

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ April 2009



HEALTHY ATTENDANCE

SCHOOLS AS SHELTERS

Energy efficiency: not optional

School traffic transformation



15th Annual Safe Schools, Successful Students Conference

October 12-13, 2009
Galt House East, Louisville

Call for Presentations!

The Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) and the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) are seeking proposals for presentations at the 15th annual Safe Schools, Successful Students Conference.

The conference planning committee is seeking 90-minute interactive, skill-building sessions for school administrators, law enforcement and mental health providers.

Proposal guidelines, selection criteria and submission forms are available on the KSBA Web site at www.ksba.org and the KCSS Web site at www.kysafeschools.org.

The deadline for submission is April 17.

For more information, contact Tamara Stewart or Tammie Conatser by calling 800-372-2962 or via e-mail at tamara.stewart@ksba.org or tammie.conatser@ksba.org.

KENTUCKY CENTER FOR SCHOOL SAFETY



FEATURES

Healthy kids, healthy numbers

Several Leslie County school health clinics are making a strong case that their benefits extend to improved attendance. The proof is in the data they've collected for the foundation that funds the effort ... Page 8

Sustaining success

Keeping a program going after the grant money is gone is a high priority with an often low success rate. Clinton County Schools want to buck this trend with their \$3 million federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant ...Page 10

Gimme shelter

For the first time in recent memory, a number of Kentucky schools served as community shelters during a widespread emergency – namely, January's ice storm. The western Kentucky districts featured in this story learned some valuable lessons from the experience ... Page 12

Trafficking in solutions

What does a district do to alleviate traffic tie-ups created when three-plus schools occupy an extended campus? If you're Mercer County Schools, you convene all stakeholders and get a fresh look from an outside source ... Page 15

Energy edict

School boards across the state will soon be asked to approve joining a state energy efficiency initiative. The move to save energy and money was mandated by the state's General Assembly and the deadline to join is approaching ... Page 16



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On the cover



Family nurse practitioner Sarah Noggle checks Sfinnett Elementary School kindergarten student Haleigh Hoskins' ears during an exam at the school's health clinic. Noggle visits the clinic twice a week, supplementing the full-time service provided by other medical staff while school is in session. Article on Page 8.

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TAKE NOTE

Historic event

The Kentucky Historical Society is seeking nominations for the annual Kentucky History Teacher of the Year award, designed to promote and celebrate the teaching of American history in U.S. classrooms.

This year, only elementary school teachers from grades K-6 are eligible. The nomination deadline is April 30.

For more nomination information, visit the teacher page on the Kentucky Historical Society's Web site, <http://history.ky.gov> or contact Rebecca Hanly at Rebecca.Hanly@ky.gov.

New KSBIT hire

Melanie D. Judy of Lexington is the new marketing manager for the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust, KSBA's insurance arm.



Judy's experience includes stints as marketing manager for Wild Oats grocery in Lexington; as an area educational sales consultant

for Nystrom, a manufacturer of instructional materials for social studies classrooms; and as executive director for the Kidney Foundation of Central Kentucky.

Healthy partnership

The Owensboro Independent and Daviess County school districts are being recognized by the National School Boards Association and the American Hospital Association for their ongoing partnership with Owensboro Medical Health System. The districts will be featured in a joint NSBA-AHA publication focusing on school-hospital relationships that address childhood obesity.

The hospital system has partnered with the school systems in a "Fit for Life" program and a school nursing initiative. The partnership has included placing state-of-the-art Nautilus fitness equipment in middle and high schools;

providing support for classroom education on making healthy lifestyle choices; and helping fund health professionals in local schools.

"We were very impressed with the school districts' activities related to their partnerships with OMHS, as well as their data-driven approach and the commitment of both the school and hospital staff and boards to the success of the partnerships," said Emily Kujawa, project coordinator for NSBA's Leadership for Healthy Communities program.

Never too early

KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott has been named to Gov. Steve Beshear's new Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education. The governor created the 27-member panel of stakeholders by executive order on Feb. 19. The group will promote greater collaboration among service-providers to young children, re-emphasize quality at all levels, and define "school readiness."

Other local public-school representatives on the panel include Madison County Schools Superintendent Tommy Floyd; Theresa Jensen, director of early childhood programs for Jefferson County Public Schools; and Jessica Hiler, a Fayette County elementary school teacher. Brigitte Ramsey, a member of the Kentucky Board of Education and former Pendleton County school board member, is also on the task force.

In keeping with this new group's mission, the state education department has issued a request for applications from districts interested in becoming a collaborative demonstration site for preschool. In the absence of funding, the department wants to look at expanding preschool through collaboration among providers such as school districts, private child care and Head Start programs.

The Early Childhood Development Authority will fund two pre-K collaborative demonstration projects. The deadline for submitting applications is April 17. Information can be found on the grants page of the state education department's Web site. ☞

Is your board shovel-ready?

Funding for education-related programs in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will be filtering down to Kentucky soon, starting with an initial round that totals \$44 billion nationwide. President Obama has emphasized the need for stimulus projects to be shovel-ready.

This term initially referred to the need for school boards to be ready to begin construction and infrastructure improvements immediately upon receipt of the funds. However, since only a small portion of the money is now eligible for school construction, boards should interpret shovel-ready as being prepared to address the priority learning needs of students by focusing on the lowest-performing schools and student subgroups. If your board has not revisited your comprehensive district improvement plan recently, this may be the best way to focus on these priorities before receiving the funds.

Here's the short version of what's coming to Kentucky districts, based on what we've gleaned from the federal Web sites, recovery.gov and ed.gov, and from NSBA sources. The funding will come in several major pots:

- Title I and special education funds, which will go to state education departments – no application process – for distribution to districts under the current formula. Half this money was to be released nationwide in March.
- State fiscal stabilization funds, 67 percent of which were to be available at the end of March. This pot is aimed at restoring education funding for fiscal years 2009, 2010 and 2011 to FY 2008 or 2009 levels, whichever is greatest. Governors must apply for these funds, but the federal education department has said it will release funds to states within two weeks of receiving an “approvable” application.
- In addition to those major programs, the stimulus includes funds for education technology, homeless student services, and early childhood programs, among others.
- The law sets up a separate competitive State Incentive Grant program with school district awards focused on improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap.
- ARRA also creates a new category of qualified tax credit bonds for school construction or repair and increases bond allocations for the existing QZAB program.

So, besides revisiting comprehensive improvement plans,



Bill Scott
KSBA Executive Director

what else should districts do to get ready for the infusion? School boards should familiarize themselves with some of the guidelines for using this money, particularly the stabilization funds, where local efforts will come into play and which appear to require some exhaustive record-keeping.

Districts receiving the stimulus Title I funds must report to the state a school-by-school listing of per-pupil expenditures during the 2008-09 school year by Dec. 1. States and districts must keep track of, and report on, how the Title I and special education funding under ARRA is spent.

Here is what recovery.gov advises local school districts on the use of stabilization funds, which the governor's office will distribute:

- The use should be consistent with creating and saving jobs.
- It should advance the required education reforms – including providing effective interventions in low-performing schools and improving teacher effectiveness and equity in teacher distribution.
- Funds may be used to pay salaries to avoid layoffs of teachers and other staff.
- If used for school modernization, renovation or repair, districts “should consider” using the facilities for early childhood education and for the community, and should create “green” buildings.
- There is also a list of areas where those funds may *not* be used, such as defraying maintenance costs and for athletic facilities.

Because ARRA requires the governor to provide a detailed report annually to the federal education secretary explaining how the stabilization funds are used, school districts should be prepared to be the source of that information. Among the elements in that report are an accounting of the jobs saved or created, description of any modernization/repair project, estimates of tax increases that were averted, and progress in addressing the school improvement issues targeted by the law.

