



January 19, 2021

**To:** House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

**From:** Norma Volkmer, Fiscal Analyst

**Re:** Continuous Learning Plans

## **CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLANS IN KANSAS K-12 EDUCATION**

This memorandum provides an overview of continuous learning plans in Kansas, including the role of the Continuous Learning Task Force (Task Force), requirements passed in the 2020 appropriations bill, and recommendations from the Task Force.

### **Continuous Learning Task Force**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Kelly issued Executive Order No. 20-07 on March 17, 2020, closing K-12 school buildings until May 29, 2020. Additionally, the Governor tasked the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) with creating an education plan for the remainder of the school year.

To fulfill this directive, the KSDE created the Task Force, composed of superintendents, teachers, and other instructors from across the state. The Task Force convened over a three-day period to determine the K-12 education system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force issued guidance on March 19 and recommended that school districts focus on essential learning and use existing resources to meet the needs of the student population.<sup>1</sup> The Task Force also provided recommendations for continuous learning plans, which are described in the section below titled Continuous Learning Defined.

### **The 2020 Appropriations Bill**

The 2020 Legislature also responded to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education. As part of SB 66 (the 2020 appropriations bill), the Legislature approved the following language that required school districts to implement continuous learning plans to receive a waiver from certain statutory hour and attendance requirements:

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, in addition to the other purposes for which expenditures may be made by the above agency from moneys appropriated from the state general fund or any special revenue

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1 Continuous Learning Task Force Guidance, March 2020, <https://continuouslearning.ksde.org/>.

fund or funds for fiscal year 2020, as authorized by section 90 of chapter 68 of the 2019 Session Laws of Kansas, this or other appropriation act of the 2020 regular session of the legislature, expenditures shall be made by the above agency from such moneys appropriated from the state general fund or any special revenue fund or funds for fiscal year 2020, for the state board of education to require that any school district that receives a waiver from the requirements of K.S.A. 72-3115, and amendments thereto, relating to the duration of the school term for school year 2019-2020 pursuant to K.S.A. 72-3117, and amendments thereto, develop and implement a continuous learning plan so the school district continues to provide instruction to each student enrolled in such school district during the period of time described in the waiver: *Provided further*, That on or before April 15, 2020, each such school district shall submit its continuous learning plan to the state board of education: *And provided further*, That on or before January 15, 2021, the state board of education shall prepare and submit a report on the implementation of such continuous learning plans across the state to the standing committees on education in the house of representatives and the senate.<sup>2</sup>

## Continuous Learning Defined

Per KSDE, the purpose of continuous learning is to continue educating Kansas students when school buildings are closed, through a variety of formats, including face-to-face, small group, and remote learning. Remote learning is learning that occurs virtually but is not considered virtual learning in Kansas. Virtual schools are explicitly defined by the Virtual School Act.<sup>3</sup>

Virtual schools are funded differently than the remainder of schools. School districts that traditionally serve students *via* in-person settings that used a remote learning format were funded as traditional schools, rather than virtual schools, for school years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

The Task Force also provided recommendations for school district continuous learning plans, including:

- Accountability and time standards by grade level;
- Teaching students without internet access or technology;
- Providing for certain populations, including at-risk students, students with special needs, and students with Individual Education Plans;
- Serving meals to students without food security; and
- How to keep students safe throughout the pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

More information on the continuous learning plans, including the Continuous Learning Guidance, Implementation Guidance, and Waiver Application, can be found at <https://continuouslearning.ksde.org/>.

2 SB 66 (L. 2020, ch. 78).

3 KSA 2020 Supp. 72-3711 through 72-3715.

4 See Kansas State Department of Education, "Task Force releases guidance document on Continuous Learning," March 19, 2020, <https://www.ksde.org/Home/Quick-Links/News-Room/task-force-releases-guidance-document-on-continuous-learning-1>.