

# KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ May 2010

## High-performance schools take off

Legislative wrap-up – for now

**BARREN COUNTY SCHOOLS' VIRTUAL WINNER**

**A PERSONAL APPROACH TO DROPOUT PREVENTION**

# KSBA Summer Leadership Institute

July 9-10  
Marriott Griffin Gate, Lexington

Summer isn't just a great time for getting away; it's also a great time for learning. So be watching for registration information and join us to learn how your district can reduce its dropout rate and raise the graduation rate.

For more information or to register, go to [www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org) and click on Summer Leadership Conference under "Featured Events" at the top of the page.



**FEATURES**

**TAKING IT PERSONALLY**

Paducah Independent leaders say the personal approach that permeates all their dropout-prevention efforts has been the key to reducing the dropout rate in their system. The multifaceted program includes credit recovery, mentoring, student recognition, early intervention and parent involvement ... Page 8

**VIRTUAL PEAK**

Barren County's statewide online high school has made its mark during the five years it's been serving students. And now the state's first accredited online high school has made a mark by winning KSBA's *PEAK* (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award ... Page 10

**GREEN FROM THE GET-GO**

"Green and healthy" was built into every design decision made when Shelby County Schools built its latest high school. That's why it served as "exhibit A" on how to build an Energy Star school during the annual High-Performance Sustainable Schools workshop ... Page 12

**EASTERN OUTPOST**

State energy efficiency leaders hope Magoffin County's newly designated Energy Star school will inspire others in all Kentucky's far reaches. It's already inspired its students, who no longer have to try to learn over noisy window air conditioners and breathe in coal dust from an old furnace ... Page 14

**WELL-TRAINED**

Kentucky school board members have assessed their training and preparation for the job. In what topics do they feel most grounded? Where are they less confident? A survey by the Office of Education Accountability provides the answers to those questions ... Page 18



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Graduation in gear, Page 8

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**On the cover**



Educators tour the recently renovated Southern Elementary School in Scott County as part of the High-Performance Sustainable Schools workshop. The school is a good example of how new construction is not the only route to greener schools ... Article on Page 12.

# TAKE NOTE

## Kentucky School Boards Association

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### The numbers don't lie

School district leaders who want to chart their district's financial progress have a new resource. The Council for Better Education has compiled state and local SEEK funding information from 2006-10 to show the downward trend in state funding for schools. To access that report, which covers the organization's 168 member districts, go to [www.kyceb.com/2010seekoverviews/index.php](http://www.kyceb.com/2010seekoverviews/index.php).

### Sweet sixteen

Forty-four Kentucky high schools are now part of AdvanceKentucky, a teacher training and incentive program aimed at accelerating student learning in rigorous math, science and English courses and on Advanced Placement exams.

Sixteen more high schools were added last month to the 28 high schools already taking part in the program, funded by a \$13.2 million grant from the multiple-foundation supported National Math and Science Initiative.

The new participants are: Bourbon, Christian, Clay, Franklin, Harrison,

Mercer, Perry, Pulaski and Trigg county high schools, as well as George Rogers Clark High in Clark County, Martha Layne Collins High in Shelby County, Southwestern High in Pulaski County, Western Hills in Franklin County, Holmes High School in Covington Independent, Hopkinsville High School in Christian County, and Glasgow High School in Glasgow Independent.

### Honored architect

Kentucky school architect Martha Tarrant has been named the 2010 Southeast Region Educational Planner of the Year. It's the highest award presented by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International Southeast Region.

Tarrant's firm, RossTarrant Architects in Lexington, has worked on projects in more than 50 Kentucky school districts and 19 college and university campuses. The honor recognizes her impact on educational facility planning and contributions to knowledge and best practices in that field. ☞

### Team energy

Two project coordinators are on board for the Kentucky School Energy Managers Project, a partnership between KSBA and the Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence. The program will allocate federal funding to local districts to hire energy managers to create district energy-management plans.

Martha Boles Casher, a Madisonville native, worked for Kentucky Utilities as a home energy advisor and corporate residential conservation service coordinator. She also worked in the utility's human resources department with major responsibilities for performance consulting.

After KU downsized, Casher began a second career as a teacher, working in both Bourbon County Schools and Paris Independent Schools.

John Noel, another project coordinator, has worked in Fayette County Schools. He has 25 years of experience in school facilities management and 15 years of experience in public schools energy management. His experience also includes project management for new school construction and renovation.

Noel worked for three years for the state education department's Division of Facilities Management and has been secretary of the Kentucky School Plant Management Association.

Two more coordinators will be hired. The program is currently accepting proposals from school districts.



# Session may be over, but charter schools aren't

Charter schools, which in the past have not gained traction in Kentucky, emerged as a serious issue during the 2010 session of the General Assembly – of necessity, some might say.

The state Board of Education and Commissioner Terry Holliday provided a late-in-the-day push for charter school legislation to enhance Kentucky's second attempt to get a federal Race to the Top grant. While the push was unsuccessful, the issue may well be resurrected during a special session on the state budget later this spring.

The charter school provisions contained in the unsuccessful House Bill 109 will serve as a starting point for future discussions of charter schools. Given the dire need for funds for education — particularly to support the implementation of the state's new assessment system — it's hardly coincidental that HB 109's charter provisions closely resembled the Colorado legislation that gleaned the maximum number of points in the charter school category of the RTTT scoring. If Kentucky had received the entire 32 points for this category in the first round of RTTT, we would have had the second-highest score in the nation and been one of the two winning states.

This is a powerful motivation for seeking charter school authorization in this state, one that KSBA recognizes.

That said, we don't believe that charter schools are the sole guarantee of a RTTT award. And after conducting a thorough analysis, we had several concerns about HB 109 that I hope will be addressed in any new version in the future. Among them:

- The legislation did not address the issue of reciprocal nonresident student agreements.
- The state school board would have the final say in an appeal by a would-be charter rejected by the local board, an erosion of local control.
- Conflicting language in the bill left the charter enrollment process open to siphoning the best and brightest away from public schools.
- There may have been a potential for locally generated revenues being transferred to another district with a charter school.
- It contained multiple questionable areas on employment issues and relating to its proposed statewide virtual charter school.
- The bill's outline of the application process created an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.



**Bill Scott**  
KSBA Executive Director

## The good parts

While we hope these concerns are considered when and if the issue resurfaces, we — your association and individual school districts — should avoid knee-jerk naysaying. HB 109 was an improvement over earlier charter-school bills. For one thing, it called for school boards to be the only authorizing agency for charter schools and said boards would hold charter schools accountable for meeting their learning goals and applicable statutes, regulations and policies.

Any revisions in the charter school contract couldn't be made without board approval, the bill said. While charters would have greater flexibility, HB 109 stated that they must still follow state law and regulations relating to curriculum, assessment and accountability. Further, it said the board would be responsible for providing funding to the charter schools.

There also is another money angle to charters besides Race to the Top. Holliday, in addressing KSBA's annual conference earlier this year, said a lack of charters hinders the state from getting funding from private nonprofits, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He termed it, "leaving money on the table."

In the less tangible realm, proponents of charter schools believe they provide more educational choices within the public education system. They feel that the higher standards will have a positive influence on the entire system and maybe even eliminate the push for private-school vouchers.

