

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

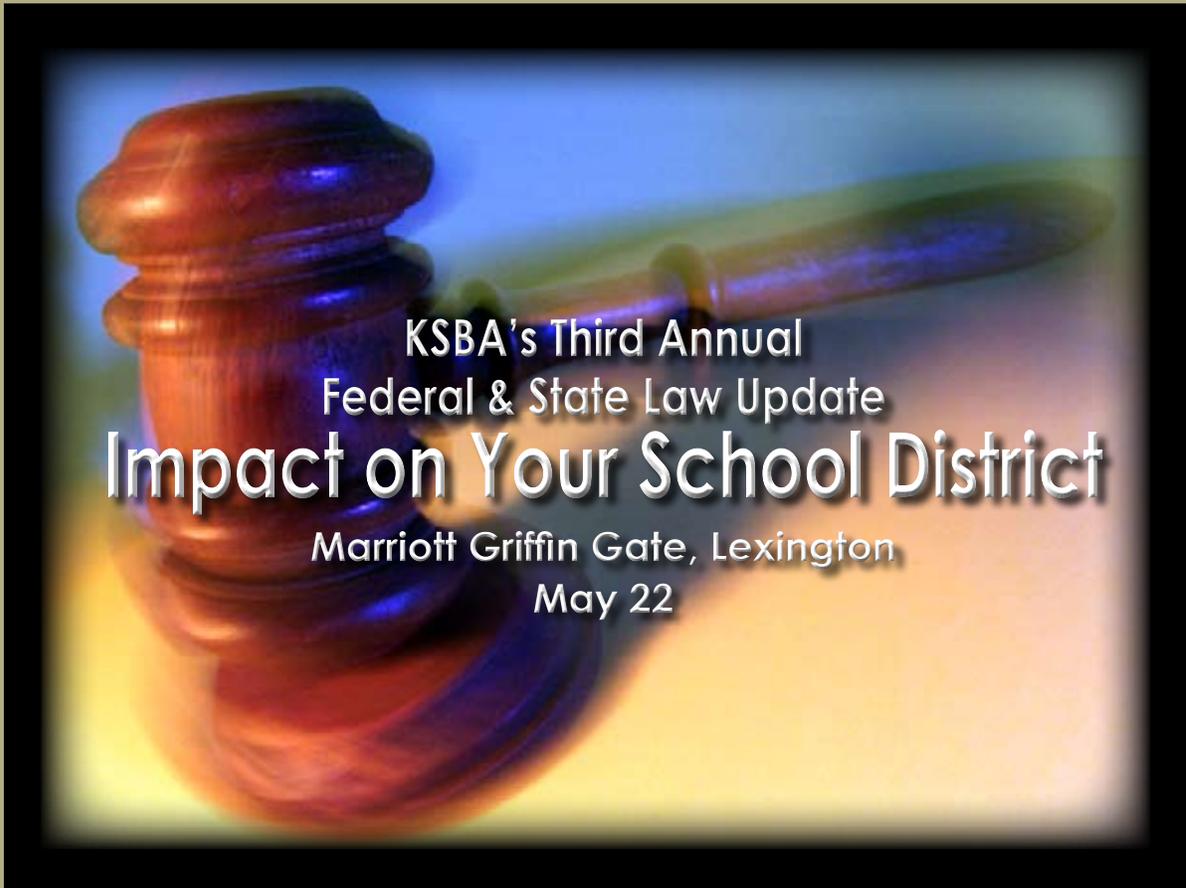
A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ May 2009

**CATS, NOT
ACCOUNTABILITY, GONE**

Award winners: Burgin and Owensboro

PLAYGROUND POWER

'Cloudy' technology forecast



TOPICS

- Up-to-date information regarding the 2009 legislative session
- New Family and Medical Leave Act regulations.
- New Americans with Disabilities Act Provisions: Impact on services for staff and students and recent Office of Civil Rights opinions
- New Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act regulations
- Annual policy and procedure update
- New case law and Attorney General opinions.

TIME

8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

FEE

\$170 - Includes lunch

TO REGISTER

Go to www.ksba.org and click on "Third Federal and State Law Update: Impact on Your School District" at the top of the page under "Featured links," or contact Jolene Shearer at 1-800-372-2962 or via e-mail at jolene.shearer@ksba.org.



FEATURES

NO CATS, NO PROBLEM

CATS may be gone as an accountability measure, but Kentucky’s school districts will be using a laundry list of other measures to track progress until the new test arrives in 2011-12. And it will be up to school boards to hold the line in the interim ... Page 8

BURGIN BEHAVES, WINS PEAK

Burgin Independent School’s Positive Approach to Student Success (PASS) program proves that early intervention in students with behavior problems pays long-term dividends. And it also has repaid the district with the spring *PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky)* Award from KSBA ... Page 10

SWINGS, SLIDES AND SAFETY

With warmer weather, students are out in full force on Kentucky schools’ playgrounds. But the sobering fact is that between 200,000 and 225,000 children nationally are injured on playgrounds each year. A safety inspection can help prevent these mishaps ... Page 12

WINNERS AND LOSERS

All eyes were on the bill to end the state’s testing system and a measure to bail out the current state budget. But what else was approved – or not – during the 2009 session of the General Assembly? ... Page 14

WHOLE CHILD APPROACH WINS AGAIN

Owensboro Independent Schools is now a two-time first-place winner of the *American School Board Journal’s* Magna Award. The district Instructional League was honored for giving children more opportunities to participate in team sports, with their attendant physical and social benefits ... Page 16



Whole child, Page 16



PASSing good behavior, Page 10



Play it safe, Page 12

DEPARTMENTS

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On the cover



Tayla Collins, a ninth-grader at Deming High School in Robertson County, takes a ThinkLink practice test in language arts/reading to prepare for this year’s CATS assessment – the last year the test will be given for accountability purposes. What happens until the new statewide assessment takes over in three years? See story, Page 8

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TAKE NOTE

Early childhood event

A national authority on early childhood education will headline the 23rd Kentucky Early Childhood Summer Institute, slated for June 15-16 at the Galt House in Louisville. Dr. Sue Bredekamp's theme will be promoting excellence in early childhood education through a framework of developmentally appropriate practice. Bredekamp is the primary author of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She will be highlighting the third edition of that publication, which was released in December.

For registration information, go to <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Preschool/> and click on the "for preschool coordinators and teachers" link.

Acting out for a cause

Lee County Schools' Alternate High School has been recognized by Act Out



Loud: Raising Voices for Safe Teen Driving. The school's

Mountain Proud Teen Safety Squad is one of 20 teams in the nation recognized by the program, which is part of National Youth Traffic Safety Month in May.

Act Out Loud is a national teen- and school-led activism competition to help spread the word about safe teen driving. The Lee County team's project uses guerrilla theater to communicate its

Psych out

Dr. Connie Adams, director of psychology for Madison County Schools, was recently honored by a national organization for her advocacy efforts to improve the education and mental health services for students and their families.

Adams received a Government and Professional Relations Certificate of Appreciation from the National Association of School Psychologists at its annual convention in Boston. Adams helped develop the Kentucky Comprehensive School Psychology Handbook, and has served as legislative chair for the Kentucky Association for Psychology in the Schools since 1992.

She also was cited for her school safety work, including anti-bullying and emergency procedures efforts.

message, including multimedia presentations, displays, musical performances and written materials. The group also works with local authorities and schools to produce impromptu dramatic presentations at local teen gathering places.

As one of the 20 finalists recognized, the Lee County team received \$1,000 to implement their project and a video camera to document it. The finalists are competing for a \$10,000 grand prize.

On board

Interim state Education Commissioner Elaine Farris has filled several vacancies on local school boards. The recent appointments include: Robert Traylor, Caldwell County; Bontina Haynes, Hart County; and Tina Watson, Boyle County.

