

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ June 2010

Getting real-world answers

CASEY COUNTY'S KINDERGARTEN PLUS

123 school districts energized

Food service delinquents

ROSS, SINCLAIRE & ASSOCIATES, LLC

KENTUCKY'S No. 1 FINANCIAL ADVISOR

School District Finance Specialists

- Municipal Bond Structuring
- Comprehensive Debt Review
- Long Range Capital Financing
- Investment Advisory Services
- KISTA Bus Financing

KENTUCKY SCHOOLS PUBLIC FINANCE TEAM

Joe Nance
Glenn Brashear
Dwight Salsbury
Lincoln Theinert
Wendell Emerson



325 W. Main Street, Suite 300
Lexington, KY 40507
401 West Main Street, Suite 2110
Louisville KY 40202

R | S | A
Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC

Telephone: 800.255.0795
Facsimile: 859.381.1357
www.rsamuni.com

Member FINRA and SIPC

FEATURES

EAT UP, PAY UP

Lunch ladies as collection agencies? At a time when school districts are penny-pinching, school cafeterias are doing their part to cut down on the amount of unpaid meal charges. Communication is the key, food service directors say ... Page 8

REPEAT AFTER ME

When kindergarten students at a couple of Casey County elementary schools are held back, no one uses the word “repeat” to describe their second year of kindergarten. That’s because the second year gives them targeted assistance ... Page 10

WAKE-UP WEEK

Russellville Independent leaders use testing week to prevent “failure to launch” in their graduating seniors. The seniors get a nonstop education in the real world from community agencies, employers and financial experts, along with some fun ... Page 12

TIGHTROPE

A newly revised law will promote frank conversation when school boards evaluate a superintendent, but it is not without its hazards. KSBA policy and legal experts weigh in on how to navigate the new provisions ... Page 14

MANAGING TO SAVE ENERGY

School district energy managers will begin fanning out across the state this summer as the School Energy Managers Program gets into gear. It’s managed by KSBA in cooperation with the Kentucky Department of Energy Development and Independence ... Page 18



Picking up the tab, Page 8



Twice as nice, Page 10



Success in and out of class, Page 16

DEPARTMENTS

Take Note 4
 People Are Talking 6
 Ed Innovators 16
 In Conversation With 20

COMMENTARY

President's Corner 5
 Get Your Message Out 22

On the cover



Ruben Hines, left, and Bryan Harris, Russellville High School seniors, eagerly raise their hands to answer a review question on information learned during a morning session of the independent district’s Senior Week. The weeklong event, held while other classes have state testing, is designed to prepare the seniors for life after graduation ... Article on Page 12.

TAKE NOTE

Kentucky School Boards Association

260 Democrat Dr.
Frankfort, KY 40601
800-372-2962
www.ksba.org

Executive Director Bill Scott
Member Support Director Brad Hughes
Advocate Editor Madelynn Coldiron
Publications Coordinator ... Jennifer Wohlleb
Account Executive Mary Davis

The *Kentucky School Advocate* is published 10 times a year by the Kentucky School Boards Association. Copies are mailed to KSBA members as part of their association membership. Two additional issues each year are published exclusively on KSBA's Web site.

KSBA Board of Directors

Officers

Delmar Mahan, President
Whitley County
Tom Blankenship, President elect
Lincoln County
Ed Massey, Immediate Past President
Boone County

Directors-at-large

Linda Duncan, Jefferson County
Tim England, Barren County
Ronnie Holmes, Graves County
Dr. John Inman, Meade County
Allen Kennedy, Hancock County
Durward Narramore, Jenkins Independent
Eugene Peel, Jessamine County
Dr. Jackie Pope-Tarrence, Bowling Green
Independent
Ann Porter, Mason County
William White, Pulaski County
Carl Wicklund, Kenton County

Regional Chairpersons

Dr. Felix Akojie, Paducah Independent
Jeanette Cawood, Pineville Independent
Mike Combs, Campbell County
Larry Dodson, Oldham County
Jeff Eaton, Allen County
Jane Haase, Owensboro Independent
Lisa Hawley, Cloverport Independent
Marshall Jenkins, Morgan County
William Owens, Lee County
Fern Reed, Montgomery County
Jeff Stumbo, Floyd County
Chris Watts, Adair County

Central (region) time
KSBA will be the host July 23-25 when an estimated 50 state school boards association officers and top staff, along with leadership from the National School Boards Association, attend the 2010 meeting of NSBA's Central Region in Louisville.

Among the list of activities is a presentation from former Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit on the national push for common core standards. Wilhoit is currently the executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Boone County school board member C. Ed Massey has been serving as Central Region director on the NSBA board, but recently ascended to the secretary/treasurer's position. The region encompasses nine states.

Smith selected

Marion County Schools Superintendent Donald W. Smith is one of 60 African-American superintendents nationwide selected to participate in the National Leadership Symposium.

The June 24-26 event in Minneapolis is sponsored by The National Alliance of Black School Educators, a 13,000-member organization of black educators throughout the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean.

There are 368 African-American superintendents in the United States,

according to the Alliance, representing 2.5 percent of the nation's 15,000 public school districts. The group said Smith was chosen from among this group not only because he would benefit from the experience, but because of his accomplishments and commitment to public education. Smith took the helm of the Marion County district in July 2009.

New recall watchdog

School leaders and others now have a one-stop shop where they can get information on recalls of consumer products relating to children.

The National School Safety Coalition has launched its Click, Check and Protect campaign, a national effort to help safeguard children and inform parents, educators, and caregivers about the potential dangers of products.

The coalition includes the National School Boards Association, Consumers Union, National PTA, and other national groups.

The partnership aims to deliver critical and time-sensitive information on recalled and defective children's products via its website, www.clickcheckandprotect.org.

"No child should be injured or die because safety information did not get into the hands of parents, teachers, and caregivers," said NSBA board member Anne Byrne, who represents the Northeast Region and attended the unveiling of the initiative. ☞

Grow where you're planted

Summer is gardening season and members of the Kentucky Organization of Superintendents' Administrative Assistants will be sowing seeds of professional development in July at their summer training event.

Appropriately enough, the theme of the July 9 daylong gathering at Lexington's Marriott Griffin Gate is "Garden Party." Tentative agenda items include presentations on school-community disaster response, public speaking tips, records retention update, KSBA event registration and Microsoft Outlook, along with a host of breakout sessions on topics ranging from school law resources to a new member roundtable.

Online registration will be available on the KSBA website, www.ksba.org, in early June. The cost is \$65, which includes a picnic buffet luncheon.

The training is concurrent with the first day of KSBA's Summer Leadership Institute, July 9-10 at the same location. For more information, contact KSBA's Dara Bass, dara.bass@ksba.org. For more information on Summer Leadership event, see Page 15 of this magazine for more details.



EXTRA CREDIT

Until the federal government came to the rescue with a \$56 million school-improvement grant in April, Kentucky school leaders weren't trying any new strategies for helping their lowest-performing schools. Teachers were shrugging their shoulders, oblivious to innovative teaching ideas. And school board members just weren't interested in improvements that would help students succeed.

At least that's the way it can come across to non-educators when federal officials trumpet their new funding for struggling schools, and local and state school leaders clap their hands. But it's far from an accurate picture. Yes, new federal school-improvement money will help turn around 10 low-achieving schools, and help 98 others to a lesser degree, but in most cases, local education leaders have known about their problem schools and haven't exactly been sitting around, twiddling their thumbs.

That point tends to get lost in the discussions about the four intervention models, school leadership audits and low-achieving schools. In the urban Jefferson County district, for example, work began several years ago to turn around some of the poor-performing schools that now are targeted for change, while in rural Union County, a young superintendent began making his mark two years ago by shaking up both personnel and academics.

