

# KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

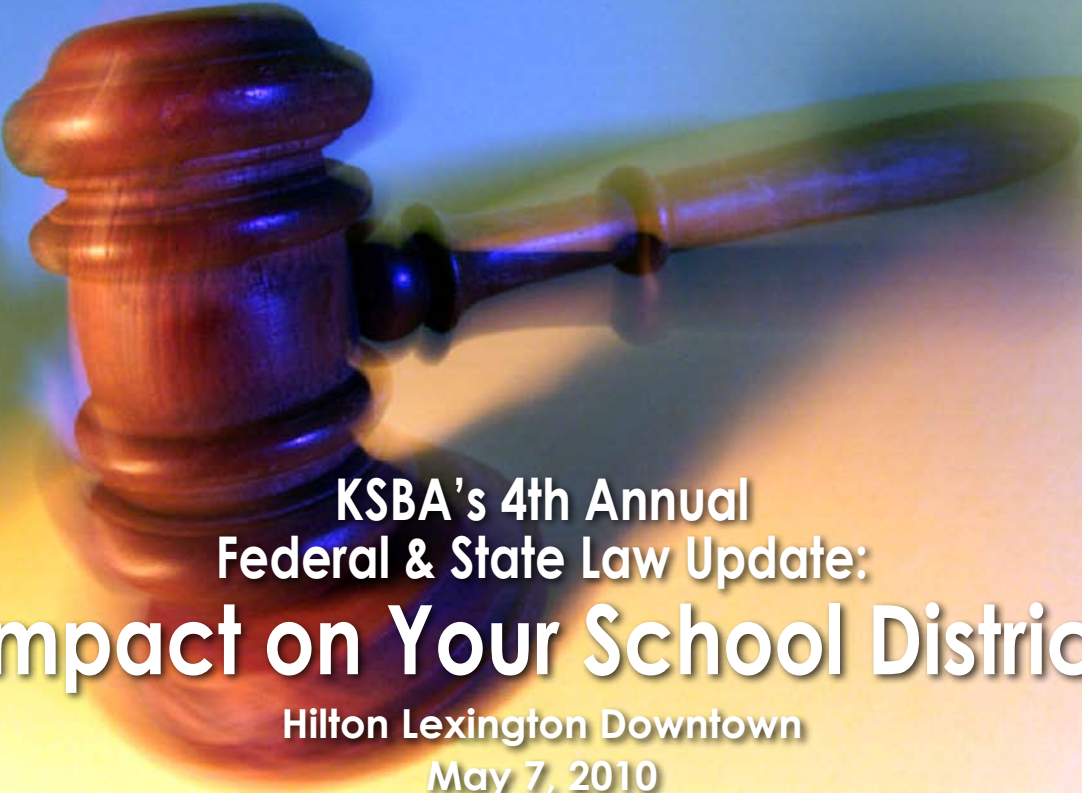
A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ April 2010

Two-  
campus  
high school

MASON'S MAGNA

DISTRICT SCORES PROFICIENT IN POUNDS

Boot camp for educators?



**KSBA's 4th Annual  
Federal & State Law Update:  
Impact on Your School District**  
Hilton Lexington Downtown  
May 7, 2010

Join us for this timely update of federal and state legal changes that will affect school district management next school year! We will inform you of critical new legal requirements. The event will cover the new Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008; an update on the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements; the 2010 Kentucky legislative session; and local board implications of the information presented. We will also cover the practical implementation aspects of new case law and agency opinions.

It is vital that your school district staff become aware of the recent changes to federal and state law that will be discussed during this conference.

For additional information or to register,  
go to [www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org) and click on  
"Federal & State Law Update: Impact on Your School District"  
under Featured Events at the top of the page.



**FEATURES**

**A HOMEY TOUCH**

Every summer, teachers in Mason County Schools visit the homes of their homeroom students. The district's Home Visit Initiative has resulted in fewer discipline problems, increased test scores and more volunteer hours. And the most recent result? A national Magna Award ... Page 8

**STAYING FRESH**

In the Fort Thomas Independent system, administrators keep their skills sharp after their promotion, maintaining their knowledge of classroom strategies by continuing to teach a class. Benefits abound for the administrators, teachers and students ... Page 10

**MERGER WITH A MESSAGE**

If Muhlenberg County's two high schools had been any further than four miles apart, they probably wouldn't have been able to merge. But the school board took advantage of the locations to create a unique, single high school with two campuses – and a renewed focus on preparing students for the future ... Page 14

**SEMPER FI FOR EDUCATORS**

When students ask questions about joining the military after graduation, maybe voicing fears about making it through boot camp, one group of Kentucky educators will be able to answer with authority. That's because they went through a mock training exercise at the U.S. Marine base at Parris Island, S.C. ... Page 16

**CLASSROOM EXTENSION**

Pulaski County's school bus drivers are partners with the district's educators in carrying out positive discipline strategies – with a twist. The drivers themselves have drafted behavioral expectations for their passengers, tailored to the situations that crop up on four wheels .. Page 18



Promoting health, Page 12



Continuing education, Page 10



In the swing of things, Page 16

*Kentucky School Advocate*  
Volume 16, Number 10

**DEPARTMENTS**

Take Note ..... 4  
 People Are Talking ..... 6  
 Ed Wellness ..... 12  
 In Conversation With ..... 20

**COMMENTARY**

President's Corner ..... 5  
 Get Your Message Out ..... 22

**On the cover**



Muhlenberg County High School seniors Jessica Green (foreground) and Schyler Pentecost work on projects in their Advanced Painting class. The unique consolidation of the district's two high schools has enabled the school to offer more electives. See article on Page 14.

## Kentucky School Boards Association

260 Democrat Dr.  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
800-372-2962  
[www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org)

Executive Director ..... Bill Scott  
Member Support Director ..... Brad Hughes  
*Advocate* Editor ..... Madelynn Coldiron  
Publications Coordinator ... Jennifer Wohlleb  
Account Executive ..... Mary Davis

The *Kentucky School Advocate* is published 10 times a year by the Kentucky School Boards Association. Copies are mailed to KSBA members as part of their association membership. Two additional issues each year are published exclusively on KSBA's Web site.

## KSBA Board of Directors

### Officers

Delmar Mahan, President  
Whitley County  
Tom Blankenship, President elect  
Lincoln County  
Ed Massey, Immediate Past President  
Boone County

### Directors-at-large

Linda Duncan, Jefferson County  
Tim England, Barren County  
Ronnie Holmes, Graves County  
Dr. John Inman, Meade County  
Allen Kennedy, Hancock County  
Darryl Lynch, Christian County  
Durward Narramore, Jenkins Independent  
Eugene Peel, Jessamine County  
Dr. Jackie Pope-Tarrence, Bowling Green  
Independent  
Ann Porter, Mason County  
William White, Pulaski County  
Carl Wicklund, Kenton County

### Regional Chairpersons

Dr. Felix Akojie, Paducah Independent  
Jeanette Cawood, Pineville Independent  
Mike Combs, Campbell County  
Larry Dodson, Oldham County  
Jeff Eaton, Allen County  
Jane Haase, Owensboro Independent  
Lisa Hawley, Cloverport Independent  
Marshall Jenkins, Morgan County  
William Owens, Lee County  
Fern Reed, Montgomery County  
Jeff Stumbo, Floyd County  
Chris Watts, Adair County

## TAKE NOTE

### At the switch

A retired utility company executive will lead a new school energy management program for KSBA and the state Department for Energy Development and Independence.

Ron Wilhite, an electrical engineer, will direct the Kentucky Energy Efficiency Program for Schools Energy Manager project, which is funded by a \$5.1 million federal economic stimulus grant. The money will help pay for 40 to 50 school district energy manager positions throughout the state.

Wilhite was vice president of regulation and economic planning for Kentucky Utilities, where he guided the study and development of a plan for energy management activities that customers could use. He was later a vice president for Kentucky Utilities and Louisville Gas & Electric following their merger.



Wilhite also served on the Scott County school board in the 1990s and still helps the district as a member of its energy team.

