

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ May 2011



**Building
for the
future**

Letcher County Schools
in tune with **PEAK Award**

SNOW DAYS? S'NO PROBLEM

The census and the school board



We're digging in

to set the agenda for KSBA's Summer Leadership Institute

JULY 8-9, LEXINGTON

KSBA has a limited number of spaces available for workshops on Saturday, July 9. Each workshop is 75 minutes long. Submissions should include a session abstract of no more than 60 words and should indicate one of these primary audiences:

- new school board members
- veteran board members
- superintendents
- high school
- middle school
- elementary
- preschool
- other

The submission form may be accessed online by going to www.ksba.org and clicking on "2011 Summer Leadership Institute Call for Presentations" under *Important bookmarks* at the bottom of the page.

**SUBMISSIONS MUST BE
RECEIVED BY MAY 13**

If you have any questions about the Institute or submitting a proposal, please contact Kerri Schelling via e-mail at kerri.schelling@ksba.org or by calling 800-372-2962 ext. 1276.



FEATURES

KEYS TO LEARNING MATH

Music is part of the equation that has helped Letcher County elementary-level students improve their math scores. Those scores went up after the district established piano labs in all seven elementary schools and are a major reason the program won the spring *PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award* ... Page 8

LEARNING NOT SNOWED OUT

The Owsley County district is reporting promising results as one of the districts that is piloting a method for educating students when the weather doesn't cooperate. The result this year amounted to six instructional days ... Page 10

BUILDING BLOCKS

Homebuilding has been in the doldrums since the recession began, but Casey County may be a bright spot. That's because of a group of students at Casey County High School and what they've done for their education — and their community ... Page 12

COUNTING ON IT

The release of 2010 U.S. census figures may send some school districts to the drawing board, literally. But technology will make the task of reworking board division boundaries both easier and freer of controversy ... Page 14

IT ALL ADDS UP

Why is mathematics the weak link in all Clark County schools? That was what district leaders wanted to know and they used a top-to-bottom "math audit" to get some answers and devise an improvement plan ... Page 16

SUPERINTENDENTS JOIN COUNCILS

Superintendents will sit down with school councils as part of the new principal hiring process that takes effect next month, thanks to passage of Senate Bill 12. The collaboration could be the beginning of a new relationship. Read on for information on the fate of other education legislation ... Page 18



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Janson Sallee, a senior at the Casey County Area Technology Center, is working on his second house as a member of the industrial arts class, which has built 14 homes that have been sold to low-income families in the community. The class provides students with both an education and the opportunity to serve the community ... Article on Page 12.

TAKE NOTE

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Good news for school foundations

According to the GuideStar news-letter, fewer nonprofits reported decreased contributions in 2010 – 33 percent compared with 46 percent in 2009. Sixty-seven percent reported their contributions had increased or stayed the same, up from 54 percent the previous year; most of that was in the “stayed the same” category.

The survey of 1,845 charitable groups reported that online giving in 2010 increased at 58 percent of the organizations, while major gift and events income increased for half of the nonprofits. The majority of participants in the survey, sponsored by the Nonprofit Research Collaborative, also expect contribution levels to increase in 2011.

National attention

While Boone County school board member and former KSBA president Ed Massey assumed the position of

president-elect of the National School Boards Association, several Kentucky school districts also shared the spotlight as clinic presenters during NSBA's annual conference, April 8-11 in San Francisco.

Boone County school board member Bonnie Rickhart and Assistant Superintendent Karen Cheser spoke at a clinic on curriculum, standards and college/career readiness, while Mason County Schools Assistant Superintendents Kelly Middleton and Elizabeth Pettit discussed food services, student input and school climate at another clinic; and Union County Schools Superintendent Josh Powell focused on turnaround school districts at another clinic. KSBA Board Team Development Director Kerri Schelling also was a presenter for the New Board Member Boot Camp.

For more on the Kentucky representation at the NSBA event please see the inside back cover of this magazine. ☘

TELL us more

The Kentucky School Boards Association and several other education groups banded together to encourage teachers to respond to the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) survey.

KSBA, along with the Kentucky Education Association, Kentucky Association of School Administrators and the Jefferson County Teachers Association, contributed prize money for weekly drawings aimed at increasing the response rate. The anonymous survey, which concluded March 25, gathered information about school working conditions from all Kentucky certified educators.

KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott said the association wanted to encourage a good response to the survey because the information will in turn support the work of school boards in aligning all aspects of the school system around students' learning needs.

“Feedback from the TELL Kentucky survey should provide boards with an important snapshot of which conditions are currently supporting student achievement and which ones need to be realigned,” he said.

The pooled prize money went to a drawing for cash awards for schools with 50 percent response rates. Schools that reached 100 percent were entered into a drawing for a \$1,000

cash award that went to an individual educator. At the end of March, the statewide response rate stood at 80 percent, with 42,035 completing the survey. District results will be released by the end of this month.

A teacher from College View Middle School (Daviness County) is the winner of the random prize drawing during the second week of the TELL survey.



From tellkentucky.org

Linking teacher evaluations to student performance: the time is here

Kentucky is currently developing new evaluation systems for both teachers and principals. Steering committees comprising a broad range of educational stakeholders have been assembled to provide the Kentucky Department of Education with guidance on all aspects of these new systems.

KSBA has two representatives on the Teacher Steering Committee—retired teacher and Mason County board member Ann Porter and KSBA's director of Policy Services, Dara Bass. The centerpiece of the Teacher Steering Committee's work will be an expanded teacher evaluation rubric to be deployed statewide in the 2012-13 school year.

According to an analysis by the National School Boards Association's Center for Public Education, virtually all states are changing their evaluation system, with most of these efforts focused on discussions about how to incorporate the statistical measures of teachers' impact on student learning.

In Kentucky, the steering committee currently is considering four evaluation areas: instruction, learning climate, leadership and professionalism, and student performance.

Although it's too soon to determine how Kentucky's final system will look, I'm encouraged that policy makers recognize the need to improve our current system and that they are including student performance as one of the criteria in the new evaluation system.

Given the growing and unmistakable body of evidence documenting the strong connection between teacher effectiveness and student success, it would be unthinkable to miss this opportunity to improve our education system.

That also was the message of the Center for Public Education's recent analysis of teacher evaluation research. The final report, Building a Better Evaluation System, included the following observations:

The current system of evaluating teachers is inadequate.

By rating all but a few teachers as "satisfactory," the majority of evaluation systems across the country currently do not identify the true variation in teacher effectiveness. One study found that only 1 percent of teachers were evaluated as "unsatisfactory."

Although multiple studies have documented a huge variability among teachers, even within the same schools, these differences are largely hidden by inadequate evaluation tools.

Improving teacher effectiveness can dramatically in-



Bill Scott
KSBA Executive Director

crease student learning.

Numerous studies have shown that teachers have the single greatest impact on students' performance. By improving teacher effectiveness and identifying and supporting ineffective teachers early on, districts can raise the level of student achievement and save money at the same time.

Value-added models are not perfect but are much better than the current system.

The fairest way to measure teachers' impact on student performance is through a system that tracks student gains. These value-added models are designed to isolate the effect teachers have on their students' achievement

from other factors that might influence student performance.

Multiple studies have shown that value-added models fluctuate from year to year. While this is a valid concern, these fluctuations in scores should be weighed against our current system that consistently misidentifies large numbers of ineffective teachers as "satisfactory."

Value-add models improve over time.