The list of improvement efforts is long.

- In its first year, Fayette County's new alternative school for middle and high school students is making a difference in the lives of students working below their academic potential for any number of reasons. It didn't take the carrot of federal money to get the school board and administration to launch the school.

- At the other end of the age spectrum, who gave extra money to Owensboro Independent Schools, enabling its preschool to become a Center of Excellence, only the second one in the state? Did the federal government pressure the preschool educators



Delmar Mahan
KSBA President and
Whitley County Board of
Education member

there to jump through hundreds of hoops to achieve that designation? Nope. They did it on their own, with support from the administration and school board.

- The Shelby County school board was hoping that round one of the federal Race to the Top funds would subsidize Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering program, at its new high school. When the money didn't materialize, board members didn't hesitate to OK dipping into the district's general fund to make the program a reality.

And those are just recent examples. Go back further and you'll find more evidence: districts beefing up their efforts to close achievement gaps, schools retooling after-school programs, high schools preparing students for life after graduation through specialized career tracks, teachers assessing individual student progress more frequently, boards investing in classroom technology to improve learning, and improved collaboration among teachers on behalf of special education students.

Don't get me wrong – I am delighted to see the federal government do what it should have done when No Child Left Behind was first launched: provide funding to help the schools that have been identified as not meeting standards. Finally, there's some loot beyond the label.

And of course it takes money to make the kinds of changes needed to intervene in our lowest-achieving schools, whether to pay for new programs, additional professional development or personnel. With the state's incredible shrinking education budget, this kind of help is timely and significant. It may not have been possible to sustain some of those examples above without the various pots of federal stimulus funds.

But whether it was restructuring the instructional day, investing in strategies to mold better teachers or identifying individual students for help, let's give some credit to the district and school leaders, staff, school boards and councils who have been quietly "intervening" all along. ☘

"Yes, new federal school-improvement money will help turn around 10 low-achieving schools, and help 98 others to a lesser degree, but in most cases, local education leaders have known about their problem schools and haven't exactly been sitting around, twiddling their thumbs."

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



“He said, ‘You haven’t marked your outhouses yet.’” Fleming County High School agriculture teacher Charles Berry on a bit of input from a 90-year-old visitor watching students restore a 1930s-era one-room school as a community project. The students added two outhouses, complete with a star on one door for girls and a half-moon on the other for boys. From the *Maysville Ledger-Independent*.

the capability to manage their intervention. We have. We have some of the best students in the Commonwealth and I’m sure they will do their best to improve. I’m fairly confident that we will be able to get the money and it can be used to make a lot of improvements at the school.” Lawrence County Schools Superintendent Mike Armstrong on his assumption of management of the district’s high school from its principal and school council following an academic audit by the Kentucky Department of Education. From the *Louisa Big Sandy News*.

“We’re not doing anything any differently than any other district across the state. Any time you mess with positions, people get upset. It’s something that no one wants to see, but it sometimes happens. What we have to do is look at the situation and say, ‘What can we do to save as many positions as possible?’” Owen County Schools Finance Officer Sheila Miller as the school board adopted a tentative 2010-11 budget with limited financial guidance from Frankfort due to the lack of a state budget. From the *Owenton News-Herald*.

more financial drain that school budget writers have to deal with. From the *Harlan Daily Enterprise*.

“There are other schools going through this and not all of them have been determined to have

“It (the increase) can be attributed to me personally and my theory on behavior in classrooms. My whole philosophy on that is that if behavior can’t be exhibited in the classroom, then it’s got to be removed. I still don’t tolerate any of it in the

“My fear is that this will snowball. When this is fully in place, it will add up. Teachers sense a lack of worth and value from the legislature. They feel like they aren’t valued.” Hazard Independent Superintendent Sandra Johnson on her concerns about ongoing limits in state funding for schools combined with higher medical insurance and retirement costs. From the *Hazard Herald*.

“The federal government has not kept up with state-mandated (salary) increases for the staff that provide those programs so the local districts have to make up the difference from the general fund. You reach a point where programs have to be cut, and nobody wants that to happen.” Harlan Independent Schools Superintendent David Johnson on one

Flood of problems

“Mother Nature is a powerful, powerful individual. We just didn’t want to take the risk.” Mercer County Schools Superintendent Chuck Hamilton on calling off classes the first week in May after flood waters prevented buses from running on two-thirds of the county’s roadways. From the *Danville Advocate-Messenger*.

“I know, should the board pass this proposal, there will be conflicts with athletic activities, weddings, graduations and more things than we can imagine. This is simply the best solution I can come up with in a winless situation.” Warren County Schools Superintendent Tim Murley on his recommendation for school on Saturday due to the late-year impact of flood waters. From the *Bowling Green Daily News*.

“I had 17 on my bus at one time and we couldn’t go anywhere because we were stuck. I had infants, disabled people, all walks of life. They were basically stranded. They were scared, they were concerned about other loved ones that they couldn’t get in touch with and we had to keep them calm. We retired from the department of corrections, so this is kind of like old hat for us.” Rowan County Schools bus driver Rhonda Callahan who, along with husband and fellow driver, Vernon, used their school buses to help flood victims get to emergency relief stations after heavy rains. From the *Morehead News*.

“My dad is a Korean War veteran and we in the school system regard Memorial Day as one of our most sacred holidays; however (the number of missed days) leaves no other good option.” Madison County Schools Superintendent Tommy Floyd on his recommendation for making up the flood-related day missed late in the school year. From the *Richmond Register*.

classroom, but how we deal with it after the classroom has changed, and that's good." Second Street School (Frankfort Independent) Principal Travis Harley on a three-year-high number of student suspensions and the use of in-school suspensions to deal with disciplinary issues. From the Frankfort *State Journal*.

"Kids would lay a pencil across the keyboard and then close the top." McCracken County Schools Technology Director Heath Cartwright on the most prevalent problem (180 cracked screens) experienced in the district's initiative providing 2,170 high school students with laptop computers for use outside school. From the *Paducah Sun*.

"We have almost 200 kids here and we're not always going to make everyone happy. I'm excited to see what the survey results show because they will offer some good information. No one is perfect and we have areas for growth." Locust Grove Elementary (Oldham County) School Principal MariAnn Arnold on Superintendent Paul Upchurch's creation of an anonymous parent survey on school climate issues after several parents brought up problems during one of the school board's town hall meetings for community input. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

"We don't want to wait until the end of the year to see where our students need improvement. The immediate feedback is one reason why we like it. It's a great opportunity to know where our children are and get them where we want them to be."



Christian County Schools Superintendent Brady Link on his dis-

trict's requirement that its schools use MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) tests in the spring and fall in grades four through 11 to gauge student progress and identify weaknesses. From the Hopkinsville *Kentucky New Era*.

"We live in a new economy and a changing economy.



The jobs of today are very different from the jobs of yesterday. We really don't know what the jobs of tomorrow will be, and so a college education is more important than ever."

University of Louisville President James Ramsey encouraging Magoffin County High School juniors to get a college degree as part of their life goals. From WYMT-TV in Hazard.

"Once you realize what you're doing to the Earth, you want to recycle to try to help it."

Caverna Independent student Sonya Matthews on the impact of Earth Week science class studies that ranged from electricity use and water pollution to creating headgear that symbolized recycling of used materials. From the *Glasgow Daily Times*.

"When you look at the (KETS Master Plan) goal of anywhere, always-on, anytime access, the move to Live@edu really brings all that to the table. And it levels the playing field by allowing all districts – not just the wealthy ones or the ones who are extremely technology-savvy – to do all of this stuff." Chuck Austin of the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Education Technology on some of the reasons behind last month's major change in the state's school district e-mail system. From the KSBA eNews Service in Frankfort. ☘

Release vs. professional development days

POINT ...

