

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ March 2011



Reaching for the stars

New academic standards:
Is your district ready for rigor?

Training teachers
Communicating with parents
The board's role

MEASURING TEACHER SATISFACTION



**KSBA's 4th Annual
Federal & State Law Update:
Impact on Your School District**

Marriott Griffin Gate Resort

May 13, 2011

Join us for this timely update of federal and state legal changes that will affect school district management next school year. We will inform you of critical new legal requirements, including the new Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act regulations, cyberbullying issues, the 2011 Kentucky legislative session and local board implications of the information presented. We also will cover practical implementation aspects of new case law and agency opinions.

It is vital that your school district staff become aware of the recent changes to federal and state law that will be discussed during this conference.

For additional information or to register,
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"Federal & State Law Update: Impact on Your School District"
under Featured Events at the top of the page.



FEATURES

READY FOR RIGOR

In school districts and educator networks across the state, the behind-the-scenes work should be under way in advance of teaching new math and English/language arts standards in the fall – and assessing those subjects in the spring. The *Kentucky School Advocate* looks at where the state stands in the launch process.

IN MANY DISTRICTS, teachers at the school level are breaking down the standards and figuring out how to teach them. But exactly how far along they are varies from district to district, which has some educators worried ... Page 8

THE VARIANCE AMONG districts in teacher training for the new standards is echoed in the classroom, where some schools are getting a leg up by teaching the new content now ... Page 10

THE NEW MATH and English/language arts standards will be tougher, and some math concepts in particular may be taught earlier than they are now. How will districts close the “rigor gap?” ... Page 11

SCHOOL BOARDS ARE charged with keeping abreast of the training process for the new standards in their districts. They need to be aware of the work and prepared to figure out how to weigh budget constraints against the need for teacher professional development ... Page 12

PARENTS MAY BE the forgotten stakeholders in the process of preparing for the new standards. How will they react when their children run headlong into tougher coursework? ... Page 13

A PROJECT FUNDED by the Gates Foundation is gearing up for a grassroots public awareness campaign about the new standards, the purpose of the change and why it is important ... Page 13

TEACHER SURVEY

It's Kentucky teachers' turn for show and tell, or at least TELL. A statewide survey of all teachers and building-level administrators, TELL Kentucky (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) is aimed at helping board teams improve the teaching and learning environments in their districts ... Page 18



Ready for rigor? Page 8



Show and TELL, Page 18

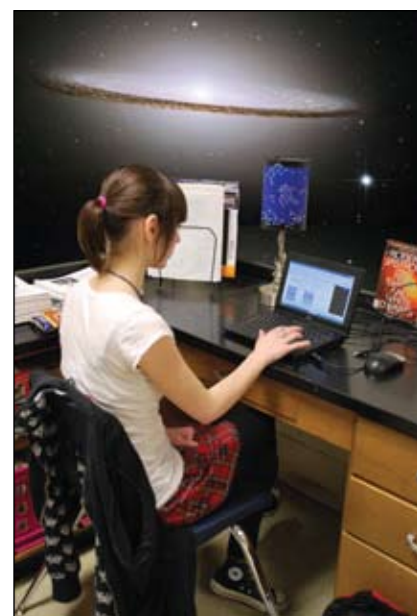
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On the cover



In this photo illustration, Rowan County Senior High School junior Hannah Mabry continues her search for a second pulsar. She found her first one earlier this year, becoming only the third student in the United States to do so. Mabry is a student in the school's astronomy program and next year will be a part of its new space science program, a collaboration with Morehead State University ... Article on Page 16.

TAKE NOTE

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The work continues

The PNC Foundation has awarded the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence a two-year grant of \$100,000 to support efforts to make quality preschool available to more Kentucky children. The two-year grant will help fund the Business Leadership Council for Pre-K, a group of 60 Kentucky business leaders who advocate access to quality preschool as the foundation for success in school and life.

Inspiring

A Breckinridge County High School senior has won a national award for



being the Most Inspirational High School Football Player in America. Senior Chance Anthony won the award, dubbed "The Rudy Award," for

Daniel "Rudy" Ruettiger, whose story was the basis for the eponymous 1993 movie. It carries a \$10,000 scholarship

prize.

Anthony was chosen from among 250 nominees. He was born missing the lower half of his right arm and is a four-year starter for the Tiger football team and also a member of the school's basketball team.

Musically inclined

Dr. Larry D. Vick, Superintendent of the Owensboro Public Schools, has received the Kentucky Music Educators Association Outstanding Administrator Award for 2010-11. Vick was presented the award Feb. 11 during the KMEA professional development conference in Louisville. He was the 2010 recipient of the Kentucky Arts Education Association's Administrator of the Year Award, while the Owensboro district's comprehensive fine arts program was honored in 2005 with KSBA's *Public Education Achieves in Kentucky (PEAK) Award*.

Under Vick's leadership, the district recently completed a multimillion dollar fine arts suite at Owensboro High School. The new wing includes Wenger practice rooms with recording facilities tied into an IT room, large music classrooms with recording and playback media, and a newly renovated auditorium. ❧

Happy Anniversary

A half-dozen KSBA employees recently were recognized for reaching watershed marks in their service. They are, back row from left, administrative assistant Tammie Conatser, five years; Executive Director Bill Scott, 15 years; and unemployment claims specialist Merry-Ann Marshall, the longest-serving KSBA employee with 30 years. Front row from left, Dara Bass, policy and procedure director, 25 years; legal counsel John Fogle, five years; and Myron Thompson, risk management director, five years. ❧



Fulfilling the Promise of SB 1 Requires Support of Local Boards

The implementation of the 2009 legislation known as Senate Bill 1 is the most significant challenge currently facing Kentucky's public schools, and, by extension, Kentucky school boards. Starting next year, our students, schools and districts will be evaluated on a new set of academic standards designed to better prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace. Forty-four states have adopted similar expectations for their students.

The new standards, known as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, are supposed to address student preparation in several ways:

- They focus on the specific knowledge and skills proven to be most crucial for success in college and the 21st-century workplace;
- they focus on fewer concepts but go into more depth on the most important ones;
- and they are modeled after what is being taught in the most successful schools in the world.

Because Kentucky students will be tested on their mastery of the new math and English/language arts standards beginning in the spring of 2012 (science and social studies will be added later), the most serious challenge currently facing our districts is training teachers and administrators to incorporate these standards into effective classroom instruction by the start of the next school year.

To accomplish this goal, representatives from each school district are participating in regional training networks where they learn how to teach the new standards and then bring this knowledge back home to share with colleagues.

Meeting the challenges of SB 1 will require the support and involvement of the entire school community, including local boards of education. While every sector of the education community has its own way of supporting this effort, the same five board roles that have been proven to positively impact student achievement are also the best ways for boards to support the implementation of SB 1.

1. *Setting Clear and High Expectations*

When boards embrace the new learning standards, they are in fact setting clearer and higher expectations for their students and schools.

Because the new standards focus on fewer concepts, they are more concise and clear. Since they also go into more depth on critical concepts, the new standards are also higher and more rigorous.



Bill Scott

KSBA Executive Director

It's important that board members are able to articulate how these new standards represent higher expectations for students. In other words, how do they differ from the previous standards?

2. *Creating and Supporting the Conditions for Success*

Because the current professional development effort to help teachers incorporate the standards into classroom instruction is so critical, boards need to be asking the following question:

Are our teachers and administrators getting sufficient time and support to learn the new standards in time to teach them to our students during the 2011-2012 school year?

If the answer to this question is "No," ask what you can do to support this effort.

3. *Holding the system accountable*

The best way for boards to hold their district accountable for implementing SB 1 is to learn what is currently going on in this area. To do this, make sure the board is getting regular updates on all aspects of the implementation.

4. *Creating the Public Will to Succeed*

As the community's elected leaders for public education, boards have an obligation to help their friends and neighbors understand how the new standards will help students be more successful beyond high school.