"I'm looking forward to assisting districts in developing their own energy teams and programs," Wilhite said.

His team will include four project coordinators, two of whom will be in satellite locations, one in southeastern Kentucky and one in western Kentucky.

A request for proposals from school districts was issued in mid-March. Applicants for project funding should know by early May if their application has been approved; the district energy managers would be selected and on board by July 1.

Wilhite said his major challenge will be related to time. "We've got a short time frame to utilize the federal funding," he said. The stimulus money must be used by April 2012. ☞

### Happy ending in Haiti

A Lincoln County school board member who has been visiting Haiti since 2001 spent 17 aftershock-filled days there in February in what was an ultimately successful quest to take his adopted Haitian daughter home to Kentucky.

His 20th trip to Haiti "was the best and the worst one I've ever been on," said Eddie Whittemore, missions pastor of a church that operates an orphanage in that country. The orphanage was not damaged in the earthquake, but "there were still a lot of buildings falling" in the aftershocks, he said.

In addition to his adopted daughter, 5-year-old Riche, Whittemore and others were bringing back 50 other orphans to waiting parents on behalf of several different organizations.

A last-minute glitch during the already harrowing trip brought the departure process to a standstill, but help came from an unlikely source. Actor Sean Penn heard of the problem and chartered a 747 jet to fly the group to the U.S., Whittemore said.

Riche started preschool in Lincoln County Schools March 15 and is rapidly learning English. Whittemore, who also works as an insurance agent, and his wife, Nicole, have two sons, ages 10 and 12. He said their experience has deepened his perspective as a school board member.

"When adults begged me in Haiti, they begged me for money. When kids begged me in Haiti, they begged me to send them to school," he said. ☞



Photo provided by Eddie Whittemore

# Scaling the highest barriers

We often hear it said that the best way to fight poverty is a good education.

As a product of eastern Kentucky, I have experienced firsthand the benefits of receiving a good education and seen it make a difference in the lives of others. But there are barriers we must remove so that disadvantaged children can fully benefit from going to school. And those barriers are not uniform: some are higher than others.

I recently did some research into the poverty issue as it relates to the number of homeless children residing in Kentucky. I discovered that the Kentucky Department of Education has extensive information on identifying these children and the procedures for enrolling them in programs to meet their needs.

The numbers are staggering: A 2008-09 survey by the department identified nearly 23,000 children as homeless in Kentucky. The number has been rising steadily over the last decade; in the 1999-2000 school year, 8,336 students were identified as homeless.

Given the condition of the national economy, the upward trend will continue. A couple of indicators are already evident: many family resource centers are seeing an increased demand for services and some districts' free- and reduced-price meal numbers have risen.

Homeless children are faced with so many tough issues, things that most of us take for granted: where will they rest their head at night, where will their next meal come from and what if they get sick?

Currently, my Whitley County school system has identified 152 students as homeless. I was shocked to learn that such a large number of our students fall into this category, and through my discussions with school personnel it appears that there are many more students who are homeless and have not been identified.

These students don't always fit the stereotype of a family in a homeless shelter. They may be living in a weekly rate motel, a dilapidated house, in a vehicle or with friends or relatives. In fact, the most common situation in Kentucky is for homeless families to double up



with relatives or friends – they may have shelter of sorts, but it's not a permanent residence.

Can you imagine trying to do homework with no privacy, with the noise of other families or quarreling relatives around you and maybe with an empty stomach? And just try to stay awake in an English class when those conditions leave you sleep deprived, or to concentrate on a math problem when your own problems seem insurmountable.

As educators, we have a responsibility to all of Kentucky's youth to ensure they receive a proper education. We, as local

board members, must fight to give homeless children the opportunity for a successful future and instill in them the tools to become productive members of society.

I encourage you to become familiar with the homeless student numbers in your district and with the programs that help them. Is your district using Title I funds to target their needs? Federal funds under the McKinney-Vento Act? Are community organizations being recruited to bolster the district's efforts to help homeless children and their families?

As school board members, we are faced with the challenges of declining resources and increasing needs like this one. Districts have been called upon to slash their budgets, which places in jeopardy after-school programs, early childhood education, textbook purchases, health services and many other programs vital to meeting all the needs of all children.

As school board members and, most importantly, as the voice for Kentucky's children, we must advocate on their behalf at the local, state and national levels – now more than ever. What a responsibility and an obligation we have to our students – and to the state in general, because public education remains the best investment in Kentucky's future.

*A personal footnote:* On my behalf and my family's, thank you so much for your kindness and compassion since the passing of my mother. I am so fortunate to have my KSBA family during this time of loss. Thank you, as always, for the leadership and service you provide your district. ☘

*“We, as local board members, must fight to give homeless children the opportunity for a successful future and instill in them the tools to become productive members of society.”*

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

**“E**very subject area will be able to find a use for the iPods in their class. To me, it is like bringing the world to our school with the touch of a finger! I won’t be surprised if the students don’t teach us some things instead of the other way around. Our students are becoming so tech savvy that if we, as teachers, don’t get on board, we will be left at the dock.” Harrison County Middle School librarian Patsy Graham on the impact of a federal stimulus grant that is paying for 70 iPod touches and 17 MacBook laptops for use by the school’s students. From the *Cynthiana Democrat*.



Photo provided by Harrison County Schools

in school. With these tests we will be able to tell a parent exactly how their child is doing compared to other students locally and nationally.” Russell County Schools Superintendent Scott Pierce in support of Kentucky’s planned narrower-but-deeper English and math standards as part of a revised system for assessing student progress. From the Russell Springs *Times-Journal*.

**“S**he knows several English words and can say some of them well. My (13-year-old) older sister helped me learn to speak English, and now I am being the teacher at home for my little sister.” Hogsett Elementary School (Danville Independent) fourth-grader Lupita Gonzalez on how her participation in English as a Second Language courses is helping her family, especially her 2-year-old sister. From the Danville *Advocate-Messenger*.

**“T**he decisions they make today are going to impact our children’s future. It’s not only going to have an impact on an individual child’s future but on the economic outlook of our community and the livelihood of our children. If we don’t invest in them, if we cut instructional days, if we cut resources, if we cut teacher training and textbooks, they’re not going to have what they need to be successful and to compete globally.” New Haven Elementary (Boone County) teacher Karen Chesser addressing the Northern Kentucky Legislative Caucus at a jam-packed meeting on the 2010 General Assembly and the development of a two-year state budget. From the Fort Mitchell *NKY.com*.

Locust Grove Elementary School (Oldham County). The incident prompted changes in the school’s afternoon transportation procedures. From the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

**“I**t will be more like the tests you and I took when we were

**“I**t should provide more consistency to our program and eliminate a transition in our schools and the ways they operate. It will eliminate some of the things that are objectionable, such as having to have new people, new rules and procedures.

**“I** think those changes sound fabulous because children this young should never be unsupervised. But this is the first I’ve heard of those changes, and I’d still like someone to call or send a letter, something. I need to know it’s not going to happen again.” Susan Isaacs, whose 6-year-old was found wandering after he mistakenly got on a school bus when he should have been in an after-school program at



this winter’s snow and ice. From the Ashland *Daily Independent*.

Weather woes

**“W**e’re still being compared to districts that haven’t missed as many days.” Carter County Schools Superintendent Darlene Gee, one of many eastern Kentucky district leaders who called on the state to delay this year’s assessment testing because of the number of instructional days missed due to last fall’s flu outbreak and

**“O**ur decision to have or not have school brings into play running 53 buses over all our roads versus maybe running one bus over only state roads at the end of the day instead of at 6:30 a.m. that morning. Our school district doesn’t have a policy that says we can’t have events when we are not in school.” Grayson County Schools Superintendent Barry Anderson explaining why some extracurricular activities continue as scheduled on snow days. From the Leitchfield *Grayson County News-Gazette*.

