Virtual Learning Academy to share the strategies they have implemented to ensure the whole child is successful, which includes mental health supports and social-emotional learning supports.
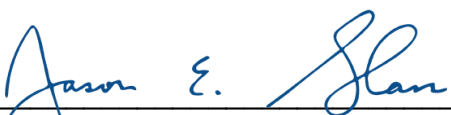
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