Finally, boards should heed what recovery.gov says: “Depending on the program, these funds are available for only two to three years. These funds should be invested in ways that do not result in unsustainable continuing commitment after the funding expires.” ☞

Estimates on Kentucky's share of ARRA

- State fiscal stabilization funds: \$655 million
- Title I (part A, targeted and school improvement): \$195.6 million
- Title II (education technology): \$9.4 million
- Special education (parts B and C): \$162.3 million

Source: Congressional Research Service early estimate

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

Photo provided by the Ft. Thomas Independent Schools



“Obviously, it’s bitter-sweet for me, as I am so passionate about theater and sharing this experience with young performers. I certainly don’t see this as the end, but as an opportunity to engage others in the theater program.” Fort Thomas Independent Superintendent John Williamson on his retirement from co-directing the district’s middle school musicals after a 10-year run. From the Fort Mitchell *Community Press & Recorder*.

Scott Bonham on a nearly \$1.5 million grant to WKU’s SKyTeach program that will, among other things, recruit Allen County Schools’ graduates with science, technology, engineering and math majors to become teachers. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

“We want to build a ‘brain trust’ to address the common misconceptions students have about college. These teachers are from all districts, and we have common ground. It’s nice to have this opportunity to share experiences.” Hancock County High School math teacher Kevin Lasley on a nine-school collaboration with Owensboro Community and Technical College to find ways to improve high school student preparation for college. From the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

“I just want them to have fun and know science isn’t dorky or nerdy. It’s fun, it’s something you can make a living out of doing.” Morgan County High School science teacher Chris Lacy on the value of the Kentucky Science Olympiad program beyond the learning experience of the competition itself. From Hazard *WYMT-TV News*.

and later died, on the family’s successful campaign to raise \$20,000 to purchase 24 automated external defibrillators for the school system. From the Leitchfield *Grayson County News Gazette*.

“You know, if we don’t tap into our female resources, we lose half of our country’s brain power. I mean, you look at the future and ask yourself, there are still going to be needs for engineers then, who’s going to design our products? Or, even better, who’s going to design stuff for (women) specifically? That’s why this type of thing is so important.” Graves County High School science teacher Abbie Morris on the “Girls in Engineering Day” activities at her school. From the *Paducah Sun*.

“One of the things this scholarship does is helps us in our mission to show teaching is valued. Unfortunately, the attitude, particularly in science, is that if you’re not good enough for graduate school then be a teacher, but that’s not the way it is. Teaching is an ever changing, intellectual challenge. Things like this scholarship show that Allen County values and that Western Kentucky values teachers and that they will go out of their way to make a difference for the next generation.” Western Kentucky University associate professor

“It’s like a Rubik’s Cube on steroids.” Ron Murrell of Lexington-based RossTarrant Architects to the Carroll County school board on the process of determining and prioritizing needs for an \$8 million renovation of Cartmell Elementary School. From the *Carrollton News-Democrat*.

“We’ve got monsters, we’ve got boats. We try very hard not to specifically mention things, so they come up with it themselves and if it’s crazy, it’s crazy.” Scott County Schools nurse Joyce Ellis on the snacks students create for Stamping Ground Elementary

“The defibrillator may have saved Keith’s life. Every minute the shock is not applied to the heart you lose a 10 percent chance of surviving. The magic window of the AED is within the first three minutes. The middle school was only blocks from the EMS office and that still was too long a time period.” Michael Walker, whose 13-year-old son, Keith, collapsed at a Grayson County Middle School basketball practice last October

“I talked to a boy in Texas who is in a wheelchair who said he loved sports growing up but he couldn’t play. He said the first place where people didn’t see him as a student in a wheelchair, they saw him as a student and the person that he could become, was FFA. What a powerful message.”



Photo by Bob Flynn/Jessamine Journal

National FFA President Paul Moya to members of the Jessamine Career and Technology Center’s FFA chapter in a session that also allowed Moya to meet Jessamine County school board attorney Howard Downey, the 1957-1958 national FFA president. From the Nicholasville *Jessamine Journal*.

School's annual snack fair, an initiative designed to help students make better decisions about nutrition. From the Georgetown *News-Graphic*.

“I think it really does allow our parents and community to see that what we have in Caldwell County is a high-quality program.” Caldwell County Schools preschool director Renee Williams on the news that the district's preschool/Head Start program had earned accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. From the Princeton *Times-Leader*.

“We have to make sure that the kids don't get slighted. Anytime that you have to cut personnel or programs or facility usage, the kids are going to be hurt. Before you make those decisions, you want to have some really firm numbers and see if you can utilize what you have, and eliminate what you have.” Pineville Independent Superintendent Mike White on the difficulties school leaders face in building next year's budgets while awaiting both final funding figures from the state and allocations of federal stimulus law money. From the Middlesboro *Daily News*.

“The loan forgiveness played a large role in me deciding to go into this field. I paid for my entire master's degree out of the program, books and all, and so did my wife. We were told, 'It's something you can count on.' But then it was just gone.” Anderson County Schools special education teacher Travis Gray about the lack of money in the state's teacher loan forgiveness program. From the Lexington *Herald-Leader*.

“It's very easy to tarnish a reputation,” Lewis said at Friday's meeting of the Russell Independent Board of Education, ‘but it's going to take a long time for our kids and our school to polish that back up.’ Russell

High's long-established reputation for excellence in academic competition crash-landed because of a foolish and arrogant decision by its coach. The process of restoring that reputation has begun, and like Lewis said, it is going to take time. While it may not seem like it to the school and its students today, the events of the last week can have a positive impact on the Russell academic team and the school in the long run.” Portion of an editorial on an academic coach's inappropriate actions regarding a regional Governor's Cup competition in the Ashland *Daily Independent*.

“We never expected to fall in love with the community and feel so completely adopted, but everyone was great to us the whole time we were there. Schools and kids were everything to him. That was how he spent his whole life, and it would be important to him to be able to give back to them. The whole community gave so much to him, and he would want to give back and help the children.” Terral Graves, widow of late Washington County Superintendent Larry Graves, on the family's creation of a college scholarship in his memory for local high school graduates. From the Springfield *Sun*.

“With this nickel tax, we're not talking about sending money to Frankfort or to Washington – the net revenue from that nickel tax stays right here in Adair County earmarked for construction. We have a little over \$5 million in bonding potential now and with the nickel tax and equalization funds that would give us an initial \$9.3 million, most of which would come from the state. When you put those together, you get over \$14 million in bonding potential for our kids here in Adair County. If our county wants to build big dreams, we can do it, but the people will have to give a little to make it happen.” Adair County board member Mike Harris on the benefits of passing a nickel property tax after local baseball boosters asked for help with a new ball field project estimated at \$328,000. From the Columbia *Community Voice*. ☞

Increasing Kentucky's dropout age to 18

POINT ...

“We are facing a huge budget shortfall in the state and we simply don't need an approach to the problem that could have unintended consequences. We believe that everything within reason should be done to lower the dropout rate in our state because it is a problem, but the focus needs to be instilling in students at an early age the importance of staying in school and earning their diplomas. If a student hasn't taken this message to heart by the time they are 17 or 18, it is already too late.” Portion of editorial in the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

COUNTERPOINT...