The research shows every time there's a transition, the students have a difficult time making that transition, no matter what grade level or structure it's in. So we want to eliminate one transition." Owensboro Independent Schools Superintendent Larry Vick on a proposal to merge the middle school and the building housing grades 5 and 6 into a single school on two campuses. From the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

**"It's hard to make a schedule that is pleasing to everyone, but we must first plan for the best situation to get our students back on track."** Clay County Schools Superintendent Reecia Samples on the decision to schedule classes on two Saturdays in March and April to help make up for missed days this school year. From the *Manchester Enterprise*.

**"The important thing is to give the teachers a place to teach where plaster won't fall on their head."** Former coach and principal Fred Waddle making a pitch for the Taylor County Schools' nickel tax proposal, saying that teachers also deserve better facilities. From the Campbellsville *Central Kentucky News-Journal*.

**"It is a horrible situation and something we would not**



**tolerate. It is a nice feature to be able to track down a lost or stolen laptop, but it isn't worth the potential for abuse."** McCracken County board member Rick

Straub on the district's decision to remove tracking software from more than 2,000 laptops assigned to high school students in the wake of a lawsuit against a Pennsylvania district that allegedly monitored students in their homes. From the *Paducah Sun*.

**"One is to put more focus on collaboration within the regular classroom setting. Two...**

we want the students to be grouped together with other students in the same areas for enrichment. And three...more professional development for teachers, and, hopefully an increase in teachers from six to nine teachers, so we can have one teacher at each school." Kenny Fannin of the Shelby County Schools Talented and Gifted program on the priorities for the 1,000-student initiative. From the Shelbyville *Sentinel-News*.

**"When we originally started it, we wanted it to be a group of people who surround the students when they leave the high school. If we've got the teachers and the school on board, and they're using Green Dot talk at school, (but) then they leave the school and no one mentions it, they're not going to connect with it. We want them to see it more than just when they're at school."** Purchase Area Sexual Assault Center education director Angie York on the Green Dot program, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded initiative at Marshall County High School designed to empower bystanders to stop violence and sexual assault. From the Benton *Tribune-Courier*.

**"It's not a question of who and if ... but we will review the videotape and see if it shows the incident."** Carrollton Police Chief Mike Willhoite on his intention to obtain a Carroll County Schools bus security camera recording as part of his agency's investigation of one student allegedly shooting two others students with a pellet pistol as they rode on the bus. The district said the police would need a court subpoena to access the video under state law. From the Carrollton *News-Democrat*.

**"If we get \$6.4 million, a middle school becomes the top priority of our facility plan. It will become our facility plan."** Crittenden County Schools Superintendent Rachel Yarbrough on the inclusion of funding to replace the 61-year-old former high school in the House version of the state budget. From the Marion *Crittenden Press*. ☘

# Cutting two instructional days to balance the state budget

## POINT ...

**"Hopefully, if the economy gets better, perhaps this time two years from now, the General Assembly will be able to add those days back. But, the point is, there's no evidence at all that indicates that by adding two more days that the learning process is positively affected."** Speaker of the House Greg Stumbo on the proposal to eliminate state funding for two school days as part of the cuts to offset a projected revenue shortfall in the next two fiscal years. From the Louisville WFPL Radio News.

## COUNTERPOINT...

**"The students deserve those days. I'm sure we are going to have to cut back somewhere, and I understand (the state is) having a difficult time balancing their budget. But I hate to see instructional time taken away from students. That's 12 to 14 hours. That's a lot of time, in my opinion."** Somerset Independent Schools Superintendent Teresa Wallace. From the Somerset *Commonwealth-Journal*.



Mason County Schools first-grade teacher Renee Biddle makes a visit to the home of one of her students.

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

If educators were required to make home visits to students when Mason County Schools board member Ann Porter was a teacher, she might have been able to intervene sooner to help a homeless high school student.

“He fell asleep in my classroom every day and I didn’t know until later that he fell asleep because he was sleeping in his car every night, but was still coming to school because he wanted to finish high school,” she said. “If I had been doing home visits then, I would have been aware of that situation.”

That scenario is unlikely to happen today because of Mason County Schools’ Home Visit Initiative, a program that has been so successful it was named a 2010 Grand Prize winner of the National School Boards Association’s Magna Award.

The Magna Awards is a national recognition program co-sponsored by NSBA, the *American School Board Journal*, and Sodexo School Services that honors school board best practices and innovative programs that advance student learning. A Grand Prize winner is named in each of three enrollment categories.

Mason County Schools Assistant Superintendent Kelly Middleton said the six-year-old initiative grew out of a desire to treat students and parents as customers of the district.

“A child could go through 12 years of education and not receive so much as a positive phone call. That’s quite sad,” he said. “Now that we have competition – vouchers, the charters, the private schools, the online home-school movement – we’ve got to get this message out, we’ve got to look at what we’re doing ... We want to make sure that parents get a positive

contact before they can ever get a negative one.”

#### How it works

The program is simple: before the start of the school year, teachers are required to visit the homes of their homeroom students. Teachers can go alone or pair up with another teacher. Middleton said if a teacher is concerned about visiting a certain area, an administrator will go along.

Teachers receive a \$200 stipend for making the visits, as well as getting several shortened work days during the school year.

“We feel like it’s a very minor expense for what we’re getting in public perception alone,” he said. “We feel like \$200 is a steal.”

And while better customer service may have been the initial goal, Middleton said the program has produced a number of benefits: fewer discipline problems, improved test scores, and a significant growth in volunteer hours in the district. The 2,600-student district logged more than 70,000 volunteer hours last year.

“We believe that this connection piece, first it’s a student-achievement issue, it’s a school-discipline issue,” he said. “We also believe it’s a school-safety issue because the research says that you’ve got to get to know your students. We also think it’s a finance issue because we believe if you get to know your kids, they’re not apt to leave your district.”

#### Why it works

Straub Elementary School teacher Brenda Huber began making home visits even before the district created the initiative.

“I’m a looping teacher, so I keep my students two years,” she said. “The connections I make are really unbelievable, especially for that second year. I really know my kids; they trust me





Mason County school board member Janie Hord visits the home of Heidi and Chan Graham and has fun with preschooler Kylar and her older sister Kennedy (behind her).

and if I ever have a problem – sometimes if there's a problem, parents jump to the conclusion that the teacher is wrong – I never have that problem. I wanted to treat my parents the way I want to be treated as a parent.”

Teachers at Mason County High School keep the same students for all four years, which allows time to build strong relationships.

“For four years, here's someone who came into your home and talked to you and your family. You've known them,” said Principal Steve Appelman. “You have that personal connection, you have someone who cares about your attendance if you're not here, they talk to them about their grades.”

As a result of those relationships, kids who may have dropped out have instead decided to finish their high school education, he said.

#### On board

Appelman said any initial resistance there may have been from teachers to the program vanished when they saw the results.

“When you see kids have problems in their homes and the conditions they have to live in, it helps you in your classroom,” he said. “You think, ‘I can present this material in the classroom in a different way to help them learn it.’”

Kindergarten teacher Renee Faris, who by her own admission is more comfortable talking with children than adults, said if she can do the home visits, anyone can.

“You do have to give up some time in the summer, and that does stink, but the rewards in the long run are so much more. Once you get into the flow of doing them, it's not a big deal.”

She said it also gives teachers insight into their students that they wouldn't learn just in the classroom.

“Some of these kids come to school with baggage that we would never know about if we didn't go to their houses and see, ‘This is why Johnny is probably never going to bring a snack,’ or why they're not going to have everything they need every day because they can't afford it,” Faris said.

Middleton said the program has been such a success, he believes most teachers would continue to make the visits even if they weren't mandated.

“The kids are working harder for them; they can add things into their lessons from what they learned during their visits to make them more relevant to students,” he said. “If you make a mistake, the parents are more willing to forgive you because they know you.” ❧

# Pulling back the curtain

The success of Mason County School's Home Visit Initiative led the district two years ago to add a transition day to the end of the school year to further help students and teachers get to know each other.

“That last week before school lets out, you go spend one day with your next school-year's teacher. Next year, we're going to do two days,” said Assistant Superintendent Kelly Middleton. “With two days, we're going to do some lessons. The reason we're doing this is because there's so much anxiety about going to that next teacher, to that next school, that high school where they're afraid they're going to get beat up. We're taking that fear away early in the process before we can lose any children.”