Advancing achievement

Fifteen more high schools are joining AdvanceKentucky, the Advanced Placement Teacher Training and Incentive Program. The program, funded by the National Math and Science Initiative, has been shown to accelerate student success in rigorous math, science and English courses and on AP exams.

Twelve Kentucky high schools are already participating. The second round of high schools are: Bellevue (Independent), Bowling Green (Independent), Bryan Station in Fayette County, East Jessamine, Franklin-Simpson in Simpson County, Graves, Highlands in Fort Thomas Independent, Hopkins County Central, Johnson (County) Central, Madisonville North Hopkins, Montgomery, Paintsville (Independent), Powell, Warren Central and West Jessamine. ☘



Different challenges, shared goal

With the stroke of a pen, Gov. Steve Beshear and the Kentucky legislature have passed what is arguably the most significant piece of education legislation since the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act.

Senate Bill 1 officially calls for the replacement of the existing Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) with nationally normed standardized assessments. Furthermore, SB 1 requires the implementation of a testing system that follows individual student progress from year to year.

The window to design a new testing mechanism by the 2011-12 school year brings new challenges to boards of education and administrators during the interim. The momentum achieved over the past several years by all districts must not regress or become stagnant during the next three years. The goal to bring all children to proficiency should remain at the top of everyone's agenda.

This is a great opportunity for local boards of education to promote accountability and continued progress in their respective districts. Now more than ever, we as local school board members have a golden opportunity to express our commitment to the children of Kentucky.

One of the changes of SB 1 is the elimination of arts and humanities from the assessment and accountability system.

Even though there has been widespread agreement with this, we must continue to stress the arts, music, theater and literature in our schools. This importance was so eloquently relayed by Julie Andrews at the National School Boards Association Conference in San Diego last month.

The actress/singer expounded on the benefits of exposing our children to the arts at an early age. The benefits include improved reading, community service, social tolerance and many other attributes our children can use to improve their overall skills in whatever arena their future holds.

Music has always given me inspiration when I needed something to energize my batteries. We were



Delmar Mahan

KSBA President and Whitley County Board of Education member

blessed at the national conference by a wonderful group of talented students from Maryland. I was amazed at how the crowd in attendance suddenly went from being very passive to becoming part of the entertainment.

The bottom line is, we need to maintain a strong emphasis in the arts and not deprive our children of the opportunity to grow in their overall education experience. Over the next few months, we will closely monitor the changes to the new assessment proposals.

Special thanks to all the participants at the NSBA conference in San Diego. Overall attendance at the event was down due to the economic down-

turn, but Kentucky was represented very well. Several Kentucky districts participated in the break-out sessions and some KSBA representatives worked with the NSBA staff to oversee the operation.

I am constantly amazed at the dedication of Kentucky school board members. Several paid their own expenses to attend, not wanting to miss the benefit gained by the sessions provided by NSBA and the interaction with school board members from other states.

In conversation with some members from various states, I came away with an understanding of the kinds of difficulties they have in educating their students.

For example, due to the remoteness of some areas in Alaska, some students are transported by small planes to school. When you consider extracurricular activities, parent-teacher conferences and all the normal functions associated with everyday school life, this makes for a huge challenge the board and administrators must overcome. A board member from New Mexico told of a child who must ride a school bus 70 miles – one way – to attend school.

All states have unique obstacles and problems, but due to the dedication of school board members and administrators they find a solution so children can obtain a quality education.

Thanks to all board members, administrators, teachers and others who have touched the life of a child. ☘

“All states have unique obstacles and problems, but due to the dedication of school board members and administrators they find a solution so children can obtain a quality education.”

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



Photo provided by Frankfort Ind.

more Stephanie Jones on efforts to encourage more girls to take part in her school's aviation program. From the Frankfort *State Journal*.

“It’s kind of different hanging out with guys than it is with girls. You just get a different kind of feeling with the girls than when you’re with the boys. It kind of makes it boring with just boys being around.”

Frankfort Independent sopho-

“There shouldn’t be an agency that is a lone ranger.” State Sen. Katie Stine (R-Southgate) on her plan to reintroduce a bill to protect schools from being sanctioned by the Kentucky High School Athletics Association when schools follow the orders of a judge in cases of student athlete eligibility. From the Fort Mitchell nky.com.

“I know that may sound a bit like the old concept of banked time, but it is not. It only applies to replacing days that were missed. You can’t count days that were already longer to replace days that were missed. Banked time only exists to the extent that it may have been used in calendars in the 2005-2006 school year. So if you used extra time in that year to replace days, then it still works, but beyond that, it is not a concept that is still in place.” Kentucky Department of Education Deputy Commissioner Larry Stinson explaining some of the limitations the agency is placing on use of disaster days under legislation passed by the 2009 General Assembly. From the Frankfort KSBA eNews Service.

“I don’t like to just get a report card. I like to find out a couple times every six weeks. If I think there’s a concern, I have (gone) there in the past and talked to teachers. It would be really easy and convenient. (I) don’t have to call them and track them

down.” Parent LaKetta Nantz on the benefits she hopes for as Bell County High School integrates Infinite Campus, the state’s new student data system, into its options for parents to follow how their children are doing in class. From the Middlesboro *Daily News*.

“It’s a real good way to combine our resources and work together for the common goal. I think it’s absolutely the thing that should happen.” Foster Heights Elementary School Principal Gail Kamer on the Nelson County Board of Education’s approval of an administrative merger of her school and Old Kentucky Home Intermediate School one year ahead of the planned physical consolidation of

the two schools. From the Bardstown *Kentucky Standard*.

“That’s just kind of changing the mindset of the entire community and our 7,000 students who come to school every day. Increasing expectations is cultural.” Hopkins County Assistant Superintendent Linda Zellich on a recommendation in a voluntary state review of the district that “the community should expect more from its students.” From the Madisonville *Messenger*.

“The part of this story that I find most disappointing is that through omission of several details, many have been left to believe that our schools do a poor job of educating and caring for our children. One of the young men featured in this program was a recent graduate of Johnson Central High School. Unfortunately, the program might have left a lot of people feeling



No escorts

“We have times that we should celebrate and it seems to me that we’re saying, ‘Well we really can’t celebrate because some insurance agent somewhere has dreamed this up in thinking of all the things that could possibly go on.’ I just think insurance agents rule too much of the world.” Morehead City Councilman Tom Carew on a requirement



in a Kentucky League of Cities insurance policy that prohibits police escorts of school-related teams or organizations consisting of buses and/or other vehicles. From the *Morehead News*.

that our school system does not reach out to help those in need. On the program, it was portrayed that this young man did not have a place to sleep at night, but I know of several who offered a place for him to stay and did provide many necessities to him, including job opportunities.” Johnson County Schools Superintendent Steve Trimble reacting to an ABC-TV 20/20 program on life in Appalachia. From the Louisa *Big Sandy News*.

“A lot of times, all they’re ever smart.’ They’re never hearing, ‘Wow, you worked so hard on that.’ We really have to think about how we praise kids as educators and as parents, because what we say can make a difference in what our students value.” North Oldham High School Assistant Principal Pam Jett during an informational session about the district’s gifted and talented program, which covered topics ranging from the dangers of perfectionism to how parents can help their children succeed. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

“Variables are the biggest part of game-making. The more I experiment with game-making, the more I learn about physics.” Greenup County High School Junior Dustin Thompson explaining a computer game he and classmates created as part of the district’s second annual Technology Showcase. From the Ashland *Daily Independent*.