“It was startling to hear Gov. Steve Beshear saying the state can't afford to educate the young folks it would force to stay in school. It's true, as the governor pointed out, that this bill's 'got a real price tag to it.' But then so does letting kids stumble into the emerging information-dominated economy without the background and skills they need to succeed, and to contribute. How many times has Mr. Beshear himself said that Kentucky's future depends on producing new generations of capable, prepared workers? Raising the dropout age might cost \$15 million per year, but, as the governor himself has argued, government gets that money back many times over, from an educated workforce. And the way to save on housing tomorrow's prisoners is to keep them in school today.” Portion of editorial in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

FEELING HEALTHY

Leslie County Schools' health clinics seeing healthy attendance numbers



By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Stinnett Elementary School Principal Britt Lawson has a one-word answer to describe the most immediate impact of the health clinic in his school: attendance.

"They come here, they get treated, they go back to class," he said.

Stinnett has the longest-operating of the Leslie County district's three school health clinics. Attendance there increased almost 2 percent in the 2007-08 school year, to 93.52 percent. The data also show that 60 percent of the students who use the clinic and for whom the school has multiple years of attendance data have increased their attendance by an average of 3.5 days per year.

The data is being carefully tracked at the request of the Tennessee-based Elgin Foundation, which provides funding to the nonprofit community group that operates the school clinics.

Lawson said teachers and other staff members also use the clinic at his school, which has improved their attendance. And parents don't have to miss work to take students to seek medical care.

"The parents love the clinics. It's a positive effect all the way around," said school board Chairman Lonnie Napier.

County of Leslie Lifting Youth (COLLY) is the local nonprofit group that operates and equips the clinics. The organization works with the Frontier Nursing Service, which operates the local hospital and a series of rural health clinics, to staff the school sites, which are open any time school is in session. A licensed practical nurse or registered nurse staffs the clinics every day, with a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner visiting once or twice a week.

The school district, in turn, provides the clinic site in each building and absorbs any overhead costs.

From teeth to whole child

The Leslie County school health clinics grew out of COLLY's first project, now in its fourth year: a children's dental screening program operated in conjunction with the University of Kentucky's mobile dental unit.

The rampant dental problems they found indicated overall health needs also weren't being met, and there are no school nurses in Leslie County's elementary schools. "The school secretary assumed the role of the school nurse, which is give out band-aids and call the parent," said Mary Ethel Wooton, who chairs COLLY's board.

In both cases – dental and medical care – the group assumed because there were local providers that chil-

dren were getting regular care. That assumption was wrong.

“It really turned out that they weren’t seeing anybody, maybe just for their required (school) physicals,” said Anna Carey, the nonprofit’s executive director.

Factors include families’ lack of transportation and the ingrained use of the local hospital’s emergency room for primary care.

“One of our goals under the grants we’ve written is to create a culture of healthy living and comfort with health care providers, appropriate use of health care providers,” Carey said.

The most common illnesses the school clinic nurses treat are respiratory, injuries, gastrointestinal upsets, pain complaints and skin conditions. Also near the top of the list is helping students manage chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes. In addition, the clinics can provide the required well-child checkups for kindergartners and students entering the sixth grade. Because of that wide gap, the clinics also do checkups for students in the third grade.

The staff has been able to identify more serious medical problems and pick up on behavioral and family concerns, referring students to appropriate professionals, said family nurse practitioner Sarah Noggle. Parents are contacted if medical issues arise, but parents also often call the clinic voluntarily to ask that their child be checked if they are concerned about a health issue.

There are indications the clinic project has made some progress toward changing the health-care climate in the area served. The data Carey is collecting show that emergency room visits are down among families served by all three

elementaries with clinics. And, Wooton said, “The numbers at the rural health clinic have increased. It’s very familiar to parents to go to the rural health clinic and talk and meet with the same one they saw at the school clinic.”

Education

While they’re seeing their young patients, the clinic staff informally tries to educate them on healthy habits. They also visit schools monthly with lessons on topics such as the cardiovascular system, dental hygiene, diabetes and exercise, Carey said. Clinic displays echo those lessons.

“We try to make it as consistent as possible. They’re getting it from a nurse practitioner, they’re getting it from the clinic staff, they’re getting it in the classroom – it’s repeated a lot,” said Carey.

Older students have been interested enough at Stinnett Elementary to form the Blue Jay Fit Club, an after-school program that combines exercise with health and science lessons and activities.

Wooton said she hopes, through the clinics and education outreach, to see an eventual reduction in students’ body mass index and better eating habits. Her group’s approach, she said, is similar to the one used by PRIDE, the environmental education initiative in eastern Kentucky.

“Start with the children,” she said, “...get the children to effectively teach their parents good health habits.” ☞

Photo opposite page: Family nurse practitioner Sarah Noggle examines McKayla Caldwell at Stinnett Elementary School’s health clinic. Noggle works for Frontier Nursing Service.

Web site of the month

Christian County Schools’ has relaunched its Web site — for both the district and its schools — with a clean, professional look and an emphasis on efficiency.

Each school site has a look slightly different from the district’s but they all work off of the same layout and menus, making navigation easy and the sites user friendly.

The site has drop-down menus across the top that each offer multiple options. When an item from one menu is clicked on, the entire contents of that menu appear as quick links down the left side of the page, giving users immediate access to all options in that area. For example, if a user selects ‘curriculum’ under the Academics menu, then the other options — instruction, high school graduation requirements, alternative programs, gifted and talented, special education, English as a Second Language and pre-school, all appear as menu items in the left-hand column.

To view this site, go to www.christian.kyschools.us.



An advertisement for Alliance Corporation. At the top is the logo, which consists of a stylized blue 'A' followed by the word 'ALLIANCE' in large blue letters and 'CORPORATION' in smaller blue letters below it. Below the logo is the tagline 'Builders & Managers' in a serif font. The center of the ad features a photograph of a modern, brightly lit interior space, possibly a school hallway or a large office, with a large blue and white starburst graphic on the floor. Below the photo, the text reads 'YOU HAVE A CHOICE!' in bold blue letters, followed by 'Select Alliance – an experienced professional builder' in a smaller blue font. At the bottom, there is a dark blue horizontal bar containing the text 'Glasgow, KY · Prestonsburg, KY' in white, with the phone numbers '270-651-8848' and '606-886-8748' below it. The website 'alliancecorporation.com' is listed in white. At the very bottom, the slogan '“Our Success is Building”' is written in a white, italicized serif font.

Suitable for sustaining

Clinton County Schools plans to turn four-year grant into lasting change

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Grants that fight drug abuse, improve early childhood education or even increase overall school safety are not uncommon. But many of those programs dwindle when grant money runs out.

Clinton County school district plans to be the exception when its four-year, \$3 million federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant – Students and Families Empowered Together (SAFE-T) – ends in 2011.

“We’re establishing these partnerships in the community, coming together as a group and when the grant is over, it will actually continue,” said project director Charlotte Bernard. “The funding will be gone, but we want to sustain this as a community because we’re doing a lot of good things.”

Bernard cited the Olweus bullying prevention curriculum it began teaching its first through eighth grades last fall as just one program that will continue after the grant ends.

“We had a sixth-grader go through the bullying program early last fall and then she moved to another county,” Bernard said. “She wrote her teacher back a letter that read, ‘Dear Miss Scott, I wish I could come back down there. There’s a lot of bullying here and I want to know if I can borrow your bullying program because it has changed me from bullying and I

think it can help others.’”

“When we leave this (grant) in three years, I’m sure Ms. Scott will continue this Olweus curriculum because she sees what an impact this has on her students.”

Frank Butler, prevention curriculum specialist, said the number of bullying incidents has already dropped, and a recent survey of elementary and middle school students shows the percentage of students who reported feeling unsafe at school dropped to 13 percent in 2008, compared with 27 percent in 2006.