Boards also have an obligation to help the community realize that more rigorous standards may lead to lower test scores. The community's failure to recognize this potential consequence may lead them to incorrectly interpret lower scores as a failing school system.

Boards will need to engage the local media in their efforts to get these messages out to the larger community.

5. *Learning as a team*

Research tells us that the most effective boards learn as a team. When it comes to learning about SB 1, boards have several great sources of information, including the websites of the Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Educational Television and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

KSBA is currently working with KDE and the Prichard Committee to translate the most important aspects of SB 1 into board training modules and community discussion formats. We will also be focusing on this topic at future KSBA events, such as our Summer Leadership Institute and next fall's Regional Meetings.

The hope of SB 1 is to prepare every student for success in college or the workplace. School boards have a unique and powerful role to turn this vision into reality. ☞

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

Photo provided by Russell Independent Schools



participation in an after-school peer tutoring program in which she and 25 classmates work with younger students on their math, English, science or social studies homework. From the Ashland *Daily Independent*.

“Sometimes you need someone other than a teacher, someone who can relate to you, someone who can explain it maybe not better but easier.” Russell Independent Middle School eighth-grader Miranda Rogers on her

the Danville *Advocate Messenger*.

“Cyber-bullying is a crime in Kentucky. By posting on this site, your identifying information might be shared with law enforcement agencies should they provide a valid court order. Please think twice before posting. Don’t be stupid.” Banner added to the local Topix.com webpage after Trigg County High School Guidance Counselor Janay Futrell got local and state officials, including the Office of the Attorney General, to complain about negative postings aimed at middle and high school students on the popular Internet comment outlet. From the *Cadiz News*.

“We call them ‘near-peer’ mentors because, ideally, they are recent college graduates who can share their educational experiences with students who plan to further their education upon completion of high school. We hope the recent experiences of our members will enable high school students to easily identify with their coach and become more receptive to the message about the need to consider college or technical training.” Chris Dressler with the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority on the “college coach” program at South Floyd (Floyd County) High School. From the Prestonsburg *Floyd County Times*.

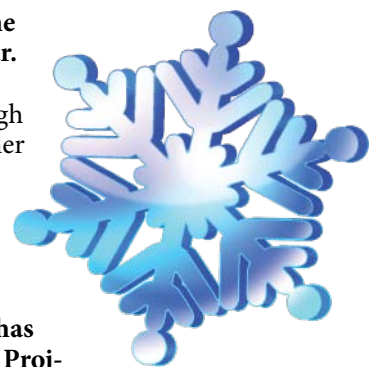
wrong question.” Lancaster City Attorney Leonard Smith advising the mayor and three other city council members, all employees of the Garrard County Schools, to recuse themselves when Superintendent Don Aldridge appealed for an adjustment to the district’s water bill after a broken pipe leaked 700,000 gallons before it could be fixed. From

“Students came to an understanding that while all dances use the elements space, force and time, every culture or community has dance traditions that are very unique and reflect their beliefs and values.” LaRue County Schools Instructional Supervisor Denise Skaggs on a program bringing professional artists in dance, music

“The maturity level of this group is just amazing. They’ve figured out that they have to be both friendly and firm. I thought the class would be a great experience. I thought it would prepare me. And it has.” Spencer County High School history teacher Melita Drake on the one credit-hour course on careers in education she developed to give students a firsthand look at classroom teaching. From the Taylorsville *Spencer Magnet*.

“If I were you, I wouldn’t touch it with a 10-foot pole. My recommendation is to not even ask questions, because you could have the appearance of conflict by asking the

“I’ve been doing snow day assignments online because we had so many snow days last year. Just because our AP (exam) date doesn’t move, we can’t afford to miss any class time.” Greenwood High School (Warren County) Advanced Placement teacher Tara Gupton on how she and some of her colleagues used Facebook and other websites to give students homework when weather cancelled classes. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.



“The rule in Clinton County is graduation has to occur after the last student day. We tie Project Graduation in with it in order to allow parents and community members to take part, so it needs to be on a weekend. Otherwise, we could have it on the last day students were in school.” Clinton County Superintendent Mickey McFall on just one of the issues leaders have to face when redoing a calendar at midyear. From the Albany *Clinton County News*.

“We want to extend our thanks to the good citizens for helping our bus drivers.” Calloway County Schools Superintendent Kenneth Bargo showing a “Thank You” graphic to his school board that was posted on the district’s website after farmers and motorists helped 22 buses navigate out of icy-road difficulties after a sudden, heavier-than-expected snowfall. From the Murray *Ledger and Times*.

and drama to introduce the arts to gifted students. From the Hodgenville *LaRue County News*.

“We looked at kids’ attention span and determined that we could teach them what they needed to know in 72 minutes.” Maurice Witherspoon, owner of a Louisville-based company, on a one-day CPR training at Lincoln County High School that prepared 500 students in the appropriate emergency procedures to help heart attack and choking victims. From the Stanford *Interior-Journal*.

“What’s disheartening about it is this was brought onto teachers. It doesn’t seem fair for teachers to have to go and rally support to get the legislature to fix what they’ve broken. This is not something that costs money. There’s no cost to the taxpayer to right this wrong. The only people that will benefit are the teachers who deserve it. Can we recruit kids out of college to become teachers when the state has allowed this? That will be one of the decisions future teachers have to make.” Ohio County High School teacher Robert Shown on his campaign for a change in state law which the courts have ruled makes teachers’ retirement benefits an asset for inclusion in a divorce settlement. From the *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*.

“The students’ version, the ‘Reality Store,’ has teenagers pretend they’re grown up and facing the everyday challenge of making their own way in the world. The Reality Store is all make-believe. The adults involved in this week’s discussions about city school budgeting, by contrast, were talking about real money, real choices, real jobs on the line. They weren’t just learning a lesson, they were looking for practical means to get through hard times in the expectation that the school district will have at least \$250,000 less next

year when federal stimulus funding expires and cuts in state aid are also anticipated.” Portions of an editorial on a brainstorming session by Frankfort Independent school board members, administrators and staff members in search of ways to economize expenses or increase revenues. From the *Frankfort State Journal*.

“A student can make up a yearlong class in one semester. We have some students that four walls and a desk in a classroom are not the answer. I’d rather say to a student ‘I’ll enroll you in e-school rather than sign your dropout papers.” Casey County High School Principal Barry Lee on the “e-school” online credit recovery program being used to keep potential dropouts on track to graduation. From the Liberty *Casey County News*.

“The premise is taking everyday moments and turning them into teaching moments. Any moment can be a teaching moment...from cooking in the kitchen to simply shopping at the grocery store with our children.” Rebecca Zmurk, a literacy coach with the Covington Independent Schools on Born Learning Academy, a series of workshops for parents of children newborn to age 5. From the Fort Mitchell *nky.com*.

“Alex actually understands. It is a computerized program that understands the differences between words and their context. So if it is reading a sentence and it comes across the word read, it knows the context to say either read or read. The amount of applications and the amount of books that are available through the iPad is amazing.” Caverna Independent High School Principal Brad Phipps on the use of federal school improvement funds to purchase iPads to help struggling students build reading skills. From the Glasgow *Daily Times*. ☚

Advertising on school buses

POINT ...

“The revenue enhancement is the thing that appealed to me most. I realize this bill is a little bit out of the box, out of the can, but it’s a good idea to discuss and see if there is a way to create some revenue for the school system.” State Rep. Terry Mills (D-Lebanon) on his bill that would allow school boards to accept advertising placed on the exterior of buses.

COUNTERPOINT...

“I think it could be distracting to the general civilian driving down the street. It can be distracting when you are hauling around a bunch of school kids. You don’t need something drawing attention.” Paducah Independent Schools Transportation Director Steve Spraggs on a concern voiced by other educators.

From the *Paducah Sun*

READY FOR RIGOR?



Some members of the Wayne County Schools In-School Network Team at Bell Elementary work on deconstructing the new standards that go into effect this coming school year. From left are team members Beverly Roberts and Virginia Cares, standing, and Virginia Morrow and Principal Donna Rice, seated.