"The bottom line is, you could start an initiative, but you never really finished it." Trigg County Intermediate School Principal Brian Futrell explaining to the school board his support of a proposal to replace the district's 25 early-release days (equating to 90 minutes of collaborative time) with five staff planning days to give school personnel adequate time to complete academic improvement ideas. From the *Cadiz Record*.

COUNTERPOINT...

"On early release days, these teachers come in for training about getting these Professional Learning Communities started. Then, they'd go back and work with the teachers in their schools. It lets us get down to the individual student. To do that properly — it's hard to get those teachers together during the school day, and when you ask them to stay after until 5 p.m. or so, by the end everyone is tired and ready to go. You don't get nearly as much accomplished." Marshall County Schools Superintendent Trent Lovett speaking in favor of a shift to early-release days for teacher training in his district. From the Benton *Marshall County Tribune-Courier*.

EATING INTO PROFITS



Food service directors share strategies for recouping unpaid meal charges

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Lisa Sims has a big-picture view of the problem of unpaid meal charges in Kentucky school cafeterias.

That's why, when she became food services director at Daviess County Schools, she wanted to be sure the school board's policy addressed that issue.

"Because if they're not paying me, they're not paying fees, they're not going to pay after-school (care). And if they start this in kindergarten-first grade, what happens when they go through 13 years of school in your district? Just think of all the bills they can rack up," Sims said. "There's got to be some accountability."

The issue of charging for meals has been "a big topic of discussion" among school food service administrators in recent years, said Sims, who is president of the Kentucky School Nutrition Association.

A number of school boards have been in the hot seat as upset parents complain about the most frequent consequence of non-payment of cafeteria bills: the serving of an "alternative" meal, usually a cheese or peanut-butter sandwich with fruit and milk.

When the Perry County school board discussed its \$30,000-plus in unpaid meal charges, "We looked like the bad guys," said board Chairman John Combs.

In reality, needy children already are getting free- or reduced-price meals, he said, "and the people we confronted are the people who could afford to pay."

Districts use a range of tactics to recoup unpaid charges, but Sims noted that not all districts have policies that specifically

address the unpaid charges, and those with no provisions tend to have much larger sums owed. In Daviess County Schools, she said, most of the time the charges don't stem from hardship, but from "lack of attention."

"That's why we have a policy – to get their attention," Sims said.

About two-thirds of the 173 districts in KSBA's Policy Service have no provisions in their food-service policies that address unpaid meal charges. A few incorporate the issue in their procedures or handbooks.

Among those with specific policies, there are some commonalities: most state that the charging of meals is designed for occasional or emergency use and do not allow the charging of a la carte items. The charge limit before the alternative meal kicks in varies and can be based on number of meals charged, number of days charged or a dollar amount. A few districts don't allow high school students to charge meals and a couple do not allow the charging of meals at all.

Contact is key

Those districts with policies for collecting unpaid meal charges usually use a progression of steps – notes sent home to

parents, phone calls and letters at varying intervals.

"We try to do everything we can to try to contact the parents. That's the hardest thing," said Nina Wilz, food service director for Bellevue Independent Schools.

Wilz sends copies of charge slips home with children on the 15th and 30th of each month, tied to when parents are likely to receive their paychecks. Teachers are kept in the loop, she said, "because a lot of times the younger children, their money's in their backpack or their desk and they just forgot to bring it down."

Anyone more than a week-and-a-half behind in payment gets a phone call, which usually does the trick if parents are simply unaware of the debt, she said.

"My elementary manager is constantly on the phone with calling people," said JoAnn George, food service director for Paris Independent Schools. "If their balance is getting up a little bit, she calls them, and she calls the next day, and she calls the next day. Finally, they get tired of getting calls from her and they'll send their payment in."

Allen County Schools uses its automatic phone messaging system to make a weekly call to families who owe more than \$1, said district Food Service Director Karen Young.

Communication is the key, Combs said. Perry County Schools recovered about \$20,000 of its food-service debt after clerks in cafeterias without outstanding charges met with other clerks to explain their system for contacting parents – thereby

eliminating the need for alternative meals.

"We got ours straightened out now," he said.

Working it out

Many district policies on this issue call for involving the family resource center when food service workers suspect a family is having tough financial times. They also offer to work with parents to set up a payment plan.

"I try to be lenient and I understand the way the economy is now. They may not be able to pay it all at once, and that's fine, but as long as you're showing me you're making an attempt, I have a little more leniency," said Young.

Many directors also enclose free- and reduced-price meal applications with their notices.

"We work with them and convince them it's OK to do that," said Mike Edington, food service director in Lewis County Schools. "A lot of people have a little pride in them and they don't want to do that. But we've increased our number of free-meal students this year over what we had in the past."

Still, in a district such as Bellevue, where there is a high number of transient students, it is hard for the district to avoid being left holding the bag in some cases. "Sometimes they move out of district and we're just kind of stuck," Wilz said. "We haven't come up with any ideas on that yet." ❧

— Photo opposite page taken at Paris Independent Elementary School.

Other tactics on the tray

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Districts have a few other strategies for collecting unpaid meal charges besides the barrage of phone calls and notes.

Incentives are used in Bellevue Independent Schools, where the principal buys T-shirts, caps and other clothing with the school logo, Food Services Director Nina Wilz said.

"I'll advertise if anybody has any lunch charges and they pay them within this amount of time, their name goes into a drawing and they can win some kind of sportswear," she said. "We try all kinds of things. Anything we can think of, we'll try. Our board is really behind us."

As a bonus, the clothing items are purchased from the fundraisers held by upperclassmen who are trying to earn money for prom or graduation events, she said.

High school students also are permitted to work off their debt, doing tasks such as custodial work after school. "Students don't mind at all," Wilz said. "It gives them something to do."

In more punitive approaches, some districts take away some student privileges.

"We restrict them from things like going to the prom and participating in graduation, possibly," said Mike Edington, Lewis County Schools' food service director. "Most of them always pay that up. That's pretty effective – you know, going to the prom you spend \$200 for a tux, you're not going to let \$30 in lunch charges keep you from going to the prom."

Some districts' policies call for using small claims court or district court as a last resort, though push rarely comes to shove. Paris Independent Food Service Director JoAnn George, who has not gone to court, pointed out that there's a \$91 court fee that the defendant is responsible for.

"But there are families that I know, and know of, that it doesn't make any difference what we do, I'm not going to get the money. So I'm going to have that \$91 charge on top of what they already owe me, so why add another \$91 to what they already owe me that I know I'm not going to get?" she said. ❧



Casey kindergarten program not just a 'rerun'

Maxwell McCubbins, a student in the Liberty Elementary School Kindergarten Plus classroom, completes a worksheet during class in early May. Two of three elementary schools in Casey County offer a kindergarten boost to students who may need a little extra help to be better prepared for first grade. The K-Plus classroom includes those students as well as some students in their first year.

By Mary Branham

Some struggling kindergartners in Casey County elementary schools are being given what one school board member calls the “gift of time.”

The district’s Kindergarten Plus program gives those students a second year of kindergarten tailored to their needs, not just a simple repeat.

“They can be successful rather than being pushed on a year where they’re not going to be successful because they haven’t mastered those basic skills,” said Marilyn Coffey, a retired kindergarten teacher who is a member of the Casey County Board of Education. “That’s why I call it the gift of time. I think it honors children and respects children’s development.”