## Swimming against the tide?

Despite the reservations I've mentioned, the bottom line is that as long as charter schools remain one of the top priorities of the Obama administration, it is essential that local board members become more familiar with these entities. Why? Because local boards play a variety of critical roles in the establishment, oversight, and evaluation of charter schools. One of the best sources of information on this topic is the Center for Public Education's website, [www.centerforpubliceducation.org](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org), which is administered by the National School Boards Association. Its article entitled "Charter schools: Finding out the facts: At a glance" provides an excellent overview.

In a nutshell, when it comes to charter schools, the stakes are much too high for any of us to remain on the sidelines. ☹

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



Photo provided by Powell County Schools

**“When I went to school, they would ask if there was anyone in history that we could talk to, who would it be? Would it be Jesus, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, the Beatles or Elvis Presley? But through the power of reading, you can talk to**

**them. Through reading, you are having a conversation with famous people.”** Former school board member Dr. Charles Noss addresses a crowd estimated at about 2,500 at Powell County Schools’ Second Annual Reading Celebration. From the *Clay City Times*.

**“I’d like for them to say, ‘OK, here’s what Kentucky is doing, I’d love for him to come here.’”** Metcalfe County Schools Food Services Coordinator Beth Miller on her e-mail to ABC TV about Jamie Oliver’s *Food Revolution*, a reality show focusing – often negatively – on foods served in public school cafeterias. From the *Glasgow Daily Times*.

**“At the beginning of every school year, I point to the rules of behavior. I say, ‘My name is Miss Judy and this is Miss Judy’s bus and these are the rules you have to follow while you ride on my bus. If you don’t follow the rules, you may be visiting your principal, and you will not be able to ride Miss Judy’s bus.’ A lot of kids help me out, and that’s a wonderful thing because that means I can stay focused on my main responsibility and that’s driving the bus and keeping the kids safe.”** Judy Worthington, a 21-year driver for the Danville Independent Schools, on how things run on ‘Miss Judy’s bus.’ From the *Danville Advocate-Messenger*.

**“They use so much slang today through texting and instant messaging. It’s interesting for them**

**to see how (language has) changed over hundreds of years, and how it’s constantly evolving.”** Amy Clark, an Advanced Placement English literature teacher at Madisonville-North Hopkins High School, on a two-class project to create a dictionary of slang based on Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 1755. From the *Madisonville Messenger*.

**“We wouldn’t have the same choir day 1 as we would day 175. There’s a potential to lose and gain kids every 12 weeks. I’ve yet to see proof that kids (on a trimester**

**schedule) can take as many AP classes as they want and band and chorus. It’s just a logistical scheduling nightmare – I’ve yet to see someone who can do it all.”** Franklin County High School Choral Director Raye Hurley on her concerns about a possible shift to a trimester schedule and its impact on the school’s arts programs. From the *Frankfort State-Journal*.

**“I think we have smart kids here. We just need more students. It is the numbers that is our concern, not the quality of your school. As the numbers go down, your children are not exposed to as much material, they don’t have as many opportunities, there aren’t as many clubs, there aren’t as many extra classes.”** Letcher County Schools Superintendent Anna Craft addressing a community meeting on the future of Arlie Boggs Elementary School, enrollment 125. From the *Whitesburg Mountain Eagle*.

**“Any time you start looking at any program, whether it’s ag, driver’s ed or home ec, people are going to be upset. We want Marion County High School to be a great place to learn, but we are limited. I can’t control Frankfort’s budget.”** Principal Taylora Schlosser to a group of parents and students about the school’s JROTC program, its declining participation and the school’s probable staffing reduction to meet its budget. From the *Lebanon Enterprise*.

Music for the masses

**“We’ve sold fruit at Christmas. We’re selling strawberries now. We do these things at school and the kids get bored. We wanted to do**



**something the kids would enjoy and maybe the people (in the community) would get something out of it, too.”** Boyd County High School Band Booster Secretary Leeann Kelley on the group’s unique fundraiser – a “practice-a-thon” by band members during which the student musicians played at various locations in a local shopping mall. From the *Ashland Daily Independent*.

**“Normally, 70 percent would not be a good percentage for us. We usually aim for 95 percent or higher. Some of our elementary schools had 90 percent or higher on Saturday, but considering it was a Saturday, overall student attendance was pretty good.”** Clay County Schools Superintendent Reecia Samples on the district’s first Saturday of classes, an option used to help make up some of the 26 days missed so far this school year due to flu and weather. From the *Manchester Enterprise*.

**“The funding will come out of our capital building project money. You can’t pay salaries with it. We have money sitting out there that we can’t use for anything other than construction. We just can’t sit on it. We have to move our high school forward and our community forward.”** Grant County Schools Superintendent Michael Hibbett on his board’s decision to use local funds to build a 34,000-square-foot, \$9.4-million career and technology center. From the Williamstown *Grant County News*.



**“These funds are a lifeline for a poor district. It’s making all the difference in the world for us. Without the USF (Universal Service Fund), we would be in worse shape than most people at home with our Internet access and with technology improvements in general. The new phone system will allow all calls within the district, even from West Knox to Dewitt, (to) be local calls, with everyone basically on an extension system. Basically, you look at it as if all our schools are in one big building, which has a phone system for that building. You just dial in an**

**extension to reach another party.”** Knox County Schools Technology Director Kevin Parsons on the impact of a \$3.1 million award from the USF, a program whereby telecommunications companies pay into a central fund to support expansion of phone and Internet services in rural areas. From the *Corbin Times-Tribune*.

**“I don’t think it’s a stand-in-a-circle ‘kumbaya’ way of dealing with criminal justice. It’s a way that allows the victim to be much more a part of what needs to happen. It’s almost harder when you have to face up to what you did and understand it.”** Jefferson District Judge Angela McCormick Bisig on her support for a pilot program involving the Jefferson County Public Schools and the court system based on a New Zealand program called “restorative justice,” a form of discipline that seeks to avoid removing problem students from regular classrooms and schools. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

**“I actually jumped when it erupted. I’d tell my friends that they definitely need to come to this. It’s totally awesome.”** Eleven-year-old Mackenzie Evans of Kuttawa reacting after Western Kentucky University geology and geography professor Margaret Crowder poured liquid nitrogen into a plastic bottle weighted down with two bricks and dropped the contraption into a trash can filled with water as part of a Girls In Science Day demonstration. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

**“People bully because most are insecure. In my opinion, about 75 percent of bullies bully because they have been bullied. Being bullied made me stronger.”** Michaela Montez, an eighth-grader at Scott Middle (Fort Knox) School, sharing her insights during an assembly to kick off an anti-bullying campaign at her school. From the Elizabethtown *News-Enterprise*. ☼

# Disclosing financial settlements

## POINT ...

**“The court has now made the law clear on this point, and public agencies around the state should take note of it. It doesn’t matter if a settlement amount is paid out of government funds or if it’s paid by a public agency’s insurance policy. In either case, it’s the public’s business.”**

Attorney Ashley Pack, who represented a Campbellsville newspaper in its successful appeal to the Kentucky Supreme Court for making public the details of a \$100,000 settlement in a former teacher’s lawsuits against the Campbellsville Independent and Taylor County school systems.