Photo by Linda Jones/Wayne County Schools

Training for new academic standards: On track or uneven?

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Across Kentucky, groups of teachers have been gathering in schools to dissect new national standards for what students must learn in math and English/language arts. Separate regional networks for teachers, principals and other instructional leaders also have been meeting to coordinate and prepare for the standards.

How's it going? It depends on whom you ask.

"As I talk to my peers, I'm incredibly pleased with where we're at and the progress we're making," said Wayne County Schools Superintendent John Dalton. "We're supportive of it. This is not something we've spent time griping about. This is something we've embraced and our people really are working hard at."

The system of layered training networks has been effective, said Dr. Shelli Wilson, associate superintendent for Campbell County Schools, which has been involved in training since last summer. Campbell County Schools also belongs to a regional "content cadre" apart from the state education department's structure.

However, Marie McMillen, a Marshall County middle school teacher who oversees Kentucky Education Association's first district, said in late January that there was not much school-level training going on in her area.

"I don't think it's very standardized throughout the state. We're not all doing the same thing," she said. "There might be a few people trained in each system or a couple in each system, but the information is not getting to the teachers in the trenches."

KEA President Sharon Oxendine was blunt: "It worries me that the implementation is not happening the way everyone perceived that it would. I just know from some work that we have done that it's wildly different all over the state."

SET CLEAR AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Embrace the new standards

- Clearer and more rigorous
- Focused on specific knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success

HOW MUCH DOES YOUR BOARD KNOW ABOUT NEW STANDARDS?

Liz Storey, director of the Kentucky Superintendents Network, a professional development group, said the training picture is uneven. While some districts have held back, "There are many districts that are out front, no doubt about that," she said. More recently, Storey added, "There's been a bit of, 'Oh, my gosh, it's February,' so everybody is understanding that this is pretty real."

Robin Oatley, an educational consultant who manages a project that spreads the word about Kentucky's new school standards and assessment, told a recent gathering of school board members, "If your superintendent says, 'Oh, I haven't showed those standards to my staff yet' or 'We haven't talked about it very much,' you're in a little bit of trouble. About six months of delay of trouble."

Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, which helped spearhead the new standards, said the 40-plus states involved in the standards initiative are doing similar training.

Kentucky is a bit ahead of the other states in training for the new standards, Wilhoit said, because the state also factors in the added deadline of the new assessment system under Senate Bill 1.

"I think that's created a greater sense of urgency about putting these in place," he said.

The network system

The Kentucky Department of Education, which devised the network training system, calls this a "capacity building" approach to assisting school systems with the new standards. After training in the various networks, districts and schools are expected to craft teacher training at the school level tailored to local needs.

Felicia Cumings Smith, associate commissioner of the state education department's Office of Next Generation Learners, said the agency has tried to be proactive, but there is a gap between the training system that the agency has devised and how it is being applied at the district level.

"What we're hearing is we know that sometimes those messages don't make it to the classroom level," she said.

The department, Commissioner Terry Holliday and a spe-

See "TRAINING," on Page 14

Specific board roles that impact student achievement*

** From the Iowa School Boards Association's 10-year Lighthouse Project*

ROCKY RIGOR?

New standards may prove difficult for some students

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The most challenging aspect for teachers being trained in Kentucky's new math and English/language arts standards is the increased complexity and rigor of the material, said Dr. Shelli Wilson, associate superintendent of Campbell County Schools.

In high school math, for example, it's not just what students are asked to learn, but in which course and when, she said. "It's definitely at a higher level than we've seen before," she said.

Wayne County Superintendent John Dalton said there is some urgency at this stage because the standards will be tougher, even though his instructional staff have "embraced" them.

"You might find, for example, that the work previously required of a fourth-grader now may be required of a second-grader. All of our kids are going to have to make up a lot of time in a

short time," Dalton said. "So we're going to have to be doing some real – and we didn't originate this – power teaching to make sure, for example, that we get that second-grader prepared for fourth-grade work."

Teachers are excited about the depth of the new standards, said Marie McMillen, who teaches at South Marshall (County) Middle School, but they're also apprehensive about how the standards will work for students who already are behind.

"I have students that are two levels below grade level in my classroom and I'm supposed to present one to two levels above their grade level – four years above their reading level – to them? That's kind of scary," she said.

McMillen, who represents Kentucky Education Association's first district, said the new standards will help chal-

See "CHALLENGING," on Page 15



Photo by Juli Hale/Campbell County Schools

Helen Nassano, left in black, from Campbell County Schools, Pam Brenner, in red, from Ft. Thomas Independent Schools, and Dr. Shelli Wilson, back right, and Melinda Hyden, both from Campbell County Schools, meet at the Alexandria Education Center on Campbell County's campus. Wilson, associate superintendent of Campbell County Schools, was working with teachers during a professional development training activity.

Students in some districts getting a jump on the new standards

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Kentucky students will begin learning rigorous new math and English/language arts curricula in the 2011-12 school year. But some school districts are offering a little more than a sneak preview of the new content during the current school year.

Campbell County Schools already has incorporated the new standards into existing units or made a complete changeover to teach to the new standards, said Associate Superintendent Dr. Shelli Wilson.

"We felt like we owed it to our students and teachers to begin with implementation," said Wilson. Campbell County has been training its staff in the new content since this past summer.

The work with the new standards in the classroom comes at the same time teachers are continuing to meet in groups or in professional learning communities to break them down and study how best to teach and assess them. The state education department released a set of draft core standards in the two subjects Jan. 3, after months of work by more than 1,300 teacher leaders, content specialists and higher education representatives, according to KDE. The final version is expected in May.

Marion Sowders, associate superintendent for Knox County Schools, said the district took a two-pronged approach with the standards this year.

"We felt like this was the vision of the future and so with our nonaccountability grades we went completely new standards this year," he said.

For students who have to be tested on the current standards this spring, Sowders said both sets of standards are being taught. But the standards are color coded so teachers, "know this is where we are and this is where we're going." Material in the new standards is included in common and formative, or ongoing, classroom tests, he said.

Knox County Schools also has been trying to prepare students for the rigorous new work by adding more resources that can be accessed through its website, such as ACT and Advanced

Placement preparation materials.

The district is creating videos showing educational activities parents can do with their children.

"We're just trying to look for innovative, creative ways to address it," Sowders said. "We feel like we're being proactive, we feel like we're being aggressive. We feel like that will pay off for us."

Wilson said because of the work teachers have done in Campbell County, students "have responded very well" to the challenging new standards.

"They understand that the new standards are established to better prepare them for college and career readiness," she said in an e-mail.

In some high school courses in that district, students are getting involved in deconstructing the standards with their teacher, which Wilson said motivates and empowers them.

"This enables them to identify the knowledge, reasoning, skills and products they will need to know, understand or be able to do," she said.

Because this is a transition year, folding in the new standards shouldn't be a problem, said Felicia Cumings Smith, associate commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Next Generation Learners.

"As long as you know your students understand the content that they're supposed to know from our core content for assessment, I think they're OK with teaching the new standards now," she said.

Jumping ahead to teach the new standards is not unique to these Kentucky schools, said Liz Storey, director of the Kentucky Superintendents Network, a professional development group. "There are pockets of that all over the country," she said. "We're not totally alone in that." ❧

CREATE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Support high-quality professional development

— Do teachers have sufficient time and support to learn new standards?

WHAT CAN THE BOARD DO TO SUPPORT THIS EFFORT?

Setting the standard FOR STANDARDS

Variety of resources are available for boards

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Teachers, principals, central office staff and students all have to get ready when new math and English/language arts standards kick in this fall and are tested in the spring of 2012.

Add school board members to that list.

As elected representatives of their community, board members will be on the spot when parents and others begin to realize the effects of the new standards.

“We need school boards to help figure out how they can get ahead of what the perceptions may be when scores do come back,” said Felicia Cumings Smith, associate commissioner of the state education department’s Office of Next Generation Learners. “We need them really amping up their approaches with working with community members on behalf of and in support of the superintendent and the schools in their district.”

KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott said boards have “a tremendous opportunity” to help the community understand the implications of the new standards and assessments.

Smith suggested that board members prepare talking points about the tougher new standards and testing, something that KSBA is currently working on. She said board members should be informed about the standards and “hold superintendents and schools accountable by asking the right questions.”

The key question for school board members to ask about new academic content standards right now is, “What process do we have in place to work with our

standards and how effective is that process?” said Dr. Shelli Wilson, associate superintendent for Campbell County Schools.

Wilson said the training for the new content standards is driving a new way to approach professional development, as something that is ongoing and not an “event.”

“Everybody is looking for the new standards to be ‘completed, finished, done.’ What we have to continue to focus on is that it is an evolving, continuing, lifelong learning process,” she said. “We’re going to continue to grow with the standards.”

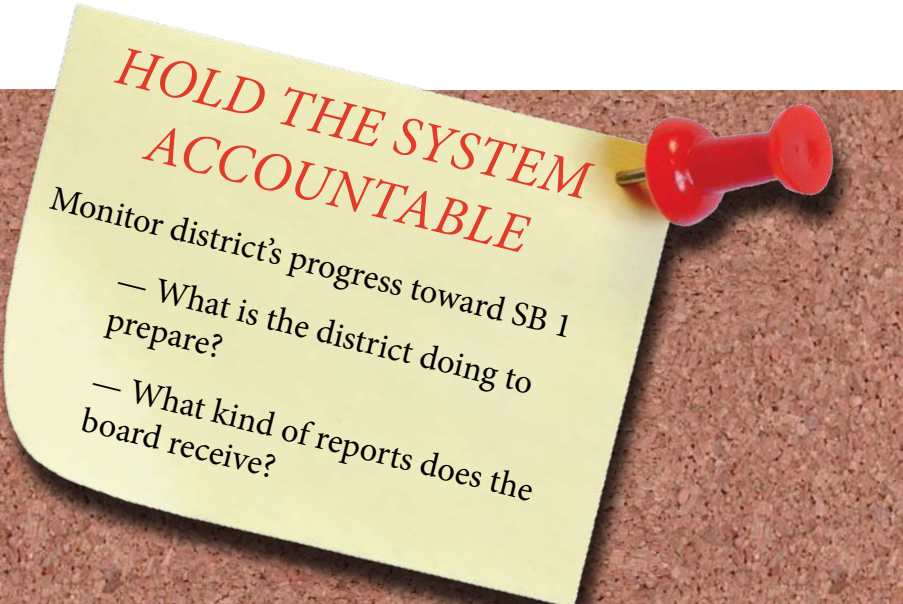
That is something school boards should be aware of, Wilson added.

This can mean designing innovative calendars that will support job-embedded professional development, Smith noted, “so now is not the time to move away from early-release days.”

“As a board, you’ve got to find the time and the support for this professional development,” Scott said. “This is critical work here. The clock is ticking – your kids are going to have to know these standards by the spring of 2012.”

Kentucky school board members who want information on the new standards will have other resources.

Members of KSBA’s board training cadre will be available to talk with boards about the standards in conjunction with ReadyKentucky (see related story on next page). KSBA’s Academy of Studies series called Leaders for Learning also will give board members general guidance and background that can be helpful for their role in the new standards and testing implementation. ☘



HOLD THE SYSTEM ACCOUNTABLE

Monitor district’s progress toward SB 1

— What is the district doing to prepare?

— What kind of reports does the board receive?

Grassroots network will raise awareness about new standards

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The rollout of new academic standards and assessments in Kentucky will echo the campaign that accompanied the implementation of education reform more than two decades ago – with one major difference: more grassroots communication.

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is building a cadre of what it calls “parent messengers” who are trained to build local awareness and knowledge about the new standards and subsequent assessments called for by 2009’s Senate Bill 1. The project, called ReadyKentucky, is funded primarily by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Prichard Committee is collaborating with several education partners on ReadyKentucky, including KSBA, which will have its own common standards cadre for school board members.

The cadre members will make presentations to business people, civic clubs, teachers and parents, “specific to those audiences because they each need something different,” said Robin Oatley, an education consultant who manages the project.

She said the long-term goal is to have at least one parent and one teacher who are highly trained and part of the cadre in each region, preferably each school district. They will be able to explain the new standards, why they’re needed and how students will meet them.

However, Oatley said the other end of the scale won’t be forgotten, as this network also will raise awareness of the coming changes among policy makers and legislators.

The standards communication campaign is analogous to the statewide publicity that appeared following pas-

sage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, Oatley said.

“The difference that we’re seeing is when we did this the first time around they spent a lot of money communicating through big business, through media ... and when push came to shove, the individual parent didn’t know what KERA was,” she said. “The individual parent didn’t even know their child was getting a test at the end of the year and teachers couldn’t figure out why all this was changing – because we hadn’t gotten to the grassroots.”

This is not the only Kentucky standards initiative being funded by the Gates Foundation, which has taken a particular interest in the state’s role as the first of 40-some states to officially adopt the national Common Core standards. It also has given the state education department a two-year, \$1 million grant to develop instructional strategies and tools for math and literacy and a \$300,000 grant to the Prichard Committee for a separate literacy project that builds on the new standards. ☼

DO PARENTS NEED TRAINING, TOO?

In the push for teacher training in new math and English/language arts standards, dealing with potential fallout when students confront the rigorous new work has taken a back seat – at least for now.

“We’re trying to make parents aware of the things that are coming down the pike, but is it completely perfect at this point? Of course not,” said Marion Sowders, assistant superintendent for Knox County Schools.

Sowders said his district has been working harder on public relations, trying to convey to parents and the community what Senate Bill 1 – which also requires a new testing system – and the new standards mean to them.

“We’ve been really brainstorming lately about trying to do more informational things,” he said.

“I don’t think the public has any idea that new standards are coming out and what all that involves,” said Janice Winbigler, Campbell County school board chairwoman who works as the chief information officer for Bellevue Independent Schools. “It’s been more of a concern how we are going to get this in the hands of teachers so our teachers are knowledgeable in terms of their instruction than how are we going to let our parents know that these are coming and are going to be more rigorous.”

Because the new content isn’t in the classroom yet, it will be difficult to give parents more than an overview at this point, Winbigler said. ☼



TRAINING

Continued from Page 9

cial department team have been responding to the “variances” in district implementation with more information in addition to what already has been issued, Smith said, including webcasts for principals and teachers and a two-day summit planned for this summer.

Training information from the state education department lagged at the beginning of the process, Knox County Schools assistant superintendent Marion Sowders said, but “I think it’s getting better.”

The process is better than those used in the past, “where it’s been left to each district to roll out the standards as they saw fit,” said Janice Winbigler, chief information officer for Bellevue Independent Schools and a member of the Campbell County school board. “Now we have more of an aligned process for disseminating that information down the line.”

While work is ongoing on standards training, KDE has designed the approach to also encompass teacher effectiveness training.

“How they devised putting effective teaching strategies in with assessing those strategies and then understanding what you’re to teach is an excellent idea,” said Winona Griggs, director of instruction for Wayne County Schools.

Time crunch

Ronda Harmon, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils, said she is concerned about the school-level training, because there is so much to do.

“That’s the biggest challenge I see is how are they going to really help the teachers understand the standards, really understand how to use them in instruction, really understand how to write formative assessments that are going to be meaningful,” Harmon said. “How it’s organized and planned is going to be really vital. And I’m concerned about where the time is going to come from for that.”

Some districts, such as Knox, Wayne and Campbell counties, have set up timelines to pace the training.

Wayne County’s timeline calls for using the summer to develop content units embedded with the deconstructed standards and accompanying assessments put together earlier, plus the new teaching practices.

“So a teacher going into next year will have her units developed and can really concentrate on effective teaching,” Griggs said.

