

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ October 2009



**WASHING
AWAY
THE FLU**

SCHOOLS HELP MORE STUDENTS IN TOUGH ECONOMY

Model alternative in the mountains

(REALLY) EARLY INTERVENTION

KSBA Fall Regional meetings:



Becoming an advocate for early childhood education

You know how important it is to lay the groundwork for students to succeed – groundwork that begins in early childhood. But how can board members communicate this to parents, the business community and other taxpayers? At this year's regional meetings, we'll explore some ideas so you can be the strongest advocate possible for early childhood education. And you'll get more than ideas: each district represented at their regional meeting will receive a free copy of "Planning for Pre-kindergarten: A Toolkit for School Boards" from NSBA's Center for Public Education!

Schedule of remaining meetings

Oct. 1	Northern Kentucky	Host district: Campbell County
Oct. 6	Eastern Kentucky North	Host district: Morgan County
Oct. 15	Fifth District	Host district: Oldham County
Oct. 20	Middle Cumberland	Host district: Adair County
Oct. 22	Fourth District	Host district: Cloverport Independent
Oct. 29	First District	Host district: Paducah Independent
Nov. 5	Third District	Host district: Allen County
Nov. 10	Second District	Host district: Owensboro Independent



FEATURES

RESCUING RECESSION'S CASUALTIES

Many Kentucky children whose families are struggling also are victims of the national recession, whether from unemployment, homelessness or hunger. School district programs that help students and their families are trying to meet the corresponding increased demand for services ... Page 8

TELL IT IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Ramey-Estep High School in northeastern Kentucky – designated as a best practice site – uses some unconventional ways to help its students, from grouping them in “families,” to lots of hands-on activities. And then there are the snakes ... Page 10

INFECTIOUS IDEAS

Flu season is more than gearing up – it’s here. Several school districts have already had to deal with H1N1 cases and are sharing their lessons learned. We’re also including a tip sheet with some of their ideas and a related Q&A piece (see Page 18) on how schools can plan for the flu ... Page 12

SEED MONEY

A large federal grant means Kentucky will be able to identify and provide more services to very young children with emotional disturbances. The benefit for schools? When these children begin classes, they’ll be better adjusted and prepared ... Page 15

SUMMIT SPOTLIGHT

Whether it was state officials, county government leaders, students or former dropouts, the message at the Graduate Kentucky summit was the same: it will take teamwork to reduce the state’s dropout rate. And one Fayette County Schools program is aimed at keeping Hispanic students in school ... Page 16



Avoiding these cells, Page 12



Alternative point of view, Page 10



Focus on graduation, Page 16

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On the cover



Carroll County Schools Head Start student Boston Dolente washes his hands before going to lunch. Frequent hand washing is just one of many measures Carroll County and other school districts are employing in an attempt to prevent or slow down the spread of the H1N1 flu virus. See article on Page 12.

TAKE NOTE

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Awards season

The deadline is approaching for Kentucky school districts to enter both a statewide award and a national award.

Entries in the fall KSBA *PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award* are due by Oct. 9. The award, established in 1997, recognizes district or school-level programs that enhance student achievement, thereby promoting public education in Kentucky. The nomination guidelines can be found at www.ksba.org/peak.

The *American School Board Journal* will accept online nominations until Oct. 31 for its 2010 Magna Awards. The program recognizes districts for leadership, creativity, innovation and commitment to student achievement. Grand prize winners are selected in each of three categories based on enrollment. The nomination form can be accessed at www.asbj.com/MagnaNominations.

Strong Start speaks

Want to raise awareness in your community about the importance of early childhood education? The Strong Start Kentucky project of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence has organized a speaker's bureau made up of representatives from the Business Leadership Council for Pre-K and the Shakertown Roundtable.

Speakers will make 20-minute presentations and come to meetings armed with brochures. They also will have a brief video that can be shown. Strong Start Kentucky is a nonpartisan group that advocates increased access to high-quality preschool programs. For more information, contact Nan Harnice at (502) 330-1497 or e-mail harnice2@bellsouth.net.

Grant a wish

Kentucky school district grant writers who have longed for extra guidance in applying for federal grants can find it in the U.S. Department of Education's online Freedom of Information Act Reading Room – without having to file a Freedom of Information request.

The site, at www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/foia/readingroom_2.html provides help in the form of past success stories – previously approved grant proposals that can be used to see what it takes to land a federal grant.

Proposals are posted in many of the programs for which Kentucky school districts commonly apply, including Safe Schools, Healthy Students, Carol M. White Physical Education, Teaching American History, Elementary and Secondary School Counseling, Smaller Learning Communities and Early Reading First. ☘

Making drinking “uncool”

A student group at Owen County High School whose efforts are credited with curbing underage drinking has won the 2009 Steve Kimberling Youth Leadership in School Safety Award. The Owen County Teen Alcohol Prevention Project Youth Task Force, an offshoot of a larger community group, promotes the message of an alcohol- and drug-free school through activities and service projects.

“Through their efforts and the support of their community partners, the underage drinking rates in Owen County have been reduced,” said Amy Baker, director of the state Substance Abuse Prevention Program.

The youth task force has also received the Robert Strauss award for substance abuse prevention practices and was recently recognized as the Youth Empowerment System Group of the Year.

The award will be presented during this year's Safe Schools, Successful Students conference Oct. 12-13. It is named for the late Steve Kimberling, who helped to create the conference.



Protecting children in tough times – the board’s role

One of the most dramatic effects of our economic downturn is the growing number of Kentucky children who are at risk for a range of problems related to unemployment and poverty.

Numerous studies have documented that extreme economic deprivation increases the likelihood for all kinds of negative outcomes in children and youth, including academic failure, dropping out of school, substance abuse, delinquency, and teen pregnancy.

As Madelynn Coldiron’s article on Page 8 of this issue of the *Kentucky School Advocate* indicates, today’s recession is creating a whole new group of at-risk students – many of whom have never experienced the physical, emotional and social burdens associated with poverty. Not only are these formerly middle-class children more apt to be too embarrassed to seek help from their teachers and other school staff, but in many instances, their newly unemployed parents may be too overwhelmed to provide the additional support they need.

For those Kentucky children who were already living in poverty, the economic downturn may have made their lives even tougher. Nonprofit agencies that normally help these families are seeing the demand for services increase; their rental housing may be lost due to owner foreclosure; and the teen who used to be able to help support his or her family with a fast-food job may find the position is now occupied by a formerly out-of-work adult.

I like to think of local board members as the ultimate education advocates, willing to donate their precious time and effort to oversee the community’s schools. But being an advocate for public education also means being an advocate for all the students who attend these institutions.

Board members must commit to do everything in their power to ensure that all students receive the necessary support to be successful. In times like these, when our schools are serving an unprecedented number of vulnerable students, the board’s role as child advocate is especially critical.

It’s important to remember that local boards have a number of unique opportunities to support at-risk students.

Increasing awareness: Board meetings are an excellent way to highlight the negative effects that a bad economy may be having on students and their families.



Bill Scott
KSBA Executive Director

Testimony from family resource/youth services center coordinators or school counselors regarding the kinds of problems they are seeing among students can help the board gain a better perspective on the struggles their students are facing.

The board can also invite presentations on emerging trends from representatives of state social-services agencies, homeless shelters, mental health organizations or other child-serving groups.

Both school personnel and outside agencies can play a critical role in helping board members and other

district leaders get a better handle on the scope and nature of the problem. Media coverage of these board presentations can increase community awareness of these problems as well.

Taking inventory: Although awareness of the problem is an essential first step, if boards are serious about addressing barriers to learning they must also review the adequacy of existing resources.

Since family resource and youth services centers are required to conduct periodic needs assessments of the students and families they serve, these inventories can be excellent source of information for the board. Students who are coping with the effects of unemployment and poverty require a full range of supports, including counseling and mental health services, tutoring, mentoring and more tangible resources like food and clothing.

