



# KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ December 2009

**EARLY LEARNING,  
FAMILY-STYLE**

**Blogging teachers get PEAK Award**

**CHANGING PLACES IN LOGAN COUNTY**

***2010 General Assembly: high on drama, low on dollars***



# Build your district's future at our facilities and finance-focused Winter Symposium

**Dec. 12, 2009**  
**Downtown Louisville Marriott**

**Our annual Winter symposium is now a one-day event, packing in the same great training opportunities, but in a more compact, cost-conscious format.**

In addition to the traditional sessions on finance and facilities, this year's event will focus on skills that help school board members be successful leaders, such as patience, teamwork, and being a good listener. This year's symposium kicks off a series that will highlight those abilities that have prepared current and former school board members for their real-world occupations and activities. Kentucky Board of Education Chairman Joe Brothers, a former Elizabethtown board member, will give the inaugural talk, It Started With a School Board.



For more information or to register online, go to [www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org)



**FEATURES**

**FULL-FLEDGED**

The Calloway County Schools' Day Treatment Center is a source of pride to the district and community. The proof is in its physical building, as well as what goes on inside it. This is the last of a series spotlighting high-quality alternative programs ... Page 8

**LEARNING LOOP**

It's not only the students in Harrison County who are finding it easier to keep up with their classes – their parents are, too, thanks to teacher blogs. That's one reason the blogging program has won the fall *PEAK* (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award ... Page 10

**BEYOND THE BUDGET**

State lawmakers will tackle a new biennial budget when they convene next month, trying to figure out how to plug Kentucky's massive budget leak. Educators will be following that process closely, but there are also nonmonetary issues to watch ... Page 14

**SECRET WEAPON**

Three education associations are proving that bigger is better when it comes to lobbying. KSBA and the state superintendents' and administrators' associations have been pooling their resources to create collective clout and cohesiveness ... Page 14

**FAMILY AFFAIR**

Madison County School's Literacy Education and Awareness Program takes a whole-family approach to preparing very young children for preschool and kindergarten, melding both school and community resources ... Page 16

**HOME-GROWN IDEAS**

The 2010 KSBA annual conference will feature clinics from a roster of school districts that includes some new faces and some new topics. Keynoters will include a national expert on preschool. And did we mention the magic act designed for educators? ... Page 20



Alternative example, Page 8



Observation days, Page 12



In the loop, Page 10

**DEPARTMENTS**

Take Note ..... 4  
 People Are Talking ..... 6  
 Ed Innovator ..... 12  
 In Conversation With ..... 18  
 KSBIT Corner ..... 21

**COMMENTARY**

Executive Memo ..... 5  
 Get Your Message Out ..... 22

**On the cover**



Halloween eve was a good time for family fun and learning during Daniel Boone Elementary's (Madison County) LEAP program. Caycie Kingery works on a craft project with her 2-year-old son, Damontez Miller. Article on Page 16

## Kentucky School Boards Association

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## TAKE NOTE

### Principally distinguished

Stephanie D. Sullivan, the principal of Graves County Central Elementary



School, was one of 63 principals honored by the National Distinguished Principals program in October.

The program, sponsored by the National Association of

Elementary Schools and other partners, honors principals who have shown extraordinary leadership, commitment to students and staff, community service and contributions to their profession.

Sullivan has been principal of the Graves County elementary school since it opened in 2004. The school has a strong volunteer corps, an emphasis on continuous assessment and "success labs" for struggling learners. Forty percent of its faculty has National Board certification.

"I have enjoyed the unique opportunities of establishing a new school, setting the tone of excellence, and providing a student-centered culture that leads students, teachers, and parents toward academic and personal success," Sullivan said.

### Massey seeks move up

KSBA's immediate past president is seeking a higher office within the National School Boards Association's elected leadership.

Charles "Ed" Massey, who currently is serving as Central Region director on the NSBA Board, is a candidate for the NSBA's secretary-treasurer post. The election will be held in April 2010. Massey, a 13-year member of the Boone County school board, has been on the KSBA board since 1998. He has been a regular participant in NSBA's Federal Relations Network, communicating his trademark theme, "a passion for education" at local, state and national levels.

Massey also has participated in the Harvard University Executive Educators Leadership Program and has served on the Governor's Council for Community Education. ☞

### No. 2 is excellent

Owensboro Independent's Hager Preschool has become the second Kentucky preschool to achieve the Early Childhood Center of Excellence designation from the Kentucky Department of Education.

KDE representatives presented the Hager Preschool staff with a banner and certificate last month. To qualify for the Center of Excellence designation, a preschool center must meet a series of standards for both its programs and its staff. Hager will serve as a model preschool for other school districts in the region and throughout the state of Kentucky, as does the state's other Center of Excellence, in Calloway County Schools.

The Hager Preschool Program currently is undergoing a five-year reaccreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The preschool serves about 320 at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds and is a partnership between Owensboro Public Schools and Audubon Area Head Start.



Photo provided by Owensboro Independent Schools

# Schools need nonprofit insurance option

**B**y now, most of you are aware that KSBA is in discussions with the Kentucky League of Cities (KLC) to administer our insurance service known as the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust (KSBIT). Although these negotiations were ongoing at the time of this writing, I'd like to explain why KSBA is considering this and how schools would benefit.

Let's start with a little background on why KSBA got into the insurance business in the first place and how KSBIT differs from your typical commercial insurance carrier.

The commercial insurance marketplace is characterized by dramatic fluctuations known as hard and soft markets. In a hard market, the cost of insurance is high and adequate coverage is hard to find, especially for public entities like schools and cities. In a soft market, coverage is readily available at inexpensive rates. KSBIT was created in 1978 at the request of school leaders in response to a hard insurance market that had left many of Kentucky's school districts without access to adequate, affordable coverage.

A board of trustees representing school board members, superintendents and school business officials was appointed to oversee the new self-insured pool of member premiums. The trustees contracted with KSBA to hire staff and administer the program.

Since its creation 30 years ago, KSBIT has lived up to its purpose by paying out over \$313 million in claims to Kentucky's public schools while ensuring that all districts, regardless of size, have access to reliable loss-control services and customized school coverages at stable and affordable rates.

In 2002, KSBIT's actuary determined its workers' compensation fund needed additional resources to cover the potential long-term cost of claims. This determination represented an actuarial deficit of \$5 million. In July 2005, a new management team assumed leadership of both the trust and the association and stabilized the program, reducing the deficit to \$3.7 million by 2007.

Unfortunately, a soft insurance market subsequently reduced the level of participation as well as pricing. The result is a current actuarial shortfall of \$5.5 million: \$4.5 for the workers' compensation fund and \$1 million for the property-casualty fund. Despite this actuarial deficit, KSBIT has never experienced any cash-flow problems and currently has assets in excess of \$31 million to pay future claims.

In response to increased pressure from the state



**Bill Scott**  
KSBA Executive Director

Department of Insurance, KSBIT's trustees have been reviewing options to eliminate the actuarial deficit. In late summer we approached KLC about the possibility of a partnership that would turn the day-to-day management of the trust over to KLC while retaining the trustees' oversight role.

Because of its financial strength (\$43 million in annual premiums, \$22 million in surplus, and over \$100 million in total assets), KLC has been able to create a state-of-the-art insurance operation.

KLC's administration of KSBIT's pools would allow schools to take advantage of these operations while also saving money for both pools through economies of scale and elimination of duplicate operations. Also, by leveraging our combined assets, the partnership would produce savings in the purchase of reinsurance and enjoy higher returns on investments. However, the KLC and KSBIT pools would remain completely separate in terms of their funds so schools would never pay for a city claim.