Schools with professional learning communities have a leg up on the training because teachers are used to conferring in work-alike groups. In Knox County, the groups, which bring together teachers who teach the same subject, meet weekly. The district began virtual training among high school teachers in late fall, with cameras set up so teachers in both the system’s high schools could train together.

Wilson said Campbell County teachers are meeting in their grade-level professional learning communities to examine the new standards.

Winbigler said she thinks smaller districts like hers may be at a disadvantage for training manpower. From her vantage point on the Campbell County school board, she sees an entire curriculum department and instructional coaches in each building. In Bellevue Independent, where she works, the small district doesn’t have instructional coaches.

“It’s more responsibility on principals and the individual teachers,” she said. “I would say there’s definitely a strain on the teacher leaders because they are trying to do a full-time job teaching as well as trying to take those standards and deconstruct them and then they’re trying to share all of that with their teammates and colleagues.”

There will be bumps in the road in implementing the new standards, KDE’s Smith said, but added that she hopes the supports the agency has incorporated into the training will keep those bumps from being “so dramatic.”

⌘

Additional resources

Kentucky Department of Education

www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Curriculum+Documents+and+Resources/ATTENTION+-+Leadership+Networks.htm

Kentucky Educational Television

KET EncycloMedia website: www.ket.org/encyclomedia

If you are a Teacher’s Domain user, log in. If not, register as a new user in the KET Teacher’s Domain area. There is no charge and you will only have to register once.

At the top right, in “What’s New,” is: “Senate Bill 1: Transforming Education in Kentucky”

Prichard Committee – “ReadyKentucky”

www.prichardcommittee.org

LEARN AS A BOARD TEAM

- Include SB 1 topics on board agendas and work sessions
- Use multiple sources of information
 - Kentucky Department of Education
 - Kentucky Educational Television
 - Prichard Committee – “ReadyKentucky”

CHALLENGING

Continued from Page 10

lunge her gifted students, “but I’m worried about the middle-of-the-road and the low kids getting left behind more.”

Kentucky Education Association President Sharon Oxendine, a math teacher, had a similar reaction for her field. “I just don’t understand as an algebra teacher how you’re all of a sudden going to say, ‘Here’s a new set of standards we’re going to be teaching our kids and they’re going to be far more rigorous than they have been,’ yet I already have trouble teaching the kids because of their previous preparation coming in to me.”

The knowledge gap between the new and old standards has been a big concern of Knox County teachers, said Marion Sowders, assistant superintendent of Knox County Schools.

“Their concern and it’s a huge concern of mine – is that we test this way in the spring of 2011 and then in 2012 these students are accountable for everything that’s in the new standards. And things, for example, that were assessed in 11th grade math are now pushed down to eighth or ninth grade,” he said. “The students haven’t really had exposure to that. So then how do we fill in those gaps?”

During the implementation of the new content, school board members are likely to hear the term “text complexity,” which is the level of difficulty in reading material. Wilson said

when teachers in her region were polled on what professional development they most needed, this was the area they cited.

“One of the biggest challenges is the complexity. The level of reading material that students are needing to be prepared for when they exit high school has increased dramatically,” she said.

Ronda Harmon, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils, said she doesn’t believe the increased rigor and its effect on student performance will be an issue. “Teachers and students will rise to the challenge of making sure the kids can meet those requirements,” she said.

That’s one reason the state has coupled teacher effectiveness training with standards training, Harmon noted. “Because they know things have to be taught differently to rise to the challenge of that.”

Wilson also is optimistic, saying as long as teachers are given enough time for professional development, their students will succeed.

“Teachers are lifelong learners,” she said. “They will be able to embrace these new standards, learn the new content and deliver the instruction that will have students learning at high levels.” ☞

Celebrating those who put KIDS First



Two state legislators with extensive backgrounds in education were honored last months as the recipients of KSBA’s KIDS First Advocacy Award.

Rep. Linda Belcher of Sheperdsville and Sen. Jack Westwood of Erlanger were honored during a reception Feb. 23 in Frankfort as part of the association’s KIDS First Advocacy Days lobbying conference.

Belcher, above, is a retired educator, having served as a teacher, principal, and district administrator in Bullitt County before being elected to office in 2008. Among other reasons, Belcher was honored for her efforts to raise Kentucky’s dropout age from 16 to 18 as well as her co-sponsorship of Senate Bill 1.

Westwood, near right, speaking with Kenton County Schools Superintendent Tim Hanner, also is a retired teacher as well as a former member of the Erlanger-Elsmere Independent Board of Education. He received the KIDS First Award for his longtime support of increasing career and technical education programs and recognizing those programs’ abilities to prevent students from dropping out.

KSBA annually recognizes the legislative work on behalf of Kentucky schools by a state representative, a state senator, a school board member and superintendent. The local school leaders will be recognized during KSBA’s Summer Leadership Institute in July.



Space science program takes off

Rowan County student's discovery brings recognition to dual-credit program

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Call it a happy coincidence: Just as Rowan County Senior High School is getting ready to launch a Space Science program next fall, a student in its first-year astronomy program identified a pulsar earlier this year, becoming only the third high school student in the United States to do so.

While the two programs are in different areas of science – one deals with the natural universe of space while the other is about manmade objects in space – junior Hannah Mabry's identification of a millisecond pulsar has generated a lot of student excitement and interest in the program.

A pulsar is an extremely dense, rapidly spinning small star – a neutron star, which is the product of a supernova explosion. These dense stars emit flashes of electromagnetic waves that have been detected by radio telescopes. Mabry's pulsar discovery is special because it is a millisecond pulsar, an even rarer neutron star that spins 1,000 times per second. These stars are relatively new to the scientific world because so few have been discovered. The first one was discovered just over 40 years ago.

"The overall goal was to get kids doing real science and interested in STEM (science, technology engineering and math)," said teacher Jennifer Carter, who is in her first year at Rowan County Senior High School. "Since Hannah's discovery, we have 40 students registered to take the PSC (Pulsar Space Collaborative) course. I have students coming to me who aren't currently scheduled who want to come after school and learn how to do this so they, too, can look for pulsars."

She said the possibility of having their name forever associated with a pulsar has lit a fire under students to take this independent study class that basically requires sitting in front of a computer for hours and poring over data collected by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green

Bank, W.Va. The observatory, along with the National Science Foundation, created this program to allow high school students to sift through the charts and graphs of data collected from radio telescopes.

Rowan senior James Hall, also a student in the pulsar search class, said it is tedious but fulfilling work that he and fellow students often continue on their own at home.

"Shifting through the RFI (radio frequency interference), that's like a spark plug going off or a telephone wire," he said, describing what they are searching for in the data. "The noise is just radio static from space, which is basically all you see in there, and maybe, just maybe, sometime you'll see a pulsar. And you get really excited because you think, 'I've found one,' and then you figure out it's not. After that, you keep sifting through it and eventually someone, a thousand of those false alarms later, finds one."

Mabry, who plans to continue this area of study at Morehead State, said it was exciting to get word that not only did she discover a pulsar, but one of the rare ones.

"Most pulsars are spun out by a companion (star)," she said. "They go through the process of being in a binary (two stars). This one is much rarer because it's older and it doesn't have a companion that we've been able to find. It's already lost its companion. Millisecond pulsars are also known as recycled pulsars."

Carter, the Rowan County teacher, said Morehead State University is one of only five universities in the country to offer a bachelor's degree in space science.

"We are building a space science program that will feed into the degree program at Morehead State," she said. "I am working with MSU directly to develop the curriculum, which will offer students here the opportunity to earn dual credit."

Assistant Principal Penny Alderman said with Morehead's new space science center in their own backyard, the program is a natural.

"It has been our goal to open up more courses to our students that are STEM courses and this fits in perfectly," she said.

Blend of familiar and new faces to lead KSBA

Advocate Staff Report



Durward Narramore



Phyllis Young



Ronnie Holmes

A veteran eastern Kentucky school board member has become the next in line for the presidency of the Kentucky School Boards Association.

With the ascension of Lincoln County school board member Tom Blankenship to the top position last month, Jenkins Independent school board Chairman Durward Narramore was chosen as president elect at the association's annual business meeting.