Community partnerships: These needs assessments or other surveys may indicate serious gaps in the district’s support system for vulnerable students. On these occasions, the board can play an important role in accessing these resources from the larger community.

Asking family resource center coordinators which community organizations they’d like to work more closely with is a good place to start in bridging these gaps. As the link between the community and its public schools, board members are in an excellent position to help the schools connect to community resources.

We all know that children don’t leave their problems at the front door of the school. What happens in their families and communities can adversely affect their behavior as well as their academic performance.

Since board members are the bridge between the larger community and its public schools, it makes perfect sense for them take an active role in reducing outside barriers to student success. ☘

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

“For the last several years, I’ve asked (convenience store night clerk Eric Webb) what his customers are saying about road conditions when we’re trying to make a decision about whether to call school off or not.” Estill County Schools student support coordinator Danny Click sharing one of his successful yardsticks for bus safety during bad weather. From the *Irvine Citizen Voice & Times*.



ondary Education and the Education Professional Standards Board to create a longitudinal student data system. From the *Ashland Daily Independent*.

“I believe that we shouldn’t have a grade-level limitation on when a student is ready to take algebra I. If they’re ready to take algebra I at an earlier age, that should be allowed.” Shelby County Schools Superintendent James Neihof on the board’s removal of a policy that kept seventh-graders who had mastered middle-school math from taking the higher-level course. From the *Shelbyville Sentinel-News*.

“I don’t believe that a number or a letter inspires a kid to work harder like it used to. We want to be able to show true learning for all our students, and this is the way to do just that. We have pretty specific things



we’re looking for to see how the student is progressing toward meeting that standard, and that’s where this system really makes sense. We can really identify

where a student is having trouble, why he is having that trouble and work to fix it rather than just assigning a letter to say he either did good or bad.” Miles Elementary (Erlanger-Elsmere Independent) Principal Bryant Gillis on changes in his school’s grading system, replacing A’s and B’s with standards set by teachers and students. From the *Fort Mitchell Community Press & Recorder*.

“I think that (school nurse funding) should be in the SEEK formula. The reality is that every school should have an opportunity to have a nurse because there’s just so much more demand for it. It’s all local money that pays for that. It makes it tough when you have to pick between teachers and nurses. We only get so much money and we can only spend so much money. That’s really the simplicity of it.” Grant County Schools Superinten-

dent Michael Hibbett on the struggles to finance school nurse positions. From the *Williamstown Grant County News*.

“This is a good thing because we can still assess school effectiveness by assessing individual students. We spend too much time focusing on student weaknesses and not enough on developing their strengths.” Greenup County Schools Instructional Coordinator Matt Baker in support of the effort by the Kentucky Department of Education, the Council on Postsec-

“Vegetative roofing system (is) basically a selection of plants that will grow on the roof itself, will flow down and cleanse the water from a rain event. It’s a storm-water management technique.” Rob Haney, Kenton County Schools’ director of support operations, on one of the “green” features of the district’s Turkey Foot Middle School. From the Cincinnati *WLWT-TV News*.

Continuing financial headaches

“Businesses are asking for a time out. It’s not that they don’t care; they just don’t have the money.” Ballard County High School football booster Vicki Gough on fundraising efforts for the first half of 2009 that generated \$2,000 of the group’s \$20,000 goal. From the *Paducah Sun*.



“We had our knock-down, drag-out last year. These are hard economic times. We’ve got to drive fewer miles and to do it means cutting routes.” Henderson County Schools Transportation Director Harrell Harrison on the pressure to cut bus service costs by requiring more than 200 students to walk to school, thereby saving a half million dollars. From the *Henderson Gleaner*.

“So once again, we’re running so close it’s scary. We about broke even this year. You know, we’re carrying over some, but we’re not doing the things we need to do. If you look at one year, we’re not saving anything; we’re spending.” Pike County Schools Finance Director Nancy Ratliff in a report to the board that probably has been echoed in more than one district this year. From the *Pikeville Appalachian News-Express*.

“I only had one cry. That’s better than 28 crying or else I would have run out crying myself.” Bush Elementary (Laurel County) kindergarten teacher Kristen Gregory on opening day with her students. From the London *Sentinel-Echo*.

“My hope is that it gets kids to realize if they can take these tough classes and be successful, they can do anything. These are college-level courses and the kids are being challenged and surrounded in this push for increased rigor ... I’m tickled pink, not only for our students, but for the teachers because the training they receive is phenomenal.” Warren East High School Principal Cindy Beals on the improvement in scores and numbers of students in Advanced Placement classes as part of the first phase of the AdvanceKentucky pilot program. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.



“It was a little bit of an uh-oh.” Bernheim Middle (Bullitt County) School seventh-grader Ana Ocasio on her initial reaction when two teachers showed up on her front porch as part of a back-to-school home visitation effort. From the Shepherdsville *Pioneer News*.

“So I can live (200 miles away) in Bowling Green, but not 12 minutes away in Cincinnati. I don’t understand that rationale. I’m not trying to be stubborn; I just want to air it all out.” Newport Independent Superintendent Michael Brandt on his appeal to the Kentucky Supreme Court after lower courts ruled against him in his “friendly” lawsuit challenging Kentucky’s law requiring the state’s superintendents to reside within the Commonwealth. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*.

“It’s going to require everything. Furniture, books... we are going to have to do it from scratch. To say I’ll take a teacher, that’s great. But there

are so many other things that it entails. Until this year, we’ve been able to move students to other schools. The problem this year is that no one has any room.” Lebanon Elementary School (Marion County) Principal Donna Royse on why a record enrollment at her school requires more than just adding a teacher. From the *Lebanon Enterprise*.

“We will face many challenges (such as) getting young boys to wash their hands.” Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holli-day on one of the more demanding tasks facing school personnel in educating students about steps necessary to avoid the H1N1 virus. From the Frankfort KSBA eNews Service.

“We started printing those letters that morning. You can’t just print 5,000 letters in five minutes. Then we had to get those letters to the schools and in the students’ hands by 2:30, which was only one hour after we actually received confirmation the flu was H1N1.” Marshall County Schools Superintendent Trent Lovett, whose district had one of the state’s first confirmed student H1N1 cases this fall, on the timing of getting up-to-date information to parents. From the Benton *Marshall County Tribune-Courier*.



“We’ve used Clorox, we’ve used sanitizer, we’ve sprayed everything. We’ve wiped down everything. We’ve swept, we’ve mopped. Sure, it’s scary, I mean I’m a parent, I’m a grandparent. But you just have to handle the situations as they come up to the best of your ability.” Cowan Elementary (Letcher County) custodian Donna Howard on the steps taken after the school was closed for several days when dozens of students were sick with flu-like and stomach virus symptoms. From the Hazard *WYMT-TV News*. ☘