Further, the partnership would eliminate KSBIT's current actuarial deficits through an infusion of cash from KLC. This action would reduce the immediate threat of an assessment on KSBIT's current and past participants. In an assessment, current and former customers are billed for additional premiums to cover the cost of past claims. KSBIT's trustees and management have always considered this to be the absolute last resort, but the Department of Insurance could order this action in the absence of any acceptable alternative.

It is important to note that even if the partnership is ratified, the only way districts can avoid any future threat of an assessment is through strong participation in KSBIT. This means that current participants need to remain in the pool and nonparticipating districts should consider rejoining.

Perhaps the most important benefit of a potential partnership with KLC for Kentucky's school districts is the preservation of a strong alternative to the commercial insurance market. Although districts have recently benefited from cheap premiums produced by a soft market, history tells us that this trend will not continue indefinitely. When the hard market returns, districts will look to a strong, self-insured nonprofit like KSBIT – a dramatic reminder of why it was created in the first place.

I look forward to reporting to you the outcome of these talks with KLC. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions. ☞



Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

**“Twenty years ago, teachers often had to go on a hunch. Because MAP provides so much data on each child, I have caught issues (that in the past could have been overlooked early on).”** Clark-Moores Middle School teacher Stacy Brockman on the Madison County school’s use of MAP reading and math assessment software to profile students’ academic capabilities early in the school year. From the *Richmond Register*.



Photo provided by the Madison County Schools

**“It makes me think what it’s going to be like. I don’t like it.”** Adairville Elementary (Logan County) eighth-grader Chase Smith on his experience in the school district/4-H Reality Store, where he played the role of a farmer with four children trying to balance a budget while holding a crying baby. From the *Russellville News-Democrat & Leader*.

**“There’s a lot of good science tied up with the operation of toys.”** Dwight Portman, an instructor with the Center for Chemistry Education at Miami (Ohio) University at a five-day seminar for Ashland region educators on teaching chemistry and physics using commonplace toys and everyday household materials. From the *Ashland Daily Independent*.

**“We were doing cartwheels and back flips when we heard about how the schools did this year.”** Karen Branham, a third-year highly skilled educator working in the Christian County Schools, on this year’s assessment test results. From the *Hopkinsville Kentucky New Era*.

**“I think the way we’re looking at it is that we’d probably have to modify at least some pieces of our school council legislation to allow for governance changes in these ...schools. We’re thinking in terms of turn-around legislation, rather than**

**charter-school legislation. I think it’s more about the freedom and flexibility the school has to do things differently in terms of instruction and not being tied to some statutes and regulations.”** David Cook, manager of the Kentucky Department of Education’s Race to the Top federal school reform application, on how the agency is not contemplating a statewide charter school proposal but rather new options for low-performing public schools. From the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

**“Kentucky needs to be innovative in our approach to education and right now we almost live**

**in a vacuum. The education establishment sort of creates a one-size-fits-all education model and we have to break free from that. It allows for flexibility – whether it’s flexibility in the length of the day or in the teaching method.”** State Rep. Brad Montell explaining his prefiled bill to allow charter schools to operate in Kentucky. From the Louisville WFPL-FM Radio News.

**“A vote against the tax isn’t a vote against the school board or the schools, it is a vote against the kids.”** Adair County Superintendent Darrell Treece on the December referendum to affirm or recall the board’s nickel property tax for school facilities. From the *Columbia Adair Progress*.

**“I told the staff that if we earn the Center of Excellence, that will be something everyone will have truly earned. This definitely involved the entire school staff – every teacher, secretaries and the custodian. All of our courses had to be aligned to meet Kentucky’s preschool standards and benchmarks, and all of our classrooms had to be in the best shape possible.”** Sherry Baber, coordinator of the Owensboro Independent Schools Hager Preschool Center, on the facility’s selection

Tech talk

**“It’s all about student engagement and bringing today’s technology into the classroom because this is real world. It will change the way that we’re teaching somewhat.”** Danville High School literacy coach Dana Hager on the school’s first purchase of laptop computers for a mobile technology lab. From the *Danville Advocate-Messenger*.

**“It kind of opens the four walls and lets us get out of the classroom. I think it’s just going to open a world of opportunities for us.”** Harrison County Schools chief information officer Melissa Shepard on the district’s use of Skype, a video technology format she calls the “second Internet.” From the *Cynthiana Democrat*.



as Kentucky's second Early Childhood Center of Excellence. From the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

**“It is to the point where we just cannot operate. I don't want to make it about money. Children, and not money, is our main priority, but something has to be done.”**



Magoffin County Superintendent Joe Hunley on the common dilemma faced by many Kentucky superintendents as flu reduces

student and staff attendance. From the *Salyersville Independent*.

**“The real decision was, ‘Could I assure parents (that if schools closed) the risk would be less?’ No, I couldn't (so) we went to school. The thing that concerns me is this is just the beginning. I assume that it will continue throughout the fall.”** Pikeville Independent Schools Superintendent Jerry Green taking the long view in his decision to keep classes going after attendance dropped to 87 percent. From the Pikeville *Appalachian News-Express*.

**“They just don't utilize the vocabulary. They don't think analytically about the math. It's going to take more intensive contact, and it's going to take more direct student help in small groups.”** Hopkins County Schools Assistant Superintendent Linda Zellich on the board's creation of positions for special coaches to work with students struggling with math in the district's upper grades. From the Madisonville *Messenger*.

**“When outsiders talk about school facilities in need, they spotlight Robertson County and say the county residents should foot the bill. Of course, that would be impossible. Our students deserve an equal playing field for their education. The current facility is unable to do that.”** Robertson County Schools facilities coordinator Garrick Ratliff on

the impact on student achievement of a Category 5 school in a property-poor community. From the Maysville *Ledger-Independent*.

**“I said no, let it go for now, and they flat refused. These kids know what they want and they want random student drug testing. It makes sense that if they can't get it for the whole school, they should be able to at least institute it in a club formed for the sole purpose of keeping themselves and their friends off drugs.”** Dave Baxter, sponsor of the Lyon County High School Champions Against Drugs chapter, on the student members' show of support for random drug testing. From the Eddyville *Herald-Ledger*.

**“We don't want a free ride for them. The more people that step up, the more choices the kids will have.”** Nancy Nicholas, whose son, Andrew, works in a local dental office as part of the Bardstown Independent Schools' job training program for special education students. From the Bardstown *Kentucky Standard*.

**“We all live in Fort Mitchell and drive that way, so we certainly want something that will reflect positively on the city and the school. We're on the right path to making this a reality, and we're just looking to keep moving forward in the process.”** Beechwood Independent School Board Chairman Mike Dammert on negotiations for a placing an interstate advertising billboard on school property as a revenue-producing option. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*.

**“Maybe we can have students look at colleges earlier and maybe have a college visit your junior year. That way you don't have to wait until your senior year to decide something is not 100 percent what you want to do.”** Williamstown Independent High School senior Kyle Knarr calling for better college preparation of students during a KSBA-facilitated Community Discussion among district personnel and selected members of the community at large. From the Williamstown *Grant County News*. ☞

# Raiding contingency funds

## POINT ...

**“I want to make it clear that I do not believe these funds can be used for any programs or expenses outside the school's district. It would be patently unfair to ‘rob Peter to pay Paul,’ but it may be time for Peter and Paul to help themselves during the rainiest of days. Schools' surplus funds may or may not be part of the equation, but if they can be a bridge to better days, it is an idea that at least deserves to be discussed.”** Portion of an op-ed article by House Speaker Greg Stumbo published in several Kentucky newspapers.