The proof of the program’s effectiveness can be seen in before-and-after data, said teacher Rhonda Cochran. In a literacy assessment for kindergartners, for example, one student scored a 21 in letter-naming fluency and a 7 in two other literacy skills categories. After Kindergarten Plus, the scores

jumped to a 48, 35 and 29, all well beyond the benchmarks for first-grade readiness.

Had that student moved on to first grade after that first year of kindergarten, she would have struggled, Cochran said.

“Do you want your child to struggle through first grade?” she said. In addition to being better prepared academically, the student has more confidence, Cochran said.

Superintendent Linda Hatter said the second year “allows teachers to hone in on skills and gives them more time to work with these students.”

That helps to establish a good foundation for learning, she said, that will set them on a more successful educational path.

Liberty Elementary has been offering Kindergarten Plus for about eight years, and Hatter said the district has seen test scores improve across grade levels. While she stops short of calling the program a silver bullet, she thinks it’s played a role in those increased scores.

“That good start and good base has helped the students to be more successful at those levels,” she said.

And that has helped change the perception of students spending a second year in kindergarten, according to Liberty Principal Boyd Harris.

“It especially helps those that weren’t quite ready for first grade,” said Harris. He thinks one reason for that is because the students who have gone through the K-Plus program have been better prepared. And it’s not just a repeat of kindergarten curriculum – it also includes curriculum from first grade as well, he said.

This school year, the K-Plus class at Liberty had 15 students in their second year of opportunity and eight first-year students who fill up slots to round out the class. Harris said there’s no set number of students targeted for the classes. Cochran said the 15 second-year students this year is the largest group since the program began.

Liberty’s successes prompted Walnut Hill Elementary to adopt a Kindergarten Plus program this year. “We thought anything we could do to better prepare our kids, that’s what we need to do,” said Walnut Hill Principal Tim Goodlett.

Stephanie Floyd, Walnut Hill’s K-Plus teacher, went to Goodlett last year to pitch the K-Plus program at her school after seeing her daughter’s experience in the class last year.

She taught a regular kindergarten class last year and has a few of those students enrolled for “extra opportunity” this year. “They seem more confident and they’re keeping right up with the others,” she said of the students. “They’re all ready for first grade.”

Goodlett said the teachers are seeing results because of the K-Plus program. “It’s been a lot of work for our teachers, not just during the school day but outside the school day to start from scratch,” he said.

Walnut Hill kindergarten teacher Donna Cooper said she’s already talked with some parents and students about going

into K-Plus next year. One boy, she said, seemed ready to take on the challenge of being a leader in the K-Plus classroom next year.

Although Casey County is a small district of 2,400 students, Hatter believes the program would translate well into other districts. It helped, she said, that one school piloted the program and was available to help other schools establish similar programs. Casey County’s third elementary school, Jones Park, is expected to begin a K-Plus program next year.

“I think it’s one of the best things we’ve done for our district,” Hatter said. “We have got to address individual student needs. That’s what it’s all about.”

“It’s really a dropout prevention plan, I think,” said Coffey. “Children in high school who drop out tend to have, particularly, reading problems, problems with literacy overall and they’ve fallen behind in those early years and they get farther and farther behind and eventually they just give up. It is a dropout prevention program in the broadest sense.” ❧

— *Branham is a writer from Frankfort*

Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC

R S A




RSA is recognized today in the financial industry as a premier regional provider of Financial Advisory services to School Districts. Our client list has grown from 15 Districts in 1989 to 130 out of 174 in 2009.

As Financial Advisor, we will assist School Districts with numerous services before, during, and after the financing portion is completed. In addition to serving as Financial Advisor for bond construction projects, RSA provides many additional ongoing services.

RSA is continually developing new and innovative programs for School Districts. Acting as Financial Advisor is more than simply issuing bonds when requested. RSA is always available to assist with any matters.

Our School District division contact information is as follows:

Joe Nance
Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC
325 W. Main Street, Ste. 300
Lexington, Kentucky 40507
(800) 255-0795
jnance@rsamuni.com

Russellville seniors learn core content of life

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

A group of Russellville High School seniors sat around the long conference table at the Logan County Chamber of Commerce office while the head of the local economic development group explained the process of attracting employers to the community.

Who initiates contact with the prospective industry, a student wanted to know.

Another asked questions about the incentive deal awarded to a local company.

"They were good questions – they wanted specifics, which was great," said Billy Bingham, president of the board of Logan Economic Alliance for Development. "You could tell they were thinking about what I was saying."

And that's the whole point. The chamber office was just one stop the entire senior class made during Senior Week, which takes the soon-to-be graduates out of their classrooms and into the community, where they hear from employers, financial experts, bankers and community agencies, among others.

"It makes you think about getting a good job," said Julie Sweeney, who plans to attend Murray State University.

Trevor Coe, a certified financial planner who talked to the students about investing money, praised the weeklong event.

"I always thought there should be a Life 101 class," said Coe, a graduate of the Russellville class of 1997.

The week of activities began several years ago in part as a

way to keep Russellville High School seniors busy while their lower-grade classmates took state tests, said Belinda Ray, the speech/gifted instructor who is in charge of the program.

"It grows and evolves each year," said Principal John Myers. "We have a lot of students who may be 'A' students but you don't know if they have the skills to get along in different capacities."

The people they hear from and their experiences over the week help them with "the practicalities of what they're going to run into," after graduation, said school board Chairman James Milam.

"They've learned some life lessons that are not covered by the course content they get," Milam said. "I really feel like they got some practical economic advice, too, because they're going to be hit with credit cards and courses don't address that. And that taste of the real world doesn't hurt."

Lessons include social skills as well as financial skills. Etiquette lessons precede the formal luncheon held on the final day of Senior Week.

Early in the week, administrators have an opportunity to learn from the students in a session called Yard Sale, so named because students identify programs they feel the high school needs to keep, those that should be "repaired," and those that should be discarded.

One of the most poignant moments comes at week's end, when students reflect on the people who have helped them get to this point. During this activity, students receive some special letters from people in their lives – former teachers, current teachers, parents, family and others.

"All kids get at least 10 letters and it's very powerful. They really, some for the first time, understand that people really do care about them," Ray said.

Other benefits

Ray said the week is an opportunity for class members to reconnect. Of the 90 or so graduating seniors, "close to 80 of them have been together since preschool," she said.

"These are the people we grew up with," said graduating senior Fletcher Brown, who is headed for Western Kentucky University. "It takes you back to the younger days" before students separated into a wider range of classes.

The seniors also are encouraged to



Certified financial planner and Russellville alumnus Trevor Coe of the Levine Group, Inc. holds up a sign with a dollar amount, \$1,393.75. Illustrating the value of investing, he caused jaws to drop when he told students if they had invested that amount in Ford stock a year ago, they could buy a new Ford today.



Senior Week combines an element of fun with the serious topics. One afternoon the seniors gathered in groups for an art project. (From left to right) Jonathon Hindman, Morgan Armistead and Erin Waggoner festoon Mardi Gras masks to use as prom decorations.

try new things as they branch out after high school – yoga and line-dancing lessons were among the activities designed to take them out of their comfort zone.

The class has a chance to give back during Senior Week when they divide into groups and fan out among institutions that serve senior adults, such as adult day care, senior citizens center and nursing homes.

Parents play a role, volunteering to serve breakfast and lunch. The activities during the week act as a bridge in “the transition they’re about to go through,” said Annette Howard, a volunteer whose son Max is in the class. “It’s a good thing to take them outside a school setting and be a little more informal.”

Alumni and local businesses pick up the tab for most of the week, illustrating the community’s traditional commitment to the school district, Superintendent Leon Smith said.