2010 school tax rates

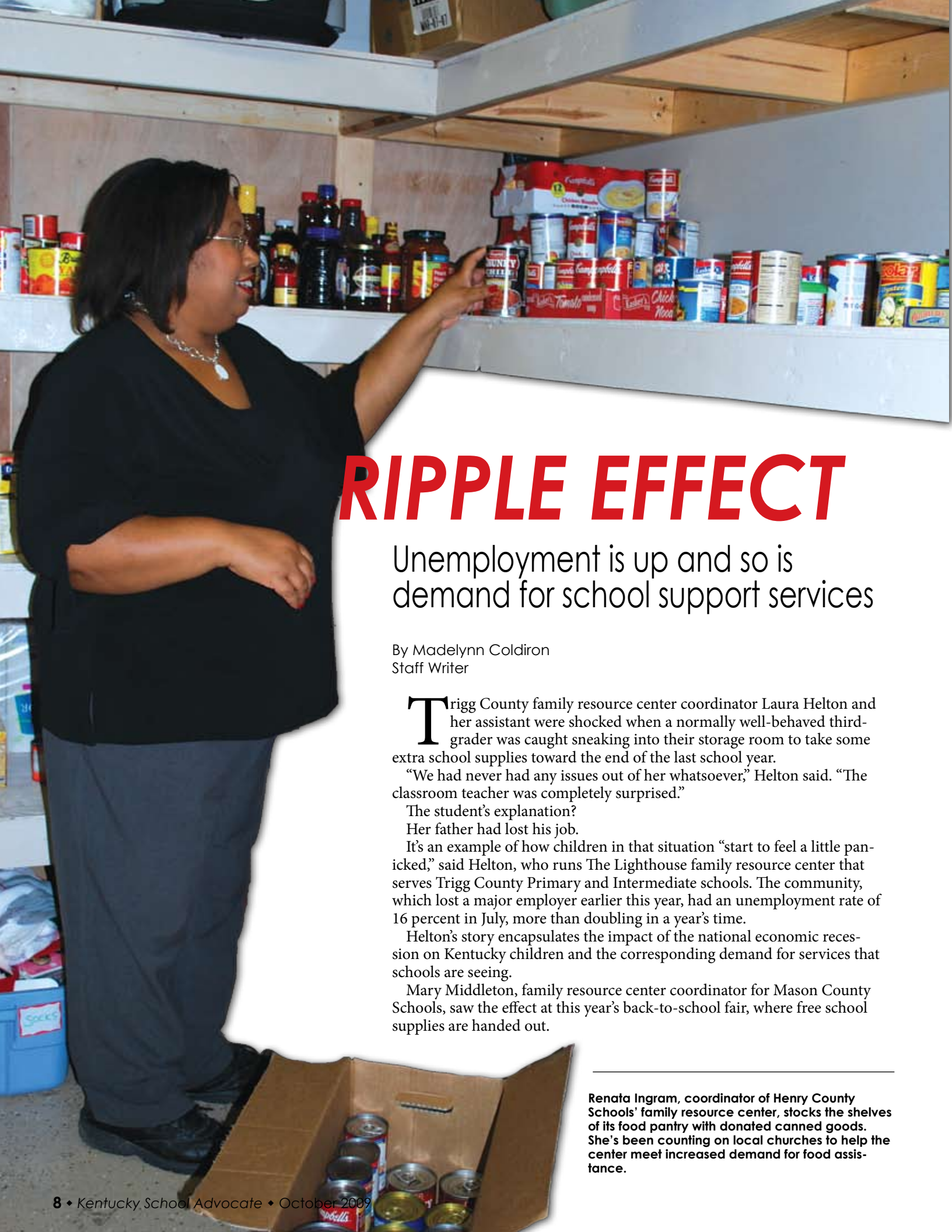
POINT ...

“I’m in favor of it. I wish it was 18 percent. I taught for 27 years and I had three kids go through this school system. If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” Retired teacher Tom Bystrek in favor of the Washington County board’s decision to take the full 4 percent tax revenue increase next year.

COUNTERPOINT...

“I’m a person on a fixed income, and it’s hard to keep my family going now. I’ve got a piece of crap car that’s about to break down, and I can’t fix that. How can I pay more taxes? I may not get a cost of living raise, but the cost of living is going on up.” Parent/taxpayer Robert Nesbitt opposing the tax hike.

From the *Springfield Sun*



RIPPLE EFFECT

Unemployment is up and so is demand for school support services

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Trigg County family resource center coordinator Laura Helton and her assistant were shocked when a normally well-behaved third-grader was caught sneaking into their storage room to take some extra school supplies toward the end of the last school year.

“We had never had any issues out of her whatsoever,” Helton said. “The classroom teacher was completely surprised.”

The student’s explanation?

Her father had lost his job.

It’s an example of how children in that situation “start to feel a little panicked,” said Helton, who runs The Lighthouse family resource center that serves Trigg County Primary and Intermediate schools. The community, which lost a major employer earlier this year, had an unemployment rate of 16 percent in July, more than doubling in a year’s time.

Helton’s story encapsulates the impact of the national economic recession on Kentucky children and the corresponding demand for services that schools are seeing.

Mary Middleton, family resource center coordinator for Mason County Schools, saw the effect at this year’s back-to-school fair, where free school supplies are handed out.

Renata Ingram, coordinator of Henry County Schools’ family resource center, stocks the shelves of its food pantry with donated canned goods. She’s been counting on local churches to help the center meet increased demand for food assistance.

“Typically, between all four schools, we serve 500 children at the event and we had over 700 this year,” said Middleton, whose county has seen its unemployment rate rise from 6.1 percent in July 2008 to 11.4 percent in July 2009.

It’s not an isolated trend, said Mike Denney, director of the Division of Family Resource/Youth Service Centers in the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

“I’ve been in a number of meetings with (center coordinators) in the last several months and they are getting larger than usual requests for basic needs assistance, such as needing help with rent, help with utilities, help with food,” Denney said.

The centers function as referral sites, sending families who need assistance to local agencies.

But, Denney warned, “They are seeing a lot of local resources being taxed very heavily because of a larger demand.”

In Covington Independent Schools, the local non-profit that provides twice-yearly funding to support student needs was able to give the district just one disbursement last year and there are no guarantees of two installments this year, either, said Lori Eifert, who works with district’s homeless student program.

Renata Ingram, coordinator of Henry County Schools’ family resource center, has seen increased requests for help ranging from food to clothing. She said Henry County churches have helped her center meet the greater demand for food by holding monthly canned food collections.

“Our numbers have really jumped this year already and we haven’t even gotten to Christmas season yet,” she said. The county’s most recent unemployment rate stands at 10.7 percent.

The timing couldn’t be worse. Statewide, funding for family resource and youth services centers has stayed flat this fiscal year. However, because the centers are serving more children, districts are actually getting a few dollars less per pupil, Denney said.

Meal numbers rising

This school year’s free- and reduced-price meal numbers – another economic indicator for schools – won’t be available until later this fall, but Denise Hagan, interim director of the state education department’s Division of Nutrition and Health Services, expects to see an increase.

“I know just in child care centers the numbers of free and reduced have increased – they have to collect those income applications as well,” she said.

Paula Maddox, food service director for Trigg County Schools, said the district started the 2008-09 school year with 49.5 percent enrollment in the free and reduced-price meal program and by the end of that school year the percentage had risen to about 53 percent. “I strongly suspect we’re a little bit higher than that now,” she said.

The percentage of Kentucky children approved for free- or reduced-price meals had already risen to 54 percent in October 2008 from 53 percent the preceding period.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently said

the number of students nationwide who receive free and reduced-cost meals at school could soar to a 41-year high this school year, as high unemployment pushes thousands more children into poverty, many for the first time.

That first-time pattern also is apparent in Kentucky. Jeannine Parsons, director of food services for Rockcastle County Schools, said she’s noticed this as parents come in to fill out applications for the meal program.

“It may be the first time they’ve filled one out,” she said. “They’ll make comments like, ‘My husband’s laid off,’ or ‘Surely we qualify for free, my husband’s not working.’”

The picture has been similar among those who’ve come to Mason County’s family resource center for help, Middleton said. “They’re not even familiar with where to go to get assistance,” she said.

The homeless

Helton, at Trigg County Schools, has noticed another pattern possibly related to increased unemployment: enrollment changes. The Trigg primary school had to add another kindergarten class to accommodate an unexpected influx.

The county lost some residents with the closure of a major factory, Helton said, but others have moved in – many of whom are jobless and appear to have moved in with family in the area.

Children whose families move in with relatives generally are counted as homeless if they have nowhere else to go.

“A lot of our kids are doubled up statewide,” said Mary Marshall, who works with the homeless education program at the state education department. “It’s because of the economy – people have lost their jobs.”