The more years of data that are used for a specific teacher, the more accurate the model becomes. The chance of misidentifying a teacher's effectiveness drops by 10 percent when one year of data is increased to three years.

Statistical measures are effectively used to evaluate people in other occupations.

Professional athletes, real estate agents, investors and other professionals are evaluated on statistical measures over time. Although these figures vary from year to year and are not the only criterion, they are still considered an important indicator of overall performance.

Multiple measures are the best way to go.

One thing that virtually all researchers agree on is that value-added data should always be one of many performance indicators when evaluating teacher performance. Supplementing value-added data with more traditional measures such as classroom observations will result in a more balanced and accurate picture of a teacher's overall performance.

Of particular interest to school boards, the report stresses that deciding which measures to use and how much weight to place on each are decisions best made at the local level based on a district's data, its available resources and its overall goals for the teacher evaluation system. ☞

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



“This is a great way for our students to become more familiar with global affairs. China’s impact on our economy is already huge, and some of our students may find opportunities through this program.” Simpson County Schools Superintendent James Flynn on a contract with Western Kentucky University that will provide three Chinese teachers for language and culture courses at the high school and two elementary schools. From the *Franklin Favorite*.

“This shows why we are better off collecting the utility tax ourselves. This is how far behind the state is doing the audits.” Hancock County Schools Superintendent Scott Lewis on the district being required to refund a \$40,000 utility tax overpayment dating back to 2009. From the *Hawesville Hancock Clarion*.

“We have a lot of private individuals come into our gymnasiums and football fields with cameras. They get the best seat in the house, right along the sidelines and sometimes they interfere with the officials calling the ball game. It’s just like school pictures ... that school needs a percentage of that revenue. I think we need a control on that.” Pike County Schools Superintendent Roger Wagner



during a board meeting discussion about amateur photographers selling photos from school athletic events in violation of district policy requiring profits to be shared with host schools. From the *Pikeville Appalachian News-Express*.

“I believe board members can play a key role in changing the academic trajectory of students to ensure they are college and career ready when they graduate. Inspiration is a key to reaching ambitious goals – school board members can be a source

of inspiration in our community. Ambitious goals are inspired by high expectations.” Shelby County Schools Superintendent James Neihof during a discussion of setting goals for the school board for the coming year. From the *Shelbyville Sentinel-News*.

“Unfortunately, we still have high school valedictorians in Kentucky who have to take remedial math and English when they get to college. The idea behind the new standards is that if students master them by the time they finish high school, they truly will be prepared for college or a career to take them to the

next level.” Robyn Oatley, director of ReadyKentucky, a Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence informational initiative about the statewide implementation of new common core standards in English/language arts and math. From the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

“I think if we don’t support them, we’ll have to bus our kids somewhere else and pay greens fees at either Fulton or Cunningham, plus we’re going to put our kids on the highway. All we’re doing is trying to be a corporate helper to keep them open so our kids have a place to go.” Hickman County Schools Superintendent Kenny Wilson on his recommendation that the board spend \$2,500 on a membership in a local country club to give the high school golf team a home course. From the *Clinton Hickman County Gazette*.

“I think it’s wonderful ... it grabbed their attention immediately. They started retaining (information) immediately. I work with children all the time who are not sure. I work with children who think they are sure and change their minds. I want to be there to help guide them any way I can.” Patsy Myers, an AmeriCorps college coach at Edmonson County High

Tower of information

“We tested both throughout the buildings. All things being equal, I would like to keep it local, but things are not equal.” McCreary County Schools technology chief Jeff Terry on his recommendation that the board contract with a national wireless service provider as opposed to the low bid by an in-state vendor. From the *Whitley City McCreary County Record*.

“Currently we have limited resource opportunities for students and teachers using mobile devices. A student that brings a personal device, any device that has wireless access, will be able to log on to the school network. Every personal device used frees up a computer workstation for another student. Our last upgrade was six years ago. Now everything from heating and lighting to food services utilizes the network. We definitely need more bandwidth.” Anderson County Schools Chief Information Officer Bret Foster on a district network upgrade that will enable students to use personal wireless devices in school. From the *Lawrenceburg Anderson News*.



School, on the impact of a regional youth summit targeting students who were uncertain about their post-high school college and career plans. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

“One dropout hurts me on the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). I’m done. I won’t make AYP just because of my dropout. I know that right now.” Silver Grove Independent School Superintendent Ken Ellis on the impact of school dropouts



on small districts’ abilities to meet federal No Child Left Behind targets. From the Fort Mitchell *nky.com*.

“We as parents, we know what he does. He’s just an amazing educator, and we are so lucky to have him here in Bell County. It’s a small town and you hear things said. I hope that these things aren’t true, but it has been said that this may not be as budget-motivated as politics-motivated. If that is true, then shame on us because what a farce to lose someone...over politics. I hope, I hope that is not true.” Libby Edwardson, a Middlesboro Independent parent who launched a Facebook protest of the decision to not retain an instructional resource teacher due to budget constraints. From the *Middlesboro Daily News*.

“We asked ourselves if we were testing our students on what they really need to be successful. We found students that were being successful on the tests but were having to take remedial classes in college. Our teachers have done a tremendous job. They have worked late and even on the weekends. They have worked hard to make this happen. That is where the credit goes.” Knox County Schools

Superintendent Walter T. Hulett reacting to a Department of Education academic audit that found tremendous improvement compared with a similar audit in 2006. From the Barbourville *Mountain Advocate*.

“It’s not something we want, it’s not something we advocate (but) they’ve used every inch of space they have in that building.” Hardin County Schools Director of Early Childhood Education Carlena Sheeran on the decision to relocate a preschool program from an elementary school that has become overcrowded due to the influx of families moving to the Fort Knox U.S. Army base. From the Elizabethtown *News-Enterprise*.

“With every schedule, there’s advantages and disadvantages. We’re going to offer almost 60 hours of college credit taught by our teachers in our building, and I’d be willing to bet there’s not another high school in the state that can say that.” Boyle County High School Principal Will Begley on the shift from a four-block to a five-block schedule next year, a move that will eliminate elective classes for a school newspaper and yearbook. From the Danville *Advocate-Messenger*.

“What I tell these girls is to finish their high school education. That is the most important thing they can do to provide for themselves and their babies. They are raising our next generation. We want them to set a good example for their children by finishing high school, and this program (Early Head Start) allows them to do that. If this program wasn’t here, some of them would have to quit school and stay home.” Denise Pool, director of the Caldwell County Schools Family Center, on the positive impact the Early Head Start Program – an initiative on the federal budget chopping block – is having in her district. From the Princeton *Times-Leader*. ☞

Vetoing across-the-board cuts

POINT...

“School districts already are absorbing a \$49 million SEEK reduction this year and another \$28 million next year, both tied to larger-than-expected enrollment. Therefore, district leaders strongly support the governor’s decision to veto yet another cut in SEEK funds that would hit as they deal with things like rising bus fuel prices and other constraints on the resources they have to support the education of their students.” KSBA President and Lincoln County school board member Tom Blankenship supporting the governor’s veto. From the *KSBA eNews Service*.

COUNTERPOINT...

“If we don’t make these minor cuts now to pay for the money we are taking from next year, everybody is going to have to be cut next year, and it will be severely and strongly.” Rep. Jim DeCesare (R-Bowling Green) with an opposite point of view about the spending cut veto. From the *Bowling Green Daily News*.