## COUNTERPOINT...

**“It would send the wrong message for the state to patch up its leaky ship by pirating the savings that schools need when things go wrong. Local residents have made it clear they want the school system to get its job done without robbing the taxpayers. They should expect no less of state lawmakers.”** Portion of an editorial from the Frankfort *State Journal*.

**“There are dumb ideas and then there is Stumbo's idea.”** Portion of an editorial in the *Glasgow Daily Times*.

# Not the redheaded stepchild: Calloway County Schools Day Treatment Center

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

When it came time for Calloway County Schools to tackle the phased-in renovation of its high school in 2000, the school board didn't start with classroom wings, HVAC system or even an auditorium. Instead, the board decided phase 1 should be a new building designed specifically for its alternative program and day treatment center.

Shortly after that decision, a 25-year teaching veteran stopped board Vice Chairman Terry Bourland to ask about the rationale for it.

"I explained that it was for them – to enhance education at the primary high school," he said. The center improves learning at the regular high school by removing students with behavioral issues, and then helps those disruptive students who may need extra attention, Bourland explained.

"We pay a great deal of attention to the top tier, the gifted students who make the news stories, but we also have those students that live in our neighborhoods and work in our community who also need our services," he said.

The board's decision exemplifies why the Calloway County Day Treatment Center, which serves middle and high school students

## The basics: Calloway County Day Treatment Center

- Serves middle and high school students in Calloway, Graves, Mayfield Independent and Murray Independent.

- Operated by Calloway County Schools in collaboration with the above districts, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State-Agency Children and a representative advisory board.

- Average number of students in a year: 90

- Minimum stay: 120 days and completion of a four-phase program



Teacher Tracy Coplen works with an alternative program class in the building the program shares with the Calloway County Day Treatment Center. Seated in the front of the class is aide Teresa Richerson.



from four districts, earned a best-practice designation across the board from the state education department.

The students in the center and alternative program deserve the best facility and best teachers, just like other students, said Superintendent Steve Hoskins.

“There is a culture of high expectation here. We don’t want to just warehouse kids and get them through it,” he said.

The nearly \$1 million facility, part of which is used for maintenance storage, is a big step up from the metal warehouse building the center had occupied since it opened in 1997 after approval from the state Department of Juvenile Justice.

Jerry Ainley, the center’s assistant director who also serves as head teacher for the alternative program, estimates that 95 percent of the Calloway County students in both programs will go on to graduate from high school.

### **Nuts and bolts**

The day treatment center is for students who have been expelled, referred by schools or placed by the court system.

Day treatment center Director Susan Bucy said her students get an individual plan of instruction that is tied to their treatment plan, and, if necessary, an individual education plan for special needs. One of the center’s three teachers is certified in special education and one also works in the alternative program.

“The curriculum is the same as it is in high school or middle school,” Bucy said. “We follow the exact same core content; everything is the same.”

Students, grouped by high school and middle school levels, are pretested in reading and math to determine their grade level in those subjects, and they’re retested every 90 days to gauge their progress.

Sixty to 70 percent of the students are failing or behind in their credit hours when they enter the center – but not for long.

“When the students leave here, they’re passing all their courses. That’s one of the goals they have to achieve to be released from the day treatment center,” said district Instructional Supervisor Stephanie Wyatt.

The center is equipped with a variety of products to make sure students catch up, such as credit recovery and other individualized curriculum programs that ensure students are covering core content and thinking about postsecondary options.

John, an 11th-grader whose home school is Graves County High School, said the day treatment center’s staff taught him to try his hardest. (Due to privacy concerns, students’ last names are not released.)

“I’ve already started planning for college,” he said. “Before, I never even thought about it.”

Students ordered to the center by the Department of Juvenile Justice get additional supports from that agency, but the center also has two counselors of its own.

Parental support also plays a big part in the operation. Parents must agree – in writing – to attend monthly meetings and share other responsibilities.

“We’ve had a great response from parents whose children have attended there,” Bourland said.

### **Supportive transition**

Calloway County Schools’ day treatment center and alternative program both emphasize the transition of departing

students back to their home schools – an area that is a weakness in many of Kentucky’s alternative programs.

Ainley, who also wears the hat of transition administrator, is one of the main links to the students after they return to their home schools. He’s a familiar figure at Calloway County’s high school and middle school, checking in with those students.

“Sometimes I just go and stand in the hallway as they come by to say, ‘How’re you doing?’” he said.

Teachers at their home school are encouraged to let the center and alternative program know if any of their former students are having problems. High school guidance counselors and administrators check periodically on their returnees, while the middle school pairs those students with adult mentors.

Middle school principal Tawnya Hunter said “very few” students returning to her school have problems.

“If we can get them transitioned successfully, then most of the time they’re able to sustain that,” she said.

But the transition assistance begins well before the students leave. A two-year Department of Juvenile Justice grant enabled the district to expand its transition program, which Wyatt said had been “a missing link.” Transition leader Chelsey Gilbert takes students into the community to talk with professionals about careers, gives them ACT preparation, makes sure their individual learning plan is ready for their return and generally allays their fears.

“They do receive so much support, there’s no reason to fail. We don’t let them fail,” Bucy said. ☞

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## Mrs. Durbin's Desk

Northside 2nd Grade



Nov 09 **Week of November 9**



Posted by Administrator at 8:23 am in Homework

We will be reading "Pearl and Wagoner" on page 321 of our reading book.

This week's spelling words are...  
step

Search

Go

# Harrison County teachers' online posts keep students, parents in learning loop

By Brad Hughes  
Staff Writer

Most people can recall being a student, getting home on a Friday evening and being unable to remember the homework assignment due Monday.

Parents can remember asking, "What happened in school today? Did you have any homework?" only to be met with a puzzled look or a shrug.

And even veteran teachers struggle to find an effective way to engage parents as vital partners in what their children are asked to do in the classroom.

In Harrison County, teachers are combining cutting-edge technology, students' inquisitiveness and the desire by many parents to know what's going on in their children's world during the school week. It's called eClassroom Journals and its impact – proven and potential – has earned the district the fall KSBA *PEAK* (*Public Education Achieves in Kentucky*) Award. The award is given twice a year to focus statewide attention on outstanding public school efforts that enhance student learning and promote the positive impact of public elementary and secondary education.

Begun in 2006, Harrison County's Internet-posted weblogs (or blogs, for short) were intended to "overlap the worlds of the student at school and the student at home." Today, their popularity with educators has led to a 100 percent participation rate.

"Starting my blog is one of the greatest successes of my teaching career," said Harrison County High School French teacher Tonya Wagoner.

"This online record of my homework assignments allows students the luxury of knowing what went on while they were away and allows me the security of knowing that I made



our class plans accessible to all,” she said. “It has completely enhanced my craft.”

And the eClassroom Journals are just as much of a hit in the lower grades.

Mackenzie Shepard, a fourth-grade student at Eastside Elementary, said she and classmates look at their teachers’ blogs daily for forgotten homework assignments or extra credit.

“A lot of teachers even have links to Web sites about subjects that some students may need extra help with,” she said. “Some teachers even have games on their blogs about the subjects they teach.”