## COUNTERPOINT...

**“This decision is going to open the door to defense attorneys, in my opinion, earning a lot more money to defend cases rather than settle them. It’s just going to take longer for people to get these matters concluded.”** Attorney John F. Stewart, who represented the teacher in the case, and who called on legislators to exclude settlement agreements from the state’s Open Records law.

From the Campbellsville *Central Kentucky News-Journal*.

# FROM START TO FINISH



Photos provided by Paducah Independent Schools

## ‘Overachieving’ Paducah Independent shows how to raise graduation rate

By Mary Branham

**D**ebbie DeWeese looks forward to Chick-fil-A days. That’s because the assistant principal in charge of curriculum at Paducah Tilghman High School knows it means students have done something good.

DeWeese buys the Chick-fil-A lunches for the three students she mentors every three weeks if the kids have stayed out of trouble, their grades are good and they’re generally doing what they’re supposed to be doing in school.

That’s just part of the contract DeWeese has with the students she mentors. In fact, every employee at Paducah Tilghman mentors at-risk students at the school and short-term rewards are part of the deal.

“Kids, especially kids from an at-risk home, don’t have that sort of support system at home and long-term goals are difficult for them,” she said. “Short-term goals are things they can achieve.”

Those short-term goals eventually turn into long-term goals, which get the student and the school to the ultimate goal – a high school diploma for the student.

The need to figure out how to keep at-risk students engaged in school became more pressing during this year’s session of the General Assembly, when lawmakers attempted, unsuccessfully, to raise the dropout age to 18. That gave rise to fears that students forced to stay in school would become disruptive.

The successful strategies used by districts such as Paducah Independent could provide pointers in helping these students. The district was named by Diplomas Count 2009 as one of 33 “overachievers” nationwide for its higher-than-antici-



pated graduation rate, which jumped from 73.89 percent in 2004 to 85.64 percent in 2008. A truer indicator of success, DeWeese said, is the reduction in the dropout rate, from 6.5 percent in 2004 to 1.83 percent in 2008. That's because the graduation rate doesn't count the students who take more than the traditional four years to graduate, DeWeese said.

The mentoring program is just one reason for that success, DeWeese said.

"Personal relationships are key and that's the common thread that runs through everything we do," she said.

The high school started a credit recovery program about eight years ago to help those students who fall behind. DeWeese said students who fall behind often believe there's no way they can get caught up in order to graduate. But the credit recovery isn't during the summer – students can take classes during the day at the district's alternative school to make up credits they've missed.

Every month, according to Assistant Superintendent Vickie Maley, the Paducah Board of Education recognizes the accomplishments of anywhere from two to six students who have recovered enough credits to graduate.

Attendance also can play a big part in falling behind, and DeWeese said the high school has a program to try to get students who miss a lot of days back in school. A committee of administrators, the director of pupil personnel and a court-designated worker reviews each case individually to try to ascertain the problem and develop a solution.

That could mean home visits to talk with the parent and the student or touching base with a teacher who has a good relationship with the student, DeWeese said.

But while the problems might manifest in high school, they don't necessarily begin there, and the Paducah Independent school district has taken steps the last few years to address potential problems early, according to Maley.

The district has placed Head Start programs in all its elementary schools, so students are familiar with the schools and learning from the time they're 3, Maley said. A key, she said, is getting and keeping parents involved.

Every school has some sort of parent activity each month, and many schools strive to get parents involved before the school year begins.

"They're finding when they can make a contact with a parent or guardian at a time when it's more positive and to inform them of school expectations and programs, it starts the year better," Maley said.

Staff at the middle school even visited parents who missed the back-to-school night.

The district also strives to ensure students don't fall

behind in critical areas before they reach high school. It has used Title I funds to reduce the class size in elementary school, and Title II funds to reduce the size of reading and math classes in high school, Maley said. Students who need additional remediation in math or reading will get an additional class in that subject in high school or middle school, she said.

The high school also has a program called "Half Time," in which 30 minutes each day is focused on either remediation for students who need help or enrichment for those who don't, said Maley.

School board Chairwoman Danette Humphrey is always happy to see those students who graduate in mid year. She said board members try to show the students they are as proud of their achievements as the achievements of those who graduate on time.

"It's wonderful to see these kids graduating because there's not a whole lot you can do in life if you don't have a high school diploma," Humphrey said.

Humphrey said the district pumps nearly half a million dollars a year into its alternative school, which shows the commitment the board has to ensuring it reaches every student.

"We really feel like we can't leave anybody behind and sometimes you have to reach a little further and try a little harder with some kids," she said. ☞

— *Branham is a writer from Frankfort*



PEAK Award winner

# Barren County virtual high school creates alternative, rigorous learning option

By Brad Hughes  
Staff Writer

Samantha Edwards had what some would call the opportunity of a lifetime – the chance to travel the globe as a teenage model. But that would have made another goal that she and her parents had much more difficult – earning her high school degree.

Enter BAVEL, the Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning, Kentucky's first fully accredited, diploma-granting

high school with no walls but plenty of classrooms, demanding course expectations but with flexibility, and the opportunity for Samantha to learn by seeing the world ... while sitting at a computer.

"I will be the first to admit that I was skeptical when the subject of online schooling came up as an option for Samantha," said her father, Rick Edwards. "However, my attitude quickly adjusted after reviewing the course offerings and the challenging materials contained in them."

Already accepted with scholarship opportunities by three universities, Samantha, a Lyon County student, is one of the success stories that led judges to select the Barren County Schools' BAVEL program for the KSBA *PEAK* (*Public Education Achieves in Kentucky*) Award.

"Barren County has hit on a program that meets the needs of students who cannot attend the regular classroom," said Durward Narramore, a *PEAK* judge and Jenkins Independent school board member who sits on the KSBA Board of Directors.



Photo provided by the BAVEL program

Senior Grayson Certain, who is in his third year at the Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning, uses his laptop to attend school.

"Anyone who has ever taken an online class knows that it is a very rigorous environment and the student must devote a lot of time and attention to achieve success," he said.

Steve Wilson, a KSBA policy consultant who also served as a judge, said, "This program has the capacity to change lives, and that's what a good education should do."

### Alternative with quality

BAVEL was created five years ago with three goals: to provide an alternative environment for students unable to regularly attend traditional school; to challenge its students through its content; and to provide an interactive learning option for students who want to accelerate their education.

"It's the missing link we thought that could help us reach out to the kids we were losing," said Barren County Board of Education Chairman Robbie Toms. "It's another concept of how to get an education. And it helps with our homebound program as well."

In fact, after starting with 10 local students, the

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*"It's the missing link we thought that could help us reach out to the kids we were losing. It's another concept of how to get an education. And it helps with our homebound program as well."*

— Barren County Board of Education Chairman Robbie Toms

2009-10 BAVEL enrollment has 82 students from 16 districts. To date, students who live in 32 Kentucky districts have studied through BAVEL, with their expenses primarily funded through nonresident student agreements between their home districts and the Barren County system. The district funds the single position of BAVEL director Amanda Wright, who works directly with the students as admissions manager, counselor and mentor. The remaining average daily attendance funding Barren County receives covers the daily operational costs, including course fees to the Kentucky Virtual High School.