For those students, Denney said, the situation is “far from the Waltons.” Children who are moved into a multiple-family household out of necessity may face loud, unfamiliar surroundings, he said, “and a whole lot of emotions and social issues when there are too many cooks in a kitchen.”

Statewide, the number of homeless children has soared in the past year: from 17,735 in the 2007-08 school year to 22,626 in the 2009-09 school year.

Eifert, of Covington Independent Schools, is looking for the district to exceed the 373 students identified as homeless last year. A third of the urban district’s students are transient under normal circumstances.

More families are having difficulty finding housing for a variety of reasons, Eifert said, including a long waiting list for subsidized housing, foreclosures on rental buildings, and a general lack of affordable housing.

Students who have experienced this before “are remarkable in the way they handle it – kids are resilient that way,” Eifert said.

However, she said, newly unemployed parents report their children are having difficulty adjusting to their new circumstances. “They are devastated; this has been a shock to their system,” Eifert said. ❧

Alternative school turns chaos into stability, learning



A student takes Murray the monitor lizard out for some exercise as his pen is cleaned in Ramey-Estep High School's herpetology lab. The lab teaches students both science and responsibility.

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

School spirit isn't something you expect to find in an alternative high school, but the student "tour guides" at Ramey-Estep High School in Boyd County bubble over as they show visitors around the building, rattling off topics that are covered in each class.

"(The literature teacher) actually takes you into the book; it's not just a work sheet. He does things so you actually 'get it,'" said Yakyma, a student from northern Kentucky. (Because students are in the state's care, last names are not released.)

The classes emphasize hands-on activities, the student guides said.

"I just feel like I learn more here," said Miranda, from central Kentucky.

Ramey-Estep High School is one of three alternative education programs in the state to earn a best practice designation in all three major yardsticks used by the state education department. The programs are being held up as examples for others to model as the education department's way of encouraging improvement in alternative education programs, which were criticized in two 2007 studies.

Ramey-Estep High School is part of the Boyd County school system, but its students – who come from all areas of the state – are referred by various state agencies, including the Department of Juvenile Justice. They live at Ramey-Estep Homes, a residential treatment center that is part of an extended campus nestled in a mountainous, rural area.

The first hint that this high school is different comes when classes change. Groups of students, clad in polo shirts and khakis, silently walk single-file from their classrooms into the hallway, where they hug the wall at a steady pace, equidistant from each other. There is a reason for the regimentation, said Tim Meadows, shift manager at Ramey-Estep Homes who

functions as a mediator between school staff and students during the day at the high school.

"They thrive on structure," he said. "If they don't have structure, it's chaos to them."

And chaos many times describes their life prior to coming to Ramey-Estep, Meadows said.

"They know exactly what's expected of them here; they know what they can do," Principal Ann Brewster said. "Unlike a regular school, no one makes fun of them here."

Academics

In addition to core subjects, the high school has classes in drama, art, and music; an industrial arts classroom with a wood shop and offerings in plumbing, electric and home maintenance; and a huge herpetology lab where students learn leadership, teamwork and responsibility – as well as some science – by caring for a collection of snakes, lizards and other reptiles and amphibians.

Students also have opportunities to learn and work through the campus apiary, greenhouse, flower garden and sugar maple trees.

But what is inside this framework is equally unique among alternative programs. Once students are evaluated at the treatment center, they are placed in a group of no more than 12 that stays together for all activities, including classes at the high school. Students in each group take care of each other – "they are a family," Brewster said.

Each group has a trained child care worker who accompanies the group to classes. The treatment staff and teaching staff must collaborate, the principal said. "You can't survive independently of each other."

Health teacher Becky Stacey said the child care worker, who knows the background and issues for each student in the

group, is a benefit in the classroom. “I try to pull them in as much as I can,” she said. “A lot of times they’ll validate what I say.”

Each group also has a daily advisory period with a teacher who is responsible for the individual learning plan of each student. The school emphasizes preparation for postsecondary education and the work force and tries to make sure older students get their diploma before they leave.

The state agency that oversees their care also requires students in Ramey-Estep to attend school 230 days per year, which means sessions during the summer and fall and spring breaks, Brewster said.

Academically, she said, “They will earn more credits here because of all the extended days we do. So kids tend to get caught up when they’re with us.”

The school’s academic program is based on credits for classes rather than grade levels; students leave the home – and the school – when they have completed a five-phase treatment program.

Because of this cohesiveness within groups, it’s easier for teachers to manage the classroom, Brewster said, though it may be more challenging academically.

Stacey said she enjoys that challenge. “You have 12 different kids in there and can have 12 different lesson plans,” she said.

Seven of the high school’s 26 teachers are certified in special education, and collaborate daily with other teachers, Brewster said.

What districts can do

At any given time, the high school has about 160 students. The typical length of stay is eight to 12 months, but Brewster said her main worry is what happens to the students when they leave and return to their home district, where many times they automatically are placed in a district-run alternative program instead of a regular school.

“One of my deepest concerns for our state-agency children is their transition back into regular school settings,” she said. “They are not always received with open arms ... They have worked so hard to turn their lives around and have come to us with such low self-esteem. It’s so easy to knock them right down again. They need understanding, acceptance and recognition of the effort they’ve made to improve.”

Brewster has tried to establish a system where there is a “safe haven” person in every receiving school.

“That’s our goal – that’s our dream,” she said.

✂

Ramey-Estep High School’s male students file out of the school and head for the fishing pond on campus. One of the activities in the school’s PE program is fishing – for some students, a first-time experience.

The evaluation areas for best practice alternative schools

- Curriculum, instruction and assessment
- School climate and culture, support services and staff professional development
- Leadership, resource allocation and program planning



FIGHTING

Districts on the front lines of H1N1

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Districts that haven't yet had to deal with the H1N1 virus can learn a lot from those that were on the front lines of the illness almost from the first day of the school year.

So far, at least two Kentucky districts have made the tough decision to close schools with high numbers of sick students, while countless others have wrestled with that question. What they've all done is come up with innovative ways to fight the spread of the flu.

In Boyle County, where Junction City Elementary was closed for two days because of H1N1, the district has created an alert system based on a traffic signal.

"When one school is on red because they are having a high absenteeism rate, every other school in the district automatically goes on yellow," said Pam Tamme, district safety coordinator. "Yellow is when you start tightening hand sanitizer use, increase custodial cleanings, start limiting the use of common items among students. But what we want for our schools is for the majority of the year to be green, which means we are doing business as usual."

Letcher County closed two elementary schools, Superintendent Anna Craft said, when students "began dropping like flies," from a combination of H1N1, a stomach bug and strep throat.

"We did have an isolation room once the kids were sick so they didn't spread it while they were waiting to be picked up," Craft said. "We had a plan for what bathroom these sick kids could use so they weren't using a larger bathroom that well kids are going to go to."

Clean, clean and clean again

Nothing is off limits when it comes to cleaning: that is what schools fighting the flu have learned.

"After we had our first case verified, we met with all of our



TIPS FROM THE HOT ZONE

School officials share some of the lessons they learned in the early battle against H1N1

- The H1N1 germs will die on surfaces after two to eight hours, so it is not necessary to clean desks and other common items at the end of the school day because they will be virus free on their own by

the next morning. Focus more on cleaning these items during the school day.

- Ventilate buses when students are on them. Sanitize buses after the morning run because it will be less than eight hours before students get back on them in the afternoon.

- Discourage students from sharing common items, such as crayons, markers, scissors from a common container. Have them select which ones they are going to use for the day and don't trade.

G THE FLU

share what they have learned

stakeholders and had the health department come in and meet with us,” said Livingston County Schools Superintendent Kenneth Bargo. “We reviewed our procedures and what we decided to do was hire three additional custodians at each of our campuses whose only duty is to sanitize the school. They’ve gone around and cleaned all of the door knobs, the drinking fountains, desk tops when students are out of the room.”