He said because of this effort and with the summer home visits, the first day of school continues to run more smoothly.

“And while everyone else (at other schools) is still doing get to know you activities, we're already way past that and into learning,” he said.

And what to do with seniors who are getting ready to graduate?

“We didn't know what to do with them; how are they going to move up?” he asked. “So we sent them back to kindergarten. It's a great day.” ❧

# IN THE TRENCHES

## Fort Thomas administrators learn by teaching

By Mary Branham

**W**hen John Williamson joined the Fort Thomas Independent school district 11 years ago, he wanted to return to the classroom.

That was all well and good, but he was hired as the assistant superintendent.

Williamson enjoys the classroom and believes it keeps him in touch with what is going on there. So he made a deal with the superintendent at the time: Williamson would teach a junior AP English class at 7 a.m., before his regular work day in the central office began. In that first year, 38 students wanted to attend the early-bird class Williamson was teaching.

He's been teaching an early-bird class ever since. That didn't change when he became superintendent. At this point, even though he's been an administrator for 15 of his 20 years in education, the only year he hasn't taught a class was the year he worked for the state Department of Education.

Williamson admits it takes some effort to keep up with the class planning and grading, but says it's worth it. And the number of early-bird classes is growing as students are requesting them.

Senior Lindsey Stellar, 17, took Williamson's early-bird AP English class her junior year to be able to take more classes during the school day. Junior Ashley Collinsworth, 16, took the morning class so she would be able to take ceramics and fashion classes.

While that benefit is tied to the early-morning classes, Williamson believes administrators will reap many rewards by going into the classroom on a regular basis. That was his philosophy when he started requiring all Fort Thomas district administrators – including principals at the three district elementary schools, high school and middle school – to become involved in instruction when he took over as superintendent three years ago. Only the assistant principals at the middle school and high school don't teach a class.

Williamson believed it would be good for administrators to see firsthand how their suggestions for teaching play out in the classroom.

"I thought it was good for teachers to see we were all invested in ... teaching kids," he said.

The Fort Thomas Board of Education also supports the initiative, he said.

"When I became superintendent, I had a vision and they



Woodfill Elementary School Principal Diana Stratton works with second-grade students on the Junior Great Books literary series. Stratton said she enjoys being back in the classroom on a regular basis.

(the board) embraced it," Williamson said. "I think they're proud of it."

Board chairwoman Karen Allen said it's important for administrators to retain that classroom connection.

"I think many times they become removed in the central office from what our shared purpose is – the kids and their education," she said.

That's just the reality of their daily responsibilities, she said. "By teaching a class, whether it is high school students or elementary students, they remain tied to that common purpose and see the result of it on a daily basis."

Administrators are able to pick the classes they teach. For instance, one elementary school principal is modeling lessons in multiple classes for reading instruction strategies, said Fort Thomas High School Principal Brian Robinson, who also team-teaches a class.

He said the students accept his different roles in the school. "When they're in the midst of class, we're the teacher," Robinson said. "I do think it helps the rest of the day ... the communication you have with the class you're teaching makes administrators seem more accessible to the kids."

That's not just at the high school level, where students are more apt to be able to talk to adults.

Deborah Johnston teaches second grade at Woodfill Elementary School, where Principal Diana Stratton comes in once a week to work with Johnston's students in the Junior Great Books literary series.

"When I was in school, you were afraid of your principal," Johnston said. "Now all the interaction with the principal and superintendent, I think has made a big difference."

Johnston herself enjoys the times when Stratton is working with her classes.

"It's so much fun to sit back and watch my kids like this," she said. "I can see who is doing what and how they were asking their questions."

Stratton sees those benefits for the students and teacher, but admits she gets a lot in return.

"It re-energizes you, rekindles that passion," she said. "As an administrator, it gives us an opportunity to model teaching strategies."

Robinson said it also helps administrators keep up-to-date on teaching strategies – and not just in theory. He was out of the classroom for five years as an assistant principal, and taught an early-bird class for six years when he worked in central office.

"There was a dramatic change in learning in the five years I was out of it," he said. "I had to change the way I approached instruction."

And he can see firsthand whether new trends in teaching really work.

"It gives me a lab and the ability to speak to teachers with some authority that it's real," he said.

Robinson said while there are principals that model lessons, he's never heard of a district focus on administrators in the classroom.

Williamson said most administrators have embraced the



Fort Thomas Independent Schools Superintendent John Williamson recently met with students interested in taking his early bird English 3 AP course. Williamson has taught the early-bird class for 11 years. That didn't change when he became superintendent three years ago. Now, all administrators in the district spend time regularly in the classroom.

teaching duties, with veteran administrators more accepting than the younger ones.

"It keeps that instructional focus up front," he said "It's what we're here for. If it's what we're here for, it makes my job real." ❧

— Branham is a writer from Frankfort

**STEVE SCHENCK**  
BUILDING ON YOUR STRENGTHS  
**ASSOCIATES**

**We Help You Put  
Your Education On Top**

- Student Support
- School Support
- District Support
- Leadership Support

**Call us today at**  
**859-873-4358**  
or email us at [smschenck@mac.com](mailto:smschenck@mac.com)

# Simpson County losers are winners

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

If you want to call Simpson County Schools Superintendent Jim Flynn and employees of his district “losers,” just make sure you include the word, “biggest” when you do it.

Simpson County has embarked on a districtwide employee health and wellness initiative that has energized and challenged them to make healthy changes in their lives. Flynn said in focusing on student wellness, he realized the adults in the district need to model healthy behavior for their students.

“Our main reason was that a healthy staff is more effective and will be more productive and effective teaching kids, and healthy kids would be more ready to learn and to reach their potential,” he said. “But from a community perspective, healthy people drive down costs and are more productive and create fewer problems. There are a lot of reasons to try to do this.”

For his part, Flynn has lost 40 pounds in what he calls his “fitness recovery,” winning one of the central office’s Biggest Loser contests and encouraging others to become active.

The fitness committee is led by Joey Kilburn, the district’s director of pupil personnel, who has been a good role model with his own 60-pound weight loss.

“The state has eight components of coordinated school health, so we’re modeling our program after that,” he said. “The fitness committee has eight component managers, six school representatives and some community members. We meet once in the spring and once in fall. At our upcoming spring meeting we will review our action plan that was created during the fall meeting, relating to staff wellness.”

He said the committee will then decide what to focus on next year and what data needs to be gathered before the fall meeting, when they will develop an action plan.

“Our overall goal is to branch out and include the students in these types of activities,” he said. “But in our first year we really wanted to focus on our staff because like anything else, if we can get staff members to get serious about something, the kids are more likely to be serious about it.”

The district has offered a variety of activities to try to appeal to an array of employees:

- Jazzercise classes on campus



Photo provided by Simpson County Schools

**Top photo:** Superintendent Jim Flynn stands on one of the exercise stations placed around the new walking path at Franklin Elementary School. The district has placed new emphasis on staff and student wellness.

**Bottom photo:** Teachers participate in the Wildcat Wilderness Fun Run/Walk.

- Discounted memberships to local health clubs
- Fun competitions involving weight loss, healthy recipes and using pedometers to count daily steps

• Health fairs with free medical screenings  
 The district also encourages schools and departments to come up with their own activities.

“Initially, we were the ones throwing these ideas out there; now they’re starting to bubble up from the grassroots from the schools,” Flynn said.

Kilburn said participation continues to grow.

“In the four (main) events we had so far, we’ve had about 200 different staff members out of about 450 participate in something,” Kilburn said.

Flynn said while there currently is no method for measuring the program’s effectiveness, he said he hears of individual success stories and sees a number of noticeably thinner people.

“None of the things we’re doing this year around staff wellness costs a lot of money, but they’re fun and engaging,” he said.

Flynn said the district is trying to focus on employees as whole beings, not just workers.

