COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools:
Alternative Learning Design Strategies
June 8, 2020

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) recommends that districts consider a variety of alternative models, strategies and schedules for the reopening of public schools for fall 2020. Designing and planning early will be key to a successful reopening.

Each school district may have a customized plan for reopening that best fits its students, teachers and community. Customized district-by-district digital, distance and remote learning plans should help determine how best to invest the variety of local, state and federal funds available to support learning (e.g. education technology infrastructures and supports, staffing allocations, professional learning).

Each district's reopening team should have the freedom to design the customized approaches and strategies that will work best. It is KDE's position, in partnership, to help remove identified barriers while continuing to implement safe and healthy practices. Additionally, design considerations should be sustainable solutions that will continue to serve beyond the current public health crisis as best practices in designing learning elements. The goal during this unparalleled time is to keep community safety and well-being in mind while providing the best education possible.

Worth highlighting are the additional supports needed, such as rapid development of teacher professional learning, and logistics that will come into play when considering alternative learning strategies, such as transportation constraints, food service strategies and procedures, staffing, teacher assignments, community relations, and parent or household dependencies.

Districts are encouraged to keep the continuity of learning and learning progressions as key components of their reopening planning efforts, and throughout the 2020-2021 school year. This is critical for student engagement as remote learning efforts transition from time spent reviewing content to teaching new material. For more guidance on constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, please continue to refer to KDE's COVID-19 Reopening Resources.

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Considerations for Alternative Learning Experiences

KDE encourages districts to prepare alternative schedule models that may be deployed if the Kentucky Department for Public Health recommends that schools reduce the number of students in the building. Districts may build alternative schedules that meet the needs of their population. KDE has prepared four possible alternative strategies as a starting point for consideration:

Strategy 1: Scheduled Rotation

Under a scheduled rotation strategy or model, the school would assign students to groups that would attend school on alternating patterns, such as A-B days, AM/PM patterns or alternating weeks. This method relies on several flexible variables, such as student grouping, staff grouping, days of the week or the time of day.

In this strategy, fewer students would be in the building during the day, allowing for greater social distancing. The reduction in students also could be used to reduce class sizes, allowing for furniture to be removed from classrooms to promote necessary space and reduce unnecessary surfaces. Breakfast and lunch should be served in the classroom and plans should be made for deep, intensive cleaning of all surfaces between rotations.

When students are not physically in school, they may be participating in project-based learning opportunities, asynchronous instruction and/or other related assignments set up during the days they are physically in school. You may also connect this strategy to the "flipped model" of blended learning where students are not just finishing assignments from days physically in school but also receiving new material through teacher videos, for example, to maintain learning momentum. This option may be helpful to schools with limited mobile technology. This strategy also could encourage teachers to utilize creative demonstrations of learning for students through collaborative co-teaching designs.