He said districtwide attendance had dipped to 89.7 percent during the height of the illness, but then rebounded to a still-low 92 percent.

“The advice we got from our local health providers was to treat it like any other flu,” Bargo said. “If we weren’t going to close at 89 percent for the regular flu, then we shouldn’t close for this, so we didn’t.”

The additional custodians will work for a minimum of six weeks. “We’ll monitor and see how it’s going after six weeks,” he said. “In situation like this you have to act or it will take you over.”

Boyle County’s Tamme said district staff was able to be more efficient in their cleaning after learning that the virus dies on surfaces after two to eight hours.

“We had thought for our custodians to come in at the end of the day and clean our desks really well, but if the germs die after two to eight hours, they’re going to be dead on those desks the next morning anyway,” she said. “So we need to heighten our cleaning during the school day. During the day when the kids go to PE, the custodian comes in and cleans the desks; when the kids go to lunch, same thing; or if the teacher had a planning period. It was actually during school that mattered.”

As of early September, H1N1 hadn’t yet hit Carroll County Schools, but that didn’t stop officials from mounting a pre-emptive strike against the virus. Students are being taught to sneeze into their arm, wash their hands and wipe down their work stations.

See “Flu fight!” continued on next page



- Know the health of your students and staff. Those with medical conditions that can compromise their immune systems and pregnant women should be notified that the flu is present and given the option to stay home.

- Become best friends with your health department.

- Add extra time to the lunch periods so students have time to wash their hands before eating. Mount hand sanitizer dispensers at cafeteria entrances.

- If a school has multiple lunch periods, sanitize tables between seatings.

- Communicate with parents. The more information they have, the better they feel about their students being at school.

- Have an isolation room and separate restroom for sick students waiting to be picked up so they don't come in contact with the rest of the student body.

Flu fight

Continued from preceding page

“We have a great network in our state, from superintendents who are going through it and the CDC is really keeping us up-to-date with e-mails and how to communicate that information to the community and to the schools,” said Superintendent Lisa James. “We have also sent a letter home to all parents describing what it is, what the symptoms are and what to do if you think your child has it.”

Bus biohazard?

Keeping desks, doorways and other items clean in schools has been a labor-intensive measure, but an easy one to implement. What has been more perplexing is how to keep school buses as germ free as possible.

“Buses were such a frustrating part,” Tamme said. “We were like, here we’ve done all this prevention and then we throw them on these buses. The only two things we were able to come up with on the buses was: ventilate them. Have them put the windows all the way down, which is reasonable given the weather conditions. And the other is, after they unload in the mornings, for the bus drivers to use disinfectant to spray down the seats because it will be less than eight hours before the kids get back on the buses.”

Craft said Letcher County disinfected its buses before students were sent home at the end of the day.

Districts also are placing hand sanitizer dispensers on buses.

Planning ahead

Having a plan before the flu strikes is critical.

“We had a good plan before it happened and the plan is even better now,” said Mike LaFavers, Boyle County superintendent. “We worked with our health department and I would encourage all school districts to do that. In our district, we have a nurse, a safety coordinator, emergency medical person and director of operations. Those four people were critical.”

Dr. William Hacker, Kentucky’s public health commissioner, also advised districts to work closely with their local health departments. That was echoed by Letcher County’s Craft, who encouraged districts to “become best friends” with their local health departments.

“We were in constant contact,” she said. “Because of confidentiality, the health department couldn’t confirm to the schools who had the flu, but were able to let us know which



Photo by Cheryl Lawson/McCracken County Schools

McCracken County Schools Nurse Kay Story gives a “Germ Fighters” lesson to Reidland Elementary School student Caleb Stamper.

schools they were from.”

Craft said having a nurse in each school also gave them an edge.

“After the first school closed, we alerted them to be at the entryways so they could watch children coming in, looking for sick children and separating them if they have a fever or are starting to get sick,” she said. “This can occur so quickly. You can leave home healthy and in 30 minutes you’re sick.”

Hacker said while pandemics can be unpredictable, so far H1N1 has been no more dangerous than seasonal flu, so public health officials’ recommendations mirror the ones they make during regular flu season.

“Schools should institute common sense procedures, encourage the use of hand sanitizers, encourage students not to be heroes and to stay home if they are ill,” he said. “And the same goes for the faculty.” ☘

— For the latest flu information, go to www.flu.gov

Photos from preceding pages: Carroll County Head Start teacher Frances Breden helps Crystal Rebollar wash her hands.

Alice England, a kindergarten teacher at Carroll County’s Kathryn Winn Elementary School, uses a black light and fake germs to demonstrate how easily they can be spread by touching items with dirty hands.

You’ll flip out!



The online edition of the *Kentucky School Advocate* has “turned a page in technology. This new format allows us to offer the magazine online exactly as it appears in print, right down to the flipping of pages.

Click on an arrow and it’s like thumbing through the publication.

Check it out at www.ksba.org/advocate

Beefed-up early childhood intervention to benefit schools

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

More Kentucky children with serious emotional disabilities will be better prepared to enter school – and be successful there – through an expanded early childhood mental-health program.

Kentucky SEED (System to Enhance Early Development) will increase access to services that help children from birth to age 5 who have severe emotional disturbances and will widen the net for identifying them before they attend school.

The effort also will allow SEED specialists to serve as a resource to advise public schools and their preschool programs about ways to help these children.

If children with emotional disabilities don't see a mental-health provider until they are 10-12 years old, the damage is already done, said interim project director Mary Beth Jackson, who works for the Kentucky Department of Public Health.

"Let's get to them and get to them early and try to build resiliency and social skills early, so when they do get to school, they've got those skills in place," she explained. "Otherwise when these children – who are being tossed around from child care to child care, kicked out because of behavior problems – get to preschool and kindergarten, just about a whole school year is wasted trying to get these behaviors under control. So you've missed a whole year of academic instruction for these kids."

The SEED program is being funded with a six-year, \$9 million federal grant to the Kentucky Department for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addiction Services. It builds on the state's existing services for children, including the Early Childhood Mental Health Program, which created early childhood mental-health specialist positions at regional mental-health centers.

However, previous efforts targeted children in child-care settings, said Beth Jordan, program administrator in the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

"That leaves out a lot of birth to 5-year-olds, kids that are either at home with their parents, in preschool, Head Start, First Steps or other settings besides child care," she said.

The new effort will help fill in those gaps for that age group, expanding services and training.

The state's regional interagency councils for services to children with an emotional disability will serve as the lead local agencies for the SEED work, providing training to agencies that serve children in how to identify those who may have severe emotional disabilities.

"Another piece of this grant is developing the capacity of all these child-serving agencies, along with pediatricians and people in the medical community, on screening," said Jack-

EMOTIONAL DISORDERS IN CHILDREN BY THE NUMBERS

- In Kentucky, 200,000 children under 18 will have an emotional disability
- 50,000 Kentucky children will have a severe emotional disability that impairs their ability to function in the community
- Nationally, 20 percent of children have a diagnosable emotional disability
- 5-7 percent of youth in the U.S. have a severe emotional disability that impairs their ability to function in the community

son. "We really want to beef up the screening that's occurring across the state."

It's easier to take note of children who might need help with an emotional disorder in a group setting, such as child care, she said. But expanding the awareness of resources among these other groups can identify and eventually help the youngsters who stay at home with a parent, for example.

Parents and family members of these children also will be trained through the regional interagency councils so they can act as a resource for parents in similar situations, Jordan said.

The state has 18 local interagency councils, but SEED is being piloted initially in just three of them: Kentucky River, Bluegrass West and Salt River/Jefferson County. Eventually, the program will spread statewide.

Renee Roberts, early childhood specialist for Kentucky River Community Care, said being able to train more people in that agency's eight-county area will "build a team" and enhance the services for the increasing numbers of children in this age group who need help.