“We want to make sure we have the best people in the classrooms,” he said. “that we’re supporting them, giving them the resources that they need. This wellness emphasis is just one more layer of the kind of support we want to provide to build the culture and atmosphere that we want in our schools.”

Kilburn said one of his next projects will involve gathering nutrition information from all of the restaurants in the community.

“We’ll put together cards that say, ‘Here are your best options,’ because we know that high school kids eat fast food,” he said. “Even though we’d like to discourage them from doing so, we know they’re going to, so let’s give them some information that says if you’re going to eat at McDonalds, here are the best things you can choose ... Get that out to both students and staff members.”

He said the district is also looking for ways to incorporate health and wellness lessons into the classroom.

“Whether it’s science class talking about calculating calories, social studies class talking about the cost of health care ... that’s where we’re looking at going next year to branch this out to reach the students more,” Kilburn said. ☞

— *Ed Wellness is the newest feature in the Kentucky School Advocate. It will join the rotation of Ed Innovators, Ed Tech and Ed Efficiencies.*

# Simpson County's Healthy steps

## STAFF

- Discounted gym memberships
- Jazzercise on campus for staff and family
- Health tips in electronic newsletters
- Weight-loss, step and recipe contests
- Health fair with free screenings
- Employees at schools encouraged to come up with own initiatives

## STUDENTS

- Daily physical activity required
- Walking path with fitness stations at elementary school
- State-of-the art playground at middle school
- Healthier breakfast and lunch offerings
- Smoking cessation through youth services center

# Muhlenberg County High School: Not your typical school merger

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**N**o one could accuse the Muhlenberg County school board of taking an easy path to high school improvement.

Not only did the district merge two high schools into one, but it split the grades between the two buildings. At the same time, it launched a plan for academic restructuring that will eventually establish four schools of study at the high school, which is already beefing up course offerings.

“We knew we had to make changes in our high schools in order to improve student achievement,” Superintendent Dale Todd said. “This entire merger is about better preparing students for life after graduation, whether that be in a career or in postsecondary and also giving them as many opportunities as possible so they can make wise choices and be better prepared.”

It appears to be the only high school in the state with this two-campus setup. “It is a bit unique and I cannot recall one quite like it,” said Mark Ryles, who head facilities management at the state education department.

Todd said the merger was physically feasible because of the four-mile distance between the two relatively new schools.

Muhlenberg County High School, east campus, houses ninth and 10th grades, while the west campus is for the 11th and 12th grades. The change took effect with the current school year.

“We’re ahead of where we thought we’d be” in terms of student buy-in and general operations, said assistant Superintendent Deborah Houghland.

Board Chairman Johnny Clark said the board got the idea

for high school transformation at a KSBA Summer Leadership Institute.

## The hurdles

There were – and are – both big issues and little ones. The two high schools had different instructional schedules, curriculums, course prerequisites, class ranking systems, valedictorian guidelines and honors class procedures.

“Everything is new because we had two schools that did things differently,” Principal Matt Perkins said.

Perkins is among the new elements. His team includes four assistant principals (two of whom, like Perkins, are highly skilled educators) and four guidance counselors – one for each grade level. Assignment of personnel, curriculum and transportation logistics had to be done before school began last August, just six months after the state board of education signed off on the reorganization.

Not all administrators from the two former high schools were rehired for their same positions. Teachers were retained but assigned based on their experience, strengths and need – and weren’t necessarily assigned to the building where they had been teaching. This caused turmoil, Perkins said.

“You came from a place where teachers had been together for years. They had become a family. When you mix people up, that changes the dynamic, changes the culture,” explained Kendra Pate, upper-grades lead social studies teacher and a member of the reconstituted school council.

Transportation is an ongoing issue. Students who live furthest from either school must be bused from one campus to the other to catch the bus that will take them home, which adds an extra half hour to their travel time.

Then there was the “small” stuff such as planning for a graduation and a prom doubled in size and deciding in which building trophies would be displayed – that latter issue “was very volatile,” Perkins said.

## Come together

“Unless it’s very intentional, it would be easy to see them as two schools,” Houghland said.

A key, Todd said, “was an administrative team that shared the same vision as the superintendent and the board.”

Perkins, who splits his time between campuses, pointed to communications and consistency.

“We try to do everything consistently between both campuses – processes, procedures, staff trainings,” he said.

With that communication goes the message of teamwork, he added.



While leading a visitor on a tour, Muhlenberg County High School Principal Matt Perkins takes a minute to encourage students in a Project Lead the Way Biomedical class, relating his own learning experiences in high school.

Perkins uses a morning “show” as a vehicle to bring the two campuses together – using streaming video set up at one school to be seen in classrooms at both sites, often featuring students for their achievements. He also writes a weekly newsletter.

The faculty came together for three days of professional development in the summer, developing a mission, vision and a three-year plan. They meet together monthly during the school year.

The principal said the recognition and celebration of all student accomplishments, not just athletics, has been another important factor in unification, as well as input from students.

“I talk to the kids and find out what they want and I build around that,” he said.

#### Future plans

A major impetus for the merged high school was a desire to set up a freshman academy, which Todd called “a critical area” that hadn’t been getting enough attention. The district is still working on that aspect of the plan, though it did launch a required freshman leadership class.

This year has seen a partial foundation laid for schools of study, pathways of elective offerings that will allow students to move into jobs or postsecondary education. Perkins expects to offer schools of study in science, technology, engineering and

mathematics and in visual and performing arts/communications next year.

“We have a big interest in those two areas right now,” he said.

Two other schools of study will be added in the future. A career focus will eventually be developed to give upperclassmen job shadowing and other work experiences.

Overall, 41 new courses have been added to the high school curriculum this year, Todd said.

Two new facilities will enhance the schools of study – ground will be broken this summer for a \$6.5 million performing arts center and an addition is planned to the district’s career and technical school that will house high-tech programs such as robotics and engineering.

The merger may also be sowing the seeds for community change. Not only were the former two high schools cross-town rivals, but each had an image based on the community it identified with – Greenville or Central City.

The situation makes the merger more complicated, Perkins said, which is why he believes this first year is about building relationships.

Clark, the board chairman, thinks the change will bring the communities together. “Instead of having a rivalry, we’re going to have a bond,” he said. ☼

---

## Muhlenberg County High School 360

“I think the community is very supportive of what was done,” said school board Chairman Johnny Clark. “Most of the complaints I hear are over athletics and not academics,” he said.

But students can get involved in lots of other activities, Clark added, many of which have expanded with the merged schools.

One of the biggest challenges has been getting to know everyone – both students and teachers, said ninth-grade counselor Beth Fleming.

“Building those relationships is important and takes time,” she said. “The students are positive. The students have enjoyed the opportunity to meet new people.”

Beverly Underwood, central fund treasurer, east campus, points to the improved communications necessitated by the change. Morning announcements have been effective at unifying

the two campuses, she said, while showcasing student activities.

Senior Caleb Adcock, calls this “my best year,” saying more students are being singled out for non-athletic achievements. With the merger, students “have more of a chance” to be involved and recognized, he said.

The reconstituted school council understandably saw “lots of public participation” this year, said Kendra Pate,

lead social studies teacher on west campus and a council member. The council had to start from scratch on school policies, she said, tackling issues such as valedictorian selection, required classes, a grading scale and honors classes.

Logistics for after-school activities can be problematic, said junior Vickie Taylor. “We can make it work, but it’s just hard.” Not all students like the arrangement, she said, but she thinks the transition has gone well for the most part. “I made a bunch of friends; the maturity level is so much nicer.”

Doris Robison, assistant coordinator of the family resource center, said she’s heard nothing negative from parents, just some questions. “We have to remind them we are one school and we work together,” she said. Before, families were sensitive to any differences between the two high schools, but “we’re not divided now.” ☼



From left, Muhlenberg County High School junior Eather Wagoner and senior Cody Gaines watch a video made by senior David Taylor (seated) for a film class.

# The few, the proud, the mythbusters: educators learn about making U.S. Marines

By Brad Hughes  
Staff Writer

**F**or some students, the first day of class started around 3:30 a.m. But the teaching and learning began in earnest 14 hours later.