Many of the community contributors are regular sponsors of school activities, Milam said, “but then the Senior Week helps nourish everything that’s going on anyway.”

Smith, who dropped in on the group periodically, said he saw a big difference over the course of the week as the lessons the students were learning sunk in.

“I saw a tremendous difference from Monday – because I spoke to the group on Monday – and then to witness the transition that happened during the week. By Friday, the difference in their attitude – the excitement, the tears, and the camaraderie that was established during that week was just phenomenal.” ☞

RUSSELLVILLE INDEPENDENT SENIOR WEEK SCHEDULE

Monday

Team-building activities
Yard Sale – students evaluate current programs
Session: Legal obligations as adults
Session: “It’s money, baby”

Tuesday

Team-building activities
Session: Chamber of Commerce, economic development agency
Session: Investment and savings
Senior art project

Wednesday

Yoga
Seniors to seniors – visits to facilities for older citizens
Art or community service project

Thursday

Dance lessons
Bowling

Friday

Social etiquette
Courthouse tour and citizenship session
Reflection
Senior alumni luncheon

New superintendent law calls for balancing act

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Kentucky school boards are no strangers to walking a tightrope on issues and the new superintendent evaluation law may have them struggling for balance.

A newly revised law (KRS 156.557) by the 2010 Kentucky General Assembly and backed by KSBA and other education groups, requires boards to convene in closed session for any preliminary discussions they want to have about the superintendent's evaluation. Discussions about the final, or summative, written evaluation, and the final decision about it must take place in open session. The idea is to permit preliminary evaluation discussions to take place in a setting that promotes frank speech.

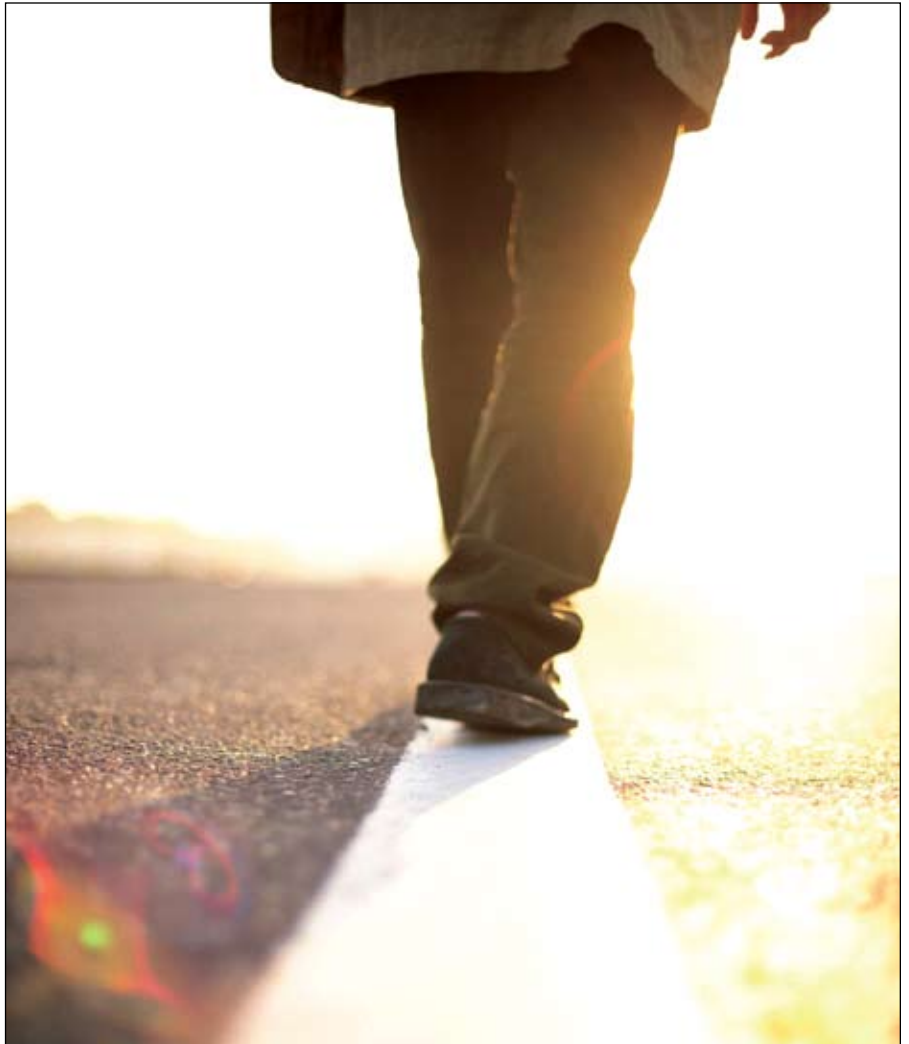
"I really think allowing the draft evaluation to be discussed during a closed session will lead to a better evaluation," said Mike Oder, a KSBA consultant who trains boards on KSBA's superintendent evaluation process. "I think there usually would be a willingness to discuss some things in this session that might not have been discussed previously, thus making the summative evaluation more meaningful," he said.

But where does preliminary end and summative begin?

"Generally, the collection – often by the chairperson – of the individual board members' rating materials prior to adopting the summative evaluation constitutes work at the draft stages" said KSBA staff attorney John Fogle. "Under the Open Meetings Law, the board must be mindful that a quorum may not discuss the evaluation or the process outside a duly-noticed meeting. When the board does meet, the new statutory subsection provides that preliminary discussions relating to the superintendent's evaluation shall be held in closed session and it would be wise to think of these discussions as entailing work on a draft. The summative evaluation is not final until the board adopts it in open session."

Many districts use those rating materials, which are often in the form of checklists of evaluation areas that board members complete individually and bring with them to the preliminary discussion, said Dara Bass, director of KSBA's Policy and Procedures Service. In addition to focusing the preliminary discussion in closed session, these checklists can serve as reference points when the board chair conducts the discussion in open session leading to approval of the final evaluation, she said.

But Bass warned against preliminary closed-session discussions being followed by a quick open vote on the final evaluation, because the new law requires that the written summa-



tive evaluation be discussed in open session before the board adopts it. She suggested that board members consider "meeting the discussion requirement of the new law with some examples to back that up – examples of why they assigned their ratings to the performance indicators, examples of what they expect to see next time. It should not be an automatic approval situation when they come out of closed session because the board made a summative decision in closed session."

Fogle agrees, saying it would be good practice for board members in the open, summative portion to summarize the high points "and to indicate that until the board acts, you're not dealing with a final document."

Another aspect of the new law is the requirement that KDE sign off on the district's superintendent evaluation policy and related evaluation procedures. The new law will be reflected in the policy updates boards are now receiving from the KSBA Policy Service, but because KDE must now approve a board's superintendent evaluation policy and procedures, "this is one area the board will need to look at early on," Bass said. She also emphasized that the new law does not require a board to provide a written evaluation. ☞

Kentucky's first online high school saluted with PEAK Award



A Glasgow restaurant with wireless Internet capacity was filled with community leaders in May for a demonstration of the Barren Academy for Virtual and Enhanced Learning (BAVEL). They were there to celebrate BAVEL, which was presented the KSBA PEAK (*Public Education Achieves in Kentucky*) Award, honoring the program for its academic support for students requiring an off-campus educational opportunity.

(Left) Paige Tennyson, who participates in BAVEL due to a medical condition requiring her to learn from home, talks about the benefits of the program with KSBA President Delmar Mahan. Tennyson will graduate from BAVEL a year ahead of her former Barren County High classmates due to the online learning opportunities of the program.

(Above right) Mahan presents the PEAK Award to BAVEL director Amanda Wright. Also pictured (left to right) Barren County Board of Education members Charlotte Beals, Tammy Groce, Tim England, and Robbie Tom, Wright, Baird, Superintendent Jerry Ralston and KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott.

