

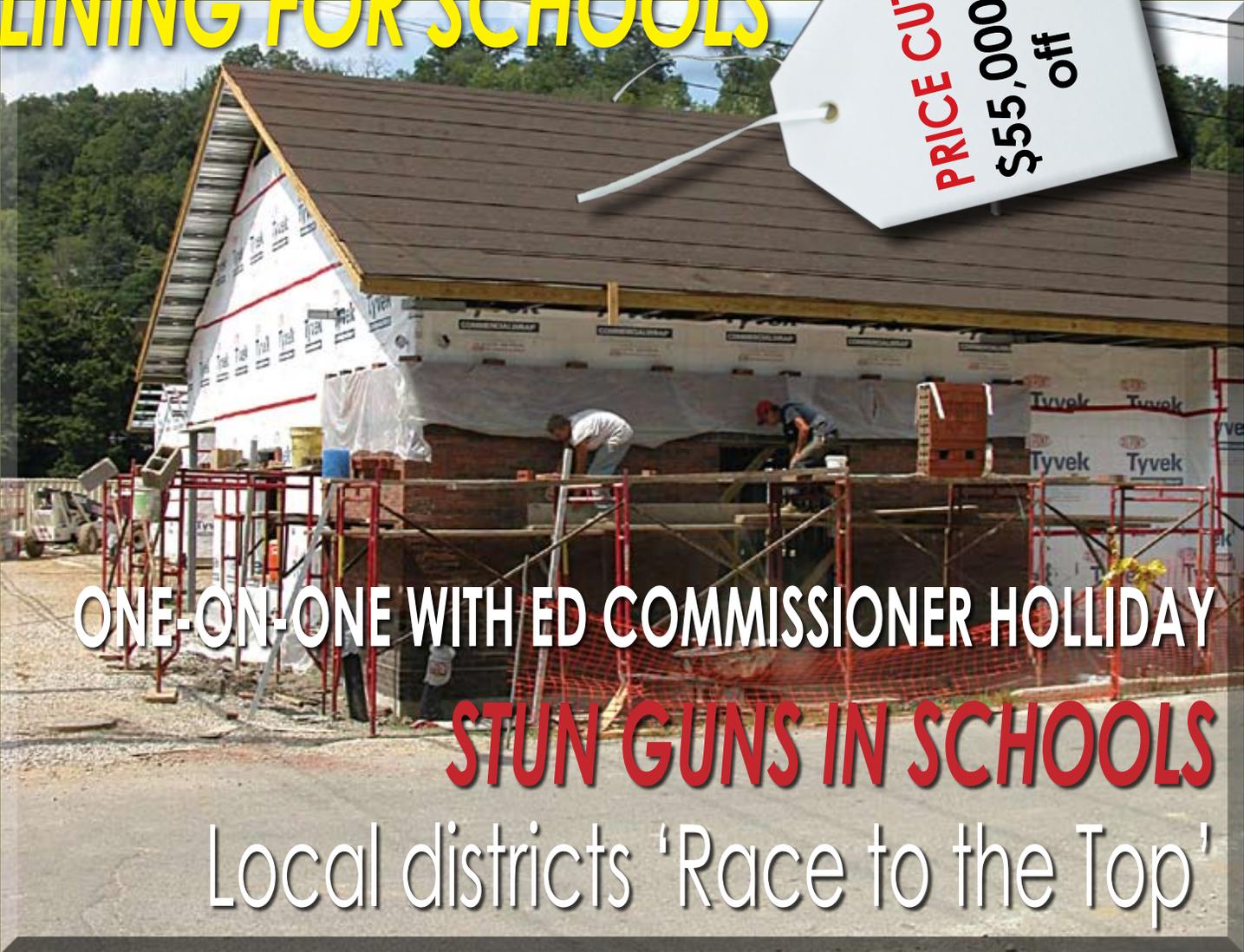
# KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ September 2009

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FEATURES

GOAL! PRINCIPALS AS COACHES

An approach that makes instructional coaches out of principals is picking up steam in Kentucky. The non-confrontational approach to helping teachers improve started out with districts in the School Administrative Manager program and has grown from there ... Page 8

YEAR-ROUND EVALUATIONS

It isn't just for spring anymore. Some school boards are using a year-round process designed by KSBA for evaluating their superintendent. It's a method that keeps the entire board team focused on goals — and on track ... Page 10

SILVER LINING

The cost of school construction in Kentucky has been one of the few bright spots in the economic downturn. Districts are seeing their project bids come in under estimates due to factors such as increased competition for fewer jobs ... Page 12

WINNING THE RACE

Local districts stand to benefit substantially if Kentucky nabs part of the \$4.3 billion federal stimulus program for education. The draft rules for Race to the Top require states to distribute at least half their grant funds to local school systems. In a related feature, get the new state education chief's take on charter schools and Race to the Top ... Page 14

A STUNNING DEVELOPMENT

Do the school resource officers in your buildings carry Tasers? If the law enforcement agency that employs them issues the stun guns, the answer probably is yes. Police and some school officials say the weapons are safer to use than other options ... Page 16



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Not all economic news is bad news for school districts. Now is a great time to find bargains for school construction and renovation projects. See story on Page 12

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**Urban legend**

Jefferson County Public Schools is one of three districts singled out for national recognition by the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education.

The three districts were cited for "outstanding achievements and continued progress" in the council's Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence. The other two districts are Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland and Wake County Public Schools in North Carolina.

The two top finalists in this year's awards program are Atlanta Public Schools in Georgia and Broward County Public Schools in Florida. One of those two will be named the top honoree at an Oct. 10 ceremony in Austin, Tex.

**Energy winners**

Two Kentucky school districts have been honored for their energy efficiency efforts.

Warren County Schools is one of six national winners of the Andromeda Star of Energy Efficiency Award, which recognizes organizations, schools, state offices and government programs for energy efficiency. The district currently is building what is believed to be the nation's first "Net Zero" public school. The award will be presented Sept. 17 in Washington, D.C., by the Alliance to Save Energy.

Meanwhile, Kenton County's Twenhofel Middle School has received a LEED Silver rating for green building and performance from the U.S. Green Building Council. The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system looks at factors such as building

sustainability, water and energy efficiency, indoor air quality and materials.

Silver is the second-highest achievement level. Twenhofel Middle School opened in 2006; the district currently is building its third high-performance school.

**Grant Olympics**

In the past month or so, it's been thrill of victory/agonies of defeat time in local school districts as major grants were announced in federal education-related programs. Here's a list of those who made it to the podium:

- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools: West Kentucky Educational Cooperative, \$500,000; Magoffin County Schools, \$99,803; Carter County Schools, \$84,514; Whitley County Schools, \$100,486; Leslie County Schools, \$99,900; Gallatin County Schools, \$95,975; Hazard Independent Schools, \$98,900; and Johnson County Schools, \$99,000.
- Improving Literacy through School Libraries: Letcher County Schools, \$332,297.
- Safe Schools, Healthy Students Initiative: Ashland Independent Schools, \$729,972.
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program: Lewis County Schools, \$379,242.
- Teaching American History: Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative, \$999,668; Kentucky Educational Development Cooperative, \$868,048; and Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative, \$999,895.
- Women's Educational Equity Act Program: Jefferson County Schools, \$216,062. ☿

**Top school cop**

Kentucky school resource officers continue to lead the way at the national level. Daviess County High School's school resource officer, Russ Day, was named 2009 School Resource Officer of the Year by the National Association of School Resource Officers.

Day is a deputy with the Daviess County Sheriff's Office and has worked at the high school for the past five years. He was quoted in the district's newsletter saying that he's honored by the recognition, "but one of my greatest rewards is when I see students I've worked with graduate and move beyond high school in a positive direction."

Two years ago Calloway County sheriff's deputy Kenny Collins, who works at Calloway County High School, won the national honor. Both deputies won the top national honor after first being named Kentucky's SRO of the Year.