“Hey, listen up. My name is Staff Sgt. (LaDectric) Driver. I have four simple rules. No talking in my formation. You go where I tell you and nowhere else. When I ask a question, you respond, ‘Yes, sir,’ ‘No, sir,’ or ‘Aye, sir.’ And you address me as staff sergeant, not sergeant or corporal or private.

“Now before you get dinner, you’re going to learn how to march in formation,” he said.

For four days in early March, 33 Kentucky administrators, coaches, counselors and teachers saw basic training up close and personal at the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C. They joined another 60 school personnel from Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

While the Marines spend nearly \$1 million a year for travel, lodging and meals for 12 such clinics, participants expecting a sales job were surprised.

“There are a host of misconceptions about the military, particularly about the Marine Corps,” said Maj. Rory Quinn, commanding officer of Recruiting Station Louisville and its offices across Kentucky and in southern Indiana and Ohio.

“It’s not that people know information and decide against the Marine Corps; it’s that they know hardly anything and have convictions they can’t explain. The whole point is to bring you down here, show you what we do and why we do it the way we do it, and what we think we achieve,” Quinn said.

“It’s almost a polite challenge, because I think the educators are going to change their impressions,” he said. “That doesn’t mean you become a huge fan of the Marine Corps, but I’m betting you become impressed with our instruction.”

It certainly changed the opinions of some participants.

“The workshop was an eye-opener for me because I used to believe that the Marines was a suicide camp for wayward teens who do not have life ambition,” said Paducah Independent school board member Felix Akojie Jr., who also is a KSBA board member. “The Marine Corps emphasizes authority and responsibility to a greater degree than I was aware.”

Calloway County High School special education teacher Katy Walls was prepared for “a censored view of boot camp, but I came away thinking it is not as bad as I expected.

“I can see the point of the difficult things they are required to do. After all, they are preparing young adults for war,” she said.

## **Everything a student advisor needs to know...**

The Educator Workshop is big on briefings on everything from laser rifle marksmanship to pre-enlistment and post-service issues. Some of the surprises included:







**Left:** Calloway County High School language arts teacher Amy Melvin and Paducah Independent school board member Felix Akojie Jr. flank recruit and Calloway County High School graduate Michelle Wells during a lunchtime discussion of basic training.

**Below left:** Staff Sgt. LaDetric Driver fields questions from Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio educators before a briefing by ranking Marines in charge of the Parris Island training center.

**Opposite page:** On the Marine recruit "confidence course," Kentucky educators work as a team to build a bridge over obstacles to transport materials and people without touching the ground or surfaces painted red.



universities, including most in Kentucky, agree to transfer credit hours for current and former military personnel.

"One of the most important things I can bring back is how the Marine Corps preaches the importance of continuing their education," said Chuck Cash, assistant principal at Madison Southern High School. "I see many students who find it difficult to pursue college. The Marine Corps offers these students the opportunity to serve their country while earning a college degree. It's a win-win situation."

It wasn't just men and women wearing stripes, bars and stars on their uniforms who educated the educators. One afternoon, small groups of attendees chatted with recruits in various stages of their basic training.

"I really enjoyed having lunch with one of the female recruits," said Bourbon County High School guidance counselor Rhoda Moore. "She said, 'This recruit used to be selfish but this recruit has learned to put others ahead of self. I was impressed with the emphasis on brotherhood.'"

#### **Taking new ideas home**

Almost uniformly, the Kentuckians went home impressed. "I'll be able to give more information to students who inquire about the Marines because of being on the base and witnessing the transformation that takes place among the recruits," said Moore.

Walls agreed. "I will definitely refer some of my students to the local recruiter now, which is not something I did before," she said.

"Also, I think educators should know the workshop was fun," she said. "We weren't required to do anything difficult or strenuous. I had many people ask us if we were yelled at or made to do exercises. Neither of these things happened. Well, we were yelled at a little by the drill instructor, but not in an insulting way."

*Note:* Educators who want to learn more about future Marine Corps Educators Workshops may contact Quinn at [rorquinn@marines.usmc.mil](mailto:rorquinn@marines.usmc.mil). Other branches of the U.S. armed services have similar programs for school personnel. ☞

- Eligibility: No high school degree – forget it. Taking medications for attention deficit disorder – thanks, but try the Army. Have large tattoos visible on arms or legs – you won't be hitting the beaches in camouflage uniforms.

- Senior drill instructors: "You must care for the recruits, where they come from, if they don't get mail," said Staff Sgt./ Senior Drill Instructor Jesabel Hamler. "Every now and then I go, 'Hey, Susie, I talked to Helen today,' and they'll be stunned you know a name they don't know you know." Pat Myers, an alternative home-based teacher in the Jackson County Schools, said, "The concern that was shown was encouraging to me. They actually were there to help a young person who might have doubts along the course of the 13 weeks (of basic training)."

- Re-enlistment of only 25 percent: "That's by design," said Col. Mike Bowersox, Parris Island's chief of staff for recruiting. "We regenerate our force every four years. We have a lot of Marines who want to stick around, and we tell them, 'No. Thank you for your service (but) we need new, younger guys.'"

- Serve, then go to college: Marines are eligible for \$4,500 a year for tuition, more for housing and books. More than 1,400

# Driving home the positives

Pulaski County bus drivers reinforce classroom practices



Pulaski County school bus driver Glenn Olmstead aboard a bus outside Northern Middle School, which is the district's jumping-off point for positive behavioral interventions and supports. Bus drivers also are trained in the behavior strategies.

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

Some school bus drivers in Pulaski County have been doing some positive thinking for the last several months, in the expectation it will rub off on their passengers.

They are practicing the principles of positive behavioral interventions and supports, a set of strategies that recognize good behavior by students as a way of discouraging problem behavior. The strategies, promoted by the Kentucky Center for Instructional Discipline, generally are better known for being used on school campuses than on buses.

"It was a natural flow," said Angela Murphy, principal of Northern Middle School, which has been phasing in the approach in her building for the past five years with good results. "The next flow is the buses....the bus is an extension of the classroom and the school building."

Northern Middle School was the initial the hub of the effort, which affects about 50 or so drivers that cover schools in the northern half of the county.

School board member Cindy Price said continuity is important for student behavior. "If that's what you're using at the school, let's keep it going from the time they get on the bus at their home in the morning until they get off their bus in the afternoon, certainly if you've seen positive results in the schools like we have."

Shelly Hargis, Northern's assistant principal, said the school's data showed the improvements since the positive behavioral focus was implemented were not extending to bus behavior.

"We recognized a missing ele-



*“It’s much better to prevent problems than try to handle them on a moving bus.”*



— Dusty Phelps, Pulaski County Schools’ director of districtwide positive behavioral interventions and supports

ment to our equation was the bus driver,” said Dusty Phelps, who heads the districtwide positive behavioral interventions and supports initiative.

Richard Edwards, the district bus driver trainer and safety instructor, said the challenges are different on a bus.

“Students feel like once they’re in the bus they’re out of school and can do what they want to,” he said.

### **Moving along**

Northern’s personnel have received extensive training in the discipline system in their building, so bus drivers also had to learn about the approach. Drivers in the Northern Middle School area were invited last fall to a voluntary “bus drivers’ summit” where Northern’s system was presented and explained – including data showing the dramatic in-school results, in which office referrals dropped from 900-plus to about 300 from 2005-06 to 2008-09.

“That is more significant than a lot of people had realized. The drivers that were in attendance all seemed to be very much on board with it,” said Edwards, who also drives a route.

Following the summit, a committee of drivers met several times, getting input from other drivers, and developing a set of expectations for behavior on buses. “The process went real well,” said driver Glenn Olmstead, one of the committee members. “We got a lot of good input.”

The bus behavioral expectations are divided between those to be followed while loading and unloading and those in effect when the bus is moving. The overarching principles are to be safe, be respectful and be responsible. The overall key is student safety, Olmstead said.

Phelps noted, “It’s much better to prevent problems than try to handle them on a moving bus.”