Each regional council may tweak the program to meet local needs, Jordan said, but all will carry out the core thrust of building training for their region's mental-health coordinators, child care providers and school personnel in dealing with very young children with severe emotional disabilities.

Through SEED, teachers and others can get recommendations for classroom strategies to address emotional/behavioral problems in very young children. Sometimes a strategy as simple as rearranging a classroom can help a child and stave off a visit to a mental-health professional, Jordan said.

There has been an increase in referrals to mental-health agencies for the birth-5-year-old population for a number of reasons, Jackson said.

"There are more children in child care now. State-funded preschool hasn't been around that long, so you're bringing them into the school system at an earlier age and identifying them that way," she said. "And nationally there's been more awareness around early-childhood mental health – not just early-childhood mental health but social and emotional issues in young kids and school readiness and how that fits together." ❧

It takes a team to reduce the dropout rate

By Mary Branham

It takes teamwork. That message was loud and clear at the Sept. 11-12 Graduate Kentucky summit on dropout prevention.

"It takes this community to change the direction of where we are right now," Kentucky first lady Jane Beshear told hundreds who attended the two-day event in Frankfort. The crowd had just heard from a student, teacher, parent, businessman, administrator and elected official.

Richard Wells, vice president of State and Community Dropout Prevention Summits for America's Promise, started the day with that same theme: "We've got to be on the same team ... so all our students can be on a winning team," Wells said.

That's because everyone is affected when students drop out of high school, he said. They earn less and pay less in taxes over the course of their lifetime. They're more likely to depend on government social programs and end up in the criminal justice system. They're less likely to support the arts. All those things, speakers on the community panel said, affect the community.

"Rising tide lifts all boats," said Daviess County Judge-Executive Reid Haire. "The reverse of that is also true."

In Kentucky, 6,500 students drop out each year, officials said. Wells said the cost adds up. The dropouts in 2009



Kentucky first lady Jane Beshear, center, talks with students who participated on a student panel about the dropout problem during the Graduate Kentucky summit on Sept. 12. The students, from left are, Josh Redmon of Shelby County, Benjamin Whitlock of Green County, and Margaret Faison and Jessica Burgess from The Providence School in Jessamine County.

alone, he said, face up to \$4.2 billion in lost earnings over the course of their lifetime.

But solving the problem is not something that will happen easily. Gov. Steve Beshear said the signs can be seen early, and student's circumstances contribute to the eventual decision to drop out.

"If a child doesn't get a fair start, the likelihood of him or her getting a high school diploma decreases," he said.

That's why Beshear has worked to streamline the Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program and appointed a bipartisan panel to take a fresh look

at the state's K-12 education system. He's also asked the legislature to increase the dropout age from 16 to 18.

"Those who are willing to fight for education must also have confidence in how we prepare them," said Beshear.

Student perspective

The governor's sentiment was echoed by five students who participated in a discussion moderated by Jane Beshear.

The dropout, said Josh Redmon, a senior at Shelby County High School, is not a loser. He or she just needs extra help.

"Sometimes, when they drop out, it's

not their heart's desire," he said. "It just seems like it's the only way."

Caring teachers who engage students and make the class interesting can make a big difference in a student's decision to drop out, students on the panel said. And sometimes, schools need to recognize the special circumstances some students face, said Jessica Burgess, who dropped out of school at age 16 because her single mother of three needed help and Jessica needed to get a job.

She earned her diploma at age 22 in January from The Providence School, an alternative school in Jessamine County. Burgess returned to school to make a better life for herself, but also to set an example for her 2-year-old daughter.

"How am I going to tell my daughter to get her high school diploma if I don't have mine?" she said.

That's an attitude new Education Commissioner Terry Holliday applauded.

Everyone involved in education should look beyond the numbers. "Sometimes you can get so bombarded by the numbers," he said. "These are real children."

He encouraged attendees to keep the face of a child in their mind's eye when they think about the dropout numbers.

"Just having the numbers will not be enough," said Holliday. "What are you going to do with the data?"

He said past failures should not be offered as excuses for not trying something new. "If we keep making excuses, we'll be here 20 years from now wanting to focus on the dropout problems," Holliday said.

It will take change and commitment from all sectors, participants emphasized. Marion County Superintendent Donald Smith, for instance, challenged administrators in attendance to look at what is best for the student, not what the adults in the system want.

"You are the ones who have to push the teachers because they're on the front line," the first-year superintendent said. "The hardest thing I've had to face is getting adults to hold other adults accountable." ❧

—Mary Branham is a freelance writer from Frankfort.

Different culture calls for different approach to dropout prevention



Biby Tinajero, dropout prevention coordinator in the Migrant Education Program for Fayette County Schools, explains the cultural factors involved.

By Mary Branham

The Hispanic community faces special challenges in dealing with dropout and truancy prevention.

It's not just the language barrier, said Biby Tinajero, dropout prevention coordinator in the Migrant Education Program for Fayette County Schools. The Hispanic culture and attitude toward life in general can also contribute to the high dropout rate, she said.

"The American thinking is work comes first and when we get old we can enjoy life," Tinajero said during one of Graduate Kentucky's breakout sessions highlighting best practices. Hispanics, she said, are told to think of the moment and enjoy the now.

The differing cultural attitudes are important for educators to keep in mind in dealing with Hispanic students. Statistics show Hispanic students have disproportionately higher dropout rates nationally and that migrant Hispanic students are even less likely to graduate.

The challenges these students face are many, but it all begins with language, said Tim Mitsumori, an English as a Second Language teacher in Fayette County.

He asked those in the audience to imagine being dropped off in the middle of China and told to learn while they're also learning the new language. That's what Hispanic students – many of whom

haven't developed completely in their native language – are facing, he said.

In addition, many students have left communities where they are part of the majority and are dropped into communities where they're a minority. That enhances their need for belonging because not only have students left a community of close-knit family members, their parents may be working a lot.

"Gangs offer that alternative," said Mitsumori. "Those gangs provide another family. They provide that sense of belonging the students need."

There's also the problem of perceived and real racism, he said.

Tinajero said parental involvement can often help schools address problems. But that, too, can face hurdles.

"They want to be a part of (their child's education)," Tinajero said, "but they don't know how to."

Tinajero has developed a strong relationship with the Catholic diocese in Lexington in an effort to reach out to Hispanic parents.

Fayette County has also started an after-school program that offers not only tutoring, but also offers field trips. "These programs give students a place to belong," Mitsumori said. "Many of our kids don't have that."

Tinajero said it's imperative for school districts to offer programs for Hispanic students. "They're here, and it's going to affect us as a society," she said. ❧

Dr. Tom Ballowe

on pandemic flu preparation

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 Dr. Tom Ballowe, pictured at right speaking at last month's pandemic flu summit in Frankfort. Ballowe, director of special programs for Paducah Independent Schools, discusses the district's detailed, three-part plan to keep students learning, while keeping them and school staff safe during a serious flu outbreak.



Q. Your district has put together a very detailed pandemic flu action plan. What are some of the details?

A. Our plan has three phases: prevention, response and recovery. We have different activities within the plan for the district and also for parents.

Q. What are some of the highlights of the prevention portion of the plan?

A. Our plan calls for education and planning, primarily. We worked with the (state) Department of Public Health to develop public service announcements and educational materials. This is called the non-pharmaceutical intervention. It's everything you do besides giving medicine or vaccine, and that includes getting the district and the families ready by preparing stockpiles of medicine, personal protective equipment for infection control, supplies, food, whatever it might take to be prepared.

The food distribution will be more like an MRE (meal ready to eat). During the ice storm we gave thousands of those and they were in small, individual containers. In order to have those things, you have to stockpile them in advance.