That's how KVHS instructor Dr. Lucinda Sanders came in contact with BAVEL.

"Although BAVEL began by connecting the power of online learning to homebound students, over the years they have expanded their vision to include at-risk students from all around the state," Sanders wrote in support of the BAVEL nomination for the *PEAK* Award.

"My BAVEL students are an interesting and diverse lot (including) a gifted musician from Louisville who simply could not manage the routines at his high school and a rider on the moto-cross circuit who didn't have time for the traditional high school approach," she said. "All were highly motivated and hard working. However, most BAVEL students fall into the category of future dropouts. BAVEL is truly the last resort for most of them."

*PEAK* Award judges were impressed with BAVEL's results. In its first five years, more than 300 students have either completed their studies through BAVEL or successfully transitioned back to their home high schools. Fifty-two have earned a Barren County degree through BAVEL, with 27 of them going on to college.

"This innovative program provides opportunities within a giant educational system that sometimes finds flexibility to be out of reach," said Grant County Superintendent Michael Hibbett, another judge.

Jeff Eaton, a *PEAK* judge from the neighboring Allen County Board of Education, can see why other school systems have taken advantage of BAVEL as an option for potential dropouts.

"With the availability of broadband Internet services, it's a program more districts should utilize," Eaton said.

Eaton's sentiments were echoed by Sanders.

"BAVEL has harnessed the power of online instruction and found that it engages students with learning styles who were

not easily engaged in a classical classroom situation," she said. "Their program has literally redefined the learning environment in such a way that the individual learner is the central concern and learning is facilitated."

This is the second time the Barren County Schools have won a *PEAK* Award, earning recognition in 1998 for its middle school Junior Guard collaboration with the Kentucky National Guard. A different program within a winning school district may be considered for the *PEAK* Award after 10

years. This is only the second time a district has won multiple *PEAK* Award honors.

The *PEAK* Award was established in 1997 to focus statewide attention on outstanding public school efforts aimed specifically at enhancing student learning skills and, in doing so, to promote the positive impact of public elementary and secondary education in this Commonwealth. ❧

— For more information about the *PEAK* Award, go to [www.ksba.org/peak](http://www.ksba.org/peak).

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**R S A**

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**SIPC** **FINRA**

# Energy efficiency is the mo

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

When it came time to build a new high school, Shelby County school leaders knew exactly what they wanted: a green and healthy school that is good for students, the environment and the district's pocket-book.

That decision was the one that drove all others and kept project leaders focused on the end result: a potential Energy Star school when Martha Layne Collins High School opens its doors this August.

Members from the Shelby County building team shared the process for building an Energy Star school as a part of the High-Performance Sustainable Schools workshop in Lexington sponsored by the Kentucky Department for Energy

Development and Independence and the Kentucky NEED Project.

"In Shelby County we have four words we live by: high expectations, positive relationships,"

said Assistant



Top left: A rendering of Martha Layne Collins High School, one of Shelby County Schools' latest green and healthy buildings.

Left: One of the sessions of the High-Performance Sustainable Schools workshop. From left to right: Mike Smith, architect with Sorrell, engineer with BCC, and Cory Sharard, who is used in planning and building the new building which opens this fall.

Right: Cory Sharard, near left, explains how Southern Electric is converting its old gymnasium into the new building. The mechanical systems the school added on to the building are part of the High-Performance Sustainable Schools workshop. The new building features energy-efficient features.

## Green Resources

Educators attending the two-day High-Performance Sustainable Schools workshop came away with a list of free resources to help their schools become more energy efficient and healthy.

### Kentucky NEED

Kentucky NEED is the state affiliate of the National Energy Education Development (NEED) Project, a nonprofit education association dedicated since 1980 to equipping students and teachers with a realistic understanding of the scientific, economic and envi-

ronmental impacts of energy. Kentucky NEED takes a holistic approach to energy, providing core content-aligned curriculum for students, professional development for teachers and energy management programs for school operations and maintenance staff.

Kentucky NEED provides energy education training and curriculum materials to schools throughout the Commonwealth. Programs include: K-12 energy education materials that have been correlated to the Kentucky Core Content standards; professional development workshops for teachers; energy management programs for schools; and workshops for school operations and management staff.

— For more information, go to [www.need.org/states/kentucky](http://www.need.org/states/kentucky)

# Portar of school's foundation

Superintendent Kerry Whitehouse. "We took that concept and put it toward our RFP. Immediately, the board and superintendent asked, 'What expectations do we have for the architect and engineering firms that we're bringing on for this high school?' We immediately came to green and healthy schools."

Whitehouse said the idea had been planted in part by students who had made presentations to the board asking for greener schools with more efficient technology.

When the board awarded the contracts, Whitehouse said the architectural and engineering firms knew the expectations.

"I told them every time they bring a concept to me, every time you ask me

if this is what we want," he said, "I'm going to ask you the following questions: Does it meet or is it within Kentucky Green and Healthy (standards)? Does it meet or is it within Energy Star? Are we within the set budget? Is it sustainable and easy to maintain without adding to the overall future costs? And does it provide learning opportunities for stu-

See "High performance" on Page 15

Martha Layne Collins High School, which leaders planned from day one to a be ng.

During the two-day High-Performance shop in Lexington was about building left, Ken Whitehouse, assistant superintendent; Doug Voss, project manager; Sherman Carter Barnhart; and Tom KTA Inc., describe the process they building Martha Layne Collins High School,

left, with KTA, Inc. engineering firm, elementary school in Scott County turned the perfect space to house the new school added when it renovated and . Participants in the High-Performance shop toured the school to see the the district was able to add to an exist-



## KEEPS

Kentucky Energy Efficiency Program for Schools - helps Kentucky school districts reduce energy consumption and lower operating expenses. It is administered by the Kentucky Pollution Prevention Center at the University of Louisville J.B. Speed School of Engineering.

KEEPS offers a package of tools, training, coaching and expertise to assist participants in developing a systems approach to energy management. KEEPS services include: web-based resources; regional network coordination; outreach and training; tracking and reporting; recognition program.

— For more information, go [www.louisville.edu/kppc/keeps](http://www.louisville.edu/kppc/keeps)

## Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools

The KGHS program is a statewide, Web-based, and student-centered program that empowers students and staff to help their school become safer, healthier, and more environmentally sustainable.

It helps close the achievement gap while using the environment as an integrated learning context. A team of students, teachers and school administrators works together to improve the school facilities in nine different categories. Students help the school save energy, decrease absenteeism, increase student test scores, and create a more sustainable learning environment.

—For more information, go to [www.greenschools.ky.gov](http://www.greenschools.ky.gov)

# All in favor of energy efficiency

North Magoffin Elementary wins Energy Star certification



Students at North Magoffin Elementary School answer questions from Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear (off camera) about energy efficiency. Beshear was at the school to celebrate its certification as an Energy Star building.

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

**M**aking energy efficiency a priority was never in doubt when Magoffin County began the process of building two new elementary schools.

“With the price of electricity and heating and cooling skyrocketing, we thought it would be a benefit to the community,” said school board Chairman John Montgomery.

What they might not have anticipated was one of those schools — North Magoffin Elementary — becoming the state’s 52nd Energy Star certified public school and the first in eastern Kentucky. And it wasn’t even that difficult.