“You have to teach for survival. Teachers already have so much they have to cover. Once you take it (writing) out of the accountability index, teachers and kids quit doing it.” Science Hill Independent Superintendent Rick Walker on changes the 2009 General Assembly made in the state’s



school assessment and accountability system, including immediate removal of student writing portfolios. From the Somerset *Commonwealth-Journal*.

“You are born with unique gifts, talents and abilities. You can make your own choices. The ‘cool table’ during lunch will mean nothing in future years. Confidence



comes from the ability to look temptation in the eye and tell it you are not going down that path.” Jason Creech, a youth pastor from Middlesboro, describing his church’s “Mirror, Mirror” self-esteem/personal responsibility program to a group of Augusta Independent students. From the Maysville *Ledger-Independent*.

“It really affected me when (the facilitator) said, ‘If you’ve lost your parents or one or both of your parents, cross the line.’ One little girl told us that she lost both of her parents in the seventh grade. I mean, how do you begin to even pick up the pieces and go on?” Meade County High School teacher Kelly Holley on the emotional impact of “Challenge Day,” a national high school program that aims to break down social barriers between students, creating a more harmonious and tolerant student body. From the Brandenburg *News Standard*.

“If we can get these buses to last about five years we’ll save upwards around \$35,000 a bus by not buying them new as long as they’re safe. We checked them all out. I think it’s a great deal.” Kenton County Schools Finance Director Kelly Gamble on the decision to purchase used buses and use them as spares in the district’s fleet. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*. ☘

Changing to a four-day week

POINT ...

“I wouldn’t be standing here if I didn’t think it would improve instruction, and our teachers and the community need to embrace that.” Lincoln County Superintendent Larry Woods at a public forum to explain the proposed four-day instructional week, later approved by the school board on a 3-2 vote.

COUNTERPOINT...

“The school board precipitously voted for a modified four-day school week calendar. The short period of time parents and employees had to prepare comment on the change makes one ask, ‘What’s the rush?’ As unwieldy as a large committee is, the district needs to return to a policy where all of the stakeholders are involved in a decision of this magnitude. When it is time to decide, the public needs more than two days’ notice of a hearing to provide board members comment.” Portions of related newspaper editorial.

Both from the Stanford *Interior-Journal*.



From left, Deming High School (Robertson County) ninth-graders Samantha Gaunce, Travis Sharp and Melissa Sims concentrate on a Think-Link practice test in language arts/reading, getting ready for this year's CATS tests.

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

No CATS, no accountability for the next three years – no worries, right? Wrong, says Danville Independent school board Chairwoman Jean Crowley. It's important that students continue to progress in science, social studies and writing, whether or not those subjects are assessed at the state level, and it's the job of school boards to make sure that happens, she said.

"It's going to be left up to the boards to really emphasize their expectation for continued progress in all academic areas regardless of whether it's tested or scored at the state level," said Crowley, who also is a board team development specialist for KSBA. "It has to start with the board and go down to the councils and the councils have to continue to emphasize it at the school level."

Superintendents around the state also are hammering away at a similar message in their districts. Soon after Gov. Steve Beshear signed the bill that calls for creation of a new state testing system, a group of school chiefs got together to devise and circulate to their peers a list of other measures districts can use as a way of gauging progress.

Even without CATS statewide accountability, there are measures districts can focus on in the interim, said Warren County Schools Superintendent Dale Brown, who helped coordinate the effort.

Those measures include No Child Left Behind, various college readiness tests and retention rates, among others (see accompanying chart, facing page).

"It was just from the standpoint of making sure we stay focused and ready," Brown said. "And if we meet many of these areas we have spoken about when we talk about standards and alignment, we will know that when the new assessment arrives

our students and staff and our districts will be well in line to continue on and not be placed in a position of retooling."

The bill passed by the 2009 General Assembly calls for the current CATS tests to continue to be given, but they won't be used by the state education department for accountability purposes. Math and reading will continue to be measured through the federal No Child Left Behind law and Kentucky law still requires districts to close achievement gaps among subgroups. The replacement for CATS is scheduled to be launched with the 2011-12 school year.

Though there will be no accountability index per se, local public reporting of interim test results will serve as a kind of accountability, said Rhonda Sims, director of the state education department's Division of Assessment Support.

"The school board is a huge part of the public accountability piece," she said.

No backsliders

Recognizing the gap between old and new testing, administrators in many districts are trying to nip any complacency in the bud. Deming School (Robertson County) Principal Jeremy McCloud said he met with each of the school's four grade-level teams to discuss maintaining intensity and accountability during this interim period.

"We just told the teachers we've got to maintain what we're doing and still teach that content, stress to them that it's very important (to teach) the skills that kids need," he said, "and we still have to maintain high standards and high expectations."

Likewise, Gallatin County Schools Superintendent Dorothy Perkins wasted no time meeting with principals and administrators. "We discussed how we are not going to let up," she said. "This next three-year period is actually a chance for us to get ahead, that's how we're going to attack it."

Abbie Combs, the assessment coordinator for Perry County

Schools and member of the state's Curriculum Assessment and Accountability Committee, says she's adopted a slogan for her instructional team that fits this situation: "Without change, there'd be no butterflies."

The testing system may be going through a metamorphosis, she said, "but ultimately, the accountability lies with us, it lies with the individual person. Every time we walk into a classroom, we are accountable for the lives of those children. And that's the message we're trying to get out, it's a message I'm getting out to the teacher leaders and to the district."

Robertson County's instructional supervisor, Gary Ratliff, says the biggest problem he sees during this period is teachers falling back to using textbooks as the curriculum instead of core content.

"I don't want them to start hugging that textbook again. The next couple of years it's going to be kind of hard to keep them from falling back into that," he said.

Hickman County Schools Superintendent Steve Bayko says he believes his staff will still take pride in how students perform, regardless of state accountability.

"It's kind of like in baseball – the World Series was cancelled, but you still want the best record. You still want to show you're competitive with the other districts," Bayko said.

New focus

Floyd County Schools Superintendent Henry Webb said his district will continue its momentum by setting internal goals based on the number of children scoring proficient, similar to No Child Left Behind.

"Our goal is to have our board of education establish some policies over other content areas as well as we go through the interim process," he said.

Perkins said Gallatin County also will set its own accountability index and set goals going forward. "It's an opportunity for us to embed and embrace national standards in our curriculum and emphasize the EXPLORE and PLAN, the ACT more," she said.

Echoing that, John Williamson, superintendent of the Fort Thomas Independent district, where most schools have already crossed the proficiency finish line, said this interim period will allow the district to be more single-minded about college-readiness standards.

Webb said Floyd County teachers will be reminded that the ultimate goal is still to prepare children for postsecondary opportunities, "regardless of how that's measured." ❧

Interim accountability ideas

The Kentucky Association of School Superintendents circulated this list of assessment strategies, goals and monitoring tools other than CATS currently used in the state's school districts.

- NCLB targets
- Graduation rates
- Advanced Placement numbers
- ACT results
- EXPLORE and PLAN numbers
- Retention rates by grade
- Dropout rates
- Dual credit participation
- Student activities
- Service learning
- Novice/apprentice/proficient/distinguished percentages
- Parent involvement and satisfaction
- GRADE/GMADE math and reading diagnostics
- Technical education completers
- Advanced math and science enrollment
- College readiness
- Student and teacher attendance
- Increased participation of all students in rigorous coursework
- Measured improvement in intervention strategies

Web
site of
the
month

Did you miss the most recent Bourbon County Board of Education meeting and were wondering about the vote on the change orders for the elementary school renovation project? You can find out on the **Bourbon County Schools'** Web site, which is making podcasts available for a number of its recent board meetings, along with posting the agenda for each meeting.

This site is full of information for students, parents, employees and community members.