Narramore has been a member of the Jenkins Independent board for 19 years. A purchasing agent for the Virginia Department of Corrections, Narramore is no stranger to the KSBA board. He represented the Upper Kentucky River Region for two years as regional chairperson, and served twice as a director-at-large for a total of nine years.

Five other school board members were elected or re-elected as directors-at-large at the business meeting. They are:

Ronnie Holmes, Graves County, for a

second and final three-year term:

27 years of Graves County board service, four years in two terms as First Region chairperson and three years as director-at-large.

Fern Reed, Montgomery County, for an initial three-year term:

Seven years on the Montgomery County board and three years as KSBA regional chairperson representing the Central Kentucky Region.

Phyllis Young, Scott County, for an initial three-year term:

Seven years as a Scott County board member and a partial term as KSBA director-at-large.

William Owens, Lee County, for an initial three-year term:

21 years of service on the Lee County board and three years representing KSBA's Upper Kentucky Region as regional chairperson.

David Webster, Simpson County, for an initial three-year term:

Five years of service with the Simpson County board. ☞



Fern Reed



William Owens



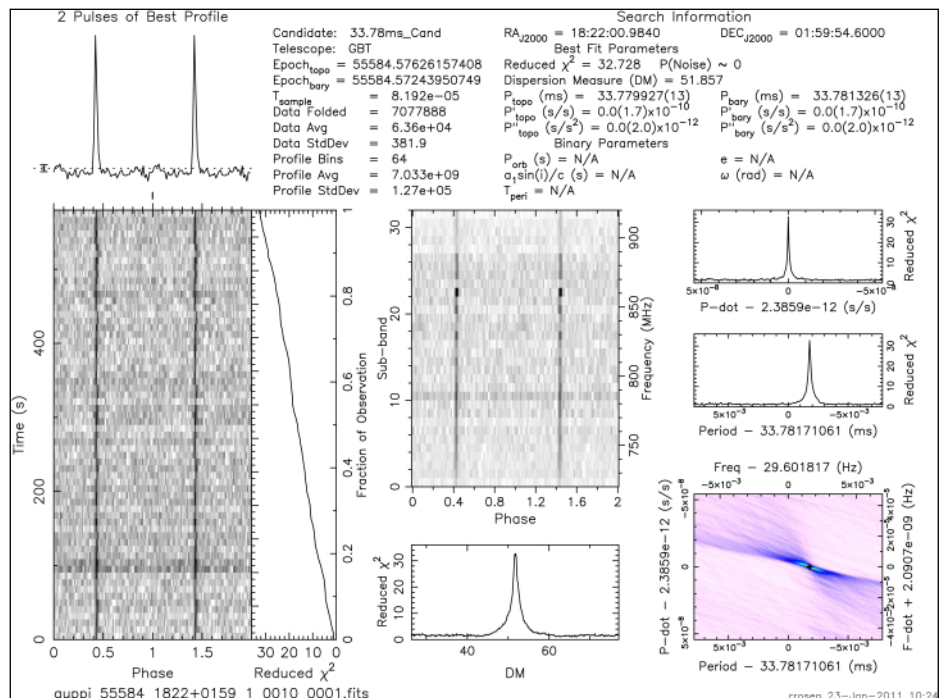
David Webster

“It was the perfect opportunity for us to introduce our students, even at the sophomore level, and direct them into those careers that are high demand, and hopefully go on and study at the space center here and have great careers in space science.”

Under the space science program, students will be able to earn up to 12 hours of dual credit, in addition to other dual credit classes the high school started offering this year in math and English.

“This year, before we started talking about space science, we had what we call an MSU cohort where we have 44 kids who are getting dual credit in math and English,” Alderman said. “When we saw how that worked at the beginning of the year, they started working with us again and said let’s do some dual credit in science and technology and other areas.”

Alderman said Morehead State has worked with the high school on offering the dual credits for free or on a sliding scale for students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. ☞



This is a pulsar plot, which is a good representative of some the data students look through in their search for the elusive star.

Provided by Jennifer Carter/Rowan County Schools

State asks for input

School board members asked to encourage teachers and administrators to complete survey

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Starting this month, Kentucky educators will get the chance to have a say about their schools. TELL Kentucky (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) is a school-level survey designed to find out from those on the ground what the teaching and working environment is like in the Commonwealth's schools.

The survey, supported by the Coalition of Partners made up of nearly every major education organization in the state, will be given every two years and used to help district leaders make decisions about school improvement.

"When you're in the trenches, you probably know better than anyone else the areas that can be improved," said David Baird, KSBA's associate executive director who served on the Coalition. "We're depending on the survey results to give data to help make these decisions."

Michael Dailey, Kentucky Department of Education's director of the Division of Next Generation Professionals, said the survey is focused on areas such as school time, professional development, support and school-level leadership.

"This is specifically for improving overall school performance," he said. "It's not designed as a gotcha. It's not going to be about if the principal does this or someone doesn't do that. It's about the conditions of teaching and learning and the environment itself. There are no questions that ask specifically about subject areas or grade levels. We just need their opinion about the working environment they're in."

The confidential, online survey will take about 30 minutes to complete and is being administered by the New Teacher Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving student learning by improving teacher and school leader effectiveness.

Dailey said the New Teacher Center will put together tools that districts can use in conjunction with the survey results for school improvement planning.

"I think school board members will find it very helpful for looking across their district as they're looking at strategic planning for the district. We'll see some common things across schools that districts can make some decisions on for planning," he said.

Baird said it's important for school board members to encourage their teachers to participate in the survey.

"I think the message to school board members is that this initiative is being supported by nearly every education group in the state and we should take it with a positive attitude to review and identify areas where improvements can be made," he said. "One of the biggest things we want to say is, 'Please, everyone, finish the survey.'"

Participation is important because schools with fewer than 50 percent of its teachers completing the survey will not receive specific results. Teachers will be given anonymous access

This March, take the **ANONYMOUS SURVEY** and
TELL US WHAT YOU NEED.

TELL
Kentucky
TEACHING, EMPOWERING, LEADING
AND LEARNING

TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS:
This is your chance to TELL policymakers what you need to do your jobs well.

www.tellkentucky.org
Survey runs from March 1-25, 2011

*"Now more than ever before in the history of the Commonwealth it is crucial to listen to teachers about what they need to be effective in the classroom. TELL Kentucky will give us the information we need to ensure that teachers across the Commonwealth work in schools that give them every opportunity to be successful with all our children."
-GOVERNOR STEVE BESHEAR*

Governor Beshear and Commissioner Holliday want to hear directly from every licensed educator in Kentucky schools about the tools you need to do your jobs well—to improve student achievement and retain effective teachers.

Win Weekly and Grand Prize Drawings! Thanks to private contributions, every school that reaches 100% response rate will be entered into a weekly drawing for teachers and schools to win cash prizes.

School, district, and state results will be on the website May 1, 2011.

Toll free number for the Help Desk
1-888-280-7903

Every Child Succeeds, Kentucky Learning, Kentucky Chamber, PTA, KASBA, KASA, New Teacher Center

codes for the survey, which they can complete anywhere they have Internet access. It must be completed in one sitting. The survey will be open from March 1-25. Response rates can be tracked by school at www.tellKentucky.org.

"We would love to have a 60-65 percent return rate, which would be phenomenal for a first-time survey," Dailey said." Return rates usually start out around 48-50 percent, but we think Kentucky has been a state where teachers have always expressed themselves, so we hope to rely heavily on our history and get up there around 65 percent. North Carolina, which has been through five iterations of the survey, has a rate around 80 percent."

School-level data will be released in May, with state-level data scheduled for release this fall. ☞

— For more information about the TELL survey, go to www.tellKentucky.org or the New Teacher Center at www.newteachercenter.org.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month It's Your Turn to Make a Difference!