Scheduled rotation considerations include:
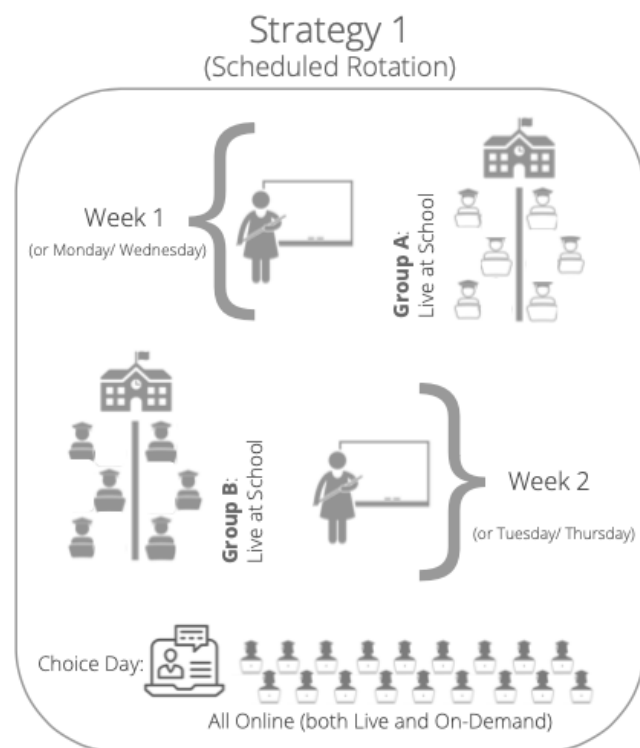
- Flex variables:
  - Groupings of students
  - Groupings of teachers
  - Days of week, weeks in the month, etc.
  - Times of day (morning, evening, start times, etc.)
- Fewer students physically in the building or classroom at a time can continue to promote social distancing.
- Groups could physically attend the school building a week at a time, providing for more intense or **deep cleaning** through the weekend to prepare for the next group (Group B) the following week.
- Time of day also may vary in this "school" model.
- This strategy recognizes and values the difference between "school" and "learning."
- Promotes project-based and competency-based models while also providing access to school-based resources.
- Desks spaced the recommended feet apart as recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with breakfast and lunch served in classrooms.
- A designated day per week (Monday, Wednesday or Friday) could serve as a "choice day" for specific activities such as:
  - Specialized student remediation
  - Deep cleaning of buildings
  - Professional learning supports or digital/technology support
  - Student follow-up, assessment (formative and summative) and feedback
- Strategy provides for some flexibilities for co-teaching or team teaching to help with students who are remote on "remote days."
- Learning design for students will likely need to incorporate creative demonstrations of learning as well as digital methods of collecting evidence of learning.
- Intentional "planned digital interactions" to support student learning as well as social and emotional connections to school.
- In this strategy, school buildings also can be leveraged as hubs for students to attend and engage in online and virtual learning if they lack internet access at home (further leverage digital learning design and learning management system-based structured learning).

Strategy 2: Synchronous Opt-In Hybrid

Under a synchronous opt-in hybrid strategy, parents may choose whether their children attend school in person or remotely. Instruction would be delivered synchronously to students who are at school and at home through virtual live streaming.

This option requires heavy use of instructional technology, including digital tools that already are available in most classrooms (mobile devices, web cameras, digital meeting platforms and learning management systems). Careful consideration will need to be made for intentional
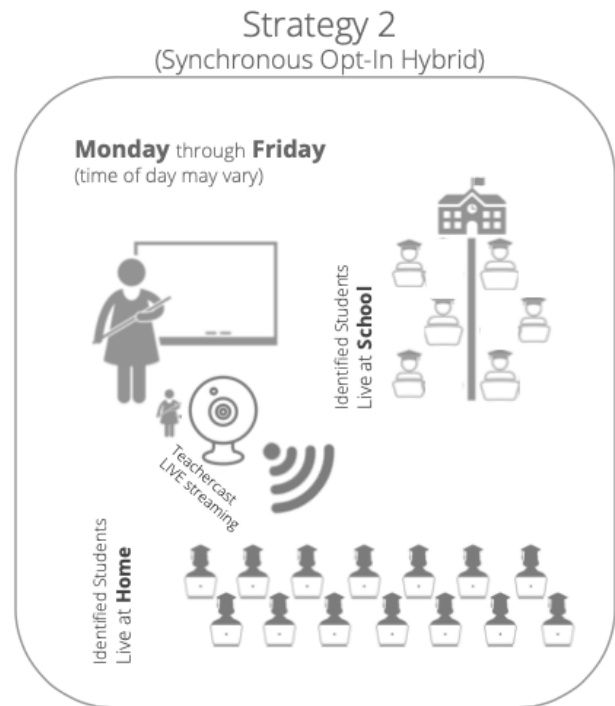
activities to engage and support students participating from home as the in-person students may more easily draw the teacher's attention.

This strategy leverages the strengths of teachers and staff and may require greater flexibility for co-teaching, co-facilitating and coaching opportunities to drive learning successes.