To view it, go to <http://www.bourbon.k12.ky.us/boco/>

PASS doesn't fail

Burgin Independent's program reducing the number of misbehaving students wins KSBA's spring PEAK award

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

If educators can redirect the disruptive behavior of a student while he or she is still young, it will pay dividends to the entire school system in years to come.

That was the reasoning behind Burgin Independent Schools initiating a PASS program in its elementary school in 2007. After nearly two school years in action, the Positive Approach to Student Success program has been instrumental in reducing disruptive behavior and is the reason the district is receiving KSBA's spring 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.

"If we could intervene early, by the time they did leave elementary, hopefully they would have their behavioral issues under control and they wouldn't interfere with their academic or social well-being in middle and high school," said Burgin Elementary Principal Martha Collier.

PEAK judge Katrina Kinman, a KSBA policy consultant, wrote that the program meets the needs of students with behavioral issues. "These children can't learn if they are not in class and this support allows them to be in class with their peers," she said.

How PASS works

Students with emotional or behavioral disorders, such as anger, physical outbursts and impulsive behaviors, are reviewed by a team comprised of the principal or dean of students, a psychologist, the PASS teacher, the referring teacher, the parents and any outside agencies involved with the student. Collier said general misbehavior doesn't automatically land students in PASS.

"Eighty percent of students can function well in the classroom," she said. "There is another tier of students who need further instruction. And there is a top tier of students, 5 to 10 percent, who are intensive and need further intervention. If they are having behavioral problems that are interfering with education programs, then they are targeted for PASS."

Students enrolled in the program are sent to the PASS classroom where the dedicated program teacher and instruc-



Photo provided by Burgin Elementary School

Burgin Elementary's PASS instructional assistant Denise Monson works with a student who is in the program to help modify his behavior.

tional assistant educate students in the behavior and social skills they need to be successful in their classes and practice it with them. During the brief time they are in the PASS classroom, students continue to be taught their regular academic curriculum.

Students also set measurable goals, which are monitored. In 2007, students showed a 67 percent mastery of those goals. That number has climbed to 91.26 percent this year.

When students return to their regular classrooms, they continue to receive support from the PASS staff who observe and occasionally remove students when needed to reinforce the skills they were taught.

PASS program results

| Date | Verbal outbursts | Defiance/disrespect physical aggression | Not following directions | Redirection removal/change area |
|---|------------------|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>1st semester monthly average</i> | | | | |
| 2007 | 66 | 24 | 36 | 6.5 hours |
| August 2008 | 9 | 3 | 18 | 2 hours |

Fifth-grade teacher Carrie Mays wrote in her recommendation of the program that it has had an immediate impact on her students who have struggled with issues such as lack of organizational skills, self-confidence and proper social etiquette skills with their peers and adults.

“The structure of the PASS program allows its coordinators to be readily available for assisting children and the classroom teacher in monitoring, addressing, coaching and servicing such issues at hand almost immediately,” she wrote.

Mays also noted that the program’s end-of-the-day routine gives students an opportunity to exhibit responsibility and keeps parents involved by sending home a daily note summarizing the students’ day and informing parents of any positive or negative issues. It must be signed and returned to school the next day.

“The successful students’ smiles reveal evidence of an increased self-esteem accompanied with the accomplished feeling of success,” she wrote. “This is priceless. This positive feedback can then continue for the PASS program child when he or she earns credit and scores on the work they’ve turned in on a timely fashion along with their peers.”

The Burgin school board funded the program by creating a certified and classified position and providing supplies, classroom space and in-kind services.

The parents of one PASS student thanked the district and staff for adopting the program, which has allowed their son to stay in his classroom 90-95 percent of the time.

“When we first became involved in the program, we met with (PASS teacher) Ms. Woods and her staff and helped develop goals and the means in which to have Kenny successfully reach them,” they wrote. “We were kept updated on Kenny’s progress daily and all problems were addressed in a professional and positive manner.” ☘



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Reaching

By Mary Branham

Tim Hazlette likes to call himself “a fresh set of eyes.”

As the KSBA risk management and safety specialist drives down Johnson County roads to two of the district’s six elementary schools, Hazlette stresses the visit he’s about to make is at the district’s request.

“The superintendent asked that I come up and do a safety walk-through as a fresh set of eyes to look at their buildings to see if there’s anything that needs to be looked at,” said Hazlette, whose unit provides a safety and security review service for school districts that have insurance through KSBA.

The walk-throughs are inside and out: An important part is the elementary school playgrounds. In 2004, the National Program for Playground Safety inspected playgrounds across the country and gave them an average grade of C+. While safety has improved somewhat, between 200,000 and 225,000 children are injured on playgrounds each year, according to Bill Foelsch, chair of the National Playground Safety Institute of National Recreation and Park Association. Two-thirds of those injuries occur on playgrounds at schools, parks and other public areas, he said.

Those injury numbers are similar to early tracking data in the 1980s, but Foelsch stressed there are more playgrounds these days.

Reporting the statistics, he said, “drove the industry to create a series of standards for playground safety both in design and surfacing used.”

At W.R. Castle Memorial Elementary School, Hazlette walks around the playground, yanking chains on swings, checking the openings in the equipment and toeing around the protective surfacing. The rubberized mulch is fairly new to the playground world, he said, but has provided an important safety feature.

“Protective surfaces are probably things

Tim Hazlette, a KSBA risk management and safety specialist, takes measurements of a swing set during a safety walk through at Johnson County’s W.R. Castle Elementary School as Principal Jeff Cochran looks on.



high for playground safety

the school can invest in and they get the most return from a safety perspective,” said Hazlette. He said 75 to 80 percent of playground injuries are a result of children falling.

Improper protective surfacing, in fact, tops the National Playground Safety Institute’s “Dirty Dozen,” the top 12 playground hazards.

Foelsch said the most frequently cited injuries are “falls from playground piece to surface or falls within a piece of playground equipment.” That has been a primary focus of the playground industry, he said.

“We work with agencies to try to eliminate the fall hazard or at least make the fall zones around equipment as safe as possible,” he said. “There is a strong emphasis on materials on grounds.”

Other hazards on the list include inadequate use zones, protrusion and entanglement hazards, and entrapment in openings. Hazlette checks for those.

“We look to make sure there are no entrapment issues with the playground appliances,” he said, “where a child could slip between pieces or components on a playground piece and become trapped around the head or neck.”

Many old pieces of equipment are being replaced with newer, safer models that meet Consumer Product Safety Commission standards, Hazlette said.

“If you bought a piece of playground equipment in 80s, it often only had a guard rail or had protective barriers with a relatively large opening,” Foelsch said. Injuries have prompted changes to make the openings smaller. “That’s the type of design changes that have happened over the years that make playgrounds much safer.”

The National Playground Safety Institute, which stresses those safety standards, has certified more than 15,000 playground inspectors since the mid-1990s. Hazlette was certified last year.

“With that training comes the hope we will prevent serious injuries on playgrounds and provide a basis for standard of care for public entities, parks, schools ... to achieve to maintain their playgrounds properly,” Foelsch said.

That’s important, said Beth Wickline, education manager for the National Recreation and Park Association.

“Children can’t be expected to consider the hazards of playground equipment so adults should inspect the play equipment for hazards so children won’t be exposing themselves to risk,” she said.

The National Recreation and Park Association participated in a webinar on playground safety best practices in April. The archived webinar can be accessed at www.schooldude.com.

The school inspections offered through KSBA also cover the interior of school buildings. As he walks through W.R. Castle Memorial School, Hazlette makes note of the ease of entry and exit on doors, the emergency lights above the doors and safety around water fountains.

“We do it in the vein of trying to help the school district stay in compliance, so that they don’t run afoul of any regulatory agencies,” said Hazlette. He looks for items covered by the fire code or OSHA, and for fall hazards or anything else that would adversely affect the safety of staff and students.