“It just takes the desire and a good architect,” Montgomery said.

The architect, engineer, construction manager and other members of the team were on hand for a celebration last month with Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear to honor the school’s Energy Star certification. Beshear encouraged students to continue the work started by

## Energy Star Certification

To earn an Energy Star, a building must receive at least 75 out of 100 points in the EPA’s national energy performance-rating system, which places these facilities in the top 25 percent of all comparable buildings. A building must also operate for at least one year in order to submit that year’s energy-use data to the EPA.

North Magoffin scored a 75 out of 100 points and was able to demonstrate an annual energy savings of more than \$15,000.

their school district by recycling, turning off lights and other energy-consuming devices when not in use.

“The people who made the decision to build an energy efficient school really care about you,” she said. “They care about your health, they care about your safety and they care about the entire environment that you’re learning in. Your school has installed energy-efficient equipment and put in place ways to conserve energy use. What that does is that in the long run, it reduces the impact your school makes on the environment around you.”

Students have already noticed that their school is cleaner and healthier.

“Our older students remember the old coal-fired furnace (at their last school) and coming in in the mornings and having their desktops coated with coal dust,” said Principal Jill Howard.

North Magoffin and its sister school South Magoffin Elementary opened in 2008, replacing five dated school buildings.

“We got hit with coal dust sometimes when we played outside,” said sixth-grader Curtis Yates, who could see the smoke coming from the furnace of his old school.

Sixth-grader Lora Leigh Barnett said her old elementary school was small and noisy, with window air conditioning units always humming in the background.

“This school is quiet,” she said.

Alyssa Patrick said it’s nice to be in a school where the cafeteria and gym don’t have to share the same space. She also likes the modern amenities. “The old school had light switches,” she said. “We have buttons now and the lights go on and off automatically.”

The students also enjoy the bright, airy classrooms and hallways that bring in a lot of natural light, as well as its energy efficiency.

“We’re learning about recycling, water, energy, natural resources, how we have to save these things or it’s our loss if we don’t,” Barnett said.

The Magoffin County building stands alone in eastern Kentucky with its Energy Star rating – the other closest schools with that distinction are in Corbin Independent and Laurel County.

Lee Colten, assistant director of the Division of Efficiency and Conservation within the Department for Energy Devel-

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## Energy saving features:

- Lights are on timers that turn off at 6 p.m.
- Restrooms, offices and resource rooms are all equipped with motion-sensor lights.
- Water in the restrooms is activated by motion sensors.
- Outside lights are solar powered and operate on timers.
- Classrooms and hallways maximize natural daylight.
- Operating systems and equipment are energy efficient.

opment and Independence, said his agency would like to see more school buildings in both eastern Kentucky and western Kentucky get Energy Star ratings. The bulk of those buildings are now concentrated in the so-called “golden triangle.”

It’s up to the engineering firm for the project to pursue an Energy Star rating, or to the local district to raise the issue with the engineering firm, Colten said. The district will see a savings whether or not it has the official rating, he noted, which may remove some of the incentive for districts to seek the rating since they’re already seeing the tangible benefit.

However, Colten said the Energy Star raises the visibility of energy savings, which can translate into future energy-efficient school projects.

“What we try to do is plant the seed in their awareness that, ‘OK, you can do that in other schools,’” he said. ☞

– For more information about the federal Energy Star program, go to [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

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## High performance

Continued from Page 13

dents within Shelby County?”

Architect Mike Smith with Sherman Carter Barnhart said this approach was a success.

“The design team met with community members, staff,” he said. “It was an integrated design approach from the very start. We had some community forums where we facilitated brainstorming sessions and some meetings with staff to discuss in greater detail their needs.”

The 225,000-square-foot school was also well within the district’s financial capability.

“The building was \$155 per square foot,” Smith said. “Mark Ryles (director of the Facilities Management at the Kentucky Department of Education) tells us to budget \$185 to \$200 per square foot, so we’re well under that. So when you ask the question: ‘Does it cost more to be a high-performance Energy Star school,’ the answer is, ‘No.’”

Tom Sorrell, an engineer with BCCLT Inc., said his company ran multiple computer models on nearly every detail before the first brick was ever laid, allowing engineers to optimize “the green and healthy” in every decision, from the building’s directional orientation to maximize daylighting options to the size of both classroom windows and the mechanical systems.

“We design this on paper first and the models were the greatest payback for making these determinations,” he said.

Sorrell said the focus on being energy efficient and green and healthy will continue for the life of the building.

“That focus continues on after the school is built because we have energy management and verification,” he said.

“There is a kiosk that students can go to and see how much energy the school is using or producing at any given time. This also is available through web access, so teachers can bring this into the classroom. The energy utility (the company participated in the integrated approach) was instrumental in adding to that, as well.”

The next step in the process of building an Energy Star school is making sure it is Energy Star compliant.

“You have to follow their check list to get the designation,” Sorrell said. “One thing is ensuring that the building went up the way it was designed and operates the way it was designed to. So there’s measurement and verification. One of the features of the school building is that all of the meters for measurement and verification were built into the base project. So if the students, third parties, administration want to see the usage of this building, they can take the meter readings that were built right in.” ☞

# NO MONEY, NOT MUCH PROGRESS

## THE 2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

The will-they, won't-they drama over whether the General Assembly would pass a new biennial budget dominated much of the 2010 session, but a few key pieces of education-related legislation were produced.

Among them were several laws considered key to improving Kentucky's chances of winning a federal Race to the Top grant and other federal funding, but that also are important on their own, said, KSBA's Governmental Relations Director David Baird.

House Bill 176, quickly approved during the first two weeks of the session, creates the state's definition of a persistently low-achieving school, and provides "a systematic approach" for assisting them using the four intervention models outlined by the U.S. Department of Education, said Shannon Pratt Stiglitz, KSBA's associate director of governmental relations.

"It was pretty remarkable" that HB 176 was introduced and passed during the second week of the session," Baird said. "There was great collaboration and it passed unanimously in both chambers."

Because the bill carried an emergency clause, the state education department already is working with the identified districts, Stiglitz said.

Another bill to enhance RTTT competitiveness was SB 163, aimed at improving adolescent reading skills. It calls for the state education department and a state literacy center to help teachers at those grade levels with reading strategies. A third bill, SB 180, would pave the way for alternative certification for Teach for America participants if Kentucky receives RTTT funding.

Overall, the 2010 session was "long and frustrating," said Baird, who also is KSBA's associate executive director. "It's difficult to have a legislative session when there is essentially no new money. It puts everyone on edge to come up with a budget in this atmosphere."

And, indeed, lawmakers adjourned without a budget, with the probability that the governor will call a special session later this spring.

### What else made it

Like HB 176, legislation shoring up the health benefits portion of the Kentucky Teachers Retirement System (HB 540) had general support, and thus, general smooth sailing.

"I think it was a situation where all of the education groups were on the same side with the Kentucky Teachers Retirement System and because no education group opposed it, then legislators felt comfortable in moving it forward," Baird said.

Among the other education-related bills that passed is one that affects the way school boards carry out one of their key duties: evaluation of the superintendent. Senate Bill 178 requires boards to conduct initial discussions in a superintendent's evaluation in private, if their policy calls for preliminary discussions. If board policy calls for a written evaluation, that must be made part of the public record. Discussion of the summative evaluation also must take place in public. Because the board's policy plays an important role in setting the parameters for the process, it should be consistent over time, Baird said.