KSBA Summer Leadership Institute

July 9-10
Marriott Griffin Gate, Lexington

Registration information soon be will in the mail about this summer's event, which will focus on how districts can reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, GO TO WWW.KSBA.ORG AND CLICK ON SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE UNDER "FEATURED EVENTS" AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE.



In and out of the classroom

Board member finds different way to help Hispanic students

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

When Steve Imhoff saw a need to provide additional support to Hispanic students in Louisville, he took action, gathering together a group of like-minded people who eventually created the nonprofit group, Adelante! Hispanic Achievers.

Fortunately for him and the students this group has helped, Imhoff had the inside track as a member of the Jefferson County Public Schools Board of Education.

“If I wasn’t on the school board, I might not have thought about doing this,” Imhoff said. “Well, I probably would have thought about it, but probably not done it.”

In addition to knowing a lot of people, particularly in the Hispanic community, Imhoff, who is chairman of the organization’s board of directors, said he was able to get data from JCPS to identify the location of the students who most needed help.

He said the idea for the program sprang from attending the Black Achievers award banquet in Louisville.

“I started wondering if there was anything like this for Hispanic students,” Imhoff said. “Over the years I had known some of the Latino leaders in Louisville and I sent out an e-mail to about 20 or 30 ... saying I was thinking about starting this Hispanic Achievers program. We had that first meeting in 2004, then we started having meetings every month or every other month.”

The program, which follows the school calendar, kicked off in September 2005, and now has after-school activities one day a week at two middle schools, as well



Photo by Rachel Scholten

Photo opposite page: Olmsted Academy North eighth-grader Everaldo Gonzalez, left, is tutored by Alex Haynes, a student at DuPont Manual High School, as part of the Adelante! Hispanic Achievers program. The program was the brain child of JCPS board of education member Steve Imhoff, right.





Adelante students work on a word challenge during a team building workshop led by Adelante mentor and volunteer Luis Rivera.

PROGRAM RESULTS

According to data provided to Adelante leaders by JCPS, in 2009-10 the average GPA of middle-schoolers in Adelante was 3.21 compared with 2.75 for other Hispanic students. As these students have moved to high school, their higher levels of achievement have gone with them, with an average 3.14 GPA this past school year compared with 2.46 for non-Adelante Hispanic students.

as Saturday activities at the Americana Community Center. It currently serves about 80 students.

“The concept of the program is to help the students do better in school, have professional careers, learn the social norms of what it is to live here and foster a connection within the community, as well as success,” said Adelante part-time director Mara Maldonado. “The whole program is to get these kids to work hard and focus so they can have

great futures.”

Maldonado said the after-school program generally follows the same schedule: meet with students at 2:20 p.m., take students outside if the weather is good followed by snacks and then bring in student tutors from two local high schools.

“The tutors are amazing and they get to practice their Spanish,” she said. “Then we work on homework until about 5 p.m., when the parents pick them up. We do fun things, but mainly focus on academics.”

Imhoff said program participants learn life skills.

“We focus on getting them into college,” he said. “We’ve also taught them how to do an interview, whether it’s with McDonalds or IBM; what do you wear; how do you talk to the person interviewing; how to do a resume.”

Imhoff said a number of professionals from doctors to lawyers have come in to speak to students.

They also go on field trips to museums, local points of interest and even Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest, which Maldonado said reinforces some of the lessons the kids receive.

“There’s no question that our kids are gaining confidence,” she said. “No matter what field trips we go on, we always get these comments that they are the best kids. Bernheim Forest has said we are their favorite group to work with. They are learning to volunteer, they are learning you need to show up on time, that you need to be respectful.”

She said she hears from parents who say their kids are happier and doing better. The program also has hard data from JCPS that shows the students in the program are making progress.

“JCPS compared CATS scores of Adelante kids against other Hispanic students in the district who are not in the program, and they do better,” Imhoff said. “I’d like to think we have something to do with that, although I’m sure their parents have a lot to do with that.” ❧

— For more information about Adelante! Hispanic Achievers, go to www.adelanteky.org.

The next issue of the *Kentucky School Advocate* will be a combined July/August issue, so please look for the magazine in your mailboxes the third week of July.

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

Districts join hands to hire local energy managers

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

On their own or in groups, 123 school districts across Kentucky soon will be able to call on the expertise of an energy manager to help them develop energy plans and improve energy efficiency.

KSBA and the Kentucky Department of Energy Development and Independence have awarded grants to school districts or groups of districts to hire the local energy managers – a total of 33 will be hired, along with two energy curriculum coordinators.

Funding for the School Energy Managers Project, which is managed by KSBA, comes from a \$5.1 million federal economic stimulus grant to the state. In the first year of the two-year program, the grants will cover up to 77 percent of an energy manager's salary and benefits; districts must pay about 50 percent the following year.

Of the 33 grantees, 25 are multi-district partnerships; only a handful of districts applied singly. In many cases, the state's education cooperatives brought the district partners together for the project.

“Originally, we anticipated that districts would work together in small groups with one energy manager serving four or five

districts,” said David Baird, KSBA's associate executive director. “It evolved into a huge collaboration that included co-ops. This arrangement made the grant process much more productive and functional.”

There is enough grant money left to fund 10 more energy manager positions because not all districts initially jumped on board to apply for funding.

“We feel like we will pick up some additional school districts, perhaps by July 1,” Baird said.

Also pending are funding requests from districts that already have energy managers and are seeking funds for professional development, software or equipment, said Ron Willhite, who heads the School Energy Managers Project. Fourteen school districts already employ energy managers.

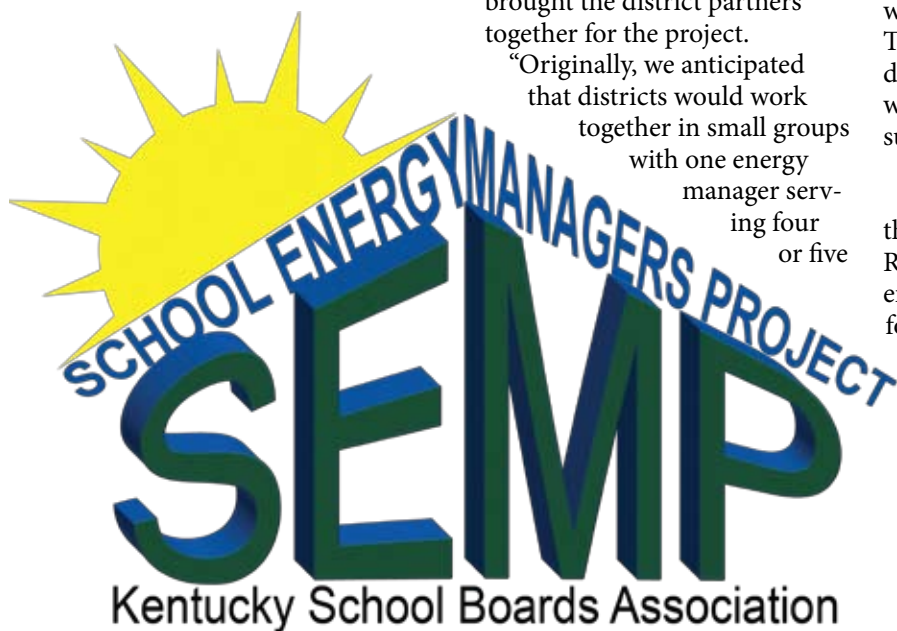
The new energy managers will be hired by July 6, in time for a three-day training session July 7-9 in Lexington. “We expect to provide enough training that they can immediately go into the districts and do things that need to be done,” Willhite said.