“Our children can now define bullying,” he said. “It’s amazing to hear them talk. A lot of them were bullying and they didn’t realize it.”

Staffing

SAFE-T has six goals (see details in panel at right) the district tries to achieve through prevention, intervention and treatment and by partnering with community agencies ranging from emergency responders to local government to physical and mental health organizations.

Clinton County has been able to hire two school resource officers in addition to the one it had, as well as add a counselor/social

Goals of Clinton County Schools’ SAFE-T Project

1. Increase the overall safety of the schools by enhancing emergency preparedness, reducing facility vulnerabilities and decreasing violent student behaviors.

2. Decrease the number of students using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs through prevention, intervention and treatment programs.

3. Increase the number of behavioral, social and emotional supports available to students, to assist more in successfully completing school.

4. Improve the quality and scope of mental health services available to students and families.

5. Increase the number of children who enter kindergarten ready to learn.

6. Develop sustainable community and caring with Clinton County through capacity building, community collaboration and shared vision.



Clinton County Schools SAFE-T Project Director Charlotte Bernard discusses safety survey results with Frank Butler, prevention curriculum specialist



Chris Marcum, Clinton County Schools' safe schools mentoring coordinator, eats lunch with first-graders Quade Martin, center, and Andy Owens, two students he is mentoring. The district has attempted to find mentors — from both within and outside the district — for all of its students at Albany Elementary and Clinton County Middle schools.

worker and a drug counselor to its staff.

“This focuses on the whole child, beyond education; it’s the fitting in in the classroom and feeling comfortable and confident in being there,” Bernard said. “And if you do have a problem, we have a social worker, a drug and alcohol counselor who can work with you. If we do see those problems, we can even work with the family. One goal builds on another.”

The new staff members, along with existing personnel, have been working to establish closer ties with community agencies and get them more involved with the district and student well-being. For example, the district’s early childhood interventionist, who works with kids from birth through age 3, has been instrumental in that effort.

“She gets referrals from people in the community, maybe a doctor or a family member, and she calls them up and asks for an appointment and does a developmental screening program,” Bernard said. “She asks the parents questions and determines if she thinks there is some kind of delay. If so, she refers them to another agency when she feels there’s a need.”

Physical safety

The district has also been able to make significant physical improvements to its schools, such as building safer entryways, adding Web-based security cameras, and installing newer, locking classrooms doors, just to name a few changes.

“Some of our classroom doors were so bad we could hardly get them to close much less lock,” said

Albany Elementary Principal Tim Armstrong, who said the school is now better prepared in the event an intruder gets loose in the building. He even installed a garage-type door over the entrance to the cafeteria so that area could be sealed off.

High school principal David Warinner said the 32 Web-based security cameras that now cover most areas of his school have had an immediate impact.

“I don’t know if it’s the training or the professional development, but we have had fewer incidents this year, hardly any,” he said, adding that students know that cameras are recording at all times and there is video proof that can be used against them if they cause a problem.

Group effort

Clinton County Schools officials meet with their more than 20 community partners on a monthly basis as a part of the grant, and have conducted several tabletop safety exercises, which Superintendent Mickey McFall said has led to greater communication.

“You really get a different perspective on things from those other agencies when you’re sitting down and discussing different scenarios,” he said. “It’s been a really important part of the process and helps in ways outside of school safety.”

Butler said the community seems “fired up” about continuing the programs.

“Manpower is one of the important things,” he said. “When these groups see that there is a way to sustain these programs, they are more apt to take part.” ❧

STORM SURGE

Kentucky districts rise to the occasion, learn from ice storm aftermath



By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

January's devastating ice storm may have been a great learning experience in disaster response, but it is a lesson Kentucky school leaders would rather have skipped.

Entire counties went dark in some places, often leaving those local schools – with or without power – scrambling to shelter area residents.

"Yes we were prepared and no, we weren't," said Grayson County Superintendent Barry Anderson, whose high school and two elementary schools served as shelters during the aftermath. "We're getting ready to have an after-action meeting with all of the agencies involved and we're going to reflect and see what went right, what went wrong and what we need to change."

There is no official tally of the number of schools that served as shelters, but the districts KSBA contacted, like Grayson, plan to meet with their community partners to work on filling the gaps they experienced, and to incorporate lessons learned from the ice storms into planning for future emergencies.

Communication

What do you do when phone lines and cell phone towers are down? That is just one of the questions school officials will work on in the coming months.

"It was difficult because we had power outages along with no communication," said Crittenden County Superintendent Dr. Rachel Yarbrough. "Phone lines were down, cell phone service was nonexistent; just getting communication from emergency management to the shelter became



difficult.”

She said her district was fortunate that Verizon Wireless provided several working cell phones to critical places in the community, including Crittenden County Elementary, which served as a shelter for nine days.

Anderson said for awhile, his cell phone company was the only one with towers operating in Grayson County, which was a blessing and a curse.

“Everything was going through me and I was literally on my cell phone all day long, it seemed like,” he said. “Communication is one issue that we kind of dropped the ball on.”

Power

Determining generator needs will be high on the list of future emergency planning as many of the schools serving as shelters did not have power during the first few days of the storm. In Ohio County, Southern Elementary became the de facto shelter because it was the only large structure to keep its power, but Superintendent Soretta Ralph said the district needs to plan for a time when it may not be so lucky.

“We are looking into generators at our schools,” she said. “We have back-up power for lights, but want to have a generator in at least one school that is big enough to operate the entire school.”

Generator needs are a large part of Kentucky’s overall post-storm discussions. Buddy Rogers, public information officer for the Kentucky Department of Emergen-

cy Management, said the state is partnering with the federal government in a pilot program to not only identify facilities that can serve as shelters during emergencies, but determine ahead of time what type and size generator each would need to operate during a mass power outage.

“I think they are identifying 2,000 different structures right now,” he said. “I don’t know if that list includes public schools, but I think if each school, regardless of whether they are pre-identified, could go ahead and have the generator requirements in place, it would be a good idea.”

Fueling up

Graves County schools not only served as a shelter to more than 600 community members at its height and housed more than 100 members of the Kentucky National Guard, but it also fueled a mostly blacked-out community with both food and gasoline.

“Right at the beginning, there was no power (in the county) and we couldn’t get fuel,” said Superintendent Pete Galloway. “Our bus garage had just topped off our tanks, so DES brought out a generator and we basically turned our bus garage over to DES, state police, city and county officials, government. We were the only source of gasoline for awhile except for one small service station that had a generator, so we became a fueling center for all of the agencies involved in getting the power back on.”

Graves ended up pumping more than 12,000 gallons of fuel to emergency responders. The district had its tanks refilled by the Graves County Fiscal Court at the end of the emergency response.

Galloway said the district also served more than 13,000 meals.

“We served a number of people who just wanted a hot meal and weren’t even staying at our warming shelter,” he said, adding that it was a good way to use the food supplies that would have gone bad at its powerless schools.

Transitioning back to class

As power returned to schools, it presented education leaders with unusual issues, such as re-securing buildings, clearing bus routes and closing shelters that still housed residents.

“We look at what happened as an opportunity to help the taxpayers of our county and I really feel that’s going to pay big dividends for us in the future.”

— Graves County Schools Superintendent Pete Galloway



Continued on next page

Far left: Graves County High School was transformed into a community warming center following the January ice storm that left entire communities without power.

Near left: Members of the Kentucky National Guard 438th Military Police Unit of Murray used Graves County Middle School as its base of operations as it assisted with the community’s storm recovery efforts.

Photos by Paul Schaumburg/Graves County Schools

Continued from previous page

Classes in Crittenden County resumed two weeks after the start of the ice storm. On the Friday before, Yarbrough said the custodial staff began an almost start-of-the-school-year cleaning, aided by the fact that all of the classrooms had been locked during its time as a shelter.