# Like school districts, KSBA is accountable

**A**s a nonprofit organization, the Kentucky School Boards Association has had a well-developed system of internal controls and strong engagement by its board of directors for some time.

In keeping with that practice of accountability, the association's board of directors and its Performance Oversight Monitoring Committee, along with KSBA staff, are reviewing the State Auditor of Public Accounts' recent report containing recommendations for public and nonprofit boards.

We began in June to review how KSBA policies and internal controls compare with the first 14 of the state auditor's 28 recommendations. The board found that KSBA's current policies and internal controls are essentially in compliance with the auditor's recommendations. The board of directors did, however, adopt a few minor changes to bring us into full compliance with the report. The board is continuing its review of the other 14 recommendations.

KSBA's chief financial officer, Steve Smith, anticipates the overall result of the entire study will further enhance the board's oversight, and improve the association's transparency and the visibility of financial and operating information available to the board of directors.

For those who aren't familiar with the ins and outs of KSBA's operations, our board of directors is comprised of 27 school board members from across the state. The function of the board is very similar to that of local boards of education.

The KSBA Board of Directors establishes policies and procedures for KSBA that are similar to those employed by nearly every district in the state. The board meets quarterly, usually at the KSBA offices in Frankfort.

New members to the board of directors obtain board orientation and learn the history of the association, their specific duties, the responsibilities and obligation each director has to the



**Delmar Mahan**  
KSBA President and Whitley County  
Board of Education member

association, and get a thorough review of the corporate structure and bylaws. Training is ongoing for all members of the board of directors – in fact, the board this fall will participate in a session on financial oversight.

The association has in place stringent and specific policies relating not only to its directors, but to staff.

The area of expense reimbursements provides a good example: no director or staff member is issued a credit card, but is reimbursed for actual expenses in carrying out association duties. All expense

reimbursement requests must include supporting documentation of specific purchases in addition to an accurately detailed travel and expense voucher on an official form. A daily cap is set on meal expenses, which are reported as taxable income.

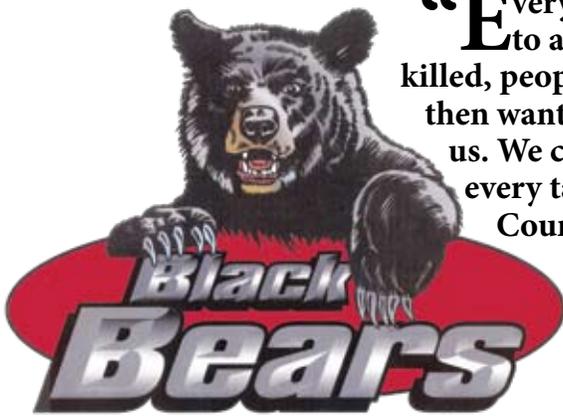
Furthermore, the association also has in place specific policies addressing the use of property, the authority to encumber and expend funds, conflicts of interest and numerous other safeguards that preserve its integrity.

The KSBA staff and board of directors have developed these policies with deliberation over the years to ensure the association will not be compromised and will provide the maximum level of service to each school district in Kentucky. Because of this, we welcome any questions our members may have about association operations.

On another topic, the beginning of a new school year is upon us and I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a great and successful 2009-10 school year. The first day back to school is a very special and exciting time as eager children rush to their new classrooms and reconnect with old friends.

Apprehension and anticipation create a wonderful atmosphere for the start of another leg of the most important journey of a child's life. Again, good luck, and let's work together to make 2009-10 a great year! ☘

## Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



**“Every time something happens to a black bear (and) one gets killed, people call the taxidermist then want to donate the bear to us. We can’t be the repository for every taxidermied bear in Harlan County.”** Harlan County High School Principal Bob Howard on one byproduct of the selection of native black bears as the mascot for the consolidated high

school. From the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

**“Poor grammar and spelling may be viewed as cute when we publish elementary children’s letters to Santa; it is far from amusing when seen in our graduation section.”** Newspaper General Manager Rae Wagener during a community discussion forum on student achievement hosted by the Lyon County Board of Education. From the Eddyville *Herald-Ledger*.

**“There is a gap between the workplace and the classroom. Employers can’t find qualified and capable local workers. We get the workplace into the classroom and the classroom into the workplace. We looked at jobs you can’t even consider without a Ph.D. to jobs you can start when you’re 16.”** Madison County Schools achievement coach/technology integration specialist Mike York, one of 33 educators who took part in the district’s Workplace Connection Institute. From the *Richmond Register*.

**“This is basically social mentoring. We hope to provide a supportive adult role model who will reinforce positive decision-making skills. We know, with the help of statistics, that students with an adult mentor see increases in attendance, behavior and academic achievement. Sometimes all it takes is an hour per week.”** Covington Independent mentor

and outreach coordinator Amy Weber on the district’s efforts to increase its corps of 200 adult mentors for students. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*.

**“They have the precincts already set up. It would be a strain on the clerk’s office to find other locations.”** Lewis County Schools Superintendent Maurice Reeder on the

decision to cancel classes for an Aug. 25 special state senatorial election rather than ask the county board of elections to move precinct voting places from two schools. From the Maysville *Ledger-Independent*.

**“It’s got the greatest potential to expand the learning experience beyond the school day and beyond the classroom.”** Heath Cartwright, McCracken County Schools’ director of technology and professional development, on the new district program giving Apple MacBook laptop computers to 2,100 high school students to use at school and at home. From the *Paducah Sun*.

**“The storms resulted in districts having less instructional days prior to the testing window, thus potentially affecting test results. The loss of instructional days was significant enough for Kentucky to extend the Spring 2009 testing window through mid-May making it impossible, both fiscally and logistically, for our vendor to return test results prior to September.”** Former Interim Education Commissioner Kevin Noland in an e-mail

## Stimulating education

**“We were not able to randomly choose to spend these funds in areas we would have liked to have strengthened, (however), we are very appreciative to receive this one-time funding to enhance student learning. We believe the initiatives we have selected for our district will help our students. It’s a good fit for us.”** Wayne County Schools Superintendent John Dalton on how his district will be using federal stimulus funds to implement initiatives aimed at boosting student learning. From the Monticello *Wayne County Outlook*.

**“We have no more ports. It’s like a hallway of classrooms. We’re out of classrooms. Sometimes you save to your hard drive and the data just never gets there.”** Kim Dawson, Eminence Independent Schools technology director, on plans to use stimulus funding to upgrade the district’s antiquated technology infrastructure. From the Eminence *Henry County Local*.

**“An issue we have had is that our six elementary schools do not have the same programs. All elementary schools will now use many of the same programs, and our transient students can continue progressing toward proficiency.”** Ohio County Schools Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Shrewsbury on how the district is using stimulus funds on new math and reading programs. From the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

explaining how wind and ice storms earlier this year led to a delay until after the start of the school year in providing this spring's state achievement tests to schools and districts. From the Frankfort KSBA eNews Service.

**“The main difference is this: ThinkLink would tell us that a kid didn't know who won the**



**War of 1812 and MAP will tell us that a kid can't read well enough to read about the War of 1812.”** Bullitt County Schools Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Greg Schultz on the decision to shift testing

programs to gain an improved level of assessment of student progress. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

**“This is not going to be a dumping ground for students where somebody says they can't handle a kid so they're sending him out there. We found that some of these kids are very bright; they just have so much going on that's keeping them from being successful in a traditional classroom.”** Williamstown Independent Learning Academy Principal Misty Buchanan on the creation of an alternative program for the middle and high schools. From the Williamstown *Grant County News*.

**“Gradually, every meeting, we seem to have fewer names. There are a lot of phone calls and home visits, and a lot of the members often have personal relationships with the students involved and families. As long as there are kids out there that we feel like we can help them, we're going to still be working at it.”** Bill Stapleton, director of the Bell County High School Youth Services Center, on the work of the “Task Force,” a team of district staff members who meet monthly and draw the names of former students who have dropped out, and then set out to get them back into school. From the Middlesboro *Daily News*.