Q. What do you advise parents to do during the prevention phase?

A. We'll send home educational materials about stockpiling food, and any medical supplies they normally need, enough for a month because you can't count on getting in to see a doctor.

We're also teaching students social distancing, which is one of the two large measures for non-pharmaceutical intervention, which is keeping 6-10 feet away from other children. The other is infection control: washing hands, food handling, and those types of things.

We are also talking to parents about discussing with their employer and their child-care agency what their plans are because parents are dependent on what their employers do. If their child-care provider shuts down, that's going to put them in a bind, possibly even force them to come home from work.

Q. Have you been educating students about prevention techniques?

A. We have shown them infection-control films. We haven't gone into social distancing with them yet, but we are working on infection control.

We're also working with our staff to apply good cleaning and infection control methods, making sure they are following those procedures, making sure our custodians are cleaning inanimate objects that are regularly touched, such as door handles, door facings, telephones.

Q. Can you tell me about the response portion of the plan?

A. That won't go into action until the infection rates are high and attendance rates are low, then we will dismiss schools, not close them.

Q. What is the difference between dismissing schools and closing them?

A. Closing means you are closing your doors. We're not closing, we're still going to be working with kids, instructing them, doing all the things necessary to keep education alive.

Our plan is unique in that it allows students to be served under the hospital-home instructional model. It means they will all have individual appointments to come to school. That means that Johnny will come at 8 on Monday and Thursday at 9. He

will get his individual assignments. We'll have assignments online so they can be seen two weeks ahead what they're going to be doing. Books are at home, so he'll be working with his parents.

When the students come to schools, they will come at the appointed time, they will have an appointment card and they won't be allowed in the school until that time. They are divided up by grade and alphabetically, and instead of all coming in one entrance we will have all entrances open. So at 8 a.m., I might have two people coming in entrance one and have two more people come in entrance two, staying 6-10 feet apart. And we would also keep them apart in the parking lot.

We are utilizing our staff differently, so we have someone out in the parking lot keeping people separate; they open the door for them; there's someone at the front desk who takes their appointment card. The student and the parent wash their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer, they will throw the tissues away, put on a mask and will be told to go to room one. They will have an hour's worth of instruction.

When they leave, if they've been twice that week, they have completed their week's worth of work, they can pick up their five breakfasts and lunches if they are on free lunch and can take those home. And they go out the same door they came in. And then at 8:20 you have people come in doors three and four, separating people around the building and going into different rooms.

We are going to make sure students get their instruction and their food. We noticed during the ice storms that after several days, we started opening up our points of distribution for food and were getting large numbers of children showing up hungry. So our schools have to stay open; a large percentage of our students are on free or reduced lunch. It's doubly important for our schools not to close but just to dismiss.

We also will have appointments for students who need tutoring and we also will have phone tutoring, so they can call in and get help on the phone. We also have drive-by assignment activities. So if you are asking for extra assignments for your child, you are asked to come at 3 p.m. on Thursday and drive by the front of the school and we will hand out packets.

At the high school, we're going to try to use more technology, with podcasts and electronic lessons where they can tune in

for that difficult assignment, like photosynthesis.

Very few students will be bused to school, probably only those with mobility issues.

Q. How will the other students get to school for their appointments?

A. In our district, we don't have anyone more than 1.5 miles away. We're an inner-city school. If they can get to the mall — and they do get to the mall — then they can get to school. We are going to reassign our transportation workers to work in the school. We are going to have to reassign everyone in our districts slightly because we are not going to be having school as we know it.

The food distribution is different; the instruction model is different. Portions of our buildings won't be open, like bathrooms, so our custodians don't have to clean them, so they'll just be cleaning doorknobs, doors, teacher's desks. They'll be assisting us in different capacities.

Staying open is very important, especially in small districts where schools are the largest employer. If the school laid off everybody and sent them home, that's economic doom for that county.

In rural areas, they may have to use outlying community centers as school distribution spots and the teachers would actually work out of those buildings.

Q. What does the recovery phase of your district's plan include?

A. Recovery is just a review of everything that was done. What were the levels of illness? What was the effect on our staff? What was the effect on our students? Were we able to collaborate with the Department of Public Health as we wanted? Were we able to get the information out? Did our students make achievement gains?

We'll review our protocols and see if we were able to do what we had hoped we were able to do. Then we'll start stockpiling all over. Pandemics come in waves and there may be as many as two in a year, so after the response mode you have to rebuild your stockpiles and get prepared again.

Schools need a memorandum of understanding with the health department up front, so you know in the prevention phase what kind of help you can rely on from them and so they will know what

kind of help they can rely on from us.

And we can't lose track of common sense. Public Health Commissioner Hacker had a news conference and he was asked, "If a student is confirmed with H1N1 at my child's school, should I send my own child to school?" His answer was, "Yes." If you hear that a child in your school is ill with regular flu, would you keep him home? No. The regular flu kills 36,000 people a year. H1N1 is similar to the seasonal flu. So parents should be no more concerned and no less concerned than they are with regular flu.

Q. Is your district trying to drive home the point with parents of keeping sick children home and not worry about perfect attendance?

A. The CDC's advice is, don't bring your child back until they are fever free for 24 hours and go see your doctor. Those are the two recommendations we have, and if that affects attendance, well, I'm sorry.

If we get into a statewide pandemic and there is an emergency declaration, I fully expect KDE to provide some help. When a school gets close to 90 percent attendance because of seasonal flu, schools consider closing. But if we get into a full response mode and we can't expect more than 70 or 80 percent, the legislature is going to have to assist the districts. My recommendation to them would be, if we're at 80 percent tomorrow, but we're still serving children, we would fully expect them to waive some days of low attendance or allow us to use the attendance from the year before during that day.

Q. Is there any advice you have for other districts working on their flu response?

A. They ought to keep two things in mind: one is, your plan has to be communicated, developed and practiced with the health department and all of the other emergency agencies. And the other thing is that no plan is worth a dime if you can't convince the parents that their child is going to be safe with you.

The plan has to be well developed, well thought out and well planned and it has to be sold effectively so that parents will believe it and accept your assurance that their children are probably safer here at school. ☘

GREEN MACHINES?

State finds green solution for old technology with eScrap program

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Dark corners and crammed storage rooms traditionally have been where old school technology has gone to die, taking up precious space.

With the inception this year of Kentucky's eScrap program, schools now have an efficient, green, and possibly profitable way to dispose of old computers, monitors, and other defunct technology.

School districts may now work directly with Creative Recycling Systems Inc., which was awarded the state's eScrap contract, to sell or dispose of their surplus technology.

"In the press announcement, we said that 95 percent of these materials were going to be recycled and Creative Recycling took that as a professional insult because they said it was going to be 100 percent," said Tom Heil, coordinator of the Kentucky Recycling and Marketing Assistance Program in the state Division of Waste Management.

Heil said this program is a great way for the state to be responsible with both information security and the environment.

"All of that stuff from the school systems and government agencies is surplus property that belongs to the state," he said. "Until this program came along,

A storage closet is filled with some of the surplus technology Marshall County Schools can no longer use. The district is one of many that has used the state's new eScrap program to dispose of old technology in an environmentally safe way.

this material was auctioned off to the highest bidder and there was no attempt to vet those people to make sure they were bona fide eScrap dealers in the state, or servicing the state. As long as they wrote a good check and came and got the material, the state just sort of washed their hands of it."

Schools and state agencies now have a way to get rid of what is not sold at auction, and maybe even make a few bucks from the deal. Marshall County, the first school district to use the program, netted \$200-\$300, but more importantly, freed up needed space in an environmentally sound way.

"In years past ... we would have so much left over after the surplus auction, we had to get rid of some equipment and we would haul it to the dump and go through their process," said John David Son, Marshall County Schools' technology director. "But that in itself was probably not the most environmentally friendly way to do it, either. This company coming along and offering this service has really provided a lot of value for the districts as well as for the environment."