Letcher County Schools' piano program wins KSBA *PEAK* Award

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

What do the piano and math have in common? In Letcher County Schools, playing one is improving scores in the other.

In the first 18 months of the piano program at its seven elementary schools, Letcher County has seen an improvement in third- and -fourth-grade math scores, discipline and attendance.

"According to No Child Left Behind data, third- and -fourth-grade students who were placed in the piano lab program increased their math scores by 9 percent (in the distinguished and proficient categories) compared to third-grade students who were not a part of this program from the year before," wrote Sherry Sexton, Letcher County's director of Grant Programs. "Also, fourth-grade students increased the percentage of proficient and distinguished math scores by 12 percent."

Results like this helped the Letcher County Districtwide Piano Program win KSBA's spring 2011 *PEAK* (*Public Education Achieves in Ken-*

tucky) Award.

"I was pleased to see that Letcher County believes in the arts and the effect it has in other academic areas of a student's educational experience," said *PEAK* judge Rose Babiak, representing the Kentucky PTA.

Walton-Verona Independent Schools Superintendent Bill Boyle, whose district is a past *PEAK* winner and who served as a judge, said he is happy to see the music program tied directly to mathematics, an area in which schools across the country struggle.

"It's an excellent opportunity for children to add a lifelong enjoyment to their learning and exploration of their talents and abilities," he said.

The district established the program in 2009 after its alumni society donated a Steinway grand piano for the high school.

"We saw the need to establish a pilot program that would not only feed our high school skilled pianists but would also, according to a study by the *Academic Leadership Journal*, increase math scores," Sexton said. "This study proved that students who participated in an organized mu-

music program in their school had an increase in math scores.”

The district’s education foundation, along with the alumni group, donated the \$52,830 for the seven piano labs. The board of education agreed to fund the salary of the piano teacher who travels to each school once a week to work with all third- and -fourth-graders – nearly 500 students.

Gracie Smith is one of those students. She not only sings the praises of the program in her letter nominating the program for the *PEAK Award*, but also of her teacher, Theresa Holonich.

“Ms. Holonich will never move to a different song even if only one student can’t do it,” Smith said. “The students that can play it can help the other students to do better on that song so we can move on ... when we help other people it helps us to get along with them and the other people.”

Holonich wrote that lessons from the piano program translate to areas outside the classroom.

“Teamwork, patience and sharing are a few essential skills that are continuously being practiced while students participate in the piano program,” she said. “The use of teamwork and peer tutoring becomes helpful because it can give students experience in boosting their confidence.”

Smith said her piano lessons also are helping her with math and other subjects.

Holonich “lets us add up all of the notes and it is a lot of mental math that you have to know,” she said. “Since second grade, I have learned more and more about piano and about math ... People may not think that piano helps you with other subjects, but I am one that says it does. I will be sitting in one classroom and they will start talking about something and I will



Photos provided by Letcher County Schools

From left, Letcher County third-graders Shannon Sergent, Cameron Short and Savannah Sergent practice their keyboard skills at one of the district’s seven piano labs. The program has helped improve math scores and attendance.

think to myself that I have heard about it in piano.”

Discipline referrals have dropped since the beginning of the program, with only two in 2009-10, the first year of the program, compared with 10 the previous years. Sexton said guidance counselors have noted an overall change in attitude students have toward school.

And while a 2009-10 outbreak of H1N1 flu in Letcher County Schools caused an overall drop in attendance of 1 percent from the previous year, students participating in the piano program saw a dip of only a half percent

“Since this program is only in its infancy, these are preliminary results,” Sexton said. “We expect to see even greater things in the future.”

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 Kentucky. ☘



Reducing gaps in wintertime learning



Owsley Co. Schools earn six days in KDE snow-day pilot

By Brad Hughes
Staff Writer

According to national weather tracking data, Owsley County gets more inches of snow from November through March than the average U.S. community. In fact, Owsley County has more nighttime temperatures below freezing and more precipitation of all types than the U.S. average over that period.

So when the Kentucky Department of Education sought volunteers for a “nontraditional instructional pilot” to reduce the impact of snow days, Owsley County Schools signed up. And in April, it became the first Kentucky district to earn instructional credit for days when the roads were too hazardous to travel.

“We missed 25 days or more the last three years and at least 20 days for several years before that,” said Superintendent Melinda Turner. “We started looking to create some type of learning experience for our students during snow days.

“So when we asked for a waiver (last year after missing 26 days), we made KDE aware that we had been providing some instruction to continue learning. When the pilot was offered, our administrative team and our teachers all bought in,” she said.

At that point, Owsley County personnel were going on faith that the “virtual learning” option would gain legislative approval. On March 9, Gov. Steve Beshear signed House Bill 427, allowing KDE to approve as many as 10 “nontra-

ditional” days for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 years for districts that missed an average of 20 or more days in the previous three years and which use alternative methods of instruction on days when the school district is closed for health or safety reasons.

In mid-April, Education Commissioner Terry Holliday granted the 780-student district credit for six instructional days for what the district called its “Snowbound Project.”

A head start

After so many years with the equivalent of a month of snow days, teachers and administrators at Owsley County’s two schools began working on a bad weather learning plan in late 2009.

“This first year was a ‘snow packet,’ materials that focused on review of reading and math,” said high school Principal Paul Green. “It was strictly voluntary but we had up to 70 percent of the students who participated.”

High school students had a mix of written materials along with online learning tools. Students in the K-6 Owsley County Elementary received only written study materials.

“The first year helped us because



Students in Amanda Turner’s Owsley County Elementary School class work with new portable technology that is a critical part of the district’s bad weather distance-learning plan.

we knew we might not get it right, but anything was better than the kids sitting at home for 25 days in the middle of winter, and then having to go to class into the middle of June,” Green said.

Making it work

The early onset of the winter of 2010 pressured Owsley County staff to get ready for a full-blown snow day instructional plan. Weather cancelled classes for 11 days before Christmas. Students and staff were in class only 13 days from the end of November to the first week in February. In fact, the first home learning plan was handed to students a day earlier than planned due to weather that eventu-

ally closed schools for more than a week. Thanks to a survey of students and parents, the district knew that 75 percent to 80 percent of households had both computers and Internet connectivity. But the plan needed a backup for other students.

“We knew going in that we were going to have some children who did not have Internet or computer capacity or the support structure at home to do the work,” said elementary Principal Stephen Gabbard. “So we built in an ‘assistance plan’ for when students returned to school with the work not completed. Teachers helped those students based on what they turned in when schools reopened.”

Teachers put together three days of assignments, with the plan to be implemented when the weather forecast called for a gap of as many as six days before classes could resume.

“We felt a day-for-a-day set of assignments would be too much,” Green said. “If you gave kids six hours of instruction, honestly, how many kids are going to do six hours of work in a single day on a snow day? So we chose to go with a two-days-to-do-one day’s work ratio.”

Using the district’s telephone notification system, Turner not only announced

cancellation of classes, but included information about what day’s assignments students should work on. Upon return to school, students had four to five days to complete the work. “We built in that flexibility because we knew you couldn’t just come back and say, ‘It’s due today,’” Green said.

At the conclusion of the two, three-day at-home learning periods – one in mid-January, the second stretching from the end of January into early February – 90 percent of Owsley County’s students had completed their assignments.

Measuring success, moving forward

Owsley County Elementary fourth-grade teacher Amanda Turner said she saw plenty of positives that she attributes to the snowbound pilot.