**“I know my daughter can send a text message faster than I can dial a phone, and the technology is getting smaller and smaller. A student can be looking straight at a teacher and texting under his desk with one hand.”** Gray Middle School (Boone County) Principal Tom Hummel on challenges educators face in trying to control students' use of cell phone and pagers in school, especially in efforts to address student-on-student bullying. From the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

**“It was kind of nerve racking when I got up this morning but I'm kind of ready just for the school year to get started so we can go ahead and get it over with.”** Breathitt County High School junior Destini Hope Hensley expressing a perhaps not too-uncommon reaction to the start of a new school year. From the Hazard WYMT-TV.

**“We don't necessarily do daily ‘tweets’... we do them when we think it is appropriate. We try and keep them ‘light’ as well as informative. There is no cost to it and it takes very little time so we just see it as another avenue to help communicate with the community. I have oft said that I am not sure what the longevity of Twitter will be but if it is a long-term tech trend we want to be there taking advantage of it.”** Barren County Schools Technology and Instruction Director Benny Lile on his district's use of Twitter social media to share information. From the *Glasgow Daily Times*.

**“No explanation for this repeated failure to follow the regular schedule is given beyond a general reference to the inconvenience of the board members, financial deadlines, and other circumstances. This office is compelled to remind the board that special meetings are the exception to the rule of a regular schedule.”** Portions of an attorney general's opinion issued after former Raceland-Worthington board member Juanita Holbrook complained about frequent changes in the board's regular monthly meeting schedule. From the Ashland *Daily Independent*. ☿

# Searching for education excellence in eastern Kentucky

## POINT ...

**“Two of our valedictorians went to UK last year and both of them had to take remedial math. They're brilliant children and there's just no excuse for that.”** State Rep. Robin Webb (D-Grayson) on an example of the region's educational challenges.

## COUNTERPOINT...

**“We created a situation where it's as much an honor to be on the academic team as it is to be a football star. We treat them like kings. We even had a parade. We're talking more than a mile of vehicles.”** Johnson County Schools Superintendent Steve Trimble on the district's student achievement emphasis and results that earned the label “the New York Yankees of academic competition in Kentucky.”

From the University of Kentucky Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues.



Larry Carroll, sixth-grade science teacher at Henderson County's South Middle School, talks with some of his students.

# Principals as coaches

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**T**hese days, Ryan Reusch, a principal in Henderson County Schools, is drawing on the motivational skills he used as a former track and football coach.

Reusch and the district's other principals and administrators are learning how to be instructional coaches. That requires them to observe teachers and coach them based on the strengths they see in their teaching.

The emphasis on accentuating the positive and pushing from good to great is similar to what he did coaching young athletes, said Reusch, who heads the district's Central Learning Center.

"For whatever reason, we don't take that to the education level as a general practice," he said. "In education, unfortunately, when you get a teacher to the 'pretty good' status, you leave them alone ... and go back to focusing on the teachers that are so bad you may have to pink slip them or get them up to the 'pretty good' status."

The Henderson County school district is using an approach called Learning Centered Schools, which emphasizes a series of 18 research-based instructional practices. The approach has been percolating through Kentucky schools in recent years,

spurred in part by the state education department, which is using it to train principals in the School Administrative Manager (SAM) program, said Debbie Daniels, who oversees that program at the department's Office of Leadership and School Improvement. In the SAM program, a school manager handles administrative duties, freeing the principal to concentrate on instruction – which is where the instructional coaching approach came in.

In addition to the 62 schools in the SAM program, others have picked up on the instructional practices, which Daniels calls a "toolbox" for principals to use in working with teachers.

Further, principals and other educators experienced in this program have also become a resource for Kentucky districts. They gather as teams to provide an instructional practices assessment for schools, visiting classrooms to observe, and providing the schools with a report showing the "big picture" of their instruction, Daniels said.

In the future, she said, principals completing their certification may not need as much of this instructional training. College and university education programs for aspiring principals are being revamped to include more emphasis on this area. And the state education department is designing three courses, one on instructional leadership, that school districts can use in their professional development and college

and university programs can use to support first-year principals.

### **Henderson County's experience**

In the Henderson County district, which is in the SAM program, an instructional cadre of 50 or so administrators, principals and assistant principals is beginning the third year of a three-year immersion in Learning Centered Schools and the instructional coaching.

In addition to getting training in the instructional practices, the group regularly divides into teams and visits a district school to observe classrooms. Next year, teacher groups will learn to coach, said Assistant Superintendent Robin Thacker.

These classroom visits are a step beyond the school- and district-level walk-throughs that Superintendent Dr. Tom Richey established five years ago when he arrived. But administrators who did the district walk-throughs found that "the district's expectations didn't always meet school expectations," Thacker said.

Now, with everyone using the same set of instructional practices to gauge classroom instruction, there will be a "common picture" of what high-quality teaching should look like, she explained.

It is the master teachers who are observed and coached on their strengths because "they have the most potential for growth," said Henderson County High School Principal Kim Marshall. "They are hungry for improvement and they will take it and run with it."

The task is to make them aware of what they're doing so they can communicate it to other teachers, Thacker said. Principals also help by modeling the practices for teachers and providing resource materials based on their talents.

The observations differ from those that principals do for teacher evaluations, said Darrell Daigle, director of secondary education. Instead of going through a checklist to see what's missing, he said, the Learning Centered Schools approach "focuses more on what the kids are doing" in response to the instruction.

That's the bottom line, said school board Chairman Ben Johnston. "It's the students, it's learning improvement. The ultimate goal is improvement in that arena," he said.

### **Teacher reaction**

Mark Kozinski, a seventh-grade science teacher at Henderson County's South Middle School, said the observations helped him improve his teaching. It provides feedback "without feeling browbeaten," he said.

Sixth-grade language arts teacher Marie Cavanah likes the non-critical, non-threatening style of the coaching. "I like that I can sit down with someone and talk about a lesson plan," she said.

Cavanah and Kozinski were two of the four teachers who took part in the piloting of the program.

Marshall, the high school principal, said teachers appreciate the fact that it's not a top-down effort.

"Although they look to us for instructional leadership, they appreciate the fact that we are learners as well, with them," she said. ☘



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# Superintendent evaluation: not just a sign of spring

By Mary Branham

When Donald Smith took the job as superintendent of Marion County Schools, he knew exactly what he was getting into. He knew the goals the board had for him, both in the short-term and long-term, thanks to a new evaluation process developed by the Kentucky School Boards Association.

“It laid it out there in an order that was simple and we all know where we’re going,” said Smith, who’s in his first year as Marion County superintendent.

The performance evaluation includes four core board-governing roles:

- Vision – setting goals.
- Structure – developing a clear written evaluation plan and timeline.
- Accountability – measuring the superintendent’s performance.
- Advocacy – communicating the goals and progress among the board, superintendent and community.

KSBA developed the process and accompanying two-part evaluation tool. The first part features eight job performance standards that are based on standards established jointly by the American Association

of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association, plus an additional standard developed by KSBA that relates to student achievement. These standards are listed in the KSBA Superintendent Evaluation Form, which also includes indicators so board teams can see how those standards have been met.