“We had the grounds searched with drug dogs to make sure there wasn’t anything inappropriate on the grounds or in the building,” she said. “Then we made sure that they cleaned again on Monday, so we had two opportunities to make sure that that building was ready for students on that Tuesday.”

Yarbrough also credited the city and county governments with making it easier to get school under way.

“Right before we went back to school, they (drove) our bus routes and they made those priorities for cleaning off debris, or at least making sure we could have a route that a bus could pass,” she said. “That was extremely helpful in our kids getting back to school.”

In some cases, when classes resumed there was still a need for shelters, which meant moving people to a new location. Jim Wol-lums, individual assistance officer with the Kentucky Department of Emergency Management, said this is why the agency prefers to use other types of structures for shelter when possible.

“You can’t have a shelter around schoolchildren; it’s a safety issue,” he said. “By law, persons who have criminal records, we don’t like to associate them with children. We don’t screen people for those types of things when they come into a shelter and neither does the Red Cross, so we have to be careful of those types of things, especially in schools.”

Preparation pays off

Despite some of the unforeseen issues, school leaders said the emphasis on emergency preparedness in recent years paid off for their districts. Ralph said while her district was prepared, it does need to have more planning sessions with other area agencies.



Photo by Paul Schaumburg/Graves County Schools

Graves County Board of Education Chairman Donnie Reed, left, and Vice-Chairman Mark Wilson, center, greet Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear at the Mayfield-Graves County Airport as he tours some of the areas hit hardest by the January ice storm.

“We need to meet more often to make sure everyone is doing the same thing,” she said.

Anderson said his district’s National Incident Management Systems training, plus a safety grant through the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, left it in good shape to deal with the ice storm.

“I’m telling you, that training really came to good use,” he said. “I can’t say enough about the training that we had; it really paid dividends and it’s a continuing thing. We have more training down the road.”

Galloway said the storm response provided a great opportunity to strengthen ties with the community.

“We look at what happened as an opportunity to help the taxpayers of our county and I really feel that’s going to pay big dividends for us in the future,” he said. ❧

New trustees join KSBIT board

Advocate Staff Report

Two new members have been appointed to the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust Board of Trustees, which manages the self-insurance pool owned by school districts. Trustees serve two-year terms.

Bill Redwine, Morehead



Board service: Rowan County Board of Education; elected 1991; current vice chairman; served on KSBA Board of Directors as Eastern Kentucky North Region chairman, 1995-97.

Education: Graduate, Elliott County High School, Morehead State University

Occupation: Assistant vice president, Morehead State University

Activities: President, Morehead Optimist Club; member, Morehead Chamber of Commerce, MSU Alumni Association.

Honors/other: National Association of College Auxiliary Services, past president of NACAS-South; 32nd Degree Mason, member of El Hasa Shrine.

Sharon Youngblood, Mayfield



Board service: Mayfield Independent Board of Education; elected 1993; served two terms as board chairwoman.

Education: Graduate, Mayfield High School, David Lipscomb University in Nashville

Occupation: Business manager

Activities: Past president, PTA; president, treasurer, band boosters; member, Future Directions Committee. ❧

Joint effort eases school traffic woes

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

It's little wonder that it took a group effort to find solutions to the traffic problems in the Mercer County school district:

The new high school, a middle school and an elementary school are within sight, if not shouting, distance of each other. And each funnels traffic onto the same road. Tech and alternative centers are nearby, along with an industrial road that rings the extended campus with factories.

"We're finding out there's pros and cons" to having so many buildings in a single area, said district finance director Joy Campbell. "You've got that campus community feel, but it also creates traffic issues with everybody trying to get to the same place at the same time."

Traffic has always been congested on that extended campus, Campbell said, but it was exacerbated once the new Mercer County Senior High School opened in December 2008.

Jeremy Baird, who helps districts with transportation safety issues as part of his job as senior risk management specialist with KSBA's insurance services, says the Mercer County situation was one of the most complex he'd tackled because of the close proximity of the buildings to each other.

"We usually address transportation safety school by school, but they're all at different locations with individual needs. With Mercer County, any actions taken to address the situation at one school could have an impact on another," he said.

The tie-ups and general congestion had the Harrodsburg Police Department running up overtime costs for the officers it deployed to direct traffic at several spots twice a day. Police Chief Ernie Kelty also was concerned about tying up so many officers in a single area. In addition, parents who ferry their children to and from school were not pleased with the back-up of vehicles and gridlock.

While the principals of the three schools most affected soon began experimenting with ways to alleviate the problems, the district also recruited help from a trained outsider's view. Baird and another KSBA risk management specialist, Tim Hazlette, conducted a transportation study of the extended campus as part of the district's coverage by KSBA's insurance services.

The work included several twice-daily observations of traffic flow at each school, along with the general traffic patterns on the surrounding roadways.

"We monitored as many locations as we could," Baird said.

The district's tentative long-term solution had called for a service road for buses that could cost up to \$100,000, but the risk management team was asked to look at short-term actions, which could make that more expensive option unnecessary. In addition to his and Hazlette's on-site observations, Baird asked each principal

to come up with their top recommendations.

"They are going to have to be the ones to live with the solutions," he said.

Meeting of the minds

Most of the parties involved gathered in early March to hear ideas from the principals, district transportation staff and Kelty, along with the findings from the KSBA team.

"Keep thinking out of the box," Baird, who acted as a facilitator at the meeting, urged, "because it's not going to be one snap of the fingers and it's fixed."

An hour-and-a-half of discussion produced consensus on a series of no-cost or low-cost smaller steps at the impacted schools. Major steps will be delayed until the start of the next school year, preceded by plenty of publicity and communication with parents and students. The interim measures will better enable the district to more effectively plan its next step, Baird noted.

Campbell said having the KSBA risk management team's help was effective. "It brought all players to the table and gathered the ideas and helped sort them into something that's feasible, reasonable and doable," she said.

"It's nice to get another perspective besides just us," said Mercer Elementary School Principal Jennifer Meadows.

As part of the work, the KSBA analysis also uncovered other more routine safety hazards related to the traffic around the schools, such as parking in fire lanes and unwise delivery truck unloading locations.

Kelty, the police chief, said the effort to resolve the situation has involved many groups working together in addition to the educators, including the Harrodsburg mayor and city commissioners, highway department, the surrounding industries and local industrial board. He said he expects the immediate actions – which include signage, gates and school traffic loop improvements – will ease demand for his department's manpower.

"I really believe this is going to be the most cost efficient for both the city and the school and it's going to provide what we need as a steady flow of traffic that's safe to come in and out of our schools," Kelty said.

The situation illustrates the need for school districts to consider traffic flow issues as part of school design, Baird added, "so we're not running into these problems down the road." ❧



Senior risk management specialist Jeremy Baird points to some of the pitfalls in addressing the traffic flow issues around Mercer Senior High School and two other schools in the immediate vicinity.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ON THE HORIZON

State mandates energy goals for schools

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Kentucky school districts with a casual interest in “going green” are in for a surprise: energy efficiency will not be optional for school districts after this year.

A bill approved by the 2008 Kentucky General Assembly requires school boards to enroll in the Kentucky Energy Efficiency Program for Schools (KEEPS) by Jan. 1, 2010. That program was set up to help school districts and higher education institutions reduce energy use and save money.

That law also requires boards of education to report to KEEPS their data on energy usage, costs and savings measures.

Several pilot districts that jumped into the program early have realized a 6 percent to 7 percent savings in energy costs, said John Davies, acting director of the state Division of Energy Efficiency and Conservation.