Synchronous Opt-in considerations include:

- Heavy emphasis on determining which students are candidates for in-person at school learning and those who are candidates for remote learning at home.
  - Criteria for identifying students coming to school for in-person learning should be well established at the school and district leadership level (e.g. exceptional learners, students with a lack of home resources, programmatic needs for specialized equipment, lack of internet access at home).
  - Criteria for opting in to remote learning at home should be communicated clearly with parents (e.g. additional parent supports, communication commitments, home internet access, student self-regulation/self-management skills, family learning contract) .
- Students having internet access at home are identified up front.
- Procedures developed for parents to opt in to remote learning from home.
- Time of day may vary.
- Flex variables:
  - Groupings of students
  - Groupings of teachers
  - Days of week
  - Times of day (morning, afternoon)
- Heavily relies on a 1:1 planned initiative where every student has an assigned and dedicated device (especially students engaged in remote, digital and distance-based learning designs).
- Intentional "planned digital interactions" to support student learning as well as social and emotional connections to school.
- Can take advantage of remote attendance, participation and performance-based models.
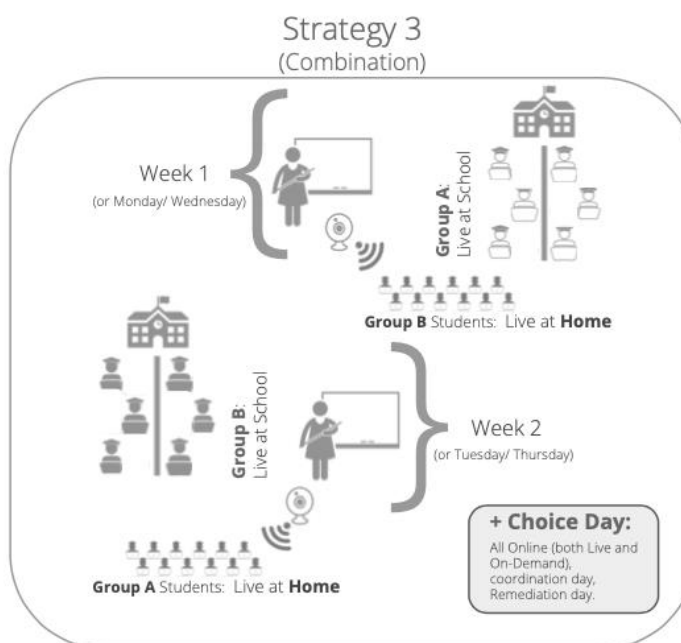

Strategy 2
(Synchronous Opt-In Hybrid)

Monday through Friday
(time of day may vary)

Identified Students Live at School

Teachercast LIVE streaming

Identified Students Live at Home

- Video (live streaming) is "a" tool, not "the" (only) tool. Live video should be used at the appropriate time during the instructional/learning design. Heavy emphasis should be placed on "intentional interactions" and screen time commitments.
- This strategy can leverage different strengths of teachers and other staff, while providing additional co-teaching, co-facilitating and coaching opportunities. The flexibility of this strategy ideally could let teachers play to their strengths with so much of this structure and instructional/learning design being re-engineered from the traditional classroom model.
- Learning design for students likely will need to incorporate creative demonstrations of learning as well as methods of collecting evidence of learning digitally.
- Could provide for smaller support "labs" for sections of courses.

Strategy 3: Combination

A combination strategy (or model) leverages components of the rotational strategy and synchronous opt-in hybrid strategy. With this design, students would be sorted into two groups and would alternate periods of time engaged in synchronous learning in the school building and periods of time receiving synchronous instruction at home. Additionally, on-demand learning (asynchronous) designs also will be targeted. This plan requires heavy use of educational technology, including 1:1 portable devices and digital tools already available in the classroom.

Strategy 3
(Combination)

Week 1
(or Monday/ Wednesday)

Group A:
Live at School

Group B Students: Live at **Home**

Group B:
Live at School

Week 2
(or Tuesday/ Thursday)

Group A Students: Live at **Home**

+ **Choice Day:**
All Online (both Live and On-Demand), coordination day, Remediation day.

Combination strategy considerations include:

- Time of day may vary.
- Flex variables:
  - Groupings of students
  - Groupings of teachers
  - Days of week
  - Times of day (morning, evening)
- This strategy could be leveraged as a combination of the "best fit" elements from the previous two strategies.

Strategy 4: Online and Virtual School

Online, virtual and expanded learning programs provide students with alternative and expanded online learning opportunities while at home. These programs can be designed for full-time and/or part-time experiences. Instruction is facilitated online by a content-certified teacher using a combination of synchronous and asynchronous strategies, ideally through a learning management system. This strategy might be more appropriate for students in higher grade levels who can be more self-directed.