Among their first tasks will be to determine whether districts have adopted an energy policy. Then, he said, “They would start off collecting data so they can create a baseline.” That data would include anything that reflects energy use, such as electricity, natural gas and fuel oil.

Grant recipients

Of the groups that will share energy managers, the biggest partnership is the one led by the Green River Regional Education Cooperative in western Kentucky. Though other co-ops aided in the formation of district partnerships, Green River will actually administer the grant for the 28 districts in its project, which will share five energy managers and one energy curriculum coordinator.

“The districts are all interested in the savings and also the fact that this is a program that teaches everyone the value of energy management,” said George Wilson, GRREC's associate executive director.



Three of the member districts already have their own energy managers, Wilson said, but they will be able to use the energy curriculum coordinator's services. The group requested that position with the big picture in mind.

"We felt it was important for the sustainability of this program to provide teachers and students with support in lesson planning and implementation of the whole concept of energy management," Wilson said. "This person will work with the energy managers and the district and school (energy) teams to embed energy management into the continuing instructional core."

In central Kentucky, Shelby County Schools will be the lead district in a consortium also comprising Frankfort, Eminence and Anchorage independent and Henry and Trimble county districts.

Shelby County Schools Assistant Superintendent Kerry Whitehouse said the group worked out the logistics of the shared position prior to filing their grant application. Once the group hires its manager, he said, "We'll develop a schedule for this individual so every district will know when the individual should be in the district."

Shelby County Schools took the lead because it has 50 percent of the pooled square footage among the districts.

While it sounds as if working in all the buildings in multiple school districts would be a tall order for a single energy manager, Whitehouse pointed out that the program incorporates the expertise of regional energy professionals from the Kentucky Energy Efficiency Program for Schools, which is administered by the Kentucky Pollution Prevention Center at the University of Louisville. Districts also are required to form district and school energy teams that can work with the energy manager, he said.

Though groups may have a diverse assortment of buildings among their member districts, Whitehouse is confident the managers will have the knowledge to work with that variety.

"I think a lot of their energies are probably going to go toward older facilities in some of these districts – what is it, without spending a lot of money, making a lot of changes through construction – what is it you can do to help conserve energy in these buildings regardless of their age. I think it's more about changing habits," he said. ☞



entirely focused on
educational design

Congratulations!



Martha Tarrant

2010 Southeast U.S. Planner of the Year
Council of Educational
Facility Planners International*

*CEFPI is a worldwide, professional, non-profit association whose sole mission is improving the places where children learn. The Southeast Planner of the Year award is presented annually to one individual throughout the entire Southeast, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

The expertise you need.
The commitment you deserve.



Ed Massey

on being elected secretary/treasurer of the NSBA Board of Directors

In Conversation With... features an interview between a leader or figure involved in public education and a staff member of the Kentucky School Advocate.

This month's conversation is with Boone County Schools' Board of Education member C. Ed Massey, who recently was elected secretary/treasurer of the National School Boards Association's Board of Directors, putting him in line for its presidency in 2012. Massey, immediate past president of KSBA's board of directors, is the first Kentucky school board member to be elected an NSBA officer.

Q. What will your job entail as secretary/treasurer of NSBA?

A. I will be responsible for maintaining the books and finances and giving the reports at the regional meetings for the National School Boards Association. In the past as an officer of KSBA, I always attended the Central Region meeting, which I'm honored to say that this year is in Kentucky.

But as an NSBA officer, I will also be attending regional meetings in Colorado Springs; Banff, (Alberta) Canada; Baltimore; and Williamsburg, Va. And the reason I bring that up, is that it allows me to go around the nation and share what I have learned through my experiences as a Boone County school board member and as a KSBA member.

When I go around and share what we're doing in Boone County and in Kentucky, I'm gratified to see how well Kentucky is doing. So when I see negative reports in the paper and I hear all this riffraff about how Kentucky is so under par in many ways, I don't see that when I hear from others. I think we're doing a very good job. What I would hate to see is because of legislative inaction, for us to take a step back and lose momentum from the progress that we've made.

In 2012, when I become president, Kentucky will get to host the NSBA President's Retreat and the Board of Directors' Retreat. That will be an opportunity for us to show off the good things we're doing in education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Q. This new role is going to require a lot of your time. How will you juggle your own board responsibilities along with these new ones?

A. I think the magic to that is before I even considered becoming an NSBA officer, I spoke with my family and got their support. I spoke with my law partners and got

their support. And then, I went to my local board and KSBA to get their endorsements. So the people in my life who have expectations of me have all been very supportive.

And given the wonderful support team I have at my law office, they are empowering me to meet my responsibilities. My law partners are pitching in and helping out. My local board members are willing to be flexible to try to accommodate this because they believe it's in the best interest of the commonwealth of Kentucky for this to happen.

Q. How will Kentucky benefit from your participation on the NSBA board?

A. No one from Kentucky has ever held an officer's position in the National School Boards Association. Prior to me being on the board of directors, we've only ever had two people that I'm aware of on the board, and that's Margie Bradford (Bardstown Independent) and Bill Cofield (Franklin County), and both of them brought some very valuable things to the table, and they also brought some good things to Kentucky.

NSBA is on the cutting edge of everything that is going on in education, including grants and programs that we will have advance knowledge of. In fact, we are currently working with NSBA on a pre-K initiative, and we're also working with them on a school climate initiative.

By virtue of holding the office of secretary/treasurer, I get more opportunities to see what's out there; I get to bring back more ideas to Kentucky, and frankly, just being there will provide us with opportunities to participate in things that we may not have otherwise known about.

Q. What are your goals as an NSBA officer?

A. One of my major goals is collaboration, not just among school boards associations, but among all groups that push for positive things in public schools. I say that because a lot of times you have multiple groups and they're splintered. They all have a good initiative and a good idea, but because they're not together, they're not as powerful as other lobbying groups.

So my goal is to partner, not only with state associations, which are our members, but to also look beyond that to other groups that we can share ideas with and join our forces with.

The reason I think that is so important is because many times, legislators on the state and federal level are far removed from the classroom. They can only philosophically understand what they are being told, but they can't understand the application of how it's actually working. With teamwork and collaboration, I think we become a more powerful force to be reckoned with; I also think we have a much better ability to educate our legislators as to what is important in education, what programs need to be supported, what's working and what's not working, where money needs to go, etc.

I think some groups are very good at what they do, but the power of many is much better than the power of one.

Q. What are some other goals?

A. We need to have better lines of communications with our state associations. We're all very busy, and because of that busyness, we sometimes lose focus of what really is important in an immediate situation. So I think we really need to work on clearing the lines of communication between the National School Boards Association and the state school boards associations, because sometimes you get so busy that you forget to listen.

Q. What are some of the critical issues facing education right now that you'll be dealing with in the coming years?

A. The biggest thing is the unfunded mandate. We all want to do more with education. All of us in education would do so much more if we had the funding. The problem is we are so compartmentalized that we can't always be efficient. One of the things I think is a real difficult piece is, if you're going to fund it, fine; we're happy to bring any new program that is beneficial to students to the table and work with it. But if you're not going to fund it, don't shove it down our throats because we have enough work to do already.

When you have so many different competing things to deal with, like Senate Bill 1 in Kentucky, No Child Left Behind regulations from the federal government, the new charter school initiatives, there's just so many varying things that are competing for time and money, it's almost like we're divided and it decreases our effectiveness.

"If we could come to a consensus of what's the most important thing and fully fund that, then I think we would see a tremendous impact on the difference we are making in our schools."