“We believe that as KEEPS matures that cost avoidance savings of at least 10 percent will become the norm,” he said.

Davies and representatives of the partner agencies involved in the effort provided a look at how it can work and outlined resources for school districts at a series of regional workshops in February and March. Thirty districts are already on board with KEEPS, including the five pilot districts, which have been designated as “mentors.”

When school boards sign on, one of their guides will be the federal Energy Star program’s seven steps in guiding schools and districts to manage their energy use. Those are:

- Make commitment to continual improvement
- Assess performance and opportunities
- Set goals



Photo provided by Pulaski County Schools

Hayleigh Tilton and Chandler Woods of Oak Hill Elementary School in Pulaski County share the “green” lessons they’ve learned with an audience at Wal-Mart. Fourth-graders in the gifted and talented program districtwide were involved in the project. Kentucky schools can obtain energy-efficiency curriculum materials from agencies that are partnering in an initiative that requires school districts to enroll in a statewide energy efficiency program.

- Create action plan
- Implement action plan
- Evaluate progress
- Recognize achievements

At a February workshop in Georgetown, Davies presented some sobering statistics to illustrate the need for more energy efficiency in schools: the energy bill for Kentucky schools was \$187 million in 2007, about double from 2000, mostly driven by higher energy prices. The energy cost per student in 2007 was \$319, compared with \$159 in 2000.

“Energy is one of those few expenses a school can reduce without sacrificing educational quality,” he said.

Kentucky has 17 high-performance Energy Star-certified schools that have seen an average reduction in energy costs of \$35,000-\$45,000 per year, Davies said.

“High-performing schools can improve performance and attendance, they can improve the sustainability for communities and help improve the bottom line by greater efficiency and better management

practices,” he said.

Representatives of a couple of school districts told workshop attendees about the impact of greater energy efficiency in their buildings. Chris Baker, energy systems coordinator for Kenton County Schools, which is in the process of adding a third high-performance building, said, “It’s not rocket science – a lot of it is really just plain common sense. ... I saved more on low-cost and no-cost measures than we do on high-performance schools or other things we do that cost money.”

Those “simple” measures have saved the district a half-million dollars over three years, she said. But, she cautioned, a district must have buy-in from all levels for an energy-efficiency program to work.

“It needs to become part of the culture of your district, not just something the people in the facilities department are doing and cramming down our throat and making us cold, which is what I hear all the time. You have to incorporate all aspects of the school district into it,” Baker said.

The energy sustainability plan she created for her district includes a district energy team, school teams and even student energy teams. The district also uses energy tracking software and an energy performance contractor.

Cam Metcalf, executive director of the Kentucky Pollution Prevention Center at the University of Louisville, which administers KEEPS, echoed Baker’s comments, saying a team effort is needed, backed by policy and follow-through. On-

line training, resources and assessment tools are available on KEEPS’ Web site for districts that join the program.

Districts may need a part-time employee to head the energy efficiency efforts, or assign those duties to a current employee, Metcalf said.

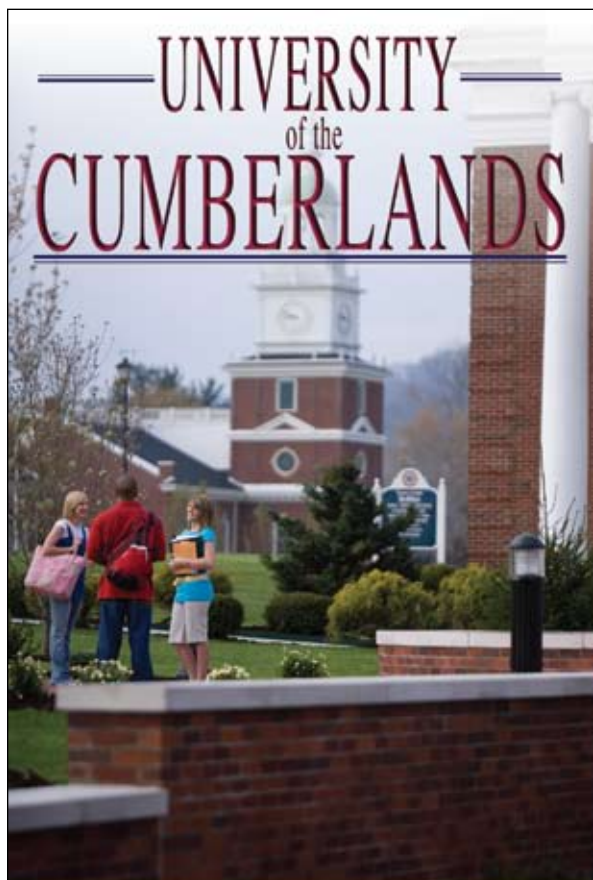
Once a district enrolls in KEEPS, he said, it will receive an energy management survey to “build the benchmark,” for gauging the effectiveness of subsequent efficiency efforts. Part of that includes analyzing school energy bills to ensure the district is getting the best rate structure, said pollution prevention center engineer Bob Miles.

“It’s really a big part of getting things started – understanding how you’re being billed,” he said.

Educating students about energy efficiency also is part of the KEEPS work. Students in high-performing buildings can learn about energy efficiency from features in their own buildings, while teachers can get curriculum materials and ideas for activities from the National Energy Education Development Project’s Kentucky office and Kentucky’s Green and Healthy Schools program.

Districts that need more information or want to sign up for KEEPS should visit <http://louisville.edu/kppc/keeps>.

That site also includes links to the federal Energy Star program and its seven-step guidelines. Clicking on the “partners” tab at the top of the page provides links to other Kentucky energy programs with resources for schools. ☘



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SAVES - a lot

Simpson County school employees become 'efficiency experts'

"There are so many people in places throughout the school system who may see waste that the board or superintendent may not see. It's really wonderful when you can reward people for recognizing areas where you can get the cost-savings."

— Betty Raines, Simpson County Board of Education member

By Mary Branham

The Simpson County school district is looking to its employees for money-saving ideas.

"We thought the employees in our district are the ones that are out and about and would be the ones to give us the best ideas on where we have waste or savings potential going on," said Tami Phillips, finance director for Simpson County Schools.

That's the reasoning behind the Simpson County SAVES program, implemented earlier this year. SAVES stands for Seek And Value Employee Suggestions.

Here's how it works. Employees can make suggestions they believe will save the district money, with one caveat: The suggestion can't be related to personnel, Phillips said. The employee submitting the idea must estimate the kind of savings the district could expect. The suggestion should apply to internal operations and explain how to:

- Improve methods, equipment or procedures;
- eliminate waste, reduce time or cost of work operation;
- create a safer work environment;
- and/or increase or generate revenue, according to the program criteria.

Suggestions are submitted to Phillips, who reviews them and funnels them to the person in the district who can best evaluate the ideas and determine whether they are feasible. Then Phillips and Superintendent James Flynn review the evaluator's comments and decide whether the district can take action.

"It has to be measurable. So is it going to save us on our electric bill? That's something we can measure," Phillips said. "If it is measurable, we benchmark it. And then we determine how much savings we can get from it."



Since the district implemented the program in early January, employees have responded with several suggestions, one of which was to turn off parking lot lights at midnight instead of keeping them on until morning. Several employees have suggested recycling efforts.

Any idea that leads to savings could result in a monetary reward for the person who submitted it. Employees can get 10 percent of the first year's net-cost savings, up to \$1,000. The award will be paid within 60 days after the first 12 months of implementation, according to program guidelines.

"You don't really have anything to lose, even if you end up paying some money for suggestions. Your savings are going to be much more than that," Phillips said.