The service is appreciated, said Scott Rowland, director of buildings for Johnson County Schools. District personnel are in buildings and on the grounds regularly, and may miss some of those items that Hazlette spots.

“Anything we can do to make it safer or better for our students and staff, we’re tickled to death to have anybody help us,” Rowland said. ☘

— Mary Branham is a contributing writer from Frankfort

Twelve leading causes of playground injury

1. Improper protective surfacing
2. Inadequate fall zone
3. Protrusion and entanglement hazards
4. Entrapment in openings
5. Insufficient equipment spacing
6. Trip hazards
7. Lack of supervision
8. Age-inappropriate activities
9. Lack of maintenance
10. Pinch, crush shearing, and sharp edge hazards
11. Platforms with no guardrails
12. Equipment not recommended for public playgrounds

Source: National Playground Safety Institute

2009 legislative session: mixed bag

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

For P-12 education, the 2009 session of the Kentucky General Assembly was a juxtaposition of cataclysmic change and familiar nuts-and-bolts issues.

The seismic development was, of course, the casting aside of the nearly 20-year-old state assessment system. The state education department will be developing new standards and a new test will be given in the 2011-12 school year (See related story, Page 8)

The other big-picture issue to surface during the session was money, pure and simple. Lawmakers approved increases in tobacco and alcohol taxes to help patch the huge hole in the current fiscal year's budget. This put the state's basic funding formula for education in the safe column – temporarily.

Districts will learn more about what the next fiscal year holds when the governor gets a revenue update from the consensus forecasting group, which

should determine the course of a special legislative session on the 2009-10 budget.

“If the revenue shortfall in 2010 is anywhere near the levels economists are predicting, the governor and legislature will be confronted with a list of very difficult options,” warned David Baird, KSBA's associate executive director and governmental relations chief.

Among the other more significant P-12 bills that were approved and signed by the governor are:

Senate Bill 148, drafted in response to a situation that arose in a Kentucky school district. It requires parent members of a school council to have a state and national fingerprint-supported criminal history background by state police and the FBI. Documentation of a sex crime or criminal offense would result in removal.

At the suggestion of J. Stephen Kirby, KSBA's legal services director, a section was added controlling access to school grounds by registered sex offenders or violent offenders, Baird said.

Education bills that did not pass:

HB 373, SB 172: would have permitted collective bargaining for teachers and classified employees.

HB 82: would have required progressive discipline for classified employees, including due process and hearing procedures for classified employees notified that their contracts will not be renewed.

HB 346: would have granted authority to school-based decision making councils to determine the teacher work hours required for each day beyond the daily instructional hours.

HB 527: would have established a preschool education grant program aimed at expanding the number of children served through collaborative models.

SB 6: would have mandated 30 minutes per day or 150 minutes per week of structured physical activity in grades PS-8. A similar bill, HB 11, mandated this for grades K-5.

HB 8: would have permitted students to voluntarily express religious viewpoints in school assignments and required each school board to implement a policy on voluntary student expression of religious viewpoints.

HB 43: would have extended freedom of speech and press to high school student journalists in school-sponsored media.

SB 44: would have identified the conditions under which a home-schooled student may participate in public-school interscholastic athletic teams.

House Bill 295, a long-sought measure that loosens the strings of districts' capital outlay purse. The state's 2008-10 budget bill contained these provisions, but HB 295 makes them permanent, said Shannon Pratt, KSBA's assistant governmental relations director.

"It will now allow every district to look at their individual situations and make a decision about what they want to do with capital outlay funds," Baird said. "In the past, there was very little discretion. You used it primarily for bonds and principal and interest payments."

Among the uses now permitted are land purchases, certain major maintenance projects, property insurance and in the case of growth districts, two years' worth of operational costs of a new school.

HB 480, a rescue of the "Best in Class" loan forgiveness program. Operated by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, the program provides incentives for students who will teach in high-need subjects, but had run out of money.

"We have over 5,000 teachers that are affected by this program," Pratt said. "House Bill 480 is not a permanent fix. It does help alleviate the pressure of paying it back on a shorter time line and it requires any funds that are available to be dedicated first to the loan forgiveness programs. It looks like that means already that \$1.3 million will be dedicated to the loan forgiveness portion."

HB 383, the sports safety law that initially mandated specific measures, such as having an ice bath at practices, but eventually morphed into a call for a more comprehensive look at the is-

sue. Prompted by the heat-related death of a Jefferson County Public Schools football player, the law as passed requires the Kentucky High School Athletic Association and state education department to conduct a study and make recommendations by Oct. 1. In the meantime, coaches will be required to take an online sports safety seminar and successfully complete an assessment. One person who has completed the training course must be present at every athletic practice and competition after July 1, when the law takes effect.

"This is a very important bill because it brought out the discussion and the question of how can schools make athletic events and practices safer for students," Baird said.

HB 322, another rescue of sorts for school districts that racked up many missed days over the winter due to wind and ice storms. The bill – most of it good only for the current school year – allows school boards to request up to 10 disaster days. It requires districts to submit an amended calendar no later than May 1 outlining their plan to make up days and requesting any emergency days. Further, it also allows districts to make up days over time by adding 30 minutes or longer to the school day.

The bill's sole permanent provision does away with the law that had required districts to make up any early dismissal or late-start days beyond a cumulative five hours with a full day of class.

"Districts felt handcuffed by that situation," Baird said. The new provision will allow an hour-by-hour makeup of lost time with the education commissioner's approval. ☞

Kentucky superintendent vacancies

Danville Independent Schools

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

The Danville Independent Board of Education is seeking an instructional leader capable of creating and sustaining a climate of high expectation who will enhance the district's tradition of excellence. The board seeks a leader who embraces diversity and encourages innovation. Salary will be commensurate with rank and experience with the contract beginning July 1, 2009.

Applications must be received by May 6, 2009.

Garrard County Schools

(2,515 – PS -12) www.Garrard.kyschools.us

The Garrard County Board of Education is seeking outstanding candidates with strong leadership skills as its next superintendent. The successful candidate should have administrative experience and be an effective instructional leader who is committed to student achievement.

Application deadline is May 26, 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



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Owensboro's 'whole-child' approach snags second NSBA Magna Award

By Mary Branham

Team sports offer many benefits. "Participation in these types of activities helps with so many areas of character development—self-esteem, conflict resolution, development of larger support groups, etc.," said Dr. George Gilliam, chairman of the Owensboro Board of Education. "The list is pretty long regarding these types of benefits."

But many children in the Owensboro school district, for a number of reasons, weren't able to participate in team sports at an early age. About 70 percent of the district's students receive free or reduced-price lunch, and many of those

students couldn't afford to participate in the team sports in the community, Gilliam said.

So the board asked district officials to see what they could do. The result—an instructional league for students in third through sixth grades—has been a hit in the community. It was also recognized last month with a first-place award in the *American School Board Journal's* 15th annual Magna Awards program.

"It's a great honor because I think there are a lot of worthy applications doing some good programs," Superintendent Larry Vick said.

But more than that, Vick said the Magna Awards are heavily weighted to school board member-initiated programs. And that speaks well of the Owensboro board, he said.

"This just demonstrates our school board's willingness to step out of the box a little bit and help our students to be better prepared," he said. Beyond the team participation, Vick said the instructional league offers social skills and character-building exercises for the students. "The board



Photos by Julie Ellis/Owensboro Independent Schools

Owensboro district has won a first-place Magna Award; it was recognized in 2004 for a fitness program addressing not only the importance of exercise and an active lifestyle, but also its efforts to provide nutritious food for students, according to Julie Ellis, public relations coordinator for the district.