“They hadn’t lost as much knowledge; they came back pretty much on task,” she said. “Sometimes when we miss so much school, we have to spend so much time on review. That wasn’t the case this time.

“I really think this is an asset with the kids being able to practice their skills at home.”

Administrators are quick not to oversell the project’s impact on areas such as preparation for this year’s state assessment tests.

“We were desperate for instructional

days because we had missed so many days in December. Now we’ve got those kids engaged. I think it will have an impact, but I don’t think you can take the test results and link it to the Snowbound Pilot, either way,” said Green.

“We don’t want to send the perception that classroom learning can be replaced with what you can get on the Internet in the home,” Superintendent Turner said. “This is a supplement, not something that’s going to decrease the importance of time learning in the classroom.”

But Owsley County Director of Pupil Personnel Tim Bobrowski sees future potential for the effort.

“We’re talking about snow days here, but what about other districts facing huge losses of time, such as following heavy flooding?” Bobrowski said. “This could have a major impact on districts beyond just snow days.”

Owsley County progressed the farthest of the five districts – all in eastern Kentucky – in the first year of the state pilot. David Cook, director of KDE’s Division of Innovation and Partner Engagement, said the pilot will be expanded for the 2011-12 year as additional qualifying districts have expressed interest. ❧

Vocabulary 101: Understanding your insurance policy

Like education, the insurance field has its own terminology. There are some key terms that board teams will hear when they review insurance bids this spring. Here are a few and what they mean to a policy.

Property

Insurance form: All-risk or special coverage insurance policies provide protection against most perils except those specifically excluded. A named or specified-peril contract is less inclusive and therefore cheaper.

Covered items and value: Make sure that all the property you want covered is accurately listed on the insurance proposal and that it is correctly valued.

Casualty

Aggregate: Aggregate is the total amount of money an insurance company will pay out on your behalf during a policy year. Most policies limit the aggregate, so this is a good area for comparison among bids.

Defense costs: Most policies provide funds for legal services and some limit the amount that will be paid. A policy with defense costs inside the liability limit will be cheaper but will

provide less protection.

Policy type: Casualty insurance can be written on a claims-made basis, which tends to be less expensive, or an occurrence basis. Generally, the occurrence type covers claims years later if they originated during the insured period.

Punitive damages: These damages are meant to punish defendants in a lawsuit and are not covered by all insurance policies. An insurance contract that provides punitive damage protection usually costs more.

Workers’ compensation

Proper payroll: Make sure that the total payroll for your organization is being considered.

Correct experience modifier: This numerical value calculates the frequency and severity of workers’ compensation claims in a school district. Make sure an insurance proposal is based on an up-to-date modifier.

— by *Marty Nemes*, Insurance Marketing Agent, Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services and the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust.

MEASURING UP



Student-built houses make an impact in the classroom — and the community

By Wayne Dominick

Houses are usually measured in square feet. In Casey County, thanks to some students, houses are measured by the impact they have on the community.

Since 1996, Garlen Whitis' industrial arts classes at Casey County High School, with some help from students at the Casey County Area Technology Center, have built 14 houses that have been sold to low-income families in the community.

Liberty Mayor Steve Sweeney said it's impossible to measure the impact the houses have had on the community. "Garlen and his kids have made it possible for families to get out of renting and have a home of their own. Plus, it increases property values," he said. "It's good for the homeowners and good for the community."

"This isn't just a project. It's going to be somebody's home."

— Casey County High School sophomore Ryan Hines, left

School Media Specialist Dale Hoskins said the program has an added benefit: “I don’t have any hard data, but I know for a fact that there are kids who stayed in school so they could be in Garlen’s class and work on the houses.”

All this makes approving the project an easy decision for Casey County school board member Marilyn Coffey. “This is what education is supposed to be about. It’s hands-on learning and it keeps students in school,” she said.

Coffey added that even though the project has been a success for several years, the board requires the students to come to a board meeting every year to get the project approved. “We look forward to hearing from them. They have to tell us their plans and what the cost is going to be.”

Whitis says the project has come a long way since he started it. “I wasn’t sure what the board was going to say that first year so I kind of hedged my bet by going to one of the local banks and seeing if they would finance the house if the board didn’t,” he explained.

Whitis didn’t need the backup as the board gave an enthusiastic thumbs up to the plan.

He got the idea to build a house after participating in a mission trip that built a house in a week. On the way home, he started thinking that his students were on at least the same skill level as the crew that built the house. “I did some figuring and realized that we had about the same number of man hours in a year as we did on the mission project,” he said.

The only thing holding him back was a technical issue. “We don’t do electricity in my class and I figured we probably should include that in the house.” Luckily, Whitis was able to

team up with instructor Mike True, who was eager to get his students some hands-on learning.

“There is only so much you can do in the classroom,” True said. “Out on a job, you run into a lot of problems that you have to think your way through. This project gives these kids some great experience. It will make a difference when they go to apply for a job and when they’re out on their first job.”

Community partners

Collaboration has been Whitis’ approach to the project from the beginning. “There’s no way I could ever do this by myself. This is truly a community effort. I couldn’t begin to tell you how many people have helped me out along the way,” he said.

One of those community helpers, Dan Hitchcock of Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, came to Whitis with the idea to make the house more energy efficient. “I told Garlen if the house passed the efficiency test, it would qualify for a \$1,200 rebate,” he said. “It wouldn’t cost him that much to do it and it would teach the kids how to incorporate energy efficiency into the project.”

The teaching aspect was much more important than the rebate to Whitis. “Thanks to Dan, the kids are not only learning how to build an energy-efficient house, they are also learning how to conduct the tests to see if the house meets the requirements,” he said.

Jody Raney, a 2008 graduate who now works for R.J. Corman, said, “I had worked some construction before I got involved in the house project and thought I knew a lot, but I can’t believe how much I learned building the house.”

Senior Hilary Thomas said female students get equal treatment ‘on the job.’

“We have to do everything the guys do,” she said. “When it was time to put the shingles on the roof, Mr. Whitis knew I had some experience, so he put me in charge of a crew to do it.”

She added that no one on the crew gave her a hard time or balked at having a girl in charge. “We all worked together to get the job done,” Thomas said.

Junior Collis Brooks said the best part of working on the house is the variety. “No two days are ever the same,” he said. “Every day we’re working on something else. It’s why we learn so much.” ❧

—Dominick is a writer from Frankfort



Casey County High School Industrial Arts students listen as instructor Garlen Whitis gives them their work assignments for the day.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

New census information may trigger election division changes

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The Bullitt County school board has been waiting for 2010 U.S. census figures before taking up the issue of redrawing election division boundaries, but Chairwoman Doris Ashby isn't exactly eagerly anticipating the process.

"It's hard to get those lines where they should be with the population, because in some areas it's so sparse and in others it's so dense," she said. "It's going to be difficult – I'm not looking forward to it."

The new census figures were released in March and showed Bullitt County's population had increased by 21.4 percent.

"We know where the areas of growth have been in our county, but it may not be enough to actually change any lines," Ashby said.

The Bullitt County board earlier had made an attempt at looking at the lines before deciding to defer action until seeing the census figures. Ashby said the county clerk is assisting the board with information and maps.

Unlike other governmental units, such as the state legislature and county governments, school boards are under no legal directive to redraw their election divisions, said KSBA attorney John Fogle. The law, KRS 160.210,

simply states that "Any changes made in division boundary lines shall be to make divisions as equal in population and containing integral voting precincts insofar as is practical."