Simpson County Board of Education member Betty Raines said the incentive program is similar to those in business and industry. And, she said, it's often the people who work closest to a situation who can come up with money-saving ideas.

"There are so many people in places throughout the school system who may

see waste that the board or superintendent may not see,” Raines said. “It’s really wonderful when you can reward people for recognizing areas where you can get the cost-savings.”

Raines said the program is of particular importance now because of the economic pinch the school district – like most districts across Kentucky – is in.

“We know that sometimes there is waste in schools or in business or in industry and anytime that we can cut the waste, then we can keep the beneficial programs,” she said. “Our goal right now is to not cut any services for the children of Simpson County.”

Flynn said the program will help his school district meet several goals.

“We want to maximize our investment of fiscal resources in efforts to improve student learning. This program will allow us to redirect funds to our teaching and learning initiatives,” he said.

In addition, it gives employees a unique way to contribute to the system and be rewarded for their ingenuity and ideas. “We hope this is empowering and motivating for our employees,” he said.

“Finally, I believe we have an obligation – a moral imperative – to demonstrate leadership in fiscal responsibility, energy efficiency and environmentally

conscious decision making,” Flynn said. “I want Simpson County Schools to be a role model in these areas in addition to providing a world-class education for our students.”

Phillips said other districts interested in starting a similar program should begin with the criteria.

“Laying out those first few steps and getting it down on paper the way you want it go is the most critical part. People are always willing to give their opinions,” said Phillips. ☚

— Mary Branham is a contributing writer from Frankfort

Kentucky superintendent vacancies

Danville Independent Schools

1,881 (PS-12) www.danville.kyschools.us

As its next superintendent, the Danville Independent Board of Education is seeking a dedicated instructional leader who can create a climate of high expectation while continuing to enhance Danville’s tradition of excellence. **Application deadline: the first week of May.**

Mercer County Schools

3,179 (PS-12) www.mercer.kyschools.us

The Mercer County Board of Education is seeking as its next superintendent an educational leader who is student-centered with evidence of meeting the needs of all students. The successful candidate should have administrative experience and good oral communication skills and be an effective motivator. **Application deadline: April 13, 2009.**

Middlesboro Independent Schools,

1,590 (K-12) www.mboro.kyschools.us

The Middlesboro Independent Board of Education is seeking a passionate educational leader who can maintain and build upon Middlesboro’s heritage and who seeks to continue the tradition of stable long term leadership. The successful candidate should have administrative and budgeting experience, and should be an innovator and an effective motivator. **Application deadline: April 10, 2009.**

Taylor County Schools

2,596 (PS – 12) www.taylor.kyschools.us

The Taylor County Board of Education seeks a strong innovative educational leader to serve as its next superintendent. Applicants must hold Kentucky superintendent certification or be eligible for same. **Application deadline: April 10, 2009.**

To apply and receive further information, send seven collated copies of a letter of application, application form, resume and three letters of recommendation to:

(Insert district vacancy you are applying for)
Kentucky School Boards Association
260 Democrat Drive
Frankfort, KY 40601

Time for training

Professional development opportunities don’t end with KSBA’s annual conference early in the year. There are two more statewide training events to come, so mark your calendars!

Summer Leadership Institute

July 10-12
Marriott Griffin Gate
Resort, Lexington

Winter Conference

Dec. 12
Louisville Marriott
Downtown



Anne Wise on seniors supporting pre-K programs

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 Anne Wise, intergenerational engagement manager for the organization Generations United, based in Washington, D.C. Wise was in Kentucky recently as part of her group's Seniors4Kids initiative, which participated in Children's Advocacy Day at the state Capitol. Seniors4Kids mobilizes older adults to support pre-K programs.

Anne Wise, standing right, answers questions from members of Kentucky's chapter of Generations United in a room at the Capitol annex as they prepare to visit lawmakers in support of pre-K programs.

Q. Your organization, Generations United, created the initiative Seniors4Kids in order to increase support for pre-K programs. Why is it important for older adults to support these types of initiatives?

A. What's important to keep in mind is, when you ask older adults what they like to volunteer or engage in, they always mention children. And there are a variety of ways they can work on behalf of children. They can have direct volunteer experiences, where maybe they are a mentor to a young adult.

Another thing older adults can do is raise their voices in support of children's issues. What we found is that this is a great opportunity for them to get involved with their community, to leave a lasting legacy.

Q. Seniors, as a group, are not necessarily viewed as being active supporters for these types of initiatives, but lobbying more for things that naturally seem to impact them more: health care, Social Security. Do you think having seniors lend their voices to these children's issues strengthens them?

A. Absolutely. I think it's a common misconception that seniors only care about Social Security and property taxes. We have released a Kentucky fact sheet in conjunction with our advocacy day here where one of our captains emphasized that what matters for her is that Kentucky families have a wide range of support throughout their community. They have children, they have grandchildren: older adults really care about children's issues.

What we love about this initiative is that it provides the opportunity to show a positive image of seniors. They are writing letters to their local papers letting their voice be heard; they're scheduling visits with their legislators. Seniors vote in disproportionate numbers to their representation, so it's very

important for them to let people know that they care about these issues.

And seniors care about these issues for a variety of reasons. For example: they may be a former teacher and that experience has instilled in them how essential it is to make sure children enter kindergarten ready to learn. They may be a retired doctor who knows that the majority of brain development occurs between the ages of 0 and 5. They may be a retired lawyer who knows that getting children interested in school and having a good start experience can have a reduction in criminal activity later. Or perhaps they are just a grandparent who loves children and wants to make sure all children have the same opportunities as those in their families.

Particularly given the current economic climate, older adults have the experience of dealing with these difficult issues and they want to make sure their tax dollars are invested in good programs that work. I think when you look over all the quality benefits that pre-K provides, it's a sound investment because it provides immediate relief to families now, and in the long run it saves taxpayers money down the road.

Q. What are the benefits of investing in pre-K programs?

A. I think there are a number of short- and long-term benefits to investing in pre-kindergarten. In the short term, many middle-class families think about saving for college, but you don't think about doing that for preschool, which in some instances can cost the same amount as a public education – and without having the timeline to prepare for that as you do for college.

It provides relief to families, but not only that, when parents feel that their families are in a good setting, they are able to work more effectively.

Some of the long-term benefits include a reduction in the

need for remedial education. You have an increase in the number of students who make it through high school graduation, which means a higher postsecondary enrollment. You also have a decrease in criminal activity. You also have a better-prepared work force that can contribute in the long term with greater earning power to the state.

We found that our seniors are very interested in this and very supportive. We see pre-K as being pro-business and pro-economy because it provides that long-term investment that will turn them into a productive work force.

Q. Which initiative is your group pushing for?

A. We want voluntary, free pre-school for all 3- and -4-year old children.

One thing we do like to see more of is collaboration between public and private programs, Head Start and early-care programs. It's much less disruptive for children if they don't have to be moved to various points throughout the day.

Q. Is that a growing trend, having teachers go to the kids rather than transporting the kids to the teachers?

A. I don't know if it's a trend, but there's definitely more of an emphasis on it because you have a growing number of working parents.

Q. What is your group doing in Kentucky and is there a way for school boards to get involved?

A. We're obviously looking for more captains and the only qualification is that you're over 50 and you have a commitment to children's issues. There is no extensive time commitment; you can participate in a variety of ways, so it's perfect for people who are busy. Some of our activities include

monitoring your local paper, and if issues about preschool come, be willing to write a letter to the editor. Perhaps you could spend some time visiting with legislators in your local area and letting them know why you support pre-K.