It's a philosophy on which the district continues to build, Ellis said.

"We care about the overall lifelong health benefits that we can help our kids develop," she said.

That shows in the instructional league, which the district started in 2007.

"With so little time during the day for any physical activity, it seemed a good way to start children at an early age getting involved in healthy activities that hopefully they will keep as they grow older," Gilliam said.

Unanticipated benefits

Though the board made the initial request, administrators had to come up with a plan. Ellis said many of the district's courts and fields sit empty when not being used for varsity sports. Still, with limited resources, the district had to come up with a way to offer the program at little cost.

Innovation, and a whole lot of community involvement, addressed that problem.

"Parents who had never been involved before in school activities, that had never had an avenue for volunteering were out there coaching," Ellis said.

While that addressed the obvious need for coaches, Ellis said it also brought another benefit: parents engaged with their children's school.

And it continues as the program has expanded, she said. The league started with soccer in the fall of 2007, and has grown to offer other sports, including basketball, volleyball, track, softball and flag football. About 1,000 students have participated in those sports, Ellis said, and some of those participants may be

reco- gnized that and en- couraged us to put together some pro- grams to educate the whole child."

In fact, this is the second time the

Owensboro Public Schools students play soccer and run cross country during the four-week September Series that is part of the district's Instructional League. The league provides students the opportunity to exercise, learn about teamwork, and develop athletic skills.

active in more than one sport.

There is the added benefit of offering a feeder program for the high school teams, Ellis said.

But that's just the icing on the cake. For now, Gilliam and other school officials see the benefits beyond athletics.

"We are teaching our children healthy activities that hopefully will last a lifetime," said Gilliam. "They are learning to participate with others in team activities and the social benefits of this. We are teaching them that in order to participate, you must have good behavior and good grades at school—teaching this at an age when they are all eager to learn."

And parents are learning as well.

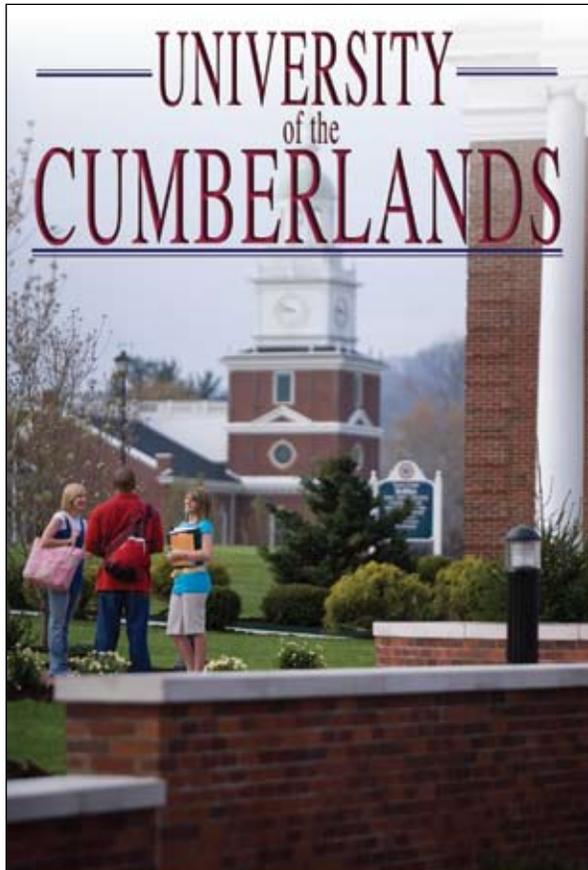
"We are teaching parents to volunteer, be a spectator, support their children at an age where they still want to be a part of their lives and vice versa, at an age when the children want them around. Hopefully this carries forward to older ages," he said. "We are teaching the parents that the schools welcome their involvement in positive activities at school."

That also builds a connection to the school. "We are building a group of children that are proud of their school," Gilliam said.

He believes that connection will ultimately benefit the students down the road. "So many small districts have trouble fielding sports teams at older ages. By starting early we are striving to have all our students participate in extracurricular activities—proven to aid performance in middle school and high school," he said. ❧



Owensboro Independent board member Cate Lauzon displays the Magna Award, which she accepted on the district's behalf at the annual NSBA conference in San Diego last month.



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Technology forecast: cloudy

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

With budgets tight and technology expensive, Kentucky school districts are turning to an emerging style of service delivery called cloud computing that could help contain some of those exploding costs.

Cloud computing can have several definitions, but for Kentucky schools it's generally referring to paying a company to run technology services outside of a school district, such as e-mail and data storage, freeing up technology staff for other tasks and saving districts the expense of buying the hardware and software needed to run those services.

"For example, in the past, Microsoft just sold you the software," said David Couch, associate commissioner of the state Department of Education's Office of Technology. "Then you went to another company, Dell, IBM, HP, whoever, and you bought their servers. Then you loaded it and started running it and you were the service provider."

Couch said that companies like Microsoft are now selling a service in addition to their software, called SaaS – Software as a Service.

"So instead of buying the software now (as an organization), I'm going to say, 'Let's buy a service and they are going to provide all of the technology behind the scenes, all the servers, all the software, all the people to run it, keep the software updated and data backed up,'" he said. "So you pay a fee every month or year to have this service, or a cloud."

Butler County Schools' Technology Director James Arnold said he believes cloud computing could save his district money.

"We're looking at the Software as a Service model, which is going out on Microsoft's cloud and using their applications, such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel," he said. "We'll also have the ability to store our data on their cloud and that's going to save us money if this thing works the way that it's supposed to. It will save us money in not having to buy as many file servers."

"The big question to us is this: if the Internet backbone that is provided to school districts will have sufficient capacity to handle this? That's the \$64,000 question."

Couch said network speed and reliability is key to cloud computing, from the school's network all the way to the service provider, along with having confidence that the service provider can deliver the promised service-level agreement.

"Without the legislative investment in the Kentucky Educational Network (KEN) in 2007 and 2008 that provided the next generation high-speed connections for all 174 school districts, we would be forced to spend more money overall, as necessary service offerings would have to be duplicated locally in each district," he said. "With the high-speed KEN network, we can leverage that investment and the faster links to the Internet, giving us the option to work with companies that provide these

large-scale services to all of us remotely, via the Internet or the cloud."

Kentucky public schools will be counting on KEN's speed and reliability later this year when they begin using Microsoft's Live@edu, a cloud service it had previously made available for free to higher education.

"Kentucky will be Microsoft's largest K-12 deployment and the first state in the country to provide this service for all its schools," Couch said. "What this does is give students, teachers and administrators access to quality e-mail and collaboration tools at no cost. Instead of the e-mail server and collaboration server being located and managed within the school district, those servers are going to be located at data centers across the country, and if one data center goes down, we have redundancy in another. This gives us what we call 24-by-7 service."

One of those collaboration tools is data storage, a growing – and expensive – need for school districts.

"As you have more and more people wanting to store more and more of the things they've created, you're not just talking about storage, but about backing it up," Couch said. "We call this disaster recovery. You're seeing a lot more people interested in transferring that headache to someone else because they can't afford to keep up with it 24-by-7."

Cloud computing is also enabling some schools to extend the life of some of their older computers that would otherwise be put into surplus. Maritta Horne, Pike County Schools' technology director, said the district has been able to continue using 1,500 computers that otherwise would not work within the state's network because they require too much processing speed and memory.

"As long as that older computer has a CD-ROM or a USB drive, we actually boot that machine to the clouds," she said. "We actually have machines doing this without a hard drive. The students are still within a secure network. What we're actually purchasing is a service."

While these older machines have limited functions, they do provide greater equality of access and lower the ratio of computers to students. "Regardless of where the child is, regardless of the school, he or she can access the Internet," Horne said.