However, that same statute provides a petition avenue for citizens to appeal to the state Board of Elections if boundaries are unreasonably disproportionate. "In addition," Fogle said, "a wide disparity could result in the district running afoul of the 'one person, one vote' rule, which applies under the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution."

Magisterial district reapportionment begins this month and generally will be concluded in September, while the state legislature will decide when it will tackle state legislative and Congressional district boundaries, which either can be during a regular or special session, said Sarah Ball Johnson, executive director of the state Board of Elections.

Until the legislature acts, precinct boundaries are frozen. That is an important point for school boards, in terms of avoiding split precincts.

"It's just really hard when you have a split precinct," Johnson said. "You put a lot of pressure on the county clerk, the county election board and particularly the poll worker in knowing who gets what school district."

However, the timing of any election division change is up to the school board, she said. County election boards, for example, begin working on precinct drafts while waiting for the legislature to complete its work.

"It really is going to vary from county to county. You can take a look at the stability of your county, take a look at what districts you're in and have you changed in the last two censuses or not," Johnson said.

The law prohibits boards from redoing electoral divisions after Aug. 1 in a school board election year. The next round of board elections isn't until 2012, however. Independent school districts are not affected because their members are elected at large.

Been there, done that

The Warren County school board realigned its division boundaries several years ago in response to the population growth in that county.

"It was just a realization that the numbers are supposed to be fairly equal and it was kind of out of kilter and needed to get back into line. It was a fairly seamless process," said board Chairman Mike Wilson, who also sits on the KSBA board.

The Boone County school board, whose county is among the tops in the state for both overall population growth and increase in the number of people

School districts line up behind

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Kentucky school districts are feeling the effects of what demographer Michael Price calls "two Kentuckys."

"Many parts of the east and west are slow-growth or declining and the central part of the state and metropolitan regions are growing," said Price, the interim director of the Kentucky State Data Center at the University of Louisville. "We essentially have two Kentuckys going on demographically."

Those areas that are losing population are in a cycle of negative or low natural increase – the difference between birth and death rates – compounded and caused over time by net outmigration, particularly of young people, he said.

"And when you're in that situation, it's kind of very difficult to overcome. The negative population momentum will last for some time until the population stabilizes at a much lower level," Price said.

That comes as no surprise to Fulton County school board Chairwoman Melanie Atwill, whose district lost 29 percent of its population ages 17 and under over the last decade.

"It's disappointing but I don't think it's surprising," Atwill said. "Because of farming not using as many people and also we don't have as big a workforce now as far as factories. There aren't as many jobs here as there are in other places, so the people are not going to stay."

It's a domino effect, she said. "If they can't get jobs, they're

See "Two" continued on Page 17

ages 17 and under, went through the reapportionment process six or seven years ago, board Chairman Steve Kinman said.

“I guess the one thing I can say is to be open and flexible and remember that it’s about kids and it’s about the betterment of the school district,” he said. “It should not be politically driven. You should be as transparent as you can possibly be,” both among board members and with constituents.

Kinman and Ashby emphasized the need to look at the school district as a whole and represent what Kinman describes as “the students, the teachers, the parents, the administrators in all of our schools.”

“When we think about being on the school board,” Ashby said, “it’s about serving the children – and not just the children in my district. We don’t look at it that way.”

Resources

The Boone County board worked in conjunction with the city-county planning commission, with which it partners on a Geographical Information System. Kinman calls it a more “scientific approach.”

“If you didn’t have GIS mapping, we would be probably looking at a map on Google saying, ‘OK, we have this many third-graders on this street and we have this many eighth-graders on this street,’” he said.

Boone County Schools Superintendent Randy Poe said the GIS also cut down on any controversy that sometimes accompanies the redistricting process.

“By utilizing the GIS system, we

were able to remove politics from the decision. I think that’s what made the process easier,” he said. The district took future growth into account when it drew the new lines, so Poe doesn’t expect the new census figures to trigger any further changes.

The state’s area development districts also can assist school boards in any redistricting, using a program it designed for magisterial districts in combination with GIS mapping.

The system takes the new census data and existing boundaries “and pushes those two things together,” providing a computer view of the population by electoral division, said Shane New, director of information systems and technology for the Bluegrass Area Development District. It also shows census blocks, letting users know how many people need to be added or subtracted from a division to bring it within the goal, and it can run various scenarios for making adjustments. The cost for this assistance is around \$3,000.

“No. 1, I know there’s no way you can do it manually that fast, and No. 2, I’m pretty certain you can’t do it that accurately. It takes human error out of the equation,” New said.

The Kentucky State Data Center at the University of Louisville has complete 2010 Kentucky census data that boards will need.

“They can just click on a map and it will open up all the block and tract data for their county. And then there are links to the Census Bureau’s block maps. So we’re trying to make it as accessible as possible,” Interim Director Michael Price said. ☞

Biggest increase overall population (%)

Spencer	45.0
Scott	42.7
Boone	38.2
Oldham	30.6
Jessamine	24.4
Warren	23.0
Bullitt	21.4

Biggest increase ages 0-17 (%)

Scott	45.9
Spencer	38.3
Boone	36.3
Oldham	32.8
Shelby	24.5
Jessamine	21.8
Warren	21.1

Biggest loss overall population (%)

Breathitt	-13.8
Fulton	-12.1
Harlan	-11.8
Clay	-11.5
Knott	-7.4
Floyd	-7.0
Hickman	-6.8

Biggest loss ages 0-17 (%)

Fulton	-29.0
Clay	-23.4
Martin	-22.1
Breathitt	-21.6
Leslie	-20.7
Harlan	-19.4
Knott	-18.1

‘two Kentuckys’

Math audits = formula for success in Clark County Schools

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

As they were analyzing data last year, leaders of Clark County Schools realized the district's math program was not adding up. "Every year we do a districtwide data analysis," said Superintendent Elaine Farris. "We bring in all the data we have, from KCCT and the other current data, and all of our elementary, middle and high school principals look at the data across the district, and we look at the issues in elementary, middle and high as a group. That's how we all ended up on the same page, that math is an issue."

To find out why and to help the district form a plan of attack, the district contracted with the University of Kentucky to conduct a districtwide math audit, which took most of March.

Math educators with UK's Partnership Institute for Math and Science Education Reform observed math classes in each of Clark County's schools, while meeting with teachers, principals and groups of parents and students. They asked detailed questions ranging from the physical setup and classroom environment to resources and lesson effectiveness. They also studied assessment data and looked at how principals communicate with math teachers, as well as math resources and math scheduling.

"When I was teaching, my school went through a very similar process," said math auditor Terry Parkey. "It's very helpful.

It gives you a different perspective with fresh eyes. As a teacher, it might give you feedback where you say, 'I didn't know I was doing that.'"

Farris said there are many reasons students are not successful in math and the audit will help identify them.

"We don't want to ever say that it's personnel, because oftentimes it's barriers that we've put in place," she said. "Sometimes it's policies we have in place, it could be the amount of time that we have our students getting math instruction, and sometimes it's how we have the day structured. We wanted to look at all of that to see if any of that was a barrier to learning for any of our students."

She said the audit will help them identify where the district has been in math and why.

"Before we made any changes, I wanted to know



Jim Moore, a math auditor with the University of Kentucky's Partnership Institute for Math and Science Education Reform, observes an algebra class at Clark County High School.

going to move. If they move, there aren't going to be as many children."