We also have several events that allow our captains to interact with each other and preschool age children to bring attention to these issues.

And most importantly, you can speak personally about why you support preschool and how you came to be involved.

Q. You had mentioned during the advocacy day that more retired military members are getting involved in this effort. Can you explain why?

A. Many of our male group members expressed interest and concern that today's young adults are not qualified for military service. A recent study showed that 76 percent of young adults ages 17-24 are ineligible for military service because they don't meet physical requirements, education requirements or moral requirements, which could mean there is some criminal activity in their background.

They also know that if you get children started in education early and set them on the right path, that is the best way to ensure that you have young people who are capable of giving back to their community.

Only 43 percent of Kentucky 3- and 4-year-olds attend preschool, according to a survey released in December of 2008 based on census data, and a vast majority of those rely on public preschool programs. If you look at the Appalachian region, that number falls to 36 percent.

I think a lot of the benefits of preschool are that you have greater academic motivation; you have fewer referrals for special education. There are lower rates of teen pregnancy, higher graduation rates and ultimately higher earning and employment rates.

One of our captains in Louisville said (supporting pre-K programs) really is just enlightened self interest to see that young children get a good start in life so they become productive and self-reliant citizens.

Q. That was one of my questions, if supporting pre-K programs is self preservation for older adults. It just makes sense for everyone to support these types of programs because these kids are going to grow up and contribute to the system and ultimately be the ones who take care of the preceding generations.

A. I think for seniors it's not so much self-preservation as much as it is common sense. It saves us money in the long term. It creates more productive citizens for the future and more importantly, they just love children. That is their favorite volunteer activity.

One of our captains said it best: she may never have a building or a street named after her, but this is a lasting legacy that she can leave behind. It keeps people connected and involved with their communities. I think that is one of the most satisfying components of this initiative for our volunteers. Many of them are retired and this helps to keep them active.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to add about your group?

A. We are looking for captains and we'd love to get more volunteers from across the state. There are a variety of opportunities and it's not time consuming. And they can really help families by shining a light on these issues.

— For more information about Senior-4Kids, go to www.gu.org.

To get involved in Kentucky, contact state coordinator Mary Musgrave at (859)294-0415 or Dr. Wilma Walker, chair of captains at (859)623-2457.

“I think when you look over all the quality benefits that pre-K provides, it's a sound investment because it provides immediate relief to families now, and in the long run it saves taxpayers money down the road.”

—Anne Wise, Generations United intergenerational engagement manager

Release of student information requires consistency, not just positive vs. negative

Peggy, a very nice-sounding woman on the other end of the call, described herself as a former Texas teacher. She had developed a college prep study guide that had proven itself invaluable to high school students in her state. She was certain that her guide could be a tremendous asset to Kentucky's college-bound students, if she only could find a way to reach them.

All she wanted from me were the names and home mailing addresses of every high school student in Kentucky public schools.

Ummm...excuse me?

It seemed that Peggy had been sent in my direction, she said, by a staff member of the state Department of Education, which didn't have that information. Of course, neither does KSBA. In fact, the only repositories for such data would rest in 174 central offices or the 225 public high schools.

Well, yes, that's what she had to do in Texas and she often found herself dealing with assistants and board attorneys and others who often didn't feel they could divulge the student contact information.

To make a longer story short, I warned Peggy that I thought she would meet the same reluctance in our state and wished her well.

Unfortunately, the decisions public schools are asked to make about releasing student information frequent are neither black-and-white, simple "Yes" or "No" calls.

What's right, not what's good

By any measurement, this is becoming a tragic school year in terms of the number of Kentucky school students. The tragedies have resulted from house fires and auto wrecks and taken place on athletic fields on hot days as teams or marching bands practiced. They have involved diseases such as MRSA infections and meningitis, and acts of violence in which they were the victim or the perpetrator.

At the same time, other Kentucky students have won acclaim for everything from spelling bees to national merit scholarships, from public service work to excellence on the athletic fields and courts.

How would your district respond to a media request for a yearbook photo and/or age and class information for a student from the first group? Would the response be the same if similar information was sought about a student in the second?

In most cases, experience teaches me that the answer to that second question is No.



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

Many administrators wouldn't give a second thought about giving the local paper a photo of a graduating senior who had just won a full scholarship to Harvard, Princeton or Yale. Stories are published every spring about high school football and basketball players – decked out in their school uniforms – who have signed with "Big Blue," "Big Red" or some school whose team frequently plays for national championships. Many of these stories contain quotes from teachers, principals and coaches about the sterling character, academic and athletic traits of these students.

The other side of the coin was demonstrated in two consultations this year with administrators whose local media sought yearbook photos of students who had died. In both cases, there was understandable reluctance. In both cases, the schools had parental forms allowing the release of student information.

This isn't just about whom you upset: grieving or embarrassed parents or a newspaper editor on a deadline. An argument can be made that the school yearbook is a public record. And the editor you turn down today because you don't want to release a photo or other student directory data will probably be the same editor who next week you are encouraging to do a story about some wonderful, progressive achievement in your district.

At the very least, consistency should be one factor when a choice is made.

The Last Word

Board members, superintendents, principals and district communications staff frequently complain to me about their districts' treatment in the news media. Many (sadly, far too many) of those complaints are quite valid and represent a failure of professionalism by those who print and broadcast the news.

Other complaints represent everything from desire to avoid negative news to the personal vanity of the complainer. It's a mixed bag.

But the news media are always going to cover public schools. And public schools are always going to want every single positive column inch and minute of air time they can wring out of local, state and, occasionally, national media outlets.

Those who lead public schools, and those of us who advocate for them, should keep these points in mind when fielding reporter calls, pitching stories and weighing decisions about situations we wish would just go away.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☘



KIDS First

School board members and superintendents from 54 school districts attended KSBA's annual KIDS First Advocacy Conference in Frankfort in February.

The two-day event consisted of an evening reception and a day at the Capital for attendees to meet with their local representatives and to observe the General Assembly in action.

Photos clockwise starting above: David Baird, KSBA's associate executive director and director of Governmental Relations, gives an overview of the top education legislative issues in the session before board members and superintendents fan out to meet with their local legislators.



State Sen. Ken Winters (R-Murray), left, receives the KSBA's KIDS First award from KSBA President Delmar Mahan, center, and KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott. The KIDS First awards were created by KSBA's Board of Directors to honor local and state leaders who work on behalf of Kentucky's public schools and students.

State Rep. Tommy Thompson (D-Owensboro), second from left, with Mahan, Scott and Ohio County Schools Superintendent Soretta Ralph, who nominated Thompson for the KIDS First award.

Gallatin County board member and recent KIDS First recipient Becky Burgett, left, speaks with Sen. Katie Stine (R-Southgate) during the reception.



Pajama (reading) party



It looked like naptime all day on March 6 at Burgin Elementary School, as students went to class in their pajamas. But the topic was reading, not sleeping. The special clothing was worn for “Snuggle Up to a Book” day, on the last day of the school’s weeklong Read Across America observance.

Deborah Brooks, the school librarian who spearheaded the celebration, said each day of that week was themed to spark interest in reading activities. For example, during “Team Up to Read” day, students wore an item of clothing bearing the name of their favorite sports team, while they wore a hat on “Hats Off to Reading” day.

From top left: Kindergarten student Mason Hickey and teacher Carrie Shewmaker look over a book.

After reading *Cat in the Hat* to the kindergartners, Brooks, seated at front, leads the students in a game of charades. Hannah Stewart decides who will get to guess what she’s pantomimed.

Shelby Barnett (left) and Lexi Voris do exactly what the day suggested and got comfy on the floor with a couple of books they had picked out.