Existing remote learning models through Kentucky's virtual learning providers, as well as many successful Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) Program designs, can be leveraged as part of the strategy.

Districts choosing to provide a fully online experience for students should seek an official school classification for an alternative program of A5. This classification is for a district-operated facility with no definable attendance boundaries that is designed to remediate academic performance, improve behavior or provide an enhanced learning experience. These programs are responsible for providing all of the education services and requirements as a physical school, such as special education services, administering and reporting state assessments, providing counseling, and reporting state and federal data. Programs also grant Kentucky high school diplomas in accordance with state minimum graduation requirements.

The Kentucky Digital Learning Guidelines are available for schools and districts to ensure quality, rigor and impact on student achievement. These guidelines also serve as a guide for digital content developers and vendors to ensure alignment to the *Kentucky Academic Standards* criteria for each appropriate course. More information is available on the Online/Virtual Course Providers page.

Possible Online/Virtual Program Implementations

1. **Single District Online/Virtual Program** *(In-District Enrollment Only)***:** This program design applies to a district choosing to create full-time and/or part-time online/virtual opportunities for students within their district only.

2. **Single District Online/Virtual Program** *(Expanded Enrollment Options)***:** This program design also applies to a district choosing to create full-time and/or part-time online/virtual opportunities for students within their district. The district is eligible to adopt policies locally enabling expanded enrollment from outside their district attendance borders through reciprocal agreements and/or a fee-based system. BAVEL is one example of a fully online/virtual program created by a single district with expanded enrollment outside their attendance borders.

3. **Multi-District Online/Virtual Programs:** A consortium-like approach where multiple districts coordinate regionally *(network)* to create and maintain fully online/virtual learning opportunities for students in their respective districts. The regional program would require a separate school designation, such as A5, from one of the participating districts. This district also would be responsible for the student information system *(Infinite Campus)* records.

Online/Virtual strategy considerations include:

- The Online and Virtual School strategy should largely be targeted for grades 6-12.
- Students in this strategy generally are not assigned to a traditional classroom teacher, they are registered for an all online and virtual course schedule (e.g. students enrolled at BAVEL - the Barren County Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning).

The following resources provide additional information for consideration:

- KDE's statewide online and virtual course programming webpage (Current)
- KDE's Guidance for Alternative Education Programs
- Virtual and Performance-based Course Set-up and Attendance Verification
- State Course Code Database

Alternative Learning Plan Strategy Suggestions (Digital, Distance and Remote Learning)

Feedback and Surveys: Survey your stakeholders and communicate the results to guide your reopening plan for digital, distance and remote learning. Sample district surveys: Digital Readiness, Impact Survey (several questions that teachers already have responded to can provide

valuable insight), SpeakUp Survey, Technology and Learning, Infinite Campus Parent Survey or a custom survey created by the district.

Ownership of Digital, Distance and Remote Learning: As your reopening team works to develop the district plan, it is important to identify who will be organizing and leading the specific components of an alternative learning strategy and the professional learning needed for digital, distance and remote learning.

Professional Learning Plans: Align your Professional Learning Plans to the needs of the teachers and administrators in the area of digital, distance and remote learning. The level of support may vary from district to district, however ensuring every teacher and administrator has an opportunity to be more prepared to teach in a digital, distance and remote learning environment is essential. Providing opportunities for learning prior to school reopening will be part of the success of digital, distance and remote learning for students. Examples of topics or opportunities for learning prior to reopening: Structured Learning through Learning Management Systems; Creating a Culture of Digitally Empowered and Connected Learning Design; Digital Feedback and Formative Assessments; Building Digital Relationships and Collaboration; as well as fundamental digital skills to support remote learning and alternative learning design strategies for teachers and students. A fluid, working set of summer opportunities in partnership with KDE can be found in this [Fall 2020 School Reopening Professional Learning Design Toolkit](). Strong consideration should be placed on district-by-district customization of the professional learning topics and structures that are timely and leveled appropriately.