"It doesn't matter who the superintendent is, they should stay with the policy," he said.

While school construction projects held up the budget process, other bills related to school construction sailed through. Senate Bill 132 will change the way the state evaluates and categorizes the condition of school buildings — a significant step because it generally is the basis for funding renovation or new construction. It requires the state education department, whose staff currently does the evaluations, to use a third-party evaluator, utilizing software to assist in the assessment. The process will be more objective and standardized, Stiglitz said.

"The hope is it will present a more accurate picture of the current state of school facilities in Kentucky for the purpose of making decisions around school construction," she said.

In addition, the bill also encourages construction of energy-efficient schools by establishing a trust fund — empty at this point — for green school design.

Also signed into law by the governor was Senate Bill 65, which requires middle and high school certified personnel to receive a minimum of two hours annually of suicide prevention training. This can be delivered through professional development or self-study, with the option of classified personnel participating. Materials, which also must be provided to students, are expected to come from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and nonprofits.

The General Assembly also signed off on a reorganization of the Kentucky Department of Education. ❧



# The also-rans

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Report

The most high-profile legislation to fail to cross the finish line in the 2010 session was House Bill 109, which contained provisions authorizing charter schools in Kentucky. Education Commissioner Terry Holliday and the state school board made a late-in-the-day push for its passage to enhance the state's second shot at a federal Race to the Top grant. Holliday is expected to ask the governor to add charter schools to his call for a special session.

KSBA had not taken a position on the bill, but did express concerns about some of its provisions.

"Because the issue is likely to be resurrected during the expected special session to deal with the budget, school board members may want to familiarize themselves with HB 109 and also the issues surrounding charter schools in general," KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott said.

HB 109 was an omnibus education bill, so when it failed, not only charter schools failed, but so did provisions dealing with Response to Intervention, early graduation and summer learning camps.

Meanwhile, it wasn't hard for KSBA's governmental relations team to rattle off their biggest disappointments of this session, starting with legislation that would have given the superintendent the authority to recommend three candidates for principal to school councils, which then would make their choice from that list.

"Without a shadow of a doubt we were extremely disappointed that we did not get the passage of the principal hiring bill," said KSBA's Associate Governmental Relations Director Shannon Stiglitz. "We feel strongly that we're asking more and more of the superintendents to be the academic leaders and if they don't have the ability to hire their academic

managers then we can't as school boards hold them accountable for academic performance," she said.

It's not an issue in all districts, said Governmental Relations Director David Baird, but where it is an issue, "it's a severe problem and when there's a conflict, it can escalate very quickly into a situation where no one wins and the best applicants may not even get consideration."

Another letdown, Baird said, is the failure of a HB 597, which would have addressed several concerns districts have about the school calendar, encompassing the making up of days and hours and provisions for restructuring professional development. The 3KT group (KSBA, the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents and the Kentucky Association of School Administrators) backed the bill, but the Kentucky Education Association raised some concerns and it never got a hearing in the House Education Committee.

"We will work closely with the department of education and with teachers to come up with legislation that will create a solution for local districts in the coming years," Stiglitz said.

Another school calendar bill bottlenecked in conference committee at the tail end of the session and fell by the

wayside. HB 487 would have provided relief for only this year for districts that missed more than 20 days of school due to inclement weather and the flu. It would have allowed those districts to request up to 10 disaster days and to count instructional time over six hours as makeup time.

The bill (HB 301) that would have raised the dropout age to 18 appeared to have legs until it was halted in the Senate, where some members worried about the cost of keeping at-risk students in school. KSBA favored the bill, with added language providing funding for alternative schools.

It wasn't the first time the legislature had considered this issue, but Baird noted, this time the new age limit would have been phased in, "making the bill more appealing than in the past" by giving local districts and students time to prepare.

Four other bills "that we thought were critical" relating to teacher effectiveness also stalled, Baird said. They would have provided teachers with more opportunities for being evaluated and given districts the ability to use student academic performance in those evaluations.

"That's been a hot topic –not just for Kentucky but for the rest of the country," Baird said. ☞

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*"We feel strongly that we're asking more and more of the superintendents to be the academic leaders and if they don't have the ability to hire their academic managers then we can't as school boards hold them accountable for academic performance."*

— KSBA Associate Governmental Relations Director Shannon Stiglitz, naming the failure to pass legislation to give superintendents greater authority in hiring principals one of the session's biggest disappointments.

# WELL-TRAINED

## Board members express confidence in preparation for job

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

Seventy-five percent of school board members who responded to a survey by the Office of Education Accountability say their training, most of which is provided by KSBA, has helped them carry out their duties.

The board members were surveyed last year as part of an OEA report to the legislature on school district leadership. Four groups were contacted: board members, superintendents, principals and school council members.

Board members responding to the survey said, not surprisingly, that mandated training is the most useful resource for helping them carry out their duties. Just 22 percent said they had training needs that weren't being met.

Seventy-two percent of respondents said they participate in the Academy of Studies, KSBA's curriculum for board members, while of those who haven't, 43 percent said they will in the future.

The report quotes one school board member as writing in his response: "The training I have received has been invaluable in making me a better school board member."

The OEA report called KSBA's Academy of Studies for school board members "comprehensive."

"The Academy of Studies exposes board members to a series of courses that range from the basics of the position to more advanced courses on school finance and risk management."

Kerri Schelling, KSBA's director of Board Team Development, said she's gratified that the Academy of Studies is referenced throughout the report on the survey.

"Our school board members deserve the very best professional development we can offer and I am incredibly proud that we have

created a program worthy of such recognition," she said.

### The breakdown

The survey showed that respondents feel least prepared to perform duties relating to developing curriculum, analyzing and interpreting test data and addressing student achievement gaps. Superintendents surveyed agreed with that assessment.

In contrast, school council members reported feeling least prepared to select textbooks and instructional materials, plan professional development and determine staffing levels.

Board members responding to the survey pointed to several areas where they feel best prepared by their training: school finance, superintendent selection/evaluation, school safety, media/community relations and conducting board meetings.

The survey results and report show KSBA is on the right track with its board training initiatives, Schelling said. "We will continue to create high-quality, timely and comprehensive workshops to bring our newest members up to speed quickly and keep our veteran members challenged and engaged," she said.

Kentucky is one of only 14 states that require training for both new and experienced board members. The number of training hours is similar to what is required in those other states, the OEA report said.

