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Dear Kentucky Public School Families:

I think one of the hardest things for those of us who are planning for the upcoming school year – parents and teachers alike – is the uncertainty of it all.

Superintendents and teachers are struggling to figure out how they will keep students learning whether or not buildings open. Parents are struggling with trying to figure out how their children will get to school, what they will do after school and even whether they will be taught at school or from home.

Staff at the Kentucky Department of Education have been working tirelessly over the past three months to release close to two dozen guidance documents to help education leaders decide how they will open the 2020-2021 school year. While this guidance provides best practices and ideas that should be considered when reopening schools, the most important thing to remember in these uncertain times is that we must remain flexible and ready to change our carefully made plans if the need arises.

While good planning is necessary for figuring out how to open buildings and keep students, staff and the community as safe as possible, we also must realize that those plans may need to change on short notice should COVID-19 infections continue to rise. While we all would like to know exactly what will happen when the school year opens, that's just not the environment we are living in while we are waiting for a vaccine.

I also would ask all of you to model the good behavior that will help us reopen schools. Right now, face masks are the best option we have for keeping us from getting others sick if we are carrying the COVID-19 infection without knowing it, and new research is showing that those masks may even help keep us from getting sick if others infected with the virus are around us.

I know the issue of wearing a face mask has gone beyond being a matter of public health and entered the realm of the political. That is unfortunate because we all want our schools to reopen and our students and children to return to a more normal life. Face masks and social distancing, which can lower the rate of COVID-19 infections in our state, are the best tool we have right now to give us a fighting chance of keeping our schools open.

We are in this together and just like the governor says, we will get through this together.

I also wanted to let you know about two important things that happened at the Kentucky Board of Education's (KBE) special meeting July 10. First, the board named Brandenburg native Dr. Jason Glass as the Commonwealth's next commissioner of education. The son of two retired Meade County educators, he has a strong background in many different aspects of education and has served as the chief state school officer in Iowa. He currently serves as superintendent of the Jeffco Public Schools in metro Denver.

Conversations between Dr. Glass and KDE staff already have begun to fill him in on what is happening in Kentucky's education system. We as a department, and I personally when I return to Jefferson County Public Schools, look forward to working with the new commissioner. His depth and breadth of experience will serve Kentucky's public school students well in the challenging times that lay ahead.

To learn more about Kentucky's new education commissioner, please read [this Kentucky Teacher story](#).

The KBE also passed a racial equity resolution that will be one of the north star documents that will guide the board's work and our work here at KDE. The resolution is available on [the KDE website](#).

The resolution affirms the board's commitment to racial equity in public schools by standing against all acts of racism and violence, and creating a better educational community for all students, and importantly, for Black students and other students of color.

State board members called on educators, schools and districts to commit to listening to those seeking to be heard and to ensure that young people of color feel valued and safe in school and the community. A challenge was issued to schools, districts, local boards of education, educational cooperatives, parents and families, and communities to join together to break down the barriers that stand between students of color and the equitable education they deserve.

This resolution is not window dressing. The board and we here at KDE are dedicated to ensuring that all of our students are served well. We cannot succeed as a state if a significant portion of our population is being left behind. In all of our decisions, both here in Frankfort and in every district across Kentucky, we must remember our commitment to seeking out and listening to members of all our minority populations.

As my time as interim education commissioner draws to a close, I want to thank all of you for your hard work on behalf of and dedication to Kentucky's children. It has been an honor to serve you all.

Sincerely,



Kevin