#### **Goal is engagement for all**

District Web tracking data shows an average 2,000 visitors weekly come to the Harrison County teachers’ blogs. Among the advantages:

- Teachers post information about what goes on in their classrooms: homework assignments, daily activities, Power-Point presentations, spreadsheets and photographs.
- Students post completed assignments and/or classroom discussions.
- Parents keep up with happenings in classrooms and schools, such as schedules, announcements, teacher meetings, district academic achievement data, and even a blog scavenger hunt.
- Teachers, parents and students have two-way communication through comments posted on the blogs. Teachers moderate postings for appropriateness before going “live.”

In a 2009 district survey, 96 percent of responding teachers and parents felt the blogs have had a positive impact on student achievement, and 77 percent of the students shared that assessment.

One parent taking the survey wrote, “It helps me feel more connected with classes and a little more secure about what’s being taught to our children.”

A student wrote, “My mom likes to check it to see if I have everything written down in my agenda right.”

And a teacher added, “There are many students who always have just ONE more question. I often offer extra credit, but I don’t believe that most of my ‘blog squad’ does it for that reason. They just love the exploration for answers that the Internet can afford.”

The program was a no-cost add-on for the district, as the blogging software came with the school systems’ computer servers. However, the Harrison County Board of Education has set aside

funding for a monthly “Blog and Win” contest in which one teacher who completes his or her postings gets \$200 toward technology for the classroom.

#### **Judges wowed**

To say the judges in this *PEAK* Award cycle were similar in their praise for the eClassroom Journal program would be an understatement.

“What a wonderful way to raise student achievement, improve communication between school and home – teacher to student, student to teacher, parents to teachers,” said Simpson County Superintendent Jim Flynn, whose district won a previous *PEAK* Award. “This initiative has enhanced the engagement level of all stakeholders.”

Coleda Tackett, vice president of programs for the Kentucky PTA, said, “I wish all our districts would make this form of communication possible for their school community. I love the option for our school partners to become informed and knowledgeable and engaged in the education process.”

Former substitute teacher, past KSBA President and Boone County board member Ed Massey was equally impressed.

“This program is fantastic. It fulfills the core concept of what’s best for students,” Massey said. “To see students achieve their dreams should be the focus of any program, and it sure is for this one.”

A delegation from KSBA will present the *PEAK* Award this month during ceremonies at a Harrison County school. The district’s eClassroom Journal program will be highlighted during a clinic at the 2010 KSBA Annual Conference in January. ☞

— The deadline for entering the Spring *PEAK* Award is March 10.



Harrison County High School French teacher Tonya Wagoner uses her blog to explain something to 10th-grader Steven Perkins.

Photo provided by Harrison County Schools

# Leading and learning

Logan County teachers learn from one another as they rotate around the district

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

It's hard to imagine what the book *Johnny Tremain* – set in Boston during the Revolutionary War – and the current national health care debate have in common, but both were used during a language arts lesson at Adairville Elementary aimed at both students and teachers.

For the past five or six years, each of Logan County's five K-8 schools close on different days so teachers from one school may rotate to a different one to observe other teachers' "fishbowl" lessons in action. These observation-day lessons are aimed at demonstrating four things:

- Getting students to use higher-level thinking skills.
- Getting students engaged in the lesson.
- Demonstrating authenticity.
- Embedding technology in the lessons, not just using it as an add-on.

"These lessons are not based on a whim, but are researched based," said Associate Superintendent Janet Hurt. "Everything is very structured. We want to make sure we maximize this time because they only get one a day a year of this."

Hurt said the district's one high school does not close for its own observation day, but its teachers do get a chance to observe lessons taught in the middle grades, and some of those teachers observe at the high school level.

On this late October day, as a group of Lewisburg Elementary teachers watched, Lori Bouldin used *Johnny Tremain* to teach students about perspective and point of view. She started her lesson by using her whiteboard to play a game with students, asking them to guess what the blurry photos flashed on screen were. From there, students discussed points of view, such as first, second and third person and moved on to a discussion of the different points of view of characters in the book.

The lesson ended with Bouldin assigning

her students a task to educate themselves on the health-care debate using the lessons they learned about point of view and perspective so they could form their own opinion on the issue.

The lesson hit all four areas of emphasis.

"If they were just learning that to be learning it, what good would that be?" asked Hurt. "We always ask ourselves how this learning transfers to real life."

Following each of these observation lessons, a curriculum specialist, the classroom teacher and those who observed get together for a debriefing to dissect the lesson, which is a learning opportunity for both the observers and that day's teacher.

Curriculum specialist Dawn Slaton said participants also fill out evaluations after an observation day.

"We ask them how much it helps them and we ask for them to list ways that they could use these strategies," she said.

She said that reinforces what they learned that day.

"Even though we saw math and language arts lessons (one day), there were science and social studies teachers in there, and what we hope they come away with is how to use strategies effectively, not necessarily the content," she said.

Bouldin said the program has evolved over the years, in the past using one fishbowl lesson followed by learning walks.

"Several years ago we had visits where we just walked through," she said. "We just dropped in on people and observed for 15 minutes and looked for certain things. Over the years it's developed into something more intentional and targeted. As we've grown from it, it's grown also."

Rhonda Skinner, a visiting Lewisburg teacher, said she appreciates the more in-depth approach.

"I've been collaborating in a regular classroom for years and what I've gained from just that is amazing," she said. "But coming in and seeing this, it's very intentional, very focused. It allows me to sit back and focus that day and watch. It's very vital to making gains professionally."

Classroom teachers aren't the only ones who





learn during these lessons.

“Those of us at the district level continue to learn from the teachers,” Hurt said. “I see different ways of doing things and take those to other teachers. We’re so focused all year on them learning from us; it really drives home the point that we are not the experts, that we are in this with them and they teach us just like we teach them.”

Hurt said the district’s teaching and learning goals make it easier to pick teachers and grade levels to showcase.

“Sometimes we may pick someone who has no experience simply because it’s an opportunity for them to learn and become an expert and grow,” she said. “We try not to do the same people all the time, but we do some repeats. We try to be smart about doing what will benefit the teachers in different areas.”

This method of professional development also seems to be more user friendly, Hurt said.

“So often with p.d., teachers will say, ‘That’s a great idea but I wish I could see that in action,’” she said. “This is an opportunity for us to provide that actual practice rather than just an idea and theory.”

The program also recognizes the district’s home-grown talent.

“We used to spend so much money going out of district (for professional development), so we decided it was time to start investing in ourselves,” Hurt said. ☞



**Top photo:** As students in Adairville Elementary teacher Lori Bouldin’s eighth-grade class use the book *Johnny Tremain* to discuss perspective and point of view, a group of teachers from in-district neighbor Lewisburg Elementary observe the lesson from the edges of the room.

**Bottom photo:** From left, Lewisburg teachers Earlene Appling, Rhonda Skinner, Judy Wilson and Bobbi Miller, and their assistant principal Randy Marcum, discuss the lesson they just observed before the entire group met for a debriefing of the lesson with the teacher and a district curriculum specialist.

# Upcoming legislative session: Even more unpredictable than usual

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**W**hile drama over the 2010-12 state budget likely will dominate the upcoming legislative session, it may also create a more favorable climate for educational change that doesn't involve dollars.

"If we look at it strictly from the standpoint of money, it's a very bad year," said David Baird, KSBA's governmental relations director. But on the flip side, the KSBA legislative team is pointing to legislation calling for educational improvements that don't carry a big price tag.

"It may be a year when lots of focus will be on other things besides money," said Baird, who also is KSBA's associate executive director.