Couch said in the end, cloud computing may not be a direct money saver because districts still need expertise to manage the cloud and noncloud services within the district, but it will help control costs because districts won't have to budget for hardware and software replacement for the services being provided through the cloud.

"Districts will probably still need everyone that they have," he said, "but the cost-avoidance benefits mean that if they have five employees, it keeps them from having to have 20 and not being able to keep up with all the new services their students and teachers want available to them in the classroom and to complete school assignments at home." ❧

CONTAINING PREVAILING WIND (DAMAGE)

Q Now that we are in severe storms season, how can we make sure our property insurance adequately covers our district buildings?



A **MYRON THOMPSON:** The spring storm season coincides with the period in which school boards purchase insurance coverage for the coming fiscal year, so it's a perfect time to ask this question before signing on the dotted line.

Some points to remember:

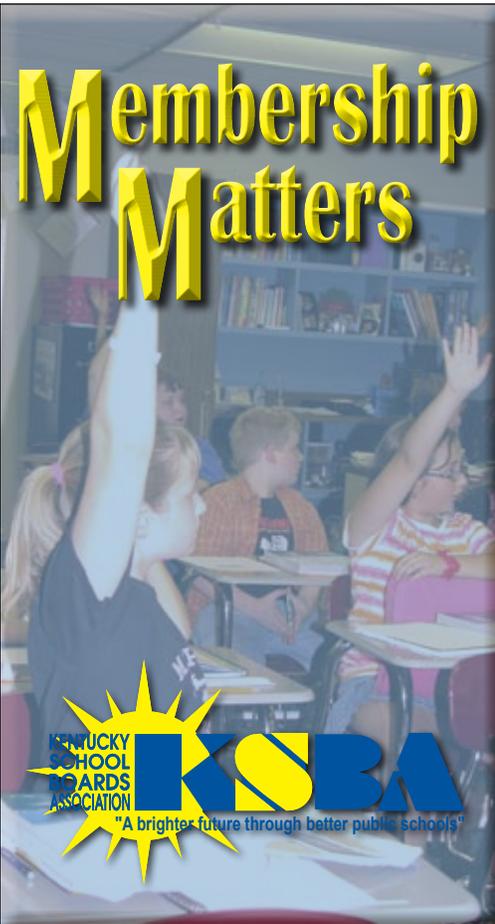
- Make sure the out-of-pocket expenses don't add up to more than your district can afford. Unlike the coverage offered through KSBA's insurance programs, some insurance policies do not

cover costs incurred while buildings are being repaired, such as temporary portable classrooms and debris removal.

- Likewise, ensure that any co-insurance in your property coverage is scaled to what your district can absorb.
- Chose an insurer that has expertise in working with school districts and can provide the kind of specialized coverage that schools need.
- Don't neglect "preventive" care – for example, have a safety specialist check your school grounds to make sure any equipment is properly secured against strong winds.
- Prepare, prepare, prepare. While we want to be sure property is insured, your prime responsibility is the safety of your students and staff. Hold regular severe weather drills, and study, update and practice your district and school emergency preparedness plans.

— Thompson is director of the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust, KSBA's insurance and risk management service. ☘

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Sandy Jupin

KOSAA president

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 Sandy Jupin, president of the Kentucky Organization of Superintendents' Administrative Assistants (KOSAA), who is in her ninth year as an administrative assistant to the superintendent of Boyle County Schools. Jupin discusses the organization's benefits. KSBA serves as the umbrella organization for KOSAA.

KOSAA President Sandy Jupin meets with her boss, Boyle County Schools Superintendent Steve Burkich. Jupin is Burkich's administrative assistant.

Q. When and why was KOSAA created?

A. Prior to the KOSAA organizational meeting held in January 2006, the KSBA leadership team had been discussing for some time the need for a professional development group dedicated to administrative assistants who work with superintendents and boards of education. Coincidentally, I had attended an NSBA conference in Chicago (in 2005). One of the days was designed for support personnel.

When I returned, I mentioned to my superintendent that this would be a good thing to have available at the state level. The following December we received an announcement from KSBA that they were starting this group. Dara Bass (KSBA's director of Policy and Procedures), her staff and Mary Davis – even KSBA officers and Executive Director Bill Scott – have been greatly involved in organizing, encouraging and assisting with our group.

At the first KOSAA meeting in 2006 we had 51 participants registered, representing 49 districts. This past January (2009) we had 84 registered from 63 districts, so the word is getting out, and our organization continues to grow.

There is no fee to join KOSAA. There are two meetings a year, one at KSBA's annual conference and one at KSBA's summer conference. Right now there are 138 folks on our membership list.

We have three academy levels of recognition in the KOSAA Professional Assistants Academy. We've had such enthusiasm and eagerness from our members that this July we're going to present our fourth level for approval of our members. Several of our members have already completed the first three levels.

Q. What are some of the benefits?

A. Networking is one of the major aspects of the group. It doesn't matter if you've been on the job a week or 20

years, there's not a time when you haven't run across something that you wanted to see how others handled. And our goal is to make the schools and the district be as efficient and effective – and look as professional – as possible.

At one meeting, we did a small roundtable between people with less than three years on the job and those with more and it's amazing that the common thread was time – there's not enough time and how to multi-task.

We also offer a mentoring program for new members. We're still working on that, but we feel it has great possibilities. When new members sign up, we notify the director of that region (which mirrors KSBA's regions) that there is a new member in their area and if they are going to be attending the meeting, so that the director can welcome the new member.

Q. Why do superintendents' administrative assistants need their own group?

A. It's a unique job. Sometimes you never know what you're going to be called upon to do or what you're going to have to come up with. Your fellow KOSAA members help with that. If you're looking for something or need some input, I have no problem calling other members of the group and asking.

None of us do the exact same thing, but with the networking possibilities, I know I can call another superintendent's secretary and say, "I know you probably don't do this, but can you put me in contact with whoever has the information?" I can't say enough about the networking aspect.

We also have to deal with a lot of legal issues. John Fogle, Teresa Combs and Steve Kirby (KSBA attorneys) have all presented at our meetings. John came and spoke in January about volunteer background checks.

KSBA has been phenomenal in supporting KOSAA. And our superintendents have embraced this by encouraging us to become involved and allowing us to be out of the office for two days each year.

Q I never really thought about the legal issues that a superintendent's assistant might have to deal with.

A Yes, we often have expulsions, timelines that have to be carried out, deadlines superintendents have to meet for notification of personnel and of course, school legislation that keeps changing.

Superintendents have so much on their plates that I feel – and many others do, as I've heard at our roundtables – that it's our job to make their job as easy as possible, to minimize the stress, to reduce the workload as much as possible.

We're fortunate here in Boyle County because I don't know of anyone – custodian, bus driver, teacher, anybody – whose main focus isn't the children, and I see that as a positive. It's the same with this group. To have a successful superintendent and for us to be successful and help them, it's all for the children.

As an assistant to the superintendent, we often deal with such confidential information that very few others have access to. It's sometimes difficult with co-workers. This is something that has come up in our roundtables. Sometimes, it's a challenge to convey that you're not being standoffish; it's just part of the confidentiality code and you're not privileged to divulge certain information.

Q Do KOSAA members mind being called on to help each other?

A No, not at all. From my perspective, I haven't had a problem calling on members of the group. Prior to the organization of KOSAA, if we had an idea or question about an issue Superintendent Burkich often suggested contacting another district to see how they would handle the situation.

It is my impression that this was the practice with some districts, allowing for some networking, but KOSAA has definitely expanded those support options. Superintendents have their meetings, they have their support groups, and with KOSAA, those of us who support them have the same opportunities to share, learn and grow.

Q How do the roles of administrative assistants vary from district to district?