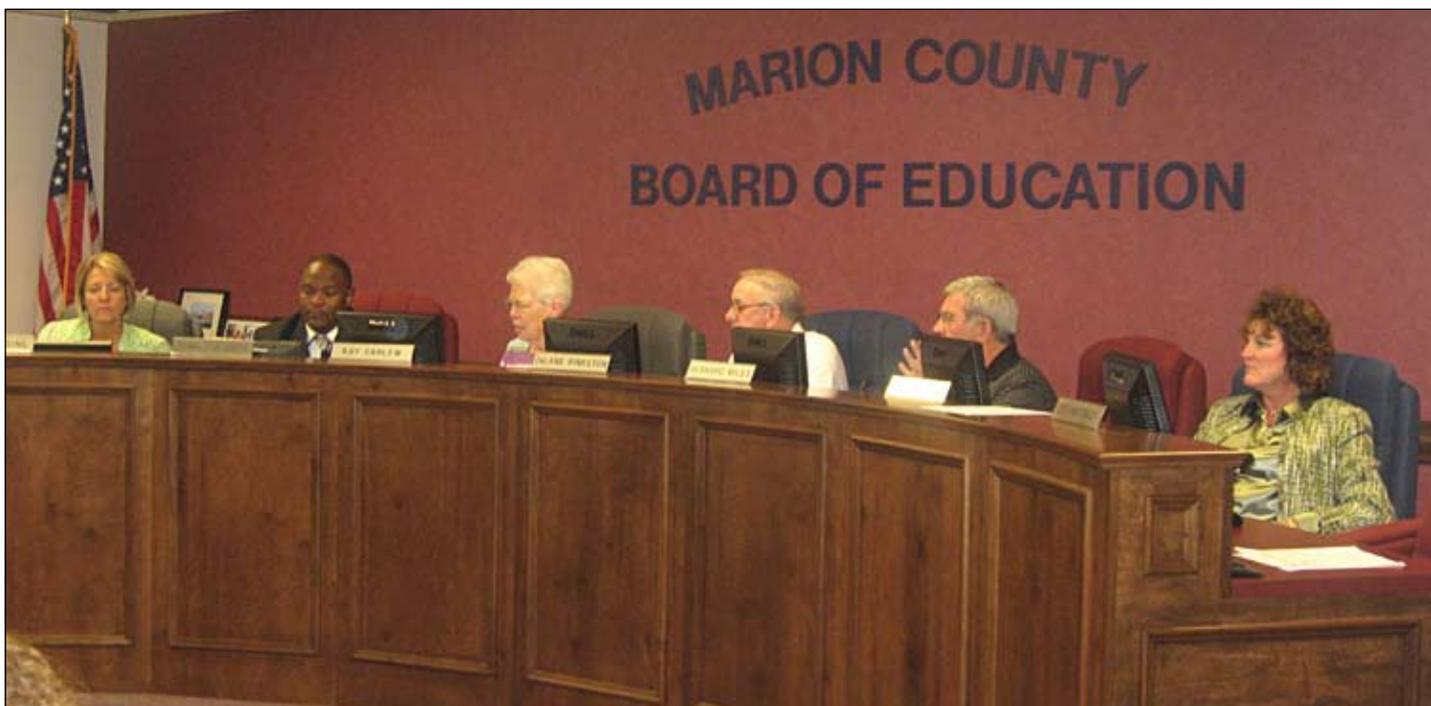
The second part of the tool focuses on the superintendent’s goals, set jointly by the board and superintendent each year. The process calls for the superintendent to develop an action plan to meet those goals.

“Most instruments deal just with the day-to-day operations,” said Mike Oder, the superintendent search consultant for KSBA who also provides training on the new evaluation tool. “This brings goals into the superintendent’s evaluation. All districts have goals they’re working toward.”

The instrument, he said, relies heavily on a timeline of expectations, because the most effective evaluations are designed to communicate future expectations rather than reviewing past performance.

Oftentimes, the superintendent’s evaluation is a set process at a board meeting in the spring. This instrument allows evaluation throughout the year.

“We don’t see the superintendent evaluation as an event; we see it as a process,” Oder said.



Marion County’s board team, from left: superintendent’s assistant Pam Spalding, Superintendent Donald Smith, and board members Sister Kay Carlew, Rev. DeLane Pinkston, Bernard Miles and Alex Akermann.

Lisa Hawley, chairwoman of the Cloverport Independent Board of Education, believes that is one of the best aspects of the evaluation instrument.

"You don't say, 'it's March or April or May, it's time to do the evaluation.' You go back and review goals and see where you're at," said Hawley, who also is a regional chairperson on KSBA's Board of Directors.

The Cloverport board is in the early stages of using the instrument. Members were trained on it in June and they've been setting goals and establishing a timeline for Superintendent John Millay.

"The superintendent will set some goals. The board has the opportunity to set goals," she said. "We're able to merge those goals, which I think is extremely important."

It's that process that attracted the Marion County board to the evaluation instrument, according to Sister Kay Carlew, chairwoman of the board.

"I felt that it would be beneficial to the board and also to the superintendent that we talk together and arrive at goals and performance standards together," Carlew said.

Carlew said because the board was hiring a new superintendent, "we didn't want to pull any surprises with him at the time of his evaluation."

During the hiring process, the board used the goals section of the evaluation instrument to develop a plan for areas members wanted the superintendent to focus on. But Marion

County also took it a step further.

"The new superintendent thought it would be important that the central office staff and principals knew what the board set as goals because we are all going to be working on those goals together," Carlew said. "No one person does anything in our district. It takes a team effort."

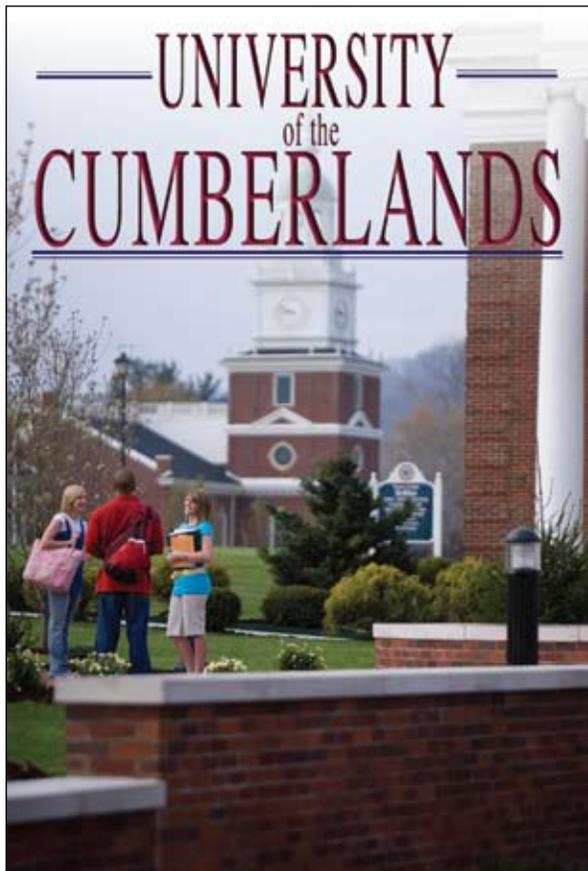
She said the goals set in the KSBA instrument are similar to those set by the Marion County board. "The way they articulated them and the steps under each goal were so well-defined that I thought it was something we as a board could use to measure," Carlew said.

Smith is happy to have that guidance. "It's easy to hold people accountable when the expectations are clear and set out for them," he said.

The nine standards used in the evaluation are leadership and district culture; policy and governance; communications and community relations; organizational management; curriculum planning development; instructional leadership; human resources management; values and ethics of leadership; and student achievement and learning.

As part of the KSBA training, board members are provided with a workbook containing information on the evaluation process, research, tips and worksheets. ☘

— Mary Branham is a writer from Frankfort



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# Need school construction Sky's the limit

Economic woes creating good deals for districts considering construction

*“(Construction) costs are down, people are looking for jobs, and as our economy improves, you’re going to see those prices go back up again.”*

— Steve Kerr, Russell County Board of Education member and construction project manager, on why now is a good time for schools to build.

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

School districts that have spent the past few years cutting already-tight budgets are finally getting a bit of good economic news: there are bargains to be had in school construction.

Supply prices are down and competition is up, meaning districts are seeing construction bids come in as much as 10 percent below estimates.