Teacher quality issues will be high on that list of non-budget issues, said Shannon Pratt Stiglitz, assistant governmental relations director.

"Education Commissioner Dr. Terry Holliday has recommended a teacher working conditions survey and he has also talked about some of the issues around differential compensation for the purposes of additional assigned duties," she said.

KSBA's legislative platform supports developing differentiated compensation for teachers in critical shortage areas and for increased responsibilities.

## Other teacher quality issues

The KSBA lobbyists also expect legislative discussion of revamping the evaluation system for teachers and administrators, looking at multiple measures, including student performance, and using different evaluators to observe teachers throughout the year.

Such a system also would expedite the evaluation process "so it doesn't take so long to address teachers who aren't performing at the level necessary for high student achievement in the classroom," Baird said.

Beefing up professional development goes hand in hand with improving teacher evaluations, and Baird also is looking for legislation that would encourage more collaborative, content-oriented training throughout the school year.

"I think there's going to be a push to increase dramatically the number of hours of professional development that a teacher will receive during the school year, and what it will look like and more core guidelines," he said.

## Governance issues

Not for the first time, legislation is expected to be introduced to change the way principals are hired, giving the superintendent more authority to evaluate applicants and recommend a pool of three to the school council. Some education groups want the superintendent to be able to select the principal, especially in the case of low-performing schools,

## 3KT

**3:** Kentucky School Boards Association, Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents

**K:** Kentucky

**T:** Team

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**I**t sounds vaguely fraternal, but 3KT is not a secret society. It actually comes closer to being a secret weapon.

This silo-busting group took shape about four years ago, uniting KSBA, the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents and the Kentucky Association of School Administrators under a broad lobbying umbrella.

"Since the inception of 3KT," said Wilson Sears, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, "we've been able to go to Frankfort with a more united front. When you put the strength of the Kentucky School Boards Association,

# Trifecta for

Kentucky Association of School Administrators and the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents all speaking from one voice, it obviously has great impact, not only in communities and in public thinking, but hopefully with legislators."

David Baird, KSBA's governmental relations and associate executive director, said he recalls when the groups went to the state Capitol separately during legislative sessions without much interaction among them. "They did their thing, we did our thing," he said.

Because of this, the clout of each group was smaller than it would have been had the three presented a united front – much smaller than, for example, the numbers that the Kentucky Education Association is able to muster. Baird



Baird said.

The state school board has discussed amending state law to add chronic low student academic performance as a cause for removal of a superintendent or school board member.

KSBA understands that the education department has a responsibility to address the removal of people in leadership positions in low-performing schools, Baird said, but those leaders first need “the assistance, the resources and the authority to take care of the problem.”

This also raises the question of school board authority over curriculum, assessment and instruction, he added. Boards have little authority over those areas now, but if they are held accountable to the point of removal, they should also have commensurate authority, Baird said.

### **Mixed bag**

Among the other education issues to watch for in the upcoming session:

- The innovation required for federal Race to the Top funding and Title 1 School Improvement grants for the lowest-performing districts may drive statutory change, Baird and Pratt Stiglitz said. Charter schools have created the greatest stir, but Pratt Stiglitz said the overall emphasis – both from the Kentucky Board of Education and the federal education department – has been on innovations that move schools out of low-performing status as quickly as possible.

- “There have been a lot of conversations among legislators about facilities,” Pratt Stiglitz said. KSBA specifically supports legislation that would require a change in the base facility funding formula from the current 5 cents to 10 cents, to be equalized by the state and non-recallable. The association believes that the increase to a dime should be optional in most cases, but mandatory if a district has a category 4 or 5 school.

- Both the state education department and KSBA are backing expansion of state-funded preschool to children whose families are within 200 percent of the federal poverty level; however, the price tag on such an expansion does not bode well for this initiative.

- Finally, legislation likely will be enacted to prevent districts from being financially penalized due to a high number of flu-related absences. A proposal backed by Senate and House leadership would allow districts to use the average daily attendance rate from either of the last two school years – whichever is highest – and multiply that percentage by the current school year’s student count. The resulting figure would be used only for 2010-11 SEEK formula funding.

### **The wild card**

The one certainty involved in the 2010-12 budget: not enough revenue.

“There will be almost no discretionary money,” Baird said. “We will have to fight tooth and nail to simply get basic school funding for SEEK and programs and services that are already on the books.”

That tooth-and-nail fighting may also include popping a trial balloon floated by House Speaker Greg Stumbo, who suggested districts raid their contingency funds to help balance their budgets.

The second year of the state budget will be the one to watch. “I think for the first year of the new biennium we’ll be able to use stimulus funding and perhaps make it a break-even year like we did this year,” Baird said.

However, he said, if the economy hasn’t picked up by 2011-12 and federal stimulus money is exhausted, “everything is back on the table” ☞

# education

said the joint group amounts to more bargaining power.

Together, said Kentucky Rep. Carl Rollins, D-Midway, “It makes a difference.”

The most recent issue to demonstrate that was during the 2009 session for Senate Bill 1, which revamps the state’s testing system, said Shannon Pratt Stiglitz, KSBA’s assistant director of Governmental Relations.

Rollins, who chairs the House Education Committee, said it helps him to be able to relate to all three groups at one time.

“For me whenever I meet with them they all come together so I know I have three groups that work together before they even come to me and that makes it easier to talk to the issues,” he said.

Rollins also cited 3KT’s depth of experience, noting, “There’s a lot of exper-

tise in those three groups and I like to bounce ideas off of them.”

Besides greater influence, another advantage to 3KT is the pooling of the resources of the groups’ internal and external lobbyists, said Dr. Leon Mooneyhan, the former superintendent who heads the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative and acts as 3KT’s facilitator.

“The ability to share information and pool our resources and to have the best picture of information, the positions of various legislators and the administration brings more information to all of the associations,” he said.

The group has no bylaws or formal contracts, Baird said, but has “a very explicit understanding” that the associations don’t have to agree on every issue. There are usually one or two areas of

disagreement during each session, “and when that happens people understand and don’t get mad,” he said.

“As a rule, I think we all keep in mind we really are about schools and kids,” Sears said.

Baird said the group meets once a month regularly and once a week or even more frequently during legislative sessions. Meetings usually include several representatives of each group, their lobbyists and officers, and representatives from other education agencies, including the state education department and the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. Other groups are pulled in on an as-needed basis for their expertise, such as the Kentucky Education Association and Kentucky Teachers Retirement System. ☞

# Preschool prep

## Madison County program targets at-risk youngsters



Caycie Kingery and her 2-year-old son, Damontez Miller, work on a craft project with the help of Daniel Boone Elementary's Family Resource Center Director and LEAP facilitator, Traci McIntosh, right.

By Mary Branham

If early learning were measured by the old state testing standards, the 2-year-old in Madison County Schools' preschool program would have moved from novice to apprentice in scissor skills.

Family resource center Director Lisa Gay said she introduced scissors to the toddler during a home visit as part of the program. The next time she saw him, the child was cutting a lot better—it was obvious his parent had worked with him, she said.

That crystallizes what the LEAP—Literacy Education and Awareness Program—aims for.

The program is a collaborative effort between Madison County Schools and community organizations to better prepare at-risk students in the district for kindergarten. The idea germinated from a Model Schools Conference in 2006, according to Superintendent Tommy Floyd.

After that conference, Floyd and others started talking with community groups.