The situation is frustrating for Atwill, a former special education director in the school district. Along with Fulton Independent and Carlisle and Hickman counties, it recently won a *PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award* for its Four Rivers Scholarship program, which was created to further both educational attainment and economic development.

"I think we're working hard in this area to bring more people in, encouraging our students to get an education so they can come back and be employed here and start new possibilities. We're doing the right things but if you don't have more kids coming in..." she said.

On the flip side, northern and much of central Kentucky are growing robustly at a naturally higher rate and also by adding population through migration. Migrants, Price said, are typically younger, which adds to the school-age population.

Boone County school board Chairman Steve Kinman said his district feels the affects of that rapid growth.

"We're averaging about a building every other year. We're always talking about buildings and if we're not in the middle

why we were struggling with our students in math," she said. "We do audits of many other things to find out contributing factors, so I felt like if we did a districtwide math audit, it would give us an overall look at whether or not what we are seeing is systemic, instructional issues, structure issues. Then we could make some districtwide decisions on what we need to do differently to improve the math performance of our students."

Kim Zeidler-Watters, director of the P-12 Math and Science Outreach Unit of the UK partnership, said the audit is more than just observations.

"We're looking at classroom observations, materials, resources in the library and using all of those data points to make recommendations of what schools should do as far as improving their programs," she said. "It shouldn't be anything that they don't already know; it just packages it in a way that makes more sense when someone else can say it and put it on paper in a logical way for them to look at it."

The report, which was expected by the end of April, will address both individual school and district needs. It will not single out teachers or principals.

"We're working on doing a report for each individual school around certain indicators," Zeidler-Watters said. "So each school will have improvement recommendations and findings around instruction, curriculum and leadership. After we have those reports done for elementary, middle and high schools, we're going to look at where we see commonalities across the district."

"We're going to make some general recommendations for the district to consider as far as professional development and support that the district plays a role in providing that appears to be showing up among multiple schools."

Assistant Superintendent Pat Rosenthal said the audit will get everyone working from the same page.

of building them, we are certainly renovating them, replacing roofs, cooling units, updating technology. It's an ongoing thing we have to do," he said.

Schools are the harbingers of Kentucky's changing demographics, Price said. The new census figures show that minority groups are fueling the state's growth. There was a decline over the decade of 28,000 white, nonHispanic children ages 17 and under, but an increase of 60,000 minority children in that age group – half of that number Hispanic.

Hispanic population growth occurred in all counties except a handful. Black population grew at twice the rate of general population, but 75 percent of that growth was in Fayette and Jefferson counties and 63 counties lost black population, Price said.

While Hispanic growth rate has been rapid, it doesn't necessarily follow that this will put a strain on education services for these students. The Hispanic population may have doubled but it still represents just 3 percent of Kentucky's population.

"Diversity occurs among children first," Price said. "You'll see more of a transition there than you will in the general adult population. So schools will be one of our first institutions that will face our new reality." ❧

"We'll be able to sit down as principals and administrators and come up with a plan, to come up with things we want everyone working on," she said. "We'll identify those things that have been working well for us, so it will give us a direction for improving math achievement."

Zeidler-Watters said the report is something the district can use for multiple years.

"They're often not things that are quick fixes where you can take the report and have everything done in a month," she said. "It's something that gives them short- and long-term recommendations to work on. And some of the long-term recommendations often have implications for budgets and are not something that can be done in the short term because you have to plan for those as a school district. Integration of technology can often be one of those."

School board Chairwoman Judy Hicks said Clark County has good math instructors and specialists, but sometimes a fresh set of eyes looking at things in a different way can help them get back on track.

"In the past, there has been a bit of resistance in having 'outsiders' if you will, come in and help us improve. 'We can do this on our own,' has sometimes been an attitude," she said. "So it's refreshing to have an administration willing to accept outside help and request independent observers come in and help us. We want what is going to be most helpful to students in helping them be college and career ready and if it takes outsiders to help us do that, hey, bring them."

Farris said the quick turnaround time for the final report was also a big selling point of the audit.

"We have no idea what the audit is going to say, but we know we'll have some short-term and long-term changes to make," she said. "But our goal was to have it this year so we could have some changes in place by this fall." ❧

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Superintendents gain greater input in principal hiring

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Collaboration will be the key as school superintendents take a seat on school councils to discuss filling principal vacancies when a new state law takes effect June 8.

The inclusion of the superintendent as chairman and full voting member of the council is a new twist, as outlined in Senate Bill 12. The superintendent will replace the outgoing principal on the panel.

Shannon Stiglitz, KSBA's governmental relations director, predicted the new process would produce a different kind of relationship between superintendents and school councils.

"I think it will remove some of the tension between the two bureaucratic levels, in all honesty," she said. "I think it'll be great to see superintendents and councils working together on selecting the most important person in the school leadership."

Ronda Harmon, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils, said she thinks the change will be made "without a hitch" where all parties have a trusting relationship and have the best interests of the school and students at heart.

"Hopefully this process will not only result in really good principals but also result in a strong relationship between the superintendent and the council," she said.

The new provisions state that the council, superintendent included, will review applications for the principal's job and decide on their choice by majority vote. The superintendent will then hire that person based on the decision. Before this, the school council did the hiring with little input from the superintendent.

Wilson Sears, a former superintendent who now oversees the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, said the new system will encourage collaboration between councils and superintendents.

"And I think in the end that will result in a better selection of principals for our buildings," he said.

The degree of collaboration probably will vary from district to district, Sears said, depending on the willingness of all parties to work together. Input from superintendents can be valuable, he said, "because of the experience that superintendents have had in leadership areas – many of whom have been principals themselves."

Superintendents need to be conscious of the effect their presence will have on a council, Harmon said, and of their new role as an equal member of the group. She said she's heard from some council members who are a little nervous about the superintendent being part of the process, whereas it's not creating a ripple among councils whose superintendents "have always been a real collaborator in the process."

The new system does not directly impact school boards, who still are not allowed to be involved in personnel other than to hire a superintendent. However, the performance of a principal and the superintendent's response to that may be considered during a board's evaluation of the schools chief, said

KSBA Associate Executive Director David Baird.

One important caveat in the new law states that the council can't consider a principal who was previously removed from a position in the district for cause. This would prevent a council from doing an end run around a superintendent's earlier dismissal decision.

Challenges

Harmon said timing of the bill's effective date has created some confusion. Many councils with principal vacancies will be in the middle of the hiring process in June so a contract can begin July 1 with the new fiscal year.

"We're recommending that they go ahead and start communicating with their superintendent as much as possible in their process and invite the superintendent to be part of their training if their process is going to last past June 8," she said.

Her association also will have to work on revising best practices for principal hiring to reflect the superintendent's inclusion in the process.

Council members must receive training that includes principal hiring, which raises the question of the superintendent's inclusion – as a council member – in that activity.

Harmon said the education organizations involved and the state education department will need to resolve that question. At this point, she said her group recommends the superintendent or his or her designee take the training with each council for each principal hiring. The training, she said, is where decisions are made about the hiring system, including ironing out the process that will be used and the timeline.

Backstory

KSBA, KASS and the Kentucky Association of School Administrators had pushed for several years to assign additional hiring authority for principals to the superintendent. During the 2011 session, the original version of SB 12 reflected that and then morphed into this current form.

"It was really sort of collaboration and the thoughts of people from the field, people from other interested advocacy groups and legislators," said Stiglitz. Besides the education organizations, those groups included the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and the Kentucky Farm Bureau.

