

## KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STAFF NOTE

**Topic:** Waiver Request 2025-WV-014, 2025-WV-015, Whitley County Schools: Whitley Central Primary School

**Date:** December 2025

**Action Requested:** ☐ Review ☒ Action/Consent ☐ Action/Discussion

**Held In:** ☒ Full Board ☐ State Schools ☐ United We Learn

### SUMMARY OF ISSUE BEFORE THE BOARD:

Whether the Kentucky Board of Education should approve or deny the waiver request pursuant to KRS 156.161 and 701 KAR 5:170.

### COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION:

The Commissioner recommends the board approve the Whitley County School District's requests to exceed caseload/class size limits established in 707 KAR 1:350, Section 2.

### APPLICABLE STATUTE OR REGULATION:

KRS 156.161 and 701 KAR 5:170  
707 KAR 1:350, Section 2

### BACKGROUND:

*Existing Policy:*

KRS 156.161 authorizes the Kentucky Board of Education to promulgate administrative regulations establishing procedures for processing requests to waive statutes or administrative regulations. Pursuant to this authority, the KBE promulgated 701 KAR 5:170 setting forth the procedures and forms a school district may utilize to request waivers from the KBE. Pursuant to KRS 156.161, the KBE may not waive any statute or administrative regulation:

- (a) Relating to health and safety, including required criminal background checks for staff and volunteers specified in KRS 160.380 and 161.148;
- (b) Relating to civil rights;
- (c) Required by federal law;
- (d) Relating to compulsory attendance requirements under KRS 158.030 and 158.100, or the recording of data necessary for participation in the fund to support education excellence in Kentucky;
- (e) Establishing certification requirements for teachers in core academic areas, except a waiver may authorize up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the teaching staff of a school may be employed without teacher certification if the individual possesses a baccalaureate or graduate degree in the subject the individual is hired to teach;
- (f) Requiring students' participation in state assessment of student performance as required under KRS 158.6453;

- (g) Financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements under KRS 156.265;
- (h) Open records and open meeting requirements under KRS Chapter 61;
- (i) Purchasing requirements and limitations under KRS Chapter 45A and KRS 156.074 and 156.480; or
- (j) Requiring instructional time that is at least equivalent to the student instructional year specified in KRS 158.070

Pursuant to 701 KAR 5:170, when KDE receives a waiver request from a school district, it must first perform a technical review to determine whether the waiver meets minimum technical requirements to advance to substantive review.

Those portions of the waiver request that advance to substantive review, if any, are reviewed and the following factors are considered in determining whether a waiver is recommended to the KBE:

- (a) The entirety of the waiver request;
- (b) Student academic achievement for the past three full school years for which data is available in the schools and programs identified in the waiver request;
- (c) Whether and to what extent the waiver request describes processes the requesting party will utilize to measure success as a result of the waiver, if granted, using data and accountability;
- (d) The likelihood of the schools and programs identified in the waiver request realizing meaningful operational efficiency improvements if the waiver is granted;
- (e) The likelihood of the students enrolled in the schools and programs identified in the waiver request realizing improved academic achievement if the waiver is granted;
- (f) Whether and to what extent the waiver request reasonably anticipates potential adverse impacts on student academic achievement and addresses such potential adverse impacts;
- (g) Whether and to what extent the waiver request demonstrates the establishment of high expectations for student learning and evidence based best practices for learning in the schools and programs identified in the request; and
- (h) For special education maximum class size applications, any additional factors to be considered pursuant to 701 KAR 1:350 for waiver or exemption of special education maximum class sizes.

Following review and evaluation, the Commissioner shall recommend approval of a waiver request, or portion thereof, only if he finds the requested waiver is more likely than not: (a) To improve school or program operations without hindering student academic achievement; or (b) To improve student academic achievement at the school or program. If a waiver is granted, it shall expire on June 30 of the third full school year after the request was first approved.

#### *Summary of Issue:*

Following receipt of the waiver request, KDE performed a technical review pursuant to 701 KAR 5:170, Section 3. As a result of its technical review, KDE determined requests to waive the following statutes and regulations should undergo substantive review: 707 KAR 1:350.

The Whitley County School District submitted two waiver requests seeking to exceed the caseload/class size as follows:

- Whitley Central Primary School - add one additional student to a special class for students with functional mental disabilities
- Whitley Central Primary School - add one additional student to a special class for students with functional mental disabilities

Each classroom includes a full-time paraprofessional assigned to the teacher for each class period. The Whitley County School District submitted a case load reduction plan for the 2025-2026 school year and included a goal to maintain a caseload that is at or below maximum caseload size for all special education classes.

The District requested these waivers to provide continuity of services, maintain efficient staffing and ensure equitable access to specialized instruction.

*Budget Impact:*


Other than staff time reviewing and processing this waiver request, there is no additional budget impact to KDE regardless of whether the waiver is granted or denied by the KBE.

**GROUPS CONSULTED AND BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESPONSES:**

As this is a waiver request for an individual public school district school/program, no additional groups were consulted. KDE followed the KBE regulation 701 KAR 5:170 to process and review the waiver request.

**CONTACT PERSON(S):**

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**Commissioner of Education**

Category: <input type="checkbox"/> Educator Workforce Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Portrait of a Graduate Partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Racial Equity Commitment <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Centered Accountability System <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District Support
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