“What we ended up with was a roomful of people who also

realized that if we worked together on this, it could probably be something that could be very advantageous to our very young and very at risk,” he said.

The district got a \$32,000 grant from the Steele-Reese Foundation that provided seed money and the program was up and running last spring. Family resource center directors worked with the Madison County Health Department HANDS – Health Access Nurturing Development Services – program to identify and recruit students who might benefit.

HANDS pairs first-time parents with skilled mentors, but only provides services for parents of children up to age 2. That's when the school system steps in.

Family resource center directors go into the homes of at-risk children in their coverage area to work with them and their parents, using an age-based curriculum, on where the student should be in their educational development. And the program can connect families to other resources because LEAP is a collaborative effort.

“Their goal is to get them better prepared through Growing Great Kids curriculum to enter preschool or kindergarten,” said Steve Gamble, director of districtwide services. “Spend-



ing money on children before they enter kindergarten saves money later when they get to middle and high school because of all the interventions you don't have to do."

Madison County school board Vice Chairman Glyndon Green said that's why the board views this program as an investment.

"We recognize many of our children are fortunate that their parents have the time and inclination to sit and read with them," he said. "We recognize many of the children who don't have that benefit show up unprepared to start kindergarten and first grade."

Family resource center directors Amy Carmichael of Kirksville Elementary and Gay, who serves Silver Creek and Shannon Johnson elementaries, said they make the initial connection with participating families during the last visit of the HANDS mentor. Family resource center directors then make weekly visits and work on the skills students will need in kindergarten.

"We have a handout for parents that gives a timeline as to what their child should be able to do ... what they should be working on with that child," Carmichael said.

The program also includes group activities—such as reading and music programs—that are open to everyone in the school's coverage area. That not only exposes the children to reading, but it also exposes families to the school setting itself.

"They're getting acclimated (to school) at a much earlier age," said Gamble. "When they (students) get to school, they feel a whole lot more comfortable and the parent feels more comfortable if they've been there several times before."

Because the program is so new, no concrete data is available to gauge its success. But anecdotally, the resource center directors sat they can see that it's working.

School officials would like the program to continue, but funding may be an issue. It didn't get a second year of funding from the Steele-Reese Foundation, and times are tough financially for schools across the state. So Madison County will need to find funding to keep it

going, even in its current form, Floyd said.

The district is working with child-care providers to get them to prepare kids in their centers for school. Those children, Floyd said, will be part of Madison County Schools when they enter kindergarten and it's important to give them a good start.

"We can do this," he said. "We can't do it for free and we can't do it without funding. While LEAP has made us feel like we're at least taking steps, it's probably heightened the awareness of the need for Kentucky to revisit its statewide approach."

Floyd, who was recently appointed to the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education, believes that's something the state really needs to do.

"If Kentucky really wants to be a competitor nationally, I can't think of any better way to make a dent in our future than a better prepared child hitting the kindergarten door," he said. ☞

— *Branham is a writer from Frankfort*

# Living Large



No need to squint when you read the *Kentucky School Advocate* online. Unlike the hard-copy version, you can make the electronic magazine larger. Just click on a page and a zoom feature enlarges it for ease of reading. Click again and it's back to regular size. The cursor also enables you to move the page around for even better focus on the material.

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# Margie Cleveland and Bill Lovell

## on their appointment to the Transforming Education in Kentucky Task Force

*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 Margie Cleveland, Woodford County school board member, and Bill Lovell, a member of the McLean County Board of Education, who have been appointed to Gov. Steve Beshear's Transforming Education in Kentucky Task Force. The task force has two goals: to re-energize and unite the business, academic, political and civic communities around our schools; and to develop ideas and stitch together an array of existing initiatives into a comprehensive fabric that is more powerful and more focused.*



**Q. You are two of the 30 people appointed to the Governor's Transforming Education in Kentucky Task Force, whose goals are basically to evaluate what is working and what isn't in our education system and how to reenergize our various communities around our schools. With nearly two decades of education reform behind us, what do you think is working and what isn't?**

**Bill Lovell:** I served on some volunteer assistance programs where they had superintendent and board members, highly skilled educators and other folks from the department of education coming in to help districts that were struggling. I was so impressed with the Highly Skilled Educators.

Ever since that time I've been thinking that if every district could have a teacher who could go through that HSE training – I understand it's just excellent training – every district then could have an HSE at their district level and that would make a world of difference, even in high-achieving districts. I know it would take some funds, but I don't think we're limited by what we can

dream. I thought it was the most effective tool being used in those struggling districts.

Not knowing what else is going to happen with our task force, I'd like to see that on the table, to at least talk about it.

**Margie Cleveland:** I agree with the need for more Highly Skilled Educators. I've worked on Scholastic Audit teams and each time you would go into an audit, you would have a Highly Skilled Educator assigned to the team, and Bill's right — their skill level is just amazing. What they can accomplish is remarkable.

Scholastic Audits and the Scholastic Reviews have been valuable tools because they have provided a road map for the HSE, district and schools to move forward. If you look at the statistics from schools/districts that have audits and reviews, you will see that they have moved forward in almost all cases. It's getting in and identifying what the issues are, what's going correctly and how to fill in the gaps.

The HSE program has been in jeop-



ardly every year. It's one of the programs that always receives cuts. Due to limited funding, many HSEs have multiple assignments. The program would be much more effective with adequate funding. They do make a big difference.

**Q. Do you see any areas that were missed in education reform?**

**Cleveland:** Every year there is talk of funding all-day kindergarten. The younger we can begin working with them the better off they are in the long run. Funding of all-day kindergarten is vital, and so is increased funding for preschool. To correct things when the children are young will save money and provide for more success for those kids. It's always talked about, but the money has not been there and the emphasis has not been there, but it could eliminate so many problems down the road.

**Lovell:** There are those who would disagree, but I believe the superintendent ought to be hiring the principals. I've heard horror stories, and it just doesn't make sense to me that teachers would be hiring their boss. That just doesn't make sense to me. As far as school reform in 1990, that's something I would prefer that we change.

**Cleveland:** I agree. There have been a lot of problems, and a lot of wrong hires that have had to be corrected. I think it's very important that the superintendent have the final choice on it.

**Q. What do you hope will come out of this task force? What areas does it need to focus on?**

**Lovell:** In 1990, school reform moved Kentucky above a lot of states in the area of public education. Whatever we do, I want us to make that leap again because all the other states have caught up and gone ahead. I hope whatever is done by the task force, whatever initiatives are started, that it would give the entire state's public education a boost like the school reform in 1990.

I also go back to the idea of No Child Left Behind, of reaching these kids, of getting them all reading on grade level; wouldn't that be fantastic? I don't know all of the tools we need to do that.

**Cleveland:** The dialogue will allow

everybody to see what the opportunities are, what the weaknesses are, what the needs are, and what great things are going on. It's like when you look at a successful district or school. They know everything that is going on. They know what works, they know how to evaluate programs, and they know what needs to be changed and when it needs to be changed.

We have great things going on; it's just everyone is working in isolation. I really hope this task force can put everyone on the same page.

**Q. That touches on the next question. One of Gov. Beshear's goals is to get people in the state re-energized about education, the way they were after KERA was passed. As school board members, it's your job to keep your fingers on the pulse of your communities. What is the public's mood about education and education reform, especially compared with 20 years ago?**

**Cleveland:** The community is hearing more about education now. Twenty years ago communities didn't talk about education. Parents didn't have a clue where we ranked, what tests were going on. Granted, we've been overloaded with that and it has come into question. But parents are aware now of which schools are doing well and which aren't. They do have that choice to move their children if they are not doing well.