Want to win
\$500 for your
school?
Log on now to
learn how
www.pcaky.org

Each day educators across the state inspire students to learn and to be creative. Put these skills to use and increase awareness of child abuse and neglect by encouraging students to make a difference in the lives of others through participation in the 2011 Child Abuse Prevention Month Awareness Contest, encouraging team building and innovation. Your participation could earn your school up to \$500! Learn more by logging on to www.pcaky.org to download the entry form and official contest regulations.
Entries due by March 18, 2011

For additional information, contact:
Rebecca Hake by calling (859) 225-8879
or email Rhake@pcaky.org.



Kentucky Superintendent Vacancies

Montgomery County Schools

4,900 (PS-12) www.montgomery.kyschools.us

The Montgomery County Board of Education is seeking an individual who has evidence of being a proven instructional leader. The successful candidate should have administrative experience, good oral communication skills, evidence of good fiscal management, and should be an effective motivator for the 650 staff members. Along with excellent people skills, the candidate must display a willingness to be visible and involved with the community. Experience with budgeting and building projects is a plus. The salary is negotiable, with contract to begin July 1, 2011. Candidates must hold or be eligible for a Kentucky superintendent's certification. **Application deadline is March 4, 2011.**

Grant County Schools

3,850 (PS-12) www.grant.kyschools.us

The Grant County Board of Education is seeking a superintendent of schools with the leadership skills for its exemplary school district that will assure the continuation of the current progress. The successful candidate should possess administrative experience, strong interpersonal skills and

be community oriented. A student centered leader with a record of enhancing student performance is a plus. The candidate should also understand and be supportive of the district goals including furthering the new Career and Technology Center. The starting salary will be negotiable. Candidates must hold or be eligible for a Kentucky superintendent's certification. **Application deadline is March 14, 2011.**

Marion County Board of Education

3,159 – (K-12) www.marion.kyschools.us

The Marion County school district seeks as its next superintendent, a student centered instructional leader with a record of improving student achievement. The successful candidate should demonstrate an ability to create high expectations and accountability while being an effective communicator. Along with promoting teamwork and excellent people skills, he/she will be expected to be highly visible throughout the school district and community. The salary will be competitive and negotiable. Candidates should have administrative experience and must hold or be eligible for a Kentucky superintendent's certification to apply. **Application deadline is April 12, 2011.**

To apply, send seven copies of all of the following: a cover letter/introduction, resume, application form, responses to eight questions, certification, three (3) letters of recommendation, and one video (optional) to: Name of district search, Kentucky School Boards Association, 260 Democrat Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601. Find application form, video information and questions at: www.ksba.org; go to Employment Opportunities.

Mike Oder

KSBA Superintendent Search Consultant

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 Mike Oder, a retired Kentucky superintendent and KSBA's Superintendent Search Consultant. With the superintendent search season in full swing, Oder discusses the ins and outs of the process to help board members — new and veteran — carry out one of their most important responsibilities.



KSBA Superintendent Search Consultant Mike Oder speaks with members of the Montgomery County Board of Education. KSBA is conducting the district's search for a new superintendent.

Q. As we approach superintendent search season, what advice you would offer to school board members who have never been through one before or for awhile?

A. A superintendent search, for those who have never been through it before, is a lot more cumbersome than you would think. It's not just advertising and interviewing. There are a lot more steps to be completed than you think there would be in between the time you know you need a new superintendent and the time you get a name on the contract.

Most school board members, even veteran board members, don't know all of the requirements that go into the search process and that's what we do for boards: shepherd them through the entire process.

Q. What are some common pitfalls that might pop up during a superintendent search?

A. Common pitfalls might occur while establishing the screening committee, then guiding the committee through its part of the process. Confidentiality is a huge pitfall, and that's where a third party comes in. When we do a search for a school district, all applications are sent to us and we work hard with the screening committee to make sure confidentiality is adhered to.

Q. Why is that such an important part of the search?

A. With a sitting superintendent, sometimes their board doesn't know that they've applied for another position. And there comes a point in time when they will have to know depending on how far along the superintendent gets in the process. But if the cat gets out of the bag before its time, you could lose a good candidate.

Also, while receiving all of the applications, if they come to someone in the district there is the potential for someone to talk about who's applied and who hasn't and their information.

As a third party, we guard against that for the district and the candidate. It's a two-way street.

Working with the screening committee, confidentiality also is important because most of its work is done in closed session so members can talk candidly about the applicants. Those committee members need to be able to know that they can trust one another and that that confidentiality will be adhered to for those closed sessions.

Q. Any other pitfalls?

A. Sometimes when a board wants to do the search themselves, the perception is there that they've already made up their mind. Hiring an impartial third party takes a lot of that out of the process.

Q. As board members begin this process, are there any questions that they need to start thinking of to prepare?

A. The first thing we do with a board is we do a planning session with them where we develop a course of action. Included in that is a timeline, creating a list of characteristics they're looking for in their next superintendent, salary parameters, advertising. We take on all of that as part of our service.

We also assist districts in establishing the screening committee.

And at the very top of the list of things for boards to keep in mind is, what does the law require for a filling a superintendent vacancy?

Q. What does the law require?

A. It requires that you establish a screening committee. It sets forth the membership of that screening committee. It has to be adhered to.

The membership is one building level administrator – a principal – two teachers, a classified representative, a parent and a school board member. The only other requirement is if a school district has a certain percentage of minority students enrolled, then you are required to have a minority member. And if they aren't among those mentioned, then the minority member of the committee would be the parent representative.

Q. So what would a typical superintendent search look like?

A. You would develop a search plan. You would advertise for the position, receive applications and at the same time be establishing your screening committee. Once the deadline for receiving applications passes, then you work with the screening committee to narrow down the applicants to present to the board of education. The screening committee would make their recommendations to the board and then the process becomes the board's process. The school board then determines who it wants to interview and ultimately hire.

Q. What about the issue of publicly naming finalists? That is always a big question during a superintendent search. Do you recommend a particular stance or leave it up to the individual school board?

A. A lot of districts choose to keep it confidential who the finalists are. Even if you do want to make it public, you have to get the permission of the finalists to release

their names publicly.

All unsuccessful candidates have the right to privacy, for any position – sixth-grade science teacher or superintendent of schools.

Q. How has technology changed the search process?

A. Once upon a time, KSBA either did what was called a state search or a national search. Now, all of the searches are one and the same because of today's technology. People all across the country can avail themselves of the advertisements, and most of the advertisements we do are on websites.

There are no more state searches, even if you want only state candidates. Candidates from out of state are going to apply, or at least know that you have a vacancy.

Q. What are some other areas board members should be thinking of?

A. We perform a lot of services for boards and all of them are very important. The work the screening committee does for a board is critical. This screening committee can be a board's best friend or worst enemy, so we've developed a process that has been very successful in guiding a committee in the completion of their work. I also can't stress enough the importance of having an impartial third party run the search.

Even if you think as a board that you might know who you want as your next superintendent, confirming that by having an open search done by an impartial third party makes it an even stronger selection at the end.

When I go to talk to boards and they say, "Well, we think we know who our next superintendent is going to be," I'll tell them if they don't want that person to come in with a cloud over them that they were handpicked behind closed doors, then go through a transparent search process. Doing that makes your choice more legitimate.

Q. The public wants and deserves transparency in a process like this.

A. Exactly. And by doing this, then the public can say for themselves, "That candidate was the best choice for our school district."

KSBA belongs to an organization that allows us to tap into a national network of search personnel for reference checking. I can call my colleague in Ohio, for example, and reference check a candidate from Ohio and be confident in what I'm told.

I think what's important for the board to know is that we work for the board and that we don't view superintendent searches as a one-time event, but as a long-term commitment. Long after the superintendent is hired, KSBA will still be working with the board team. ☞

When ‘the buck stops here,’ leaders should step up and say so

It’s a safe estimate that thousands of hours of work go into a KSBA annual conference. Countless meetings, discussions, correspondence, contracts, schedules (written, rewritten...and rewritten), all to create the most beneficial learning environment for participants. Last month’s 75th annual conference was a positive experience for most who attended. But we know it could have been better.