Communications and Parent On-boarding: Especially in terms of your customized alternative learning strategies, consistent and intentional communication with parents and guardians is critical. Districts should consider standardizing on communications platforms, as well as offering opportunities for parents and guardians to learn more about the district's specific digital platforms and programs that support their child's learning. Examples to help on-board parents into a digital learning environment: district-provided tutorials for parents on the use of a Learning Management System, Infinite Campus and district/school-specific programs; providing digital training opportunities for parents throughout the summer and fall semester with teachers; and communicating set times for technology help-desk assistance for a district-provided device.

Substantial Education Technology Integration: Most combinations of alternative learning strategies heavily rely on the integration and empowerment of digital tools and resources for both teachers and students. Whether it is students at home, students physically at school, teachers digitally connected or teachers engaged in digital instructional design, all aspects of technology planning, support and leadership, and belief systems will pay off for students. Kentucky's proven models of digital transformation, both for school efficiency and learning, have proven that successes do not "just happen" when we buy devices or apps. It happens when intentional and strategic education technology planning occurs, is measured and is sustained. District-level

education technology leaders (CIO/DTC/District Digital Learning Coach/Leader, etc.) must have a seat at the table during all phases of digitally enhanced alternative learning strategy design and implementation, including instruction.

Glossary and Definitions

Some excerpts from the KDE Personalized Learning Glossary:

Blended Learning: Blended learning is the strategic integration of in-person learning with technology to enable real-time data use, personalized instruction and mastery-based progression. It is a mechanism for giving educators, students and parents the resources they need to deliver on the vision of a highly effective, engaging and equitable education experience for every child, every day.

Demonstrations of Learning: Refers to a wide variety of potential educational projects, presentations or products through which students provide evidence of what they have learned, usually as a way of determining whether and to what degree they have achieved expected learning standards or learning objectives for a course or learning experience. A demonstration of learning typically is both a learning experience and a means of evaluating academic progress and achievement.

Digital Asynchronous/On-Demand Digital Learning: Communication exchanges which occur in elapsed time between two or more people. Examples are structured learning through Learning Management Systems (LMS), email, online discussion forums, message boards, blogs, podcasts, etc. Levels of internet access generally are less demanding for on-demand, digital asynchronous learning designs.

Digital Learning: Any instructional practice in or out of school that uses digital technology to strengthen a student's learning experience and improve educational outcomes. It includes a wide range of digital tools and practices, including instructional content, interactions, data and assessment systems, learning platforms, online courses, adaptive software, personal learning enabling technologies, and student data management systems to provide timely and rich data to guide personalized learning.

Digital Synchronous/Live Digital Learning: Online learning in which participants interact at the same time and in the same digital space. Examples are live remote learning sessions using platforms such as Microsoft Teams (through Office 365) or Google Meet (through

G Suite for Education). Digital synchronous designs generally are more internet bandwidth intense.

Distance Learning: Students engage in learning experiences from a location other than school, relying on digital tools and resources as the sole method of communication, content delivery, assessment and student feedback.

Evidence of Learning: Materials, assignments, projects and other artifacts that students may use to demonstrate they have made progress or mastered certain knowledge or skills. Evidence of learning may be compiled in a portfolio that can be in hard copy or a digital file.

Full-time Online and Virtual Enrollment: A student experience when the student is enrolled in an all-online and virtual school program and the entire course load is facilitated online.

Learning Management System (LMS): Software for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of digital educational materials key for structured learning experiences. A single Learning Management System (LMS) should be adopted and utilized school-wide, providing a consistent platform for student digital learning experiences. The LMS also gives teachers, students, parents and administrators a shared space for communications and instructional support.

Learning Progressions: Refer to the scaffolding of learning in a vertical way over an extended period of time.

Part-time Online and Virtual Enrollment: A student experience when the student is enrolled in a traditional "brick and mortar" school, and also participates in a course load that has a percentage of classes facilitated in-person (traditional) and the remaining percentage facilitated online. Oftentimes this is due to specific courses not being offered at the traditional school or there might be a scheduling conflict.

Project-Based Learning: Students investigate and respond to an essential authentic, engaging, and complex question or problem through hands-on learning experiences and inquiry.

Remote Learning: Students engage in learning experiences from a location other than school, likely from home, through digital and/or non-digital methods.

Traditional Classroom Model: This model historically has the teacher at the center of the learning process using direct instruction and lectures.

(MP, COMM: tm_jg)