I think Kentucky is much more aware than we were 20 years ago. I don't think it's going to take much to energize and get everyone moving forward again.

**Lovell:** The community members I talk to seem to be high on their elementary schools because they are doing well, and the middle schools, which have made leaps and bounds over the past few years. But the public realizes that high schools still have a long way to go.

Part of our task is going to be to look at best practices, see what is working and plug those into our high schools in Kentucky. I think that would make the community take notice even more.

**Q. How do you think the task force's efforts will fit in with the aims of Senate Bill 1?**

**Lovell:** I understand that our task force will not be involved with the funding portion ... but since Senate Bill 1 is about revamping the assessment of education in Kentucky I would think our task force surely is going to have a role in that. I'm not sure about that. I haven't received an agenda about the task force yet. I'm just going by what the governor has said.

**Cleveland:** I think it would have to, as well. We're talking about more students taking AP courses, that drives their success into college and talking with the work force, that drives what is taught in school. That would somehow have to connect with assessments, because a group of stakeholders are going to discuss what a successful student in Kentucky looks like. You have to be able to measure that child, so I would think there would be a connection.

**Q. What do you all bring to the task force as board members?**

**Lovell:** I'm excited that there are two school board members on this task force. I can remember a time when if something like this was going to happen, school board members would have been left out. I'm just excited.

I do think we have a better understanding of the community. A lot of times when you get a lot of educators in the room, they sometimes leave out the perspective of someone whose background is not in education. I think that our piece of the task force, which also includes some community members – just having the perspective of someone who's inside the system – but also outside of it, it's a positive.

**Cleveland:** We come with a broad insight. We have the perspective of a district – from preschool through high school – and through the success our students have after high school. We talk with teachers, we meet with the community, and we talk with parents, so we come with just a little bit of everything. Not necessarily a great depth of knowledge about education, but awareness of how it affects everyone else. I think our perspective will be valuable and I'm excited to be included. ☞

# KSBA's 74th Annual Conference: Familiar format, different faces

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

It's what's on the inside that counts.

That holds true for KSBA's upcoming 2010 annual conference: the framework will be familiar to board teams, but it will be what's inside the frame that sets the event apart.

"The format is the same but the feel is different because we have so much new blood this year," said Kerri Schelling, who, as KSBA's board team development director, is organizing the Jan. 22-24 gathering at the Galt House in Louisville. The theme of the session is Public Education: Kentucky's Common Wealth.

The majority of the 40-plus clinic sessions for the 74th annual event will be presented by school districts, Schelling said.

"The districts really stepped up to the plate with great ideas," she said. "Most districts in the lineup will not have presented or sent student performers in recent years. We'll have some new and different perspectives from a lot of different voices."

The topics of the 2010 clinics range from food services and school district advertising campaign to single-gender schools and training student leaders. Those who want to get a jump start may also select from any of five preconference sessions, including the second annual Joe England School Safety Seminar.

The keynote speakers for the conference also are a diverse bunch – a magician, a preschool expert and an Illinois school board member who sits on the board of the National School Boards Association:

- Billy Riggs, who is billed as a "Master Dis-illusionist," will open the conference Friday afternoon in keeping with the light-hearted note that is becoming a popular tradition for the kick-off. Riggs has been called the "Dr. Phil of Magic," weaving humor, audience participation, original funny songs and world-class illusions into his inspirational program. How to Achieve the Impossible is aimed at helping education leaders "see past the smoke and mirrors."

- Saturday's plenary speaker will continue KSBA's two-year focus on preschool education. Dr. Jerry D. Weast will focus on how investment in preschool builds a foundation that promotes equity and narrows the achievement gap. Weast heads Montgomery County Public Schools, the largest and most diverse school system in Maryland and the 16th-largest district in the nation. The district's success in closing the achievement gap is the focus of a new book from Harvard Education Press.



Weast has received numerous awards recognizing his innovative leadership in early childhood education, professional development, school accountability, and parent involvement.

- Sunday morning's brunch will be headlined by a longtime school board member from Illinois who also sits on the National School Boards Association's board of directors. Mark C. Metzger's presentation is one with which school board members everywhere can identify. It's called, No One Warned Me About This! Lessons and Laughs from a Life in School Service.

Despite the economy, Schelling thinks attendance for the 2010 conference will be strong simply because it has always been a unique opportunity for board members, not only for receiving a large amount of training in one setting but for sharing ideas and successful programs.

"The most important thing it does is give an opportunity for board teams to learn from so many of their colleagues," she said.

Along economic lines, board members will be able to take in several clinic sessions on finance that are part of KSBA's Academy of Studies and several others that focus on saving money – including funding learning opportunities on a "shoestring budget," reducing transportation mileage and costs, and "going green" on a limited budget.

Of the schedule changes made at last year's conference, two are being carried over to the 2010 event. The first Saturday clinic will begin at 8 a.m., a move that began last year to accommodate both early risers and those attendees who want to maximize the training hours they earn a single day. That also allows for a 10 a.m. plenary session with a special speaker and a networking lunch.

However, last year's mid-afternoon Saturday scheduling of the annual business meeting will revert to its former placement at the end of the afternoon, Schelling said. ☞



# Reduce risk with annual driver checks

**Q.** Why should my district run a Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) check on each driver annually?



**Joe Isaacs:** Most districts have a self-reporting policy that requires drivers to disclose driving violations and collision/accident information to the district. The self-reporting requirement should be for all employees with driving responsibilities, including occasional drivers such as administrative and maintenance staff, and bus drivers.

In addition to a self-reporting policy, a district should consider increasing the frequency of obtaining MVR or driver records. Most districts do an MVR check on a driver at the time of hire, but it is important to check a driver's motor vehicle records annually – and that a district take corrective action if it learns that a

driver has an unacceptable driving record. There are several programs that will automatically generate driver records when any of the following occurs:

- Upon new hire of a driver or an employee being assigned driving tasks.
- Annually from the date of hire or enrollment into the program.
- When a driver has any of the following added to his/her driver records:
  - Convictions
  - Failures to appear
  - Accidents
  - Driver's license suspension or revocation

Having both a self-disclosure policy and annual MVR checks may be redundant, but the goal is to eliminate the possibility of an employee with an unacceptable driving record or suspended license from operating a district vehicle.

— *Isaacs is the risk control and safety manager for the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust, KSBA's insurance and risk management service.* ☞

## Kentucky Superintendent Vacancies

### Lawrence County Schools

(2,380 enrollment, PS–12) [www.lawrence.kyschools.us](http://www.lawrence.kyschools.us)

The Lawrence County Board of Education is seeking an experienced administrator who displays a passion for education and will set and expect high expectations for the district. The successful candidate should also possess the characteristics of a proven leader, including being a motivator and good communicator. Additionally, effective people skills and strong public relations skills are expected. **All applications must be received by Dec. 1, 2009.**

*Pending until January, 2010*

### Jackson County Schools

(2,221 enrollment, PS– 12) [www.jackson.kyschools.us](http://www.jackson.kyschools.us)

To apply, send seven copies of a cover letter/introduction, resume, application form, video, responses to eight questions, certification and three (3) letters of recommendation to: (Insert district name) Superintendent Search, Kentucky School Boards Association, 260 Democrat Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601. Find application form, video information and questions at [www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org), under "Employment Opportunities."