All that information, along with a letter from each driver, was sent home with students in December. The expectations are reinforced with positive comment cards from bus drivers that are mailed to parents whose child’s behavior is exemplary or has improved, similar to those issued by teachers for classroom behavior.

### **Expansion**

Pulaski County Schools’ overall positive behavioral interventions and supports efforts are being expanded beyond Northern to its other schools – and to the rest of its bus drivers. Phelps said bus drivers in the southern half of the county will be duplicating what their peers have done in the other end.

The administrators view the involvement of bus drivers in developing the behavior expectations as a key. Phelps said the initiative is presented to drivers as “something we want to help you with.”

Murphy’s administrative team and some Northern teachers further drove home the collaboration message by riding a bus

route to get a feel for what the drivers must deal with.

Superintendent Tim Eaton also identified another way in which the effort benefits all involved, noting that bus drivers can only refer students to school personnel for discipline and not carry it out.

“If the drivers, with their awesome task of driving the school bus and controlling behavior, can get some ideas on how to handle children in a different fashion, just think what they’re going to do for the principal and the teacher,” he said.

This summer, the mandated eight-hour refresher training for all the district’s bus drivers will include instruction on the positive behavior approach, thereby launching the program districtwide. The system has 175 or so drivers and 126 full-time routes, Edwards said.

There will be some skepticism, he said, but, “If we can just get the program instituted and some of the drivers that are not on board with it will see how it works for other drivers, they will eventually come around.” ☘

**Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC**



**R | S | A**  
Innovative Investment Banking

RSA is recognized today in the financial industry as a premier regional provider of Financial Advisory services to School Districts. Our client list has grown from 15 Districts in 1989 to 130 out of 174 in 2009.

As Financial Advisor, we will assist School Districts with numerous services before, during, and after the financing portion is completed. In addition to serving as Financial Advisor for bond construction projects, RSA provides many additional ongoing services.

RSA is continually developing new and innovative programs for School Districts. Acting as Financial Advisor is more than simply issuing bonds when requested. RSA is always available to assist with any matters.

Our School District division contact information is as follows:

Joe Nance  
Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC  
P.O. Box 398  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602  
(800) 255-0795  
[jnance@rsamuni.com](mailto:jnance@rsamuni.com)





# Steve Hoskins and Bob Rogers

## on a long-term non-resident student agreement

Photo by David Dowdy/Calloway County Schools



*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 the Murray Independent Schools Superintendent Bob Rogers and Calloway County Schools Superintendent Steve Hoskins, who discuss the 25-year non-resident student agreement their districts recently reached. In addition to settling the often contentious issue for years to come, the agreement calls for the two districts to build a new shared vocational and technical school with ADA money they were losing previously under the old agreement.*

**Left to right:** Front row: Dr. Richard Crouch, Murray Independent Schools board chairman; Heidi Shultz, Murray Calloway County Economic Development Corp. chair; Terry Bourland, Calloway County Schools board vice-chair. Back row: Murray Independent Schools Superintendent Bob Rogers; Mark Manning, President Murray Calloway EDC; and Steve Hoskins, Superintendent Calloway County Schools.

### Q. Can you tell me a little bit about the history of this situation between your districts?

**Calloway County Superintendent Steve Hoskins:** We've had a dispute for a long, long time – maybe even decades ago – from non-resident student contracts. Of course it came up again six years ago with the controversy between the number of students coming and going in each district, and providing school choice or not providing school choice and going by state law when the money doesn't follow the child. So it's been controversial, but we think we've got something worked out now.

**Murray Independent Superintendent Bob Rogers:** I guess controversy is a good word to use. It's been a controversy for several years. It came to a head in '04-'05 and caused a lot of hard feelings between the districts and the community. Mr. Hoskins and I have been trying to work through this for the last five years and this year we've been able to get together, and our boards agreed, and reached this agreement to put this behind us.

### Q. What are the details of the new agreement?

**Hoskins:** There are a number of things involved in there. We can share some of the highlights. We share a vocational school and we'll continue to keep that vocational school operational. We solved our annexation issue.

**Rogers:** We've been leaving some money on the table in Frankfort and not using that money, but we've now agreed to release that money and we'll take it and build a new 21st century state-of-the-art vocational center together.

### Q. How have you been leaving money on the table?

**Rogers:** For example, there are 500 students who reside in the Calloway district who attend the Murray district. There are approximately 200 students who reside in the Murray district who attend Calloway this year. If districts only release students on a one-to-one basis, which means ADA is released on only 200 students, the difference for the other 300 students is no state money that either district will receive for those 300. So all that money did not come to either district and that's what we mean by leaving it in Frankfort.

**Hoskins:** There are 500 Calloway County students who go to Murray (currently) and we've agreed that there won't be more than 500 either way. There are currently 200 of their students who come to us, so that's a difference of 300 students, which is a lot of money and funding.

In our agreement, we have agreed to release another 100 students to them, so they'll get the ADA on those 100 kids. That leaves a discrepancy of 200 and the funding for those students will go into escrow to build the vocational school.

**Rogers:** We got together with the Economic Development Corporation here in town and they said, 'That's great, we'll provide the land for you to do that and we might even build a building for you and let you lease it from us, and we'll use the building to train the local work force in the evening.'

We went to the president of Murray State University and he said, 'Let me think of some things that we can do to help.' We've talked to some local industry people and the hospital and everyone has really bought into this idea. Steve and I feel like it's a win-win for the school districts and the community.

**Hoskins:** It's got to be something that's good for both my students and Bob's students, so that makes it good for both school districts and for the community. I think the community understands it and appreciates what we've gotten done here. It's a win-win-win-win situation.

And what's really important to Bob and me is that we will be able to make staffing decisions, facility decisions and transportation decisions based on enrollment funding that we're going to know, rather than in the past when we didn't know; it was hard to make decisions.

**Rogers:** We didn't know from year to year how many non-resident students we were going to have. Now we have a five-year history of knowing approximately how many are going to pay tuition and come to our school district. It's been fairly stable that past two or three years, so it gives us a pretty good idea, and we put a cap on that so we wouldn't go over it.

We're real proud that both boards voted 5-0 to approve this. We thought it was a real important statement because of the history. It wasn't an easy feat to accomplish. There had to be a lot of leg work done to try to get this thing done.

**Hoskins:** We're going to continue as a district to exchange census data with each other four times a year so we can always keep a good handle on it and know what we're doing. I would commend both boards of education for being progressive enough to look beyond things and do what's best for students.

### **Q. What was the process to create this 25-year deal?**

**Rogers:** It started out with Mr. Hoskins and I realizing that we're going to have to have a new contract. We both know what the law says and we both know what our restrictions are, so we started exchanging ideas. Mr. Hoskins and two of his board members met with two of my board members and me to see how far apart we were. We started throwing out ideas.

I think I counted up one day that I had 26 meetings between Dec. 1 and Feb. 11. This is meeting with either Mr. Hoskins and a board member, or with one or two of my board members to see how they were feeling about it. You can't have more than two at a time without having a special meeting. You have to keep them updated on the process and if it's some-

thing they're not going to agree to, there's no use spending a whole lot of time.

We met with Mr. (Mark) Manning (Murray-Calloway County Economic Development Corporation president) two or three times, we went to Frankfort and met with the commissioner and assistant commissioner, we met with the Cabinet for Workforce Development, which operates the vocational school we have.

**Hoskins:** I would try to come up with something that he could get three votes on and he would try to come up with something that I could get three votes on, and you don't do that on the first round. I think it was about the fifth edition that we finally came up with something that we could live with.

We finally got it passed by both boards on the same evening and then later we had the two full boards get together and have a signing.

**Rogers:** Five years ago this was all negotiated through the media and it was really, really nasty.

They'd get some quotes from a board member on one side and a board member on the other side would read that quote and it would aggravate them.

**Hoskins:** We kind of got under the radar this time.

### **Q. How has the community reacted to this agreement?**

**Hoskins:** We've had several comments from some people in the community who have said that they appreciate what we've done to hammer this thing out and put it to rest and that it looks like it's a win-win for both sides. I think the community understands it and is appreciative of both boards.