The hybrid bill was not opposed by either the school council group or the Kentucky Education Association. KEA had traditionally opposed allowing superintendents to directly hire principals.

Another factor this time around, Stiglitz said, was that most lawmakers had come to believe that the superintendent should have a role in principal hiring.

"It came down to developing what that role would be and putting the process down on paper," she said.

All the advocacy groups involved also agreed at the outset that the outgoing principal should not be part of the process of hiring his or her successor, Stiglitz added.

"When you start with that premise it lends itself very easily to who would serve instead and giving the superintendent the opportunity to do that," she said. ☞

OTHER 2011 EDUCATION LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW

HB 192 – Requires secondary schools to provide voting information to 12th graders.

HB 228 – Increases campaign contribution limit for school board candidates to \$1,000 per election.

HB 425 – Directs KDE and state Personnel Cabinet to adopt a salary schedule for administrators at the state schools for the blind and deaf comparable to those in public school districts.

HB 427 – Now in effect, allows districts to add 30 to 45 minutes to the school day – for only this year – to make up for missed days due to weather, illness or other emergencies. Also directs commissioner to forgive makeup days beyond June 21.

HB 428 – Now in effect, directs the state education department to provide funds to a district for a school that has been closed because it is structurally unsound or uninhabitable. The funding is to be used to retire debt or make debt service payments on that building. If funding is not available, money is to come from the state's general fund surplus.

Passed Senate, no House vote

SB 3 – Allows districts to approve “voluntary charter schools;” makes changes in school attendance boundary procedures aimed at Jefferson County Schools.

SB 13 – Provides greater financial incentives to science and math teachers based on student AP exam performance.

SB 56 – Requires elective Bible literacy courses in public schools.

SB 69 – Establishes an option and parameters for early high school graduation.

Passed House, no Senate vote

HB 67 – Allows school districts to sell advertising on the sides of school buses.

HB 120 – Requires the state school board to set up an evaluation system for all certified personnel.

HB 123 -- Incorporates federal requirements for the release of educational records to the juvenile justice system.

HB 225 – Raises the mandatory attendance age to 18 by 2016 and sets up protocols for alternative education programs.

No vote in either chamber

SB 31 – Prohibits a district from starting school before the third Monday in August.

SB 35 – Bars unfunded mandates on local school districts as a result of General Assembly actions.

SB 36 – Requires the state education department to issue core content standards and develop new courses for college and career readiness.

SB 74 – Dictates interscholastic athletic district and region requirements for the Kentucky High School Athletics Association.

HB 16 – Increases physical activity requirement in grades K-5 and mandates steps to curb childhood obesity.

HB 30 – Sets “digital citizenship” requirements for students and teachers.

HB 89 – Adds body mass index to required student physical exam.

HB 103 – Authorizes public charter schools in Kentucky and outlines requirements and application process.

HB 388 – Allows districts to use opening and closing day and primary election day as makeup days.

HB 411 – Sets up a fund for end-of-fiscal-year unspent SEEK money for distribution to local districts if needed.

HB 476 – Clarifies the definition of a “persistently low-performing school” and gives local board teams the discretion to implement alternative models for such schools.

Felicia Smith and David Couch

on KDE's new platform for connecting standards and resources



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 associate commissioners at the Kentucky Department of Education, Felicia Cumings Smith and David Couch, pictured at left. Smith, in charge of the Office of Next Generation Learners and Couch, head of the Office of Knowledge, Information and Data Services, explain the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System, a new \$5.5 million, three-year contract with a New York technology firm to create a "one-stop shop" to help teachers incorporate new common core standards in their classrooms, and eventually give them instant access to tools to improve their teaching skills.

Q. What is the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System?

Felicia Smith: It's a technology platform for Kentucky educators that will provide a space for them to interact with both fellow educators and with resources and other technological tools that will be designed for continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

This platform, once populated (with resources or links to resources), is intended to create easy access to standards, assessment, instructional resources, professional development, teacher effectiveness and eventually, district and school planning.

Think of it as a one-stop shop for access to information to help improve teaching practices. That is how this platform is designed.

David Couch: It originated from Kentucky's Race to the Top application. A lot of folks got together and discussed where there were gaps as far as resources that help teachers address some of these areas. From there it turned into Unbridled Learning, which is really KDE's business plan.

I've been here since the early '90s and what's different about this from other instructional tools that happened to be electronic is we've never really had the standards that were linked to instructional resources. It's something I've heard from the instructional areas that they've wanted for quite some time.

You can go to a lot of effort to say, "Here is where we have a lot of holes," but what we've not done is give them a lot of tools to address those holes. They want to know what the standards are and they'll ask, "What are the kinds of things that will help me to better teach those standards and address those standards?"

We've never really had that linked. It's been all over the place and if you really spend a lot of time you could maybe find those resources. We're trying to make this a better experience for the average teacher.

Smith: We will be linking those assessments that they can use in their classrooms on a day-to-day basis, as well as the data that will be available around student achievement which will be linked to professional development. If you see in the system that your students are not performing at a certain level on a particular standard, then there will be professional development opportunities that are linked to student performance and achievement.

Couch: We're trying to put all of these resources in one place. It's like a shell and you're filling it up. You're either populating it with content or you are pointing it at things that already exist.

For things that we've already made investments in in Kentucky, such as KET's Encylomedia – whose product is our video storage and delivery mechanism which is used regularly by 90-95 percent of the schools – we're not recreating that.

What we are doing for instructional resources is pointing to that product where appropriate.

As Felicia mentioned with the formative testing piece, which is something schools are really interested in, we've never really had anything available electronically at the department level for those formative tasks and diagnostic tests. This helps teachers with the daily types of work that we've never had available as a state before. It really is unique.

We're pointing to certain things and having certain things that never existed before, but as Felicia said, we're trying to bring it into one area to where they don't have to know if it's residing there or somewhere else in order to get to it.

Q. So if teachers have a need, this should be the one place they can go to be pointed in the direction of the right resource?

Couch: We're not trying to set the expectations that it will all be available immediately. It's being done in phases. We're trying to get the first wave of the standards (that went out in April) to the instructional network to let the teachers see the standards, the deconstructed standards, and we'll let them know some other things that are coming online.

In the June time frame, July, they'll see the instructional resources linked to it. In August there will be more to it. It's not all going to be there on day one.

Q. So what phases can teachers expect in the future?

Smith: There are standards in English/language arts and math, which are the core standards. We are making those available with the deconstructed standards, which is taking those standards into teacher language to help with day-to-day practice and interpretation of what those standards mean.

That is the first phase of this project that will become more broadly available in June to all 45,000 teachers.

Also in June, we anticipate having the instructional resources populated so that they can be directly linked to particular standards that are being taught on a day-to-day basis.

As we move through the year, we will be working on bringing different components of CIITS into play. The first two pieces are the standards and the instructional resources, which we're really focusing on.

Q. So in addition to linking to all of these resources, this system is putting the standards together with the correct resources?

Couch: Yes. You'll have the standard and the three or four resources. We're also looking at lesson plans being a part of this, as well.

Smith: I think the question you are getting to is: Is there a level of quality control to make sure the standards are linked to the appropriate resources, the just-right resources? And there are quality control checks behind the scenes to make sure those are correct, to make sure we have aligned the standards to the right resources. And there will be choices so

teachers can decide what is most appropriate for their context and classroom.