Laurel County Schools is among those finding a bargain, saving nearly \$600,000 on more than \$14 million worth of renovation projects it started in August.

“We had hoped for that (below estimate bids) because of the market,” said Finance Officer Jim Kennedy. “There’s not that many bids taking place and contractors need the work and we hoped that would be reflected in their bids.”

The projects also attracted nearly twice as many bidders as the district normally would see – 381 bids on 60 contracts.

Those in the construction business said they are seeing an across-the-board drop of \$30 to \$40 per square foot on school jobs.

“I’ve heard KDE say when you’re

budgeting for a project, budget for \$190-\$200 per square foot,” said Tim Geegan, vice president of construction management for Glasgow-based Alliance Corporation. “We’ve seen some projects coming in at \$160-\$170.”

Ron Murrell, a principal with Ross-Tarrant Architects in Lexington is seeing the same thing. “We’ve done some working estimates that the work would come in at the \$180-\$190 range and we’ve had some things bidding in the \$150-\$160 range,” he said.

Steve Kerr, a Russell County Board of Education member and a construction estimator/project manager, said different factors are producing the lower prices.

“Contractors are more competitive for the simple reason that they want to maintain jobs and keep their people working, versus losing those good, key people,” he said. “Material costs are also down over past years, which makes a difference in the cost of your construction.”

He said improved technology also contributes to the lower costs, making estimates faster to calculate and tracking projects more accurate, meaning jobs can be scheduled more precisely. He said now is a great time to start a project.

“If boards are looking at something

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Photo provided by Ross Tarrant Architects

Work crews take advantage of a beautiful summer day to make progress on Rowan County's new middle school.

in the very near term as far as school construction,” Kerr said, “they really need to be looking at that right now because of the competitiveness out there right now. Costs are down, people are looking for jobs, and as our economy improves, you’re going to see those prices go back up again.”

He said school jobs, which contractors may have passed on previously because of additional paperwork and red tape, are more attractive these days because there is less work in general and school projects are usually guaranteed money.

And oil prices, which in recent years have been budget killers for schools, are now among the biggest cost savers for their construction jobs.

“A couple of trades I’ve seen really discounted are anything with blacktop or asphalt pavement,” said architect Ehmet Hayes of Robert Ehmet Hayes and Associates in Fort Mitchell.

“It is about a third cheaper than it has been.”

Cheaper oil prices also translate into savings for work such as site excavation and grading because those large pieces of equipment use a lot of fuel.

Harlan Independent Schools took these factors into consideration when it decided to advertise for bids to construct its preschool in January. Even early in the economic downturn, Superintendent David Johnson said the district still saw bids \$55,000 to \$60,000 below the \$1.7 million estimate.

“Our board going into this was very cognizant of the economic situation, and one of the issues we considered in going forward was that we felt like we could get better pricing for the work at this current time,” he said. “I think our board did

See “Lower costs” on Page 21

# Local districts part of the 'race'

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**W**hile the state of Kentucky “races to the top” to capture part of a \$4.3 billion pot of federal education reform money, local districts may want to start thinking about lacing up their running shoes.

The draft rules for Race to the Top require states receiving grants under that new American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program to appropriate at least half that money to qualifying local school districts.

There is a major caveat, however.

“They are agreeing, if they want the funds, to do the things in our plan,” said David Cook, the state education department’s Race to the Top project manager. For example, he said, if the state’s initiative includes some form of differentiated compensation for teachers, a district getting a subgrant would have to agree to implement some type of differentiated pay.

If Kentucky is successful in capturing a Race to the Top grant, local districts would be eligible to apply for the subgrants based on their Title I funding. Though that may restrict access to those subgrants somewhat, the proposed federal rules also open the door for local districts in other provisions. For example, a state can disburse funds to local districts from its half of the grant via whatever mechanism it outlines in its grant application. And the federal government requires states to use the funds to “give priority to high-need” local districts – in addition to the subgrants. The feds define “high-need” districts as those with one or more high-poverty schools.

The state’s proposal must comprehensively integrate and address four reform areas if it is to receive one of the grants:

- Adopt internationally benchmarked standards and assessments for student success.
- Recruit, develop, retain and reward effective teachers and principals.
- Build data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their own practices.
- Turn around low-performing

schools.

In addition, grant proposals will be more competitive if they incorporate reforms in the STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and math.

Cook said it’s possible the department could ask districts to propose subgrants to implement an innovation that relates to one of those four reform areas.

“I think there are a lot of districts out there that have some great ideas and they don’t, especially right now, have the funding to get them up and running,” he said.

Parts of those four areas – particularly the standards/assessment – dovetail with Senate Bill 1, approved by the 2009 General Assembly, which mandates new standards and a new assessment system for the state. Since the legislature didn’t appropriate funding for this work, getting Race to the Top money would represent a windfall.

## Thorny areas

Working the standards/assessment reform into Kentucky’s Race to the Top application ought to be smooth sailing, given the action the state has already taken. However, the state will have to deal with some potential hot potatoes in addressing the other areas. The education department has a record of helping struggling schools through programs such as highly skilled educators and assistance teams, but the federal expectation is that charter schools would be part of this reform area. The proposed grant rules say a state can’t have any laws that prohibit or inhibit charter schools. Kentucky has no laws on charters whatsoever. Rep. Stan Lee, R-Lexington, has pre-filed a charter school bill for the

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## But wait, there’s more

Apart from Race to the Top, there are several other new education grant programs as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

- Investing in Innovation Fund - \$650 million  
Supports local efforts by school districts and partnerships with nonprofits to start or expand research-based innovative programs to help close the achievement gap and improve student outcomes.

- Teacher Incentive Fund - \$297 million  
Helps states and districts create or expand effective performance pay and teacher advancement models to reward teachers and principals for increases in student achievement, and increase the number of teachers working with at-risk students

and teaching hard-to-staff subjects.

- Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems - \$315 million

Allows states to expand their data systems to track students’ achievement from preschool through college, and link their achievement to teachers and principals.

- Title I School Improvement Grants - \$3.5 billion  
Supports states in efforts to reform struggling schools and to implement turnaround models.
- State Educational Technology Grants - \$919 million

Helps bring technology into the classroom; funds given to states by formula, but states must provide half the funding to districts on a competitive basis. ❧

# Chart-ering a new course?

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

The competition for grant money from a new federal education reform program is bringing the issue of charter schools to the fore in Kentucky.

One of 19 selection criteria for Race to the Top calls for increasing the number of charter schools, while guidelines also look at whether a state has laws that effectively prohibit or inhibit charters. Kentucky has no charter school law of any kind and no charter schools.

State Education Commissioner Dr. Terry Holliday said Kentucky's strong points in education reform will more than offset any points it loses for lack of a charter school law.

"The question to ask Kentucky is do we have a history of being able to help schools turn around performance? And if we've got that, then we need to make sure it's in the application for Race to the Top," he said.

It's not true that states without a charter school law will be eliminated from the grant competition, he said.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has said states that don't embrace charter schools hurt their access to part of the \$4.3 billion stimulus package. Following a conversation between Duncan and Gov. Steve Beshear in late June, Beshear's office released a statement saying, "We feel that Kentucky will be very competitive because of our school reform efforts, SBDM councils and the local control that they provide."

David Cook, Kentucky's project manager for Race to the Top, said the overarching principle the federal government looks for is whether states have "a system that allows for children who aren't served adequately in our public schools to get

served adequately in some other mechanism."

"We could look at existing school governance laws that could address the same reasons that charter schools are introduced for," he said.

Bill Scott, executive director of KSBA, said there is "no question" that other ways can be found to help low-performing schools short of charter schools, which the association has always opposed.

"When we have a precious amount of resources for public education we need to keep those in the districts. If a charter school is not under the ultimate authority of the local school board, the community is disenfranchised," he said.