**Rogers:** The feedback I've received has been very positive. This really split the community in '04-05. It split the business people who try to make a living in the community and they didn't want to take sides. This was really divisive. We've spent the last five years trying to mend those relationships. We've got wonderful competition in athletics and band and academics, speech and debate. Our kids have been wonderful all along.

### **Q. How did you all arrive at 25 years for the length of the agreement?**

**Rogers:** We assumed it might take five years to plan and design and build a facility, and then a 20-year bond payment to pay for it.

### **Q. It must be a relief to know that this won't be an issue again for 25 years.**

**Hoskins:** Regardless of the controversy, people need to remember to do what's right for students, and both our boards realized that rather than just being vengeful or that type thing, let's do what's right for kids.

**Rogers:** That's the bottom line, to do what's best for your students. When you focus your decisions on that, then generally you make the right decisions.

### **Q. Do you have any advice for districts going through a similar situation?**

**Rogers:** You just have to realize the law is what it is, whether you agree with it or don't agree with it. You do the best you can and hopefully everybody that's on these boards of education is there to serve the children and to do what's best for the children. And when there's controversy, try to get together like we did and find something both of you can agree upon that's going to help the children.

### **Q. It sounds like your two districts have learned from the two different approaches to this problem, one where you didn't talk much to each other and this one where you did.**

**Hoskins:** Well, we tried to the first time, but we couldn't keep everyone else out of it.

**Rogers:** In all fairness, that was Steve's first year here and he wasn't involved in the background of it and I wasn't here at all until I came in right at the end. Things were pretty hot at that time.

**Hoskins:** I came here six years ago and walked into the middle of this and there it was. And for a good while I wore asbestos britches just about every day.

I feel like we've accomplished something pretty major. ☘

# From the Halls of Montezuma to the hallways of your schools

**A**rno Norwell and Chuck Cash are no strangers to long days. As principal of Madison County's Foley Middle School and assistant principal of Madison Southern High School respectively, Norwell and Cash are used to being up and at 'em before most students and staff arrive each morning, completing administrative duties in the afternoon, and staffing ball games or other extracurricular activities in the evening.

But it was a different story as we shared dinner on the last night of our four-day U.S. Marine Corps Educators Workshop at Parris Island, S.C. The pair was almost in competition to declare who was more exhausted and who would fall asleep first when they got back to their motel room.

Suddenly, I was struck with another lesson the Marines had given to the educators: the emotional and energy drain of the packed days recruits put in throughout their 12 weeks of basic training.

It wasn't just the drills or the briefings, the rifle demonstrations or the obstacle course, the moral-choice challenges or even the pressure of yelling drill sergeants pushing them to the limit. We were being shown how all of those factors were part of the total instructional goal to, in the Marines' words, "tear the recruits down, take them out of their comfort zones, and build them back up into effective team members who can excel in the environment of the U. S. Marine Corps."

It made me wonder if perhaps there isn't another lesson school leaders can take from the Marines. What would happen if a district designed a one-day school experience workshop to create a group of better informed, more highly motivated community supporters?

## Selecting the people and the plan

To start with, select a limited, specific outcome. Is it support for a nickel facilities tax? Increased parent involvement? More adults to mentor at-risk students? A better understanding of services available to non-English speaking families? The possibilities would appear to be as numerous as Kentucky districts are diverse in challenges.

Next, choose the participant group that can best assist the district in meeting that desired outcome. It could be employers, elected officials, parents and guardians, real estate agents, medical personnel or even a cross-section of the community who can address the objective.

Now, design the day. Make it a well-rounded look at education but with a clear focus on that target issue. Begin the day with breakfast with students or the arrival of bus, car and foot traffic to school. Go right into a classroom



Brad Hughes  
KSBA Member  
Support Services Director

setting – something that will communicate a positive message about student progress. Perhaps shift into a universal learning situation such as a language arts, music or physical education class – an environment that most of your group can relate to. Move to lunch in the cafeteria, allowing group members to eat with the students. Educators at Parris Island who dined with recruits spoke highly of this aspect of the workshop.

In the afternoon, shift the attention to the issue for which you want this group to become advocates. A classroom with

inadequate technology? A tour to point out facility shortcomings? Students leading lessons that demonstrate a math or science innovation at the school? A briefing by administrators – and always teachers – on a needed resource that can boost student achievement?

Finally, close out the day with this thought: Where can we go from here? Group members should be provided with some way to stay in touch about changes the school or district makes on the target issue. Superintendents who have key-communicator or opinion-leader groups already know how to keep feeding information to the right people. Do the same thing with this team.

Take one final lesson to heart that the Marines – from high-brass colonels to barracks drill instructors – stressed at every opportunity: Constantly encourage the group's members to ask questions, to leave no uninformed opinion dangling, to gain insight or detail for anything and everything that comes to mind.

## The Last Word

I'll admit it. I was impressed by the carefully planned and executed Educators Workshop put on by the Marines. It was never a sales job. There was no whining about lack of public backing or government funding. Participants weren't asked to write letters to Congress demanding more resources. And I never once heard a slam against the similar career and post-enlistment opportunities offered by the Army, Navy or Air Force.

It seems to me that a school and/or a district with a need can always be strengthened by a small group of enthusiastic, well-versed Joes and Janes who shop at local stores, worship at neighborhood churches, attend ball games, write letters to the editor or just plain share their opinions over lunch.

But skip the Marines' practice of starting out long before sunrise. Maybe you are one of the few and the proud, but most of us aren't up to learning and retaining anything that early in the day.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☘

# LISTENING AND LEARNING

More than 40 school board members and superintendents met with legislators in Frankfort last month as part of KSBA's KIDS First in Frankfort Advocacy Conference and Lobbying Day.



In addition to those who attended the lobbying day, more than 150 people attended KSBA's reception the night before, where two legislators were honored with the association's annual KIDS First Award. The KIDS First Awards were created by KSBA's board of directors to honor local and state leaders who work on behalf of Kentucky's public schools and students. Each year, a state senator, state representative, school board member and superintendent are recognized. Boone County school board member and KSBA Immediate Past President C. Ed Massey and Owensboro Independent Schools Superintendent Larry Vick received their awards at the association's annual conference in February.



Top left: Sen. David Givens with his award, flanked (from left to right) by KSBA President Delmar Mahan, Barren County Schools Superintendent Jerry Ralston and Barren County school board vice chairman and KSBA board member Tim England.

Top right: Rep. Jeff Greer says a few words as he accepts his award. In the background from left are Mahan, Meade County school board Chairman John Inman and Meade County Schools Superintendent Mitch Crump.

Middle: David Baird, KSBA's associate executive director and director of Governmental Affairs, reviewed pending legislation with board members and superintendents before they went to meet with lawmakers.

Bottom: Rep. Charlie Hoffman, far left, met with constituents from Scott County Schools and discussed issues ranging from cutting school days to balance the state budget to superintendent evaluations and principal hirings. From left are board member Haley Conway, Superintendent Patricia Putty and Vice Chair Phyllis Young.



260 Democrat Drive  
Frankfort, KY 40601

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit 850  
Lexington, KY

## Quick recall of history



**I**n the spirit of Governor's Cup season, eighth-graders in Hanna Young's social studies class at Science Hill Independent School used a quick-recall match to review their unit on "the decades."

Young said students get a better grasp of history by focusing on major events in each decade. "A historical timeline is very difficult for students – they don't like dates," she said. "This gives them an understanding of sequence and cause-and-effect." Students also created various hands-on projects based on the decades.

Clockwise, from left, buzzer system operators M.T. Jasper and Oscar Barreda, who were in charge of scoring, get ready for the match by testing buzzers. Waiting in line with his buzzer is Austin Hill, and Jacob Stevens.

Erin Stephens and Jacob Stevens react to a point scored by their team.

Brandon Patterson, center, shows his eagerness to give an answer. He is flanked on the left by teammates Brittany Labelle and Lexie Parks and on the right by Shelby Harville, Seth Dixon and Austin Hill.