— Ed Massey, recently elected NSBA secretary/treasurer and Boone County Board of Education member

If we could come to a consensus of what's the most important thing and fully fund that, then I think we would see a tremendous impact on the difference we are making in our schools. And certainly one of those things is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. I think as we go forward, if we don't do anything to retain our current good, quality teachers, and do something to incentivize those going into the teaching profession, then we're going to lose a tremendous ability to make a difference in education.

Q. What do you think your biggest challenge is going to be in the next few years?

A. Whether we want to admit it or not, there's a faction out there in our state and in the nation that would promote doing away with school boards altogether. I think school boards are the vital connection between the community at large and education. I think if you don't have that vital connection, then you're going to lose that support for education as a whole. In our poorer communities, you've got to have someone who lives in that community who can bridge that gap between the community and what the school board initiatives are. Without that, you will never gain the support of education you need. And education, in my view, is the ability to overcome poverty, the ability to overcome dire circumstances and to provide vast opportunities for all children.

So, I think we have to be mindful that there are those out there who would like to do away with school boards, so we must be more proactive than reactive to the situations facing us.

I think there also are some real issues out there that we have to be mindful of. For instance, the charter schools initiative: while there can be some benefits of some charter school propositions, the problem is that if there is any other chartering agency other than the school board, then it takes it away from the locally elected school board. If there's a process where the school board denies a charter, then it can be appealed to a higher level and the school board is essentially neutralized; it takes away from the local decision-making authority of the school board.

Under KERA in 1990, school boards were stripped of their ability to be involved with personnel, and they were basically limited to two or three major duties: hiring the superintendent, setting the policies for the district and hiring the school board attorney. We are also the ambassadors for the school district. ☞

'No comment' about poor academic performance won't cut it, even for Coach Cal

Generally speaking, the focus of this column keeps pretty much to communications topics arising from elementary and secondary education issues.

And, generally speaking, I understand why there are times when it's hard for educators to see options beyond "no comment" when reporters ask questions about their students.

And, generally speaking, I know anyone who appears to second-guess University of Kentucky basketball coach John Calipari is asking for trouble from the Big Blue Nation of fans.

But Coach Cal deserved a technical foul call a few weeks back for choosing to cite "privacy concerns" in refusing to answer media questions about the grade-point average of his team for the fall 2009 semester: 2.025, the lowest among UK's 20 sports teams and the lowest for the basketball team since 2002.

Asked about the GPA issue, UK President Lee Todd Jr., said he "was disappointed." Senior Associate Athletic Director Sandy Bell said, "It's not something we're happy about, I'll tell you that. And we'll be working on it to get it up."

Two days later, Calipari did tell a group of reporters that he wished his first UK team had done as well in the classroom as it performed on the court.

"Do you understand that everything was different? New staff, new players, new system, new style. There was a lot thrown at these young men. But let me say this: I am so proud of how they handled the big picture of this," he said.

I hope Calipari's advisers (or a boss) convinced him that when a coach is asked about the academics of the young men whose futures are in his care, he shouldn't need 48 hours to come up with something to say.

If that's not what happened, then permit me to supply examples of educators who understand that academic ups and downs are fair game for inquiries from reporters, parents and other taxpayers.

Institutional, not individual

Let's look at some of news stories on Kentucky's lowest-performing schools list that slipped out in January and the stories about academic audits of those same schools.

Four districts – Caverna Independent, Henry County, Jefferson County and Metcalfe County – figured most prominently in the media coverage collected by KSBAs eNews Service. Not one of those stories included a "no comment" by Superintendents Sam Dick, Tim Abrams, Sheldon Berman or Patricia Hurt. In each case – even if they disagreed with the state's academic measurements of their schools – the superintendents made the point that low performance was unacceptable. And in most cases, they offered some of the steps being taken to



Brad Hughes
KSBAs Member
Support Services Director

improve academics prior to this spring's assessment tests.

When a reporter asks about a specific student's grades, it's completely appropriate to say, "That's off-limits," and cite the Federal Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA). Coaches do it all the time when they bench a player for failing to keep her or his grades up. And I've seen plenty of coaches quoted along the lines of "He/she needs to spend more time hitting the books." Period.

But what superintendent would accept "privacy concerns" from a high school principal called to explain why the Class of

2010 had the lowest graduation rate in nearly a decade? What school board member would accept a superintendent's response that low academics – even if for just one team – doesn't merit both explanation and action?

And coaches, principals and superintendents should remember that they can't have it both ways when it comes to what is talked about for an individual student.

In that same newspaper article in which Calipari cited "privacy concerns" for failing to comment, the writer noted an earlier interview in which the coach had waxed proudly about possible NBA No. 1 draftee John Wall achieving all As and Bs in his first freshman semester.

Look out for those Graduation 2010 stories this month in which principals or teachers are talking about the all As and Bs of a student headed to Harvard or Stanford or MIT on a scholarship. Yes, it's probable that neither the student nor Mom nor Dad will file a FERPA complaint for a positive release of that kind of personal information. But school leaders have to think: "What do I say if I'm asked that same question about the grades of a dropout?"

The Last Word

Without a doubt, coaches are just as important as classroom teachers when it comes to communicating all sorts of life lessons. Indeed, almost all elementary and secondary coaches carry their own academic class loads, in which learning about the discovery of penicillin is just as vital as the correct arm angle to launch a three-pointer.

But when a coach/teacher, principal, superintendent or school board member accepts that role, one of the myriad accompanying responsibilities is to be able to tell fathers and mothers how their students have – or have not – progressed toward that singular goal of a quality education. And when it comes to groups of students, taking the option of "privacy concerns" when the grades stink simply is not an acceptable response.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☘

COST EFFICIENT



SAFE & SECURE



COMMUNITY
CONNECTED



STUDENT & TEACHER CENTERED DESIGN



GREEN & SUSTAINABLE



SUPPORTS INSTRUCTIONAL
PLAN



- 26 ENERGY STAR DESIGNS
- MOST ENERGY EFFICIENT SCHOOL IN KENTUCKY
- 5 OF 7 TOP ENERGY EFFICIENT SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY
- FIRST 2 NET ZERO ENERGY DESIGNED SCHOOLS IN THE U.S.

Sherman-Carter-Barnhart ^{PSC}

ARCHITECTURE • INTERIORS • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE • CIVIL ENGINEERING

LEXINGTON • LOUISVILLE • PADUCAH
WWW.SCBARCHITECTS.COM

CALL OR EMAIL FOR
MORE INFORMATION:

Newby Walters (Lexington)
859.224.1351 nwalters@scbarchitects.com

Kenny Stanfield (Louisville)
502.721.6100 kstanfield@scbarchitects.com

Holly King (Paducah)
270.519.9867 hking@scbarchitects.com



260 Democrat Drive
Frankfort, KY 40601

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 850
Lexington, KY

Campbell County goes CATS crazy



Regardless of what form Kentucky's soon-to-be revamped testing system takes, Campbell County Schools' leaders are making sure their students don't lose their enthusiasm for success in the interim. Each school held its own celebration to pump up students before testing began last month.

(Above) Costumed Cline Elementary Principal Lynn Poe congratulates fourth-grader Aaron Baldwin as he and fellow students walk off the stage after receiving an award. "Hollywood" was the school's theme all year, and students were given the red-carpet treatment to kick off testing.

(Above right) Long-term substitute teacher Bob Rankin got into the spirit of things as the master of ceremonies at Cline, calling each student's name to walk across the state and receive an award. Students were so excited they chanted, "128, best in the state," to end the ceremony. The students chose 128 as the goal they want to reach on the test, hoping to get the highest score in the state.

(Right) Campbell County Middle School held its annual students vs. teachers basketball game to kick off testing.