# Fight 'pointless babble:' if you're going to tweet, add some meat

Do you Twitter? Education Commissioner Terry Holliday does. So do Gov. Steve Beshear and *Courier-Journal* education writer Toni Konz. And superintendents Tom Shelton of Daviess County and Pat Hurt of Metcalfe County. And school board members Jean Crowley of Danville Independent and Bill Redwine of Rowan County.

Twitter isn't only for individuals. The U.S. Department of Education has a Twitter page, as do school systems large (New York City) and small (Bowling Green Independent). In fact, a recent Google search produced a listing of more than 106 million Twitter pages with some identified link to "schools."

Twitter is just one of the many social networking Internet Web sites, much like Facebook, MySpace and Linked-In. Internet use tracking services place it among the top 50 most popular Web sites. In fact, this past March, the Nielsen international marketing firm ranked Twitter as the fastest-growing site in the Web's "member community" category.

The primary operational aspect that sets Twitter apart from other online communications tools is its limit of 140 characters per message, also called a "tweet." It's quick and easy to use. But some question whether it's worth the effort.

This fall, pearanalytics, a San Antonio-based data analysis firm, released a study concluding 40.5 percent of the Twitter messages it reviewed constituted "pointless babble;" an example: "I am eating a sandwich now."

But in a world when Generation X, Y and Z parents and taxpayers are giving more attention to online sources of information, Twitter can be a resource for schools to reach critical audiences – if they make it worth those target audiences' time.

## Tweet with a purpose

At last month's annual conference of the Kentucky School Public Relations Association, I shared the following tips on making Twitter a more useful element of communications by schools, districts and their leaders:

- **Link, link, link:** The 140-character limit can be bypassed simply by adding a link to another Web page with unlimited extra information about the subject you want to highlight.
- **Correct errors:** With only 140 characters, typos tend to stand out. Don't diminish your effort by spelling names like Holiday or Bershear.
- **Promote it:** Opportunities include adding the Twitter address to your e-mail signature, putting it on your district letterhead or making it a part of any other communica-



Brad Hughes  
KSBA Member  
Support Services Director

tions to the public.

- **Post your own stuff:** When you issue a news release or a letter to parents, put it up on your Twitter page, linked to the item on your Web site.
- **Post to others' stuff:** When media outlets publish or broadcast a positive story about your district, make it a Tweet with a link to the story.
- **Keep it informational, not personal:** It's doubtful that where you are going today and who you are meeting with will keep visitors returning, so give them something of value to their interests.

- **Do it daily:** There's plenty of research that shows return visitors to Web sites look not only for information they care about, but also for a regularly updated resource.

- **Follow:** In Twitter, to "follow" means to have signed up for a free subscription to the originator's messages. Pick and choose those who provide the most information of enough interest to you.

- **Followers:** From time to time, check those who are signed up to "follow" your site. Some Twitter sites simply try to build huge statistics and have no interest in your postings. Block them so you can focus on trends among those who really want your information.

- **Advancers:** Your followers will be interested in what's ahead, so use your postings to tell people about upcoming events, with time and location.

- **Abbreviations:** School audiences are primarily adult in nature, so avoid the character-saving shortcuts the kids use like LOL (laugh out loud) and UG2BK (You've got to be kidding).

## The Last Word

Some Internet analysts see little long-term use for Twitter. Others point to the current growth rate, the user-friendly nature and the fact that its usefulness is limited only by the creativity of the human mind.

The important question isn't, "Who is right?" It's, "Does it matter?"

For the time being, Twitter is a rapidly increasing source of information for an important target audience for public schools and their leaders. It can be where parents go to get the latest on what's happening in their children's schools. It can be a new place to announce school closings. It can share positive news created from a variety of outlets for people who might have missed that original story or press release.

In other words, Twitter can be all sorts of things for schools and leaders willing to venture into this social networking option.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☚



## 2009 first-place winners

### **Barren County Schools**

Photography  
Miscellaneous Printed Materials  
External Publications – Full Color  
Audio/Video Programs

### **Bell County Schools**

Miscellaneous Printed Materials  
Special Events

### **Boone County Schools**

Annual Reports  
Miscellaneous Public Awareness Programs  
Community Engagement Programs

### **Bowling Green Independent Schools**

Brochures – Full Color

### **Boyd County Schools**

Calendars

### **Bullitt County Schools**

External Publications – Full Color  
Photography  
Photo Essays

### **Campbell County Schools**

External Publications – Full Color  
Calendars

### **Daviess County Schools**

News Writing  
Calendars  
Photography

### **Elizabethtown Independent Schools**

Photography

### **Fayette County Schools\***

Academic Achievement Promotions  
Calendars  
Special Events  
Miscellaneous Printed Materials  
Brochures – Full Color  
Publication Writing  
Electronic Newsletters  
Commentary Writing  
Photography  
One-Time Publications  
Writing for the Web  
External Publications – Full Color  
Miscellaneous Printed Materials

**Congratulations to this year's  
top OASIS Award winners!**

School public relations professionals in these districts won first-place awards in the 2009 OASIS (Outstanding Achievement in School Information Services) professional development program, sponsored by the Kentucky School Public Relations Association and KSBA. An asterisk\* denotes a Sweepstakes Award Winner for multifaceted achievement.



### **Fulton County Schools**

External Publications - 1-2 Colors

### **Hardin County Schools**

External Publications – Full Color

### **Harlan County Schools**

Miscellaneous Public Awareness Programs  
Internet Web sites  
Special Events (two awards)  
Academic Achievement Programs

### **Henderson County Schools**

Community Engagement Programs  
External Publications – Full Color  
Brochures – Full Color

### **Jefferson County Schools**

One-Time Publications (two awards)  
Photography  
Feature Writing  
Annual Reports  
Audio/Video Programs  
External Publications – 1-2 Colors

### **Jessamine County Schools**

External Publications – Full Color  
Photography

### **Kenton County Schools\***

Miscellaneous Electronic Communications  
Calendars  
Miscellaneous Printed Materials

### **Mayfield Independent Schools\***

Audio/Video Programs  
Special Events  
Calendars

### **McCracken County Schools**

Brochures – Full Color

### **Nelson County Schools\***

External Publications – Full Color  
Calendars  
Photography  
Photo Essays

### **Owensboro Independent Schools**

Publication Writing  
Annual Reports  
Feature Writing  
Photography  
Miscellaneous Printed Materials

### **Pulaski County Schools**

Miscellaneous Printed Materials

### **Rowan County Schools**

Special Events  
Photography  
One-Time Publications

### **Union County Schools**

External Publications – Full Color  
Calendars

### **Warren County Schools**

External Publications – 1-2 Colors  
Photography  
Miscellaneous Printed Materials



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## Blue Ribbon delight in Bowling Green



Being one of only 264 public schools in the U.S. to earn the 2009 National Blue Ribbon School designation is a cool thing. So when Bowling Green Independent's Potter Gray Elementary students and staff got a chance to celebrate, "blue" and "cool" just naturally came together one October afternoon.

Above: Kindergartner Madison Stockton found the fruits of academic success to her liking (or licking) as the student body and teaching staff received a bounty from a dairy named – what else? – Blue Bell.

Upper right: Bowling Green school board members Jackie Pope-Tarrence and Mike Bishop flank Jennifer Davis, the district's director of elementary and secondary education, to hand out ice cream sandwiches to the student scholars.

Right: Potter Gray Principal Jim Tinius created a pep rally atmosphere for the event with the reminder that, "We don't stop here. We want to work harder to get even better."