Overall, the survey showed, with a handful of exceptions, that all levels of leadership are fulfilling their statutory annual training requirements and none of the groups finds the training requirements to be excessive. OEA's analysis also found no link between perceived preparedness to perform leadership duties and school-level academic performance. Forty-four percent of the state's board members responded to the survey. ❧

### How well prepared are school board members?

Has annual training prepared you for your duties?\*

*Developing curriculum standards*  
(88%\*) 64% agree or strongly agree

*Assessment data analysis/interpretation*  
(89 %) 65% agree or strongly agree

*District and school improvement plans*  
(90%) 67% agree or strongly agree

*Addressing achievement gaps*  
(89%) 69% agree or strongly agree

*School facilities management*  
(91%) 72% agree or strongly agree

*Roles of each leadership group*  
(92%) 74% agree or strongly agree

*School budgeting*  
(92%) 76% agree or strongly agree

*Student assessment*  
(94%) 77% agree or strongly agree

*Risk management/liability*  
(94%) 77% agree or strongly agree

*Leadership strategies*  
(92%) 79% agree or strongly agree

*School finance*  
(95%) 80% agree or strongly agree

*Superintendent hiring/evaluation*  
(92%) 81% agree or strongly agree

*School safety*  
(95%) 83% agree or strongly agree

*Media/community relations*  
(92%) 84% agree or strongly agree

*Conducting board meetings*  
(93%) 84% agree or strongly agree

\*Number in parentheses is percentage of board members who took courses in those subjects.

# WINDY CITY LEADERSHIP

More than 270 Kentucky school board members and superintendents attended the 2010 NSBA Annual Conference in Chicago last month, and watched as a Kentuckian made history. Boone County school board member Ed Massey was elected as NSBA's secretary/treasurer, putting him in line for the association's president elect post in 2011 and the office of president in 2012. Massey, KSBA's immediate past president, has been serving on the 25-member NSBA Board of Directors as Central Region director.



Below: Massey, right, speaks during the NSBA Delegate Assembly. To his left is outgoing NSBA President C. H. 'Sonny' Savoie of Paradis, La.

Bottom left: Ann Porter, a member of the Mason County Schools and KSBA boards, accepts the 2010 Magna Award on behalf of her district from NSBA Deputy Executive Director Joe Villani, left, and a Sodexo official. The Magna Award, sponsored by NSBA, the *American School Board Journal*, and Sodexo School Services, honors school board best practices and innovative programs that advance student learning. Mason County received the grand prize in its enrollment category for its Home Visit Initiative, which has improved attendance, decreased discipline problems and substantially increased volunteer hours.

Below: From right to left, KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott, KSBA President Elect and Lincoln County board member Tom Blankenship and KSBA President and Whitley County board member Delmar Mahan attend the Delegate Assembly.



# Superintendent Tom Shelton

on the difficulties and possible solutions to  
the district budgeting process

*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 Daviess County Schools Superintendent, and a former finance director, Tom Shelton, who discusses the impact years of budget cuts have had on districts, tying their hands in nearly every financial decision. The conversation took place before the General Assembly ended its session without a state budget.*



**Q.** Districts have been grappling with budget cuts for a number of years, but the process for creating a school budget seems to be becoming more and more difficult for administrators. Why is that?

**A.** P-12 education has been declining as a percentage of the state's General Fund budget since the mid-'90s. There was a real increase in the early days of KERA and we had some increases in funding that really, really helped schools make some very substantial progress up through the '90s. But that has waned substantially, all through the late '90s and through the 2000s and we've only had one year where we had any increase of any significance.

That has created difficulties for districts in dealing with things such as unfunded or partially funded mandates. For example: raises that are not fully funded but are mandated; additional costs passed onto us such as software for Infinite Campus; having to fund increased matches for retirement for support staff employees.

Pupil transportation is a substantial cost that is supposed to be fully reimbursed by the state but it is now only about two-thirds funded. In my district, that's a \$7 million annual cost that is only two-thirds funded, which means about \$2 million in additional costs that we have to bear locally.

Another area of specific cuts that have been made is to grant programs, including professional development, textbooks, safe schools, and extended school services. Those programs have taken 60-70 percent cuts; textbooks have taken almost a 100 percent cut and yet, none of the requirements for those programs has been relaxed.

In other words, it's one thing to say you're going to cut funding for a program, but if you don't cut the requirements for the program, the cuts must be absorbed by the general fund.

So most of us are having to spend substantial general fund dollars to fund grant programs that should be funded separately as KERA strands or through the state budget as a separate budget item.

When you combine this with the partially funded/unfunded

mandates, and the cuts that we have taken, most school districts are in a very tight or precarious financial situation.

**Q.** So where are districts now?

**A.** We're looking at cuts to SEEK – which is our basic funding formula. That's a real tough thing to swallow. I like to describe it this way: we have a requirement by statute to allocate funds to cover certified and support staff, school supplies, other costs to school-based councils. Most school districts have 75-85 percent of their total budget funds allocated to those council funds by law. Then you think about those costs of maintenance for buildings, grounds, facilities; then you take the cost of transportation. Most districts will have on average 6-8 percent of their funds left that are truly discretionary to cut from.

When you have something like the Senate budget that proposes a 1.5 percent cut in funding, there's only one place you can take that from and that's out of that discretionary area and that's already pretty well been cut to the bone with other cuts or having to cover the costs of partially funded/unfunded mandates.

So there's a real misnomer out there that education has been held harmless: we really haven't been. We've been tightening our belts for 15 years. My stance is that there is no more room to tighten and we're now at the point of cutting substantial programs and resources from kids, which is going to have a lasting effect and harm the education of our kids and our future.

Education must be funded adequately to protect our investment in the future of our state. They are looking at education as a cost rather than as an investment. The reality of it is, we all know if we want true economic development and true growth, and prosperity in our state, then education is the key driver to all of that.

They really have us at a crossroads right now because if they don't find some way to fund us adequately through this next

budget cycle, I think they are going to do lasting harm to the future of education in this state. That's a real travesty that I think we have to hold our legislators accountable to.

**Q. Are there any solutions out there for school districts, changes that can help mitigate some of these circumstances?**

**A.** We've been strong advocates – and they picked up on this in the House budget, the Senate did not – to allow us flexibility during times like this so that with funds that are normally restricted – construction, specific grants and other needs – that we should be given the flexibility in difficult times to use those funds where needed in order to try to offset some of these cuts and less-than-adequate funding.

For example, in my district we can postpone some construction projects that we had planned for a year or two. By postponing those, we use those funds that were set aside for the first year or two of debt service to offset part of the costs for these additional unfunded mandates or managing these cuts that we're taking.

**Q. What are some other solutions for making it easier for school districts to budget?**

**A.** Flexibility could be added in how to build a school calendar toward the equivalent of 177, six-hour instructional days instead of requiring instructional days that are not funded. Another example is Senate Bill 1, which is a wonderful piece of legislation that will hopefully drive us toward that next level of education reform in Kentucky, align us with other secondary institutions and create new common core standards that we'll be using for kids to work toward. But it's not funded. And since we didn't get (federal) Race to the Top funds and unless we get it in round two, there's no money to implement Senate Bill 1.

One of the things they could do to make things easier on school districts right now is relax the time requirements and constraints on Senate Bill 1. We can't ask teachers to come in and put in all this extra time doing what we call "unpacking the standards," with districts providing all of the professional development they need to be able to teach these new standards, and have teachers work with KDE to develop a new assessment program, when there's no money to do any of those things.

Ultimately, decisions need to be made at the local level with adequate funding and resources coming from the state. It is difficult to understand how someone from a state level can make decisions of how and where to cut from a budget at a district level. Local decisions and local flexibility are the keys.