He said the company, which picks up the materials, hauled



Photo provided by Marshall County Schools

STARTING THE SCHOOL YEAR SAFELY

Q:What role can board members play in districtwide safety committees?



Marc Terrell: The No. 1 role of board members in a local districtwide safety committee is to support it: walk through your schools, review accident investigation forms, ask questions regarding safety training, and supply funding allowing for committee members to meet.

The safety committee should be given the authority to take actions on immediate safety concerns and should answer directly to the superintendent and

board. Kentucky schools are subject to various regulatory requirements dealing with safety and health. Within the school environment, the scope of safety programs range from violence prevention to minimizing chemical exposures. While most schools have safety programs, these programs often need conscientious, creative application to improve their effectiveness. Safety committees play an important role in improving campus climate and discipline, as well as enlisting participation from various groups to create partnerships in this important effort.

If you have further questions regarding safety committees, please contact one of KSBIT's experienced risk control and safety specialists.

— Terrell is a risk control and safety specialist for the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust, KSBA's insurance and risk management service. ☘

off about 30 monitors, 15 servers, 15 printers, nearly 65 computers, 20 telephones and other items.

Edmonson County Schools Superintendent Patrick Waddell said his district will probably net a small fee from the items it sold to Creative Recycling, but just as important were the items the company agreed to take off the district's hands at no cost.

"A lot of places will take your old hard drives if you want to give them to them, but very few places will take monitors," he said. "We looked at several ways of getting rid of our monitors and we found out with a lot of places that we would have to pay them to take them. We didn't really like that option, to pay to get rid of our stuff."

Waddell said the company picked up approximately 100 monitors, 75 computers, 10 printers, 30 keyboards and other items, some of which had been sitting around for five years.

"At any other time with this equipment, we would have had to load it up and we would have had to take it some place," he said. "It's a win-win for the district."

Heil said schools don't need to worry about information security when disposing of these old computer hard drives and CPUs.

"All of the CPUs, all of the computers that have hard drives or memories are wiped again," he said. "Creative does resell some of them, but they are wiped again to Department of Defense protocol. If for some reason it's not wipeable, it is shredded."

— For more information about the eScrap program, go to Division of Waste Management's Web page at www.waste.ky.gov/branches/rla/recycling and look under the "Recycling" section. For more about Creative Recycling Systems, visit www.crserecycling.com.

"This company coming along and offering this service has really provided a lot of value for the districts as well as for the environment."

— John David Son,
Marshall County
Schools' technology
director

Who's got the flu?

Balancing public's right/desire to know against privacy

Forgive Kentucky public school leaders for wanting to zoom straight to fall break. Or even right to the next semester. It's been a tough autumn for superintendents, board members, principals and others who found themselves:

- Keeping one eye on young athletes running up and down the field while the other followed the reckless homicide trial of a football coach in the death of a player;
- setting school tax rates in the face of ferocious opposition by out-of-work parents, fixed income retirees and cash strapped business owners;
- preparing to talk about the positives of the new school year, only to be questioned about why last year's ACT scores didn't lead the nation;
- or deciding if the president of the United States could speak to students about the value of an education, and being criticized regardless of the choice.

And then there was H1N1.

From this statewide vantage point, Kentucky schools did a remarkable job of planning for the new influenza strain. Parents got letters, staff were trained in hygiene and facility cleanliness, young and old alike were taught the Dracula cough/sneeze (arm up, elbow over mouth, a la Bela Lugosi raising his cape to eye level), and "wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands."

But a two-week trial by fire this fall demonstrated that the demands of educating about flu – H1N1 and seasonal – will be an ongoing test for district leaders throughout the rest of this school year.

From preparation to practice

On Aug. 14, media outlets reported the first "confirmed" student cases of H1N1 in Marshall County. A few days later, the first flu-related school closing came in Boyle County. In both cases, careful planning by district leaders was evident in the media coverage.

The atmosphere began to change by the last week in August. Nationally, media coverage of H1N1 and schools was measuring in the hundreds of stories daily. Hardly a day passed without one or more Kentucky media outlets having a flu-and-schools report.

Then on Aug. 21, two unrelated incidents collided. A Nicholas County student died. The cause wasn't H1N1; it was viral meningitis. But callers to at least one radio talk show confused the child's death with the H1N1 flu outbreak. And Oldham County Schools sent parents



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

a letter on the district's decision to confirm a flu-related illness, but not to name which school the student attended. The judgment was that to do otherwise "may give students who did not attend that school, and their parents, a false sense of security."

It didn't take reporters long to find parents who rejected that line of thinking. One mother told a Louisville TV station that the school system "violated my parental rights to make a sound decision on the safety of my children." Another mother told a different

reporter, "I don't think it's right that they aren't letting parents know that so we can make decisions for our kids and our families."

The demand for more information related to H1N1 isn't limited to schools and parents. On the day a Lexington woman became Kentucky's first H1N1-related fatality, a reader of the *Lexington Herald-Leader's* online report criticized state health officials on the lack of specifics about the victim, making it impossible for the public to avoid wherever she had worked or places she frequented.

The Last Word

Near the end of last month's Frankfort summit on pandemic flu, participants received some insightful advice on communicating about H1N1 from Gwenda Bond, a spokeswoman for the state Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

"Because H1N1 affects children more, people are going to be more afraid than with regular flu," Bond said. "It's important that we acknowledge the public's concern – their right to be concerned – to always be honest and transparent.

"We have to balance how much information to release versus what the media wants us to release," she said. "Be as forthright as you can, but don't go any further than you are comfortable with by putting yourself in the shoes of a family member who has passed away from an outbreak."

For Kentucky's school leaders, flu-related decisions for the 2009-10 year have only just begun. How much information they choose to release should be considered as carefully as what they have chosen to say in encouraging children, parents and staff to wash their hands, cough into their sleeves and stay home and heal, regardless of what's making them sick.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☘

Fabulous Foursome

Fantastic and first-class are also descriptors for outstanding superintendent, board member, advocate and benefactor. Nominations are being accepted until November 16 in each category for awards that will be presented at KSBA's annual conference, Jan. 22-24 in Louisville.

- 1.** The Warren H. Proudfoot Award, recognizing a current or former school board member for distinguished leadership and community service
- 2.** The F.L. Dupree Award for outstanding superintendent
- 3.** The Friend of Education Award recognizing an individual and an organization
- 4.** The KIDS First Award for advocacy on behalf of students, honoring a state senator, a state representative, school board member and a superintendent.

Please submit nominations for the Proudfoot Award to the Kentucky PTA, P.O. Box 654, Frankfort, 40601

Nominations for the other awards should be sent to KSBA at 260 Democrat Drive, Frankfort, 40601 with the award designated on the envelope. Application forms may be downloaded on our Web site, www.ksba.org (under "important bookmarks" on the home page) after Oct. 1 or requested by calling 1-800-372-2962.



Hair-raising attendance



Some Harlan County schools went all-out to boost their numbers for the statewide High Attendance Day on Sept. 10.

Above, Cumberland Elementary School fourth-grader Autumn Dunaway makes her way through one of the inflatables that the school's family resource center sponsored as an attendance incentive. The school's PTA also helped out with activities and refreshments.



Top right, at Wallins Elementary, from left, fourth-grader Danielle Lee, third-grader Peyton Griffin, and fourth-grader Jacob Ward show off their 'dos in a Funky Hair Day activity at the school on Sept. 10.

Also showing off their creations, right, were brothers Conner Blevins, a kindergartener, and Hunter Blevins, in second grade. Prizes were awarded for the most unique hairdos. At Evarts Elementary, students received an ice cream treat to spur attendance.

High Attendance Day is sponsored by the Kentucky Directors of Pupil Personnel to raise awareness of the importance of attendance. Statewide winners for attendance on Sept. 10 will be announced later.