A Some of us do eMeeting (KSBA's electronic school board meeting service) and some don't; some of us go to board meetings, some don't. One of the things we talk about is how to do a board agenda; we've discussed Robert's Rules. Usually, the majority of us work with that; some of us work with personnel or finance.

When we went around at the tables and asked, "What are your jobs?"; one said a receptionist, another did personnel, a correspondence secretary, another one said she did legal issues; some are totally support, some work for assistant superintendents, also.

Q I would imagine the size of the district would make a difference in the types of jobs your members are asked to do.

A We're not a large district, but we do have an assistant superintendent and a director of operations. I and others assist them, as well as anyone else in our district that may need assistance.

Many KOSAA members invite their superintendents to attend the lunch with us (at the meetings). I hesitated to ask mine because I didn't want him to take the time out, but he was happy to do it, and I think most are. We also have our meetings in conjunction with KSBA meetings, so they are already there sometimes. (*KSBA note: board members also have attended the KOSAA luncheon in support of their KOSAA members.*)

And I think the ones who have assistants attending see the benefits: there's no cost (of membership) to them except for being out of the office. What we would get out of for-profit training not specific to Kentucky schools, you would have to pay I don't know how much; most of those type seminars are \$150 to \$200 person. For each KOSAA meeting, we pay \$60 and that includes lunch.

Q What types of issues will you be addressing during KOSAA's next meeting in July?

A In July we have someone coming to speak to us about employee sexual misconduct. This is a hot topic, a very sensitive subject. What are the things you can put in place; how this helps us. It gives us ideas that we can take back with us to share with others in our districts.

School law is another area that affects us. How is it changing; are there new deadlines. This helps us keep up to date.

KOSAA is a great resource and its membership had been an untapped resource until our organization came into being.

You don't feel like you're an island. It's a unique job and no one else, even in other districts, has the same job. But there is a common thread that connects us.

I have the utmost respect for superintendents and the responsibilities they must fulfill. We endeavor to make that job look both efficient and effortless, while serving as a trusted assistant. Superintendents must know they can trust us with confidential information. I don't know how someone could function in the job without that good rapport.

— For additional information about KOSAA, telephone KSBA at 1-800-372-2962 and ask for Dara Bass or Mary Davis or e-mail them at dara.bass@ksba.org or mary.davis@ksba.org. In addition, check out the KOSAA Web page at <http://www.ksba.org/kosaa>. ☞

"It's a unique job. Sometimes you never know what you're going to be called upon to do or what you're going to have to come up with. Your fellow KOSAA members help with that."

—Sandy Jupin, KOSAA president and administrative assistant to the Boyle County Schools superintendent

Web provides new ways – and choices – for contacting board members

The reporter's call wasn't a shining example of unbiased journalism. His part of the conversation went something like this: "Don't you think all school board members should have their contact information on district Web sites?" he insisted. "Surely you agree that school board members should have their home addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses on the Web site so the taxpaying public can ask them questions, make suggestions or raise concerns?"



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

The lack of impartiality aside (fodder for another column another day), the general subject is one worth some discussion among Kentucky's local school leaders.

No communications tool is growing like the Internet. According to the Nielson Company's online data service, 220 million Americans, or seven in 10 of us, were surfing the Web last year. That's a 131 percent increase since 2000, which is nothing compared with the worldwide Internet use increase of 336 percent over the same period of time.

But as my friend and Ohio School Boards Association colleague Scott Ebright told the same reporter, the amount of accessibility information is a question for each board.

"We do encourage them to be accessible, but that is a personal decision," he's quoted as saying.

And it's a decision board members should make with careful consideration.

Online contact good but essential?

As I told the reporter, there is no question that district Web sites are a more useful communications tool when they feature board meeting information. Dates, times and locations of board meetings are a no-brainer to me. Board meetings can be an important forum for demonstrating student learning, explaining crucial decisions and gaining input from the community.

Should board members make themselves available for contact 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Of course not. But as Ebright said, what to post is a personal decision and it does and will vary from board to board.

I did a spot-check of 20 Kentucky district Web sites and here is some of what I learned:

- All but two had posted board meeting dates. (Oddly, in those two, a visitor couldn't tell the district even had a school board as the site didn't even note the board existed.)
- 17 listed the board members by name.

- 14 had photos, either individual or group to help identify a citizen's representative.
- Nine sites had e-mail addresses, some which were personal or business e-mail addresses; in two cases board members had district e-mail addresses, as in name@yourboard.kyschools.us
- Seven sites had board members' home telephone numbers.

And Beechwood Independent should have been given a gold medal by that reporter. He really should have

mentioned (as I shared with him in the interview) that Beechwood Independent has each board member's name, home mailing address, home telephone number, term of office and e-mail addresses (district e-mail for one, personal e-mail addresses for the other four).

My home board in Jefferson County has the same contact information for our board members. No doubt, there are other Kentucky boards (whose district Web sites I didn't visit) with that great a degree of accessibility. My hat's off to all of you.

But don't misinterpret that nod as criticism of other boards that have less contact information on their Web sites. I suspect that in many cases it's a subject that simply hasn't come up locally as an issue. As I told the reporter, this was the first time in my 16 years with KSBA that the subject had been raised to me.

A fair question would be: should a school board be condemned for failing to do something that no one has ever asked it to do?

The Last Word

School board members are elected, public officials who have volunteered to give their time, their families' time, and their workday time to public service. Far too many people think school board service is a couple of hours, maybe a couple of nights a month.

Obviously, the ease or difficulty of reaching someone's school board member will depend on numerous factors such as community size, how well known the board member is around town, the degree of the member's community involvement, and, yes, how much contact information there is for public consumption.

What's posted on the district Web site for reaching you is your call. Completely. End of discussion. But at least have the discussion and make a choice about how accessible you want to be for that growing population of people who reach out and touch via the computer keyboard and the Internet.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☚

KSBA at NSBA

More than 160 Kentuckians were among nearly 8,000 in attendance at the NSBA conference in San Diego, April 4-7.

Photos starting clockwise at the top: Meade County board Chairman and KSBA board member Dr. John Inman applauds a student musical performance during one of the conference's four major general sessions.

Bellevue Independent board members (left to right) Susan Wilson, Dan Sparks and Jenny Hazeres navigate the crowded aisles to see the more than 500 school services vendors with booths at the conference exhibit hall.



Hart County Superintendent Ricky Line talks with visitors to his district's team building exhibit as part of the conference's Walk of Excellence.



Mason County Assistant Superintendent Kelly Middleton led his district's workshop on the value of customer service between a school system, students' families and the community.

Campbell County board member Mike Combs, a member of the KSBA Board of Directors, talks with a board member from another state. Combs served as an alternate during the NSBA conference Delegate Assembly.





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Rally 4 education

A March 21 Rally 4 Education Excellence in Henderson drew hundreds of participants, including P-12 and postsecondary educators, parents and businesspeople. Headliners for the northwestern Kentucky event included Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust in Washington, D.C., state Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Secretary Helen Mountjoy and Gov. Steve Beshear.

The goal of the rally was to create awareness about the need for communities to make a serious commitment to educational success. It inspired several districts to carry out their own follow-up activities.

(Right) From left, Jinger Carter, assessment and accountability director, and social worker Rhonda Gillham, both with Henderson County Schools, talk with community members at a booth the district set up at the rally site.

(Far right) The crowd gathers at the Henderson Fine Arts Center.

(Right) “What Kentucky needs is groups of local leaders who demand high performance and who strive to bring that high performance about,” Beshear told the gathering.



Photo by Cindy Williams/Henderson County Schools



Photo by Malinda Beauchamp/Union County Schools



Photo by Cindy Williams/Henderson County Schools