Other states are struggling with this, he noted. "Maybe we can be a state that finds some way of reconciling the charter school with oversight within a community."

Holliday said charter schools would be problematic for the state education department because each charter school would be the equivalent of another school district.

"No matter how you charter them...they're going to require services and support from KDE. And that will impact an already small staff," he noted.

Holliday said he worked well with charter schools when he was a superintendent in North Carolina.

"We collaborated with them, shared resources, negotiated agreements for transportation. We helped them with their emergency response plans. We helped them with their climate surveys, stakeholder satisfaction surveys," he said.

State Rep. Stan Lee (R-Fayette) has pre-filed a charter school bill for the 2010 legislative session. For a summary and link to the full bill, go to <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/10RS/HB21.htm>. ☞

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2010 session – something Cook said will be noted in the state's Race to the Top application (see story above).

Kentucky already has enabling legislation for differentiated pay and alternative certification. After some districts did pilot projects for differentiated pay several years ago, the issue all but died.

A data system that would allow for linking measurements of student success to teacher evaluations also could prompt some discussion. Education Commissioner Dr. Terry Holliday said he leans toward differentiated pay as it relates to additional duties rather than student testing performance and that evaluations should not be based solely on test scores.

Holliday said because these kinds of issues will be raised, his new Race to the Top advisory committee will have a key role.

"I think our advisory committee is going to be crucial, crucial to communicate why some of these things are coming forward and that we get feedback from teachers, from school boards, from principals, from everybody," he said.

KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott is a member of that panel. The four thrusts of the Race to the Top program are aligned with the association's overall mission, he said. Citing research on the positive role of local boards in improving

low-performing schools, Scott said he wants to ensure that local boards – who represent their community – also have a meaningful role in the state's Race to the Top initiative. While boards welcome new standards, there still must be some local flexibility, Scott said.

"A board needs to be able to continue to make its imprint in terms of what it expects for a successful student in its community. Otherwise there is a danger of the community disengaging from public education," he said.

A team from the education department and other state agencies, with the help of the advisory committee, will spend the next few months hammering out the state's proposal. Kentucky also is receiving assistance from a consulting firm that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is paying to assist with the grant writing. Kentucky is one of 15 states benefiting from the foundation's help.

The U.S. education department expects to take Race to the Top applications late in 2009, with awards made in early 2010. ☞

— To view the proposed Race to the Top rules, go to: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-17909.pdf>

# Sight of Tasers in schools not so shocking

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**M**ore Kentucky school resource officers will be packing stun guns along with their other equipment if current trends continue.

School resource officers generally walk the hallways armed with whatever is standard-issue for the law enforcement agency that employs them. And police departments increasingly are equipping their officers with the hand-held devices that deliver an electrical shock, said Kelly Foreman, information officer for the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training in Richmond.

“Most SROs carry whatever the

department carries. If the department issues everyone pepper spray, then the school resource officer will carry the same thing,” said Erlanger police officer Todd Brendel, school resource officer for the Erlanger Independent district and president of the Kentucky Association of School Resource Officers.

Brendel’s department does not yet issue stun guns, but, he said, many other northern Kentucky departments do. “I know they’re becoming more common,” he said.

Ben Buckler, a Carlisle police officer and school



## Are they safe?

National School Safety and Security Services, a private national school-safety consulting firm based in Cleveland, Ohio, advises that on a day-to-day basis, school resource officers should take a “very, very conservative approach” to using Tasers in a school setting.

A three-year study released earlier this year by the American College of Emergency Room Physicians concluded that 99.75 percent of criminal suspects shocked by a Taser received no injuries or only mild injuries. The study concluded that stun guns appear to be very safe compared with other options police have when subduing violent or combative suspects.

At the other end of the spectrum, Amnesty International USA, citing a national figure of 300-plus deaths following stun gun use by police and “unresolved safety concerns,” last year called on police agencies to suspend or limit their use.

Photo provided by TASER International

resource officer for Nicholas County Schools, carries a department-issued stun gun, though he's never had to use it. The devices are intimidating to criminals who are familiar with their effects, but students don't fall into that category, he said.

"Most of them are fascinated by it and want to see it," Buckler said.

Steve Tuttle, vice president of communications for TASER International, the company that manufactures the best-known stun gun brand, said 14,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies have Tasers. The increase in the number of SROs packing a Taser, he said, "is an outgrowth" of that.

#### **Use in schools**

Tuttle said there are no national guidelines on Tasers in a school setting because their use is determined by an officer's judgment of what is reasonable according to the specific situation and within civil rights law, agency guidelines and state law.

J. Stephen Kirby, KSBA's legal services director, said if a school district has concerns about whether an SRO is authorized to use a taser at school, it should raise the question with the law enforcement agency that employs the officer. The issue could be made part of the understanding and agreement between the district and the law enforcement agency, he said.

"Districts need to understand that SROs are law enforcement officers, even though assigned to the school district, and in appropriate circumstances are authorized to use force. So, it's important for the district and the law enforcement agency to have an understanding of what that means up front," Kirby said.

Brendel said the policies for the equipment's use in schools generally parallel their use on the street.

"This is what we tell parents all the time: You know, your kid's going crazy in the school – and if he's doing the same thing out on the street, what do you expect is going to happen to him out there?"

"My feeling is you give latitude – it's a school, obviously – but in the same respect, you've got to do what it takes for

your safety, staff safety and other students' safety and handle the situation," he said.

Most recently, a school resource officer in an Oldham County high school subdued a 16-year old student with a Taser during a scuffle after the student became combative. Dan Orman, the district's assistant superintendent for student services, said he didn't receive a single negative call after the incident.

"I think we run a far greater risk of kids getting hurt when it's hands-on or using the old-style billy clubs than if one officer has a Taser and has to use it," Orman said. "From the eyes of a civilian, it's a lot safer way to subdue a child when the child makes the decision to go that direction with police officers."

Brendel said the Taser is at the same level in an officer's "force continuum" as pepper spray. Tuttle also called it "a selective targeting tool" as opposed to pepper spray, which can contaminate a classroom or hit bystanders. The weapon also could be used against a school intruder, he added.

#### **Training**

Training in Taser use is not part of the current school resource officer curriculum at the Department for Criminal Justice Training because not all police agencies use them, Foreman said. This could change if the trend toward equipping officers with the devices continues, she said.

At this point, the individual departments that use Tasers are responsible for arranging for training, she said.

TASER International trains certified instructors, and law enforcement agencies generally send a cadre of certified instructor school, Tuttle said. These officers then become the trainers for their own agency.

The certified training consists of 16 hours of coursework over two days, with some Web-based training prior to coursework, he said. It does not include specific training in school settings, though they do scenario training.

"But it's the same effect on a 16-year old sophomore as a 33-year old meth user on the street. It's the same effect on the body," Tuttle said. ☞

# Dr. Terry Holliday

Kentucky's new education commissioner

*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 Kentucky's new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Terry Holliday, who discusses his new role and the goals and plans he has for himself and the state.*



**Q.** Let's begin with a perception about the job or the department that you had coming in that's been re-enforced in the first few weeks and then about something that has come as a surprise to you.

**A.** What's been reinforced is the great people here and in all of the organizations...KSBA, KASA. It's the typical Southern hospitality in wanting to see us succeed in education.

What's been a little bit of a surprise in meeting legislators is how many of them have an education background – retired principals, former school board members, teachers – that's not quite the case in North Carolina.

The other thing that was a big surprise is that they turn the lights out here at 6. As a superintendent, I didn't think anything about working to 7 or 8. And it's hard to get in here on Sunday. I'm used to going in on, working on Sunday afternoons, but they shut this place down. I just do whatever hours it takes

to do the job.

**Q.** What goals have you set for yourself in your first 100 days and beyond?

**A.** My research told me that the No. 1 job was communication, visibility and accessibility. Having the state board meeting and the General Assembly (interim education committee meeting – see back page) in my first week helped me with visibility here in Frankfort. I've started talking with superintendents and scheduling co-op meetings to make sure I get to every region of the Commonwealth.