**Q. You are president of the Council for Better Education, the group that brought the KERA lawsuit. Where does your group stand on these current budget issues?**

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*"Education must be funded adequately to protect our investment in the future of our state. They are looking at education as a cost rather than as an investment. The reality of it is, we all know if we want true economic development and true growth, and prosperity in our state, then education is the key driver to all of that."*

— Tom Shelton, Daviess County Schools superintendent

**A.** We recently completed a five-year analysis by consultant Susan Weston that can be found at [www.kycbe.com](http://www.kycbe.com) to see how much of the cost of education is being shifted away from the state to local communities. We have a district-by-district analysis as well as a statewide analysis. We show the percentage of the cost of education that was funded by the state legislature in the state budget as compared to locally generated property tax dollars, and what you'll see is a continual shift away from state funding to the local taxpayers

In my district we had made some tax increases over time, which I think is necessary because the local community needs to do its part. But we've had to take much more dramatic increases over the past few years because of the inadequate state funding. This story must be shared across our state to all constituency groups.

**Q. Now that the CBE has released the results of this analysis, are there any actions the group is considering taking?**

**A.** I mentioned before there was one year where we saw any kind of increase in state funding in the past 10-15 years. That year happened to be the year we re-enacted the lawsuit. It is our belief that the only reason the legislature provided any additional funds that year is because they were under threat of our lawsuit.

Some people have wondered if it is time to reconvene the lawsuit. The judge left the door open last time, saying that although there had been adequate enough progress to that point that we couldn't claim that funding had been a hindrance to us, but it could clearly become an issue in the future. I believe that future is now and the issue is clear. With this study and other data that we have, even though Kentucky schools have made progress, that progress is being hampered by the funding issue.

We will also be educating all of our advocates and constituencies to help engage them in the efforts of bringing this to the attention of Joe Q. Public and the legislature. For example, if you got everyone who is involved directly in education, you're talking about 90,000 or more people. We then need to add all of the parents, PTAs, and others to these groups that may not agree on everything, but the one thing they do agree on is adequate funding. If we can engage all of those groups, hopefully, we can get the General Assembly to do what the state constitution requires them to do, and adequately fund education. ☘

# A fantasy forum with very real-world school concerns

With the May primary election looming, groups are hosting debates for candidates seeking General Assembly seats. Incumbents and challengers will review the 2010 session and then pledge what they will achieve if sent, or sent back, to Frankfort.

No one could attend all of those forums, but it's not hard to imagine the exchanges, the questions, the explanations and promises that might be given voice.

It's really not hard to imagine...

**Education first, last and always - maybe**

Moderator: "Good evening, folks, and thank you for coming out to hear our legislative candidates talk about education, funding and the General Assembly. We'll begin by letting our three candidates make opening statements, and then we'll invite your questions. Our incumbent will get us started, please."

Eddy Insider, incumbent: "Well, we just ended the toughest budget-writing session ever, and even though we didn't pass a budget, we fully intend to provide the very best funding possible for our schools."

Wanda Wannabe, challenger: "How can you say that? The art program at my daughter's elementary school is being dropped next year. And we've been told to expect as many as five more kids in classes this fall because the school is cutting staff."

Barry Billpayer, challenger: "Yeah. You called yourself 'the education candidate' when you ran last time. What happened, huh?"

Eddy: "You just don't understand. Revenues aren't there. We fought for every dime for schools. Other services are on the chopping block, too, even more than education. The truth is we want to protect schools. And remember, I didn't cut that art program. The school board and superintendent did."

Moderator: Candidates, please allow us to get through the opening statements. Ms. Wannabe?

Wanda: "I just want to say that if you elect me, I'll improve our schools without raising your taxes, unlike Mr. Insider."

Eddy: "Hey, we didn't do anything to raise taxes this year."

Barry: "Oh, come off it. The school board just adopted next year's budget, taking a full 4 percent increase in tax revenue - for the first time - because of the funding cuts you made."

Eddy: "There you go again. The school board is raising the taxes, not me. I want to make sure the state lives within its means and tightens its belt. That's what the voters said they wanted me to do."

Moderator: Really, please. Mr. Billpayer, your turn.

Barry: "When I go to Frankfort, I'm going to cut the wasteful spending that's keeping the needed money out of our classrooms. I'm going to get a study of all school expenses so we can see what's important."

Wanda: "Aren't you the guy who at the last forum said that



Brad Hughes  
KSBA Member  
Support Services Director

our school budget has been cut five of the past seven years? What kind of wasteful spending are you talking about, anyway?

Barry: "Well, for starters, I'd stop replacing all those perfectly good blackboards with those new whiteboards. Blackboards were plenty good to teach me, and I got a good education."

Eddy: "Now that's just wrong. I tried to get a special line item in the budget bill to purchase those whiteboards. Our kids need that advantage if they're going to compete with those kids in China and India. Technology is the key."

Wanda: "Yeah, but the old wiring in my daughter's school makes the computers run so slow that the kids think Tubby is still coaching the Cats."

**School daze**

Moderator: All right, all right. I think it's time we take a question from the audience. Yes, ma'am?

Mindy Mom: "Where does each of you stand on adding more days to the school year?"

Wanda: "I'm in favor of adding more days because our kids deserve another full week. Of course, we just have to make sure that we protect the spring and fall breaks for educational trips with their families."

Eddy: "I sponsored a bill to keep the calendar as is. It was those other legislators who wanted to cut the school year. Not me."

Barry: "Adding days shouldn't cost more money. I mean, they have the buses, the schools are lighted and the teachers get paid for those training days, so they shouldn't complain about teaching a few more days. Besides, we can save by having the superintendent, principals and other administrators take a few days off. Teachers can run the schools for a few days each year, right?"

Moderator: "OK, let's wrap up with closing statements. Mr. Billpayer?"

Barry: "A vote for me is a vote for new schools, new textbooks and a new football stadium."

Wanda: "Send me to Frankfort and I'll make sure that physical education is required for every child every day. There's plenty of time in the school day. We'll just trim a little here and there."

Eddy: "I respect my opponents but they just don't understand. It's all about the money. I bring it back for our kids. Sure, there'll probably be a little less this year, but remember, I didn't raise your taxes."

**The Last Word**

Of course, this column is a fantasy, related only remotely to quotes reported by Kentucky's mainstream media.

We all know such statements would never be made by serious candidates for the legislature. Right?

How we answer that question makes this a message worth getting out. ☘

A person's head and shoulders are shown from behind, with their hair and the top of their dark suit jacket visible. The text is overlaid on this image.

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# Gearing up for Senate Bill 1 reforms

More than 400 educators (pictured below) put their heads together in Louisville last month during the Department of Education's Unbridled Learning Summit, an event to launch full-scale implementation of Senate Bill 1, the 2009 legislation that mandates new common core academic standards, a new assessment system, improved teacher training and greater collaboration between the K-12 and higher education systems.

Right: Education Professional Standards Board Executive Director Dr. Phillip Rogers (left) and Kentucky Board of Education Vice chairman C. B. Akins catch up just prior to Gov. Steve Beshear's address to the meeting. Beshear called Senate Bill 1 "not a one-time reform but a living, breathing process."

Below right: Lewis County Schools Instructional Supervisor Diane Johnson presented during two breakout sessions on district perspectives on the new academic standards and on using networks of English/language arts, math and science teachers to develop training for using the standards in the classroom.