Those sources that are linked now are quality resources. And over the next year we will be creating additional resources in our Content Leadership Networks, which are in place. Over the next year, those teachers will be focusing on designing lessons and instructional resources, as well as assessment strategies to be used over the course of the year. We'll do some quality control of those and those we believe to be of the highest quality will be added to our CIITS resources.

Q. What should board members know about CIITS?

Couch: For board members keeping up with finances, they may ask, "What's this going to cost my district? What do I have to do to prepare my district?" The department of education has really been a leader in cloud-based computing, which is not buying a bunch of servers but housing data elsewhere.

CIITS is housed in New York, so all school districts will have to have is a computer that has a browser on it. They don't have to have to install specific hardware or software in their districts. This is a cloud-based solution.

The primary focus of this is for teachers, but we're hoping school board members and the other academic leaders in the school buildings and district offices have interest in this as well.

Q. What can be expected of this platform in the future?

Smith: Professional development will be offered in this way, how they seek out resources for their classrooms will be this way, so I think this is a real critical piece to all of this.

We know that a major component of 21st-century learning is being able to network, so educators eventually will be able to network within this system and share across districts and regions. I think that is something that's really powerful that we can expect down the road once this platform gets fully established.

So not only are we having conversations about what does 21st-century learning look like for our students, but we're also having that conversation about what it looks like for professionals. You'll see that pop up more and more, not only in the work that the department is doing, but as we think about certification.

Working with the Education Professionals Standards Board and working with the Council on Postsecondary Education, this is going to be an ongoing theme and will become a part of our regular discourse as we're preparing educators for classrooms of today, but also tomorrow's classrooms.

Professional development that is going to be a part of how to use this system effectively will be critical and we are planning that as we think about what we want to put strategically in place and introduce to teachers over the next year.

We anticipate over the next year looking at the opportunities to weave in professional development: how to use the system, how to make it meaningful to day-to-day instruction. ☘

Who will whet your community's appetite for education news?

School board members, when was the last time you asked a constituent where he or she got the most credible information about your school system?

Superintendents, what has your district done to measure how the people in your community develop, adjust or maintain their impressions of your school system?

As local leaders in Kentucky's 174 public school systems build their budgets for the 2011-12 school year, what attention are they giving to meeting the public desire for more, not less, information about teacher quality and student learning?

In the tightest budgetary times in memory for public schools, it would be easy for local leaders to say, "We can't afford to devote our limited funds or our overworked staff's time to doing the news media's job. We've got to focus on teaching and learning and testing and..." and on and on and on.

Some believe that the public cares about the quality of education but doesn't care for details. Others may say parents – those adults who we hope would have the greatest hunger for school information – have ample opportunities to find out about their children's schools. If they don't take advantage, there is little more that school leaders can do.

Understandable conclusions...and critically wrong, according to a recently published report by the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on American Education, a respected, Washington, D.C.,-based nonprofit public policy organization.

What Americans say they want may surprise you.

More but from where?

Brookings researchers interviewed 1,211 adults (with an "oversample" of parents) in December 2010, focusing on how and where they got their education news and what changes they'd like to see. Some of what I see as the report's highlights are:

- Seven in 10 want more information about teacher performance and student progress, with almost as many seeking to know more about school safety, curriculum issues and finances. Half wanted to know more about school scandals and only four in 10 seek additional news about athletics.
- Seventy-five percent of respondents said they get most of their school news from family and friends. School publications (the printed kind!) ranked almost equal to daily newspaper and TV newscasts. While websites, social media and electronic newsletters trailed badly overall, it's no surprise that younger respondents put more faith in online resources than their tech-challenged elders.
- Eight in 10 said their schools should use more than printed newsletters to get the word out. Seventy-four percent want more communications through the Internet, and 71 percent want more e-mails about what's going on in their local schools.



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

Facebook pages were a less popular option (38 percent) and even fewer favored text messages. But, again, consider the age factor, especially of your district's parents. Younger participants (76 percent) wanted their schools to reach out to them via the Internet compared with 52 percent of older adults who took the survey.

- Overall, 56 percent of those surveyed felt they got enough school information. But 39 percent said they get too little elementary and secondary education news and only 2 percent felt they get too much of a K-12 information overload.

Who will fill the gap?

So if Americans want more specific types of school information, how is that going to happen?

Forget about increasing coverage in the mainstream news media. I have more fingers than there are "education beat" reporters at Kentucky media outlets these days. It's a sad part of the shrinking of both staff and news hole, print and broadcast. Otherwise, the news media will cover the scandals, the big events and the cute feature stories on slow news days.

Besides, remember Brookings' finding on where people get most of their school news? Family and friends. And if the other data in the report are reflective of the American public at large, opinions on school districts aren't being made on the front page of the local newspaper anyway.

That means that public schools and districts that truly want a better-informed community are going to have to work at it.

It doesn't mean you've got to drop teachers aides or run a bus an additional year or create/expand a communications program. But it does mean district leaders must consider what is being done – by the district itself – to keep the perception-building flow of news about school success stories, teacher training and academic excellence getting out to the folks who send in the kids and, oh yes, pay the taxes.

The Last Word

If you lump together printing and postage, salaries and benefits, subscriptions and technology, telephone and Internet service, travel and the occasional KFC meal, KSBA devotes about \$1 of every \$10 it spends on getting information out to school board members, superintendents, state leaders, education advocates and others who need and want to know about public education in Kentucky. That's mission-driven: getting data, updates, counsel and insight out to assist local decision makers. It's also a planned dedication of resources.

So when Kentucky school leaders build their budgets for next year, who will be listening to what Americans say about wanting more school information and asking, "What are we going to do?"

And that's a message worth getting out. ☚

Scenes from NSBA



The Kentucky delegation at last month's National School Boards Association conference in San Francisco was more than 200 strong. Board members participated in workshops, networked with other board members from Kentucky and across the nation and watched as one of their own was elected NSBA's president-elect.

Clockwise from top left: Boone County school board member and NSBA's new president-elect Ed Massey, left, and KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott, were on hand to congratulate Carlisle County's Preschool Coordinator Lisa Canler and Family Center Director Lisa Adams who accepted a Magna award on behalf of their district. Carlisle County won a Magna award, which is presented by the *American School Board Journal* and Sodexo, for its Preschool Assistants to Learning program.

Boone County Superintendent Randy Poe is part of a district team giving a presentation on curriculum, standards and college/career readiness.

KSBA Board Team Development Director Kerri Schelling, far right, participates on a panel during the New Board Member Boot Camp.

From left, KSBA President and Lincoln County school board Vice Chairman Tom Blankenship, KSBA President-elect and Jenkins Independent school board Chairman Durward Narramore and Paducah Independent school board member Felix Akojie, who served as a sergeant at arms, attend the NSBA Delegate Assembly.



Boyle County students get history lesson



Photos provided by Boyle County Schools



Nearly 1,000 Boyle County students experienced Native American culture firsthand as part of a two-day encampment sponsored by the Boyle County and Woodlawn Elementary family resource centers. Woodlawn Family Resource Center Director Liz Gardner said they sponsor an event like this each year, focusing on different cultures, to support arts, humanities and social studies content.

Top left, the presenter demonstrates how native people used games to help identify strengths in their youngest tribe members and find their future leaders. Students had to work at teamwork to be successful at the native games that were demonstrated.

Above right, at the tribal dance area, dancers from Cherokee, N.C., demonstrate how Native Americans used dance to tell stories, to celebrate and to honor rituals.

Left, students try their hand at shooting bow and arrows, as well as tomahawk throwing, pictured in the background.