My blog starts today (on the KDE Web site [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov)) and my Twitter site ([www.twitter.com/kycommissioner](http://www.twitter.com/kycommissioner)) is a week old. I've got a little Facebook thing going. These are some of the nontraditional communications things I'll be doing because I want people to know that I'm out and about. I'll use my camera and take some pictures to

highlight things I want to focus on.

Race to the Top (RTTT - the Obama administration's \$4 billion education innovation stimulus pool – see Page 14) and Senate Bill 1 (the 2009 state law to redesign Kentucky's school assessment and college preparation efforts) are running parallel for a comprehensive wave of reform. Even if we don't get RTTT money, Senate Bill 1's still there and what we want to see in education in the next five years is still going to be there. Those are the big things I'm working on right now.

**Q. If we do get RTTT funding, what do you want to target those resources to support?**

**A.** As I talk to superintendents, I've found out that there are a lot of local initiatives going on in assessment reform. I've talked to superintendents in Johnson and Madison counties about true focus on instruction and helping children achieve at higher levels. There's a lot of work going on about teacher effectiveness, one of the keys to RTTT.

RTTT's four top elements (adopting internationally benchmarked standards for student success; helping teachers and principals improve and reward effectiveness; build data systems that measure student success; turning around low-performing schools ) are my philosophical foundation. And then, lo and behold, Senate Bill 1 drives most of those goals anyway.

That's the work that I love to do – teacher effectiveness, increasing rigor and closing achievement gaps. This sounded like a match made in heaven when I read the job description and the details of Senate Bill 1.

**Q. What do you see as the major challenges that must be addressed in meeting the requirements of Senate Bill 1, such as the goals and the timetables?**

**A.** Our (legislative) steering committee met the other day and what we decided to do right off was to expand the committee to involve key budget decision makers and key education leaders in the House and the Senate, to make sure we brought to the table whoever we needed to bring support and help to implement Senate Bill 1.

The first issue is math standards at grade level, which are supposed to be out by mid-August. It will be mid-September

before we've got them. I don't know that we'll have them ready for the state board and (Council on Postsecondary Education) to adopt by the Dec. 15 deadline. We may have to have a little flexibility on that. We're not backing up, but we don't want to spend Kentucky money doing something that other states may already be doing.

On assessments, we have a longer window, but we're going to need money for training teachers in new rigor, effective strategies and formative assessments. There's some pretty tight timelines in there, but I think RTTT also is pushing us in that same direction.

For a comprehensive overview of education reform, this legislative committee will drive decisions. Underneath that will be an advisory committee of all key stakeholders that will focus on RTTT and it will feed information to the Senate Bill 1 steering committee. I think Kentucky is poised to have the buy-in and turnaround for RTTT better than other states because we have a history of working together.

**Q. The state started the new fiscal year with another revenue drop compared with 2008. How are you going to make the case for increased elementary and secondary school funding?**

**A.** I think before you can ask for increased funding, you've got to make sure the funding that you have is being spent in the most effective and efficient manner. First, we're looking at why are we doing a project. Is it a legislative mandate, a federal project or is it discretionary? Then we look at measure of effectiveness (for example), highly skilled educators. What are our measures to show that those folks have really helped turn around schools?

Then we look at what do we really need to implement Senate Bill 1 and we'll take it to the advisory committee. We'll say, 'We really need this kind of money for training, this is what it's going to cost to do this kind of assessment.' We're going to advocate that way with key leaders, because it was their bill, they are driving reform and they are in charge of education.

But we know they are going to ask us first to redirect money. We're going to do that by focusing on efficiency and effectiveness. It's a lot to do in four months.

Continued on next page

*“So many of us do classroom walk-throughs because that's the new buzz to do, but they're not worth anything if you're not coaching and supporting and giving teachers feedback. That's like giving kids a test and never giving them any feedback on the test.”*

— Dr. Terry Holliday, Kentucky's Commissioner of Education

**Q. What about funding for facility needs?**

**A.** There are some dollars with Qualified School Construction Bonds. It's a small sliver but it is a creative way to help. There are very low-interest Qualified Zone Academy Bonds that require community involvement and innovation that could lead right to the RTTT. I'm going to make sure superintendents know about those options, but to be truthful with you, I don't know enough about the Category 5 and 4 issues, the nickel taxes yet, to give you a concrete answer.

**Q. What are some of the principles of leadership and decision making you developed as a district manager you hope to bring to the commissioner's job?**

**A.** No. 1, it's the system, not the people. I believe fervently that the vast majority of people come to work wanting to do a great job. I don't think superintendents, principals or teachers don't want children to succeed; it's just that maybe they need more coaching and support in how to help them succeed.

That leads me to my next general principle in that the level above enables the level below. If kids aren't learning, it's because we haven't created a learning-based classroom; it's adult-based. If we don't have learning-based classrooms, it's probably because the principal hasn't created a focus on learning.

If the principal hasn't done that, the superintendent and the school board haven't created a learning focus for the district. And if that's the case, then the state board of ed and the commissioner haven't put a focus on learning across the Commonwealth. I want to make sure that every level above is enabling, coaching, providing the resources for the level below to be successful.

I've always relied on the quote from Ed Deming (author and professor renowned for his work improving production in post-World War II America and Japan): "Our kids come to school with a great yearning for learning. Our job is to increase the successes and decrease the failures so that kids don't lose that

yearning for learning."

If people don't think that happens, go to a kindergarten classroom and then stop by your high school and randomly visit 10 classrooms. You see such passion for learning in early childhood, but by about third or fourth grade, you start to lose it.

We're probably the only institution that the longer we keep kids, the less satisfied they are with what's happening. By the time we have kids in high school, their engagement has dwindled. It's all about engagement, about do kids understand 'Why am I in U.S. history? What am I going to do with algebra?'

You have such an activity-based curriculum in kindergarten, but by the time you get to the 11th grade, it's that cemetery teaching – sit in the rooms and be quiet.

When I visit schools, that's my touch of reality. When I visit districts, I hope superintendents will take me to some schools, and I can dialogue with principals and teachers to get their perspectives. I've got some advisory groups, but it's always extremely helpful to make sure you get into some classrooms.

So many of us do classroom walk-throughs because that's the new buzz to do, but they're not worth anything if you're not coaching and supporting and giving teachers feedback. That's like giving kids a test and never giving them any feedback on the test.

**Q. The role of the Department of Education is a complicated mix of enforcement and service. What vision do you want local folks to know about the department's focus on service and enforcement?**

**A.** At our first (departmental) planning committee meeting, I said that my expectations about customer service are pretty simple. Try to respond within 24 hours with accurate information and try to be professional and courteous in your response.

Our job is twofold: to support and to guide. I want to make sure that when we have a choice to flex a little bit that we always flex in the direction of kid-based decisions. There's some interpretation in

everything. Let's help superintendents and administrators do what they need to do to help children succeed. It's a fine balance because No Child Left Behind, IDEA and everything have boxes to check.

We're not going to have a box check mentality. We're going to be an interpretive support-leaning entity. The customer service response are requirements that are non-negotiable to me. And we're going to measure that. Eventually, we will have online surveys asking, 'Did you get information in 24 hours? Was it accurate? Was it delivered in a personal, professional manner?'

Early in my superintendent career, I was one of those folks who did a lot of complaining. I just could not understand why the department was interacting with us the way they were. Then I said one day, 'You know, I think I can do a lot better by becoming part of the solution rather than the complainer.' So I ask that we work together, find solutions and not create fences between us. I'll be giving superintendents my personal cell number and when they find a fence on our side, I want to know. And I don't mind calling and saying, 'Listen, I need some help on your end.'