One speaker’s inappropriate sense of humor. A brunch head count that left people waiting for seating and food. Paid presenters feigning indifference to the impact of running long on subsequent sessions. I’m open to suggestions on how to interrupt long-winded speakers with a message of, “Your time is up.”

Obviously, even armed with 20/20 hindsight, some of these issues couldn’t have been avoided. But I admit to a sense of pride at hearing a KSBA colleague tell a complaining guest, “You’re right. I’m sorry. We’ll need to do better.”

Leaders – whether by employment or election – will face situations when reflection casts an unflattering image on decisions, actions and inactions. Critics are not always correct in their assessment, but neither are they always off target.

Kentucky school board members, superintendents and others might discover some valuable leadership lessons from the recent comments by counterparts facing difficult situations.

Acknowledging responsibility

Being a superintendent with a school on the Department of Education’s “persistently low-achieving” list is unpleasant to say the least. So far, whenever the KDE assessment teams have recommended replacing the principals at these schools, that option has been chosen. Such was the case at Greenup County High School. It would have been easy for Superintendent Steve Hall to leave it at that.

But Hall told the *Ashland Daily Independent* that the school’s problems weren’t the singular fault of the outgoing principal. “This is a district issue. It’s a K through 12 issue,” Hall said.

At a forum about the resignation of Marion County Superintendent Donald Smith, board members came under criticism for their perceived “anger” during an open session portion of Smith’s evaluation. Newly elected chairman Michael Mullins told the audience he understood that reaction after watching a rebroadcast of the meeting on the local cable television channel.

“I have to say that I failed at that because I let it go too far too many times,” Mullins said. “When you are sitting in a meeting ... you don’t really get a complete concept of what’s happening until you see it on television.”

Now draw your conclusions from state leaders’ explanations



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

of responsibility for the nearly \$50 million shortfall in SEEK funding this year. The basis for the shortfall has been laid primarily on a difference between the projected number of students enrolled and a larger-than-expected enrollment, hence more slices into a pie set in stone in the state budget.

Questioned during a webinar on the shortfall, Education Commissioner Terry Holliday told viewers, “If you’ll go back to the department’s budget request, you’ll see a request that certainly included more than enough on the student head count.”

Speaking at last month’s KSBA annual conference, Gov. Steve Beshear took a sympathetic posture while offering no additional perspective.

“You’ve been hurt. I don’t pretend we haven’t taken a dime out of education,” the governor said. “I know it’s been tough on you and you’ve had to make tough decisions.”

A day later at the conference, Senate President and gubernatorial hopeful David Williams said the General Assembly was given “flawed data” upon which the SEEK budget was finalized. While Williams offered no further insight, his GOP colleague, Sen. David Givens of Greensburg, told the *Glasgow Daily Times*, “I’m disappointed that the governor’s budget numbers for determining the amount of funding we provided were underestimated. That’s really where the problem has originated.”

It’s an election year. I get that. And I’ve had the “joy” of crafting public messages when any statement can become fodder for campaign advertising.

And school board members and superintendents who build budgets annually – that is, they don’t have to craft a spending plan that must last through the vagaries of two years – ought to understand the difficulties of projecting revenues and expenses that involve multiple billions of dollars.

But wouldn’t it be refreshing to have had someone step up and say, oh, I don’t know, something like, “I’m sorry. We – all of us – missed the projection. We did the best we could to balance the budget. We’ll need to do better.”

The Last Word

In a recent crisis communications training for school staff, I offered the idea that, in an emergency situation – one involving lots of questions and the potential for second-guessing – people will be willing to accept explanations for action, not excuses for inaction.

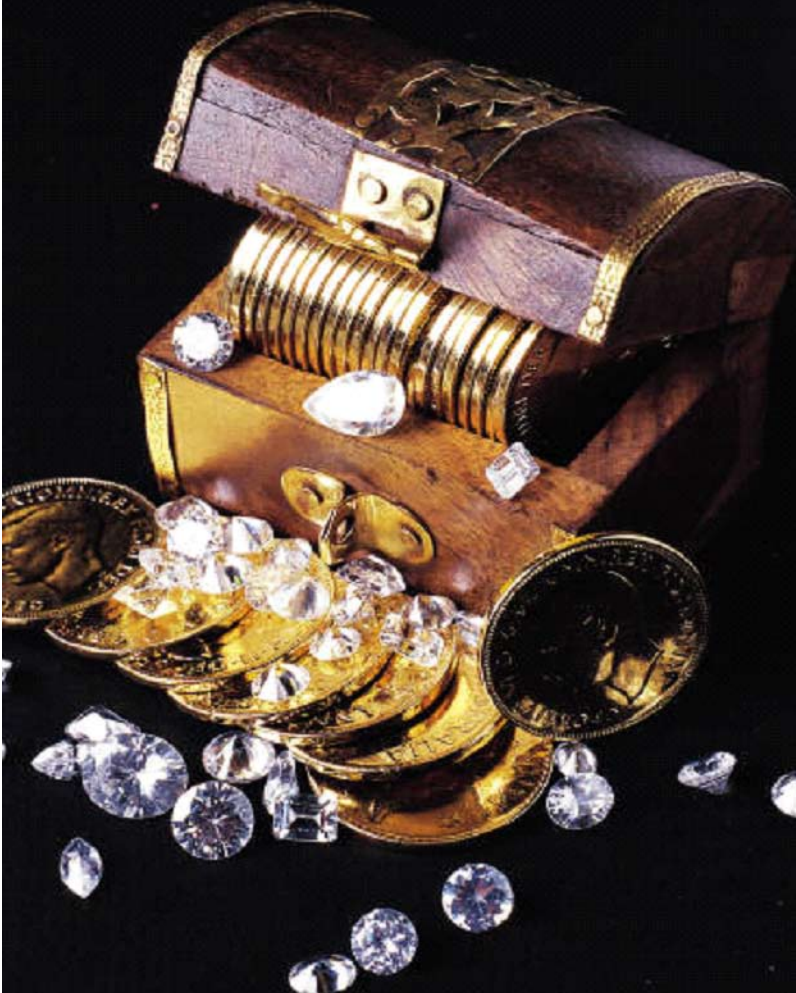
In the everyday opportunities that leaders have to communicate about their actions, I also believe most folks want leaders who understand what Abraham Lincoln meant when he said, “You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

And that’s a message worth getting out. ☘

Does your district have a program that is a local treasure?

Nominate it for a **KSBA PEAK Award**

(Public Education Achieves in Kentucky)



The KSBA *PEAK Award* was created to focus statewide attention on outstanding public school efforts aimed at enhancing student learning skills and, in doing so, promoting the positive impact of public elementary and secondary education in the Commonwealth.

The deadline for entering your program is March 11.

For more details about this program or for how to enter, go to www.ksba.org/peak.

For questions, contact Jenny Wohlleb at 1-800-372-2962.





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Face-to-face advocacy on the Hill

Fifteen Kentucky school board members, superintendents and KSBA staff were among the 800 education advocates at last month's NSBA Federal Relations Network meetings in Washington, D.C.

Below: Sixth District U.S. Rep. Ben Chandler makes a point as Mason County board member Ann Porter listens. Delegates met with the Kentucky members of Congress and/or their staff about K-12 issues.



Bottom left: Hancock County board member Allen Kennedy (left) and Second District U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie exchange ideas as a staff member looks on. The FRN conference also included updates on the No Child Left Behind reauthorization and the federal budget.

Below right: U.S. Rep. Geoff Davis, who represents the Fourth District, holds court in his office with KSBA Associate Executive Director David Baird, right.

Others in these meetings were Boone County board members Ed Massey, Ken Cook and Steve Kinman; Graves County board member Kelly Whitaker and Superintendent Pete Galloway; Jenkins Independent board member Durward Narramore; Jefferson County board member Linda Duncan; Mason County Superintendent Tim Moore; Whitley County board member Delmar Mahan; KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott and Governmental Relations Director Shannon Pratt Stiglitz.