**Q. Finally, let me describe a scenario. You are seated in a classroom with a fifth-grade teacher, one of her students and the child's parents. They want to know what you are committed to in terms of ensuring that child has a shot at a world class education. What do you tell them?**

**A.** The first thing I would ask is whether we all have expectations for stretching as far as we can go. Does the child, parent and teacher believe that the child has the potential to be world-class? Expectations are always the No. 1 thing.

Too often, either the child, the teacher or the parents don't share those expectations. When all three don't share those high expectations, we'll probably be paying more for prison for that child than education ever costs. Then everyone has to understand what world-class standards actually are. I hope our new curriculum standards and assessment will drive that. ❧

# STARTING THE SCHOOL YEAR SAFELY

**Q.** Driver's education has fallen by the wayside in the budget crunch, but is there any other way our district can help student drivers?



**Joe Isaacs:** Yes, there is a way. The National Safety Council offers a highly interactive course called "Alive at 25" that focuses on the unique challenges faced by young drivers ages 15-24 who are most likely to be involved in fatal collisions. Using on-the-spot defensive driving techniques, skill practice, role-playing and interactive media segments, the four-hour program encourages young drivers to take responsibility for their driving behavior.

Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust has joined with the Kentucky chapter of the National Safety Council to spread the word about this program.

The "Alive at 25" program in Kentucky is sponsored by Toyota Motor Manufacturing at no cost to students or schools. Kentucky State Police provides instruction at participating schools, while Allstate Insurance provides food, refreshments, information and driver discounts.

The program is fairly new in Kentucky, with about 10 high schools using it. At least one district, Campbell County Schools, has mandated that all students must attend "Alive at 25" to receive a parking permit.

Interested districts can contact Rick Fuller at the National Safety Council, (859)685-2169 ext. 335, [rick.fuller@nsc.org](mailto:rick.fuller@nsc.org); KSBIT's Joe Isaacs at (502) 330-0480, [joe.isaacs@ksba.org](mailto:joe.isaacs@ksba.org); or Lori Hunsaker at Kentucky State Police, (502) 695-6306, [lori.hunsaker@ky.gov](mailto:lori.hunsaker@ky.gov).

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

## Lower costs

Continued from Page 13

a good job of considering that. We had discussed postponing it another couple of years, waiting until maybe we had another offer of assistance (from the state). But we felt like in most cases that the extra money that we could get (by waiting) would be lost to higher prices. So our board decided to go ahead at this point and it has proven to be a good decision."

Murrell, of RossTarrant, said he is seeing school boards struggle with these decisions.

"I have heard superintendents say it is difficult to move forward with construction when at the same time they are having to cut back on staff or services, because the public in general doesn't understand that the way projects are funded is with dollars that can only be spent on construction," he said. "We have seen reactions from some boards not wanting to move forward on projects when maybe they could. We've expressed that it would be shame not to, not only because of the costs, but also because it is a great economic stimulus, locally. It's kind of a shame for a school district with \$5-6 million in bonding capacity not to have a project they need that would be a benefit to the local economy.

"Now is an excellent time to go ahead with a project." ☘

Construction continues on the new preschool in the Harlan Independent district.



# Record number of Kentucky female superintendents a positive message on many counts

One of the first news media issues I faced upon joining KSBA in 1993 was a controversy about the lack of women serving as superintendents in Kentucky. At that time, the head count was three. In fact, it had hovered between three and six for most of the previous decade.

I don't recall the explanations given then, but the situation surely is different today. That's because Kentucky schools started the 2009-10 year with what must certainly be a modern record on this subject.

As classes opened in mid-August, there are 39 women leading Kentucky school districts. With four boards seeking new superintendents this year, that number still could climb.

Colleague Mary Davis did a little research using directories dating back to 1985. Here's what she found (using five year increments):

Year	Female superintendents
1985	3
1990	6
1995	7
2000	14
2005	20
2010	39

So what's changed in the last quarter century? Attitudes on Kentucky's still predominately male boards of education? The attraction of top administrative posts for female educators?

Or have the days of the Kentucky superintendency being a "good old boys' network" waned, at least to an extent?

### Three who know share

When Dr. Pamela Stephens became superintendent of West Point Independent in 1993, there were five other women leading districts and few opportunities.

"I was told, 'You just have to put your life on hold.' That's what I expected when I became superintendent," Stephens said. "I was single with grown children and that was probably an advantage with the board believing I could pull this off. They knew that family wasn't something that would prevent me from coming to and staying in a small district.

"I think boards have a different attitude now and are more open to the whole candidate rather than focusing in on one thing like gender," she said.

In 1996, Dr. Jan Lantz took the helm of the Nelson County Schools. She has "a feeling" that it's the superintendency that has changed more than attitudes on boards.

"As the thrust in school systems has moved more to student achievement, the folks who have come through as



Brad Hughes  
KSBA Member  
Support Services Director

instructional leaders – assistant superintendents, instructional supervisors – there were more women in those ranks," Lantz said. "Consequently, it may be that as boards recognize that their major responsibility is student achievement, this has opened more avenues for folks who have had training in that area, and those ranks generally include more women.

"Conversely, I think that prior to (the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990), the major thrust of the superintendent was more administrative, and at that point, administration was far more focused on

beans, buses, building and budgets," she said. "In those days, you saw more men who were in those positions. School boards looking more for administrators may have looked at those ranks then.

"I think women have always had an interest in the superintendency, but the search on the part of school boards is getting as broad as possible to bring to their districts people who have a broad array of abilities. It's just broadening the scope of what they may look at," Lantz said.

After nine years as Letcher County superintendent, Anna Craft believes the changing demographics in the central office is more than job responsibilities or school board attitudes.

"I think society as a whole and particularly in education has opened up new opportunities for women. They've risen through the ranks as principals and administrators," Craft said.

"I also think school boards over time don't look at sex or race; they look at your qualifications and what kind of job you can do. I'm glad I've stayed in education long enough to see that occur," she said.

### The Last Word

Of course, I don't want to be accused of making too much of the latest gender numbers.

As West Point's Stephens notes, women were in the education driver's seat long ago far more prominently than today. When the General Assembly first authorized public schools in Kentucky counties in 1798, it's probable that most of those schools were run by women.

And by my rough calculations, it would take another 20 years at the rate of change over the past decade before women would lead even half of the state's public school systems.

But for a third-grade girl looking for role models or a female college junior majoring in education, the changing face of the Kentucky superintendent – and the insights of those women in charge – are positive signs indeed.

Just as they are messages worth getting out. ☘

# *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**

Sept. 21	Upper Kentucky River	Host district: Lee County
Sept. 22	Eastern Kentucky South	Host district: Floyd County
Sept. 24	Central Kentucky	Host district: Montgomery County
Sept. 29	Upper Cumberland	Host district: Pineville Independent
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
TBA	Northern Kentucky	Host district: Campbell County





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## Holliday begins advocacy for Kentucky schools



Just seven days on the job, Kentucky Education Commissioner Dr. Terry Holliday addressed a full house at the General Assembly's Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting last month.

(Above) Holliday and Kentucky Board of Education Chairman Joe Brothers talk prior to the new commissioner's brief remarks to the committee. Holliday's remarks preceded an update by Department of Education and Council on Postsecondary Education staff on implementation of Senate Bill 1, the 2009 legislation that directed a redesign of the state's assessment system, including increased emphasis on college preparedness.

(Top right) Holliday spends time with Rep. Hubert Collins (D-Wittensville), a retired teacher and member of the House Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee. Earlier, Holliday met with Sen. Ken Winters (R-Murray) and Rep. Carl Rollins (D-Midway), the respective chairmen of the House and Senate education committees.

(Right) Holliday told the panel that his focus is on preparing students for their future. "We are about the business of sending messengers to a time that many of us will not see, when our grandchildren take over leadership roles in our communities, our state and our nation. Our children need as many high-level skills as possible to be able to deal with the very real problems they will face."

