

# KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ December 2010



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**FEATURES**

**EDUJOBS, EDU-VARIETY**

Kentucky school districts did not follow a cookie-cutter mold when spending, or not spending, their federal edujobs allocation. Among the uses: maintaining current staff, hiring staff to improve student achievement and training for new standards and accountability ... Page 8

**SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE**

For the first time in the 13-year history of the *PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky)* Award, the honor has gone to a program shared among multiple school districts. The Four Rivers Scholarship Program is helping students at all grade levels in four systems ... Page 10

**MORE LIKE COLLEGE**

Scott County's Elkhorn Crossing School is in demand among students and that's not surprising. This extended campus of the district's high school is divided into "villages" for career areas and has a college-campus atmosphere ... Page 12

**ELECTION**

The last time this cycle of school board seats was decided was four years ago, but statistically, the results this time around are surprising – and not for reasons you would expect ... Page 14

**SEEING IS BELIEVING**

Some of the state's preschools are hosting visits by legislators and business people to try to show them the value of early childhood education. The visits are being organized by a group pushing for preschool expansion in Kentucky ... Page 16

**SAFE AND HEALTHY**

This year marks the start of a "whole child" approach to safe schools. The renamed Safe and Healthy Schools and Students Conference featured topics related to both school safety and healthy students ... Page 18



Charting safe and healthy kids, Page 18



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Sharing success, Page 10

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**On the cover**



Elkhorn Crossing School Principal Francis O'Hara goes through his daily ritual of greeting students with high fives and high energy. This Scott County school, which opened in August, is one of a kind ... Article on Page 12.

## TAKE NOTE

### Kentucky School Boards Association

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#### Trimble tops

Johnson County Schools Superintendent Steve Trimble has been named the Kentucky Educational Development Corporation Outstanding Superintendent for the 2010-11 school year.

The education cooperative cited the achievements of the district under Trimble's leadership, including facility and technology upgrades. The total Kentucky Core Content district index score for the district has risen from 89.4 to 93.0 during the past five years. During this same time span, individual test scores have gained on ACT, EXPLORE, and PLAN exams. Johnson County Schools also met all its federal goals under No Child Left Behind in 2010.

Trimble credited his entire staff for the award, saying it was "a great compliment" to them.

#### Electronic excellence

The Madison County school district was among the top 10 "digital school districts" of its size in the seventh annual Digital School Districts Survey,

sponsored by e.Republic's Center for Digital Education and the National School Boards Association. The survey recognizes exemplary school boards and districts' use of technology to govern the district, communicate with students, parents and the community and to improve district operations.

Madison County Schools tied for 10th place in the mid-sized student population category for districts with between 2,500 and 15,000 students.

#### Savings milestone

In less than six months, the Kentucky School Energy Managers Project has produced statewide energy cost avoidance for schools at a rate of just over \$1 million annually. A total of 143 school districts are part of the project. The savings have been found in areas such as correcting utility billing rate errors and inappropriate charging of state taxes, resetting building automation systems, replacing inefficient lighting and better managing technology. ☞



Mike Allen



Mike Wilson

#### Two more elected

Two "Mikes" have taken their seats on KSBA's board of directors, rounding out the complement of six new regional chairpersons elected during this fall's series of KSBA Regional Meetings.

Hickman County school board chairman Mike Allen was selected to represent the First Region, while Mike Wilson, chairman of the Warren County school board, was chosen as Third District regional chairperson.

Allen, of Clinton, graduated from Hickman County High School and has a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Kentucky. He is branch manager of the Jackson Purchase Agricultural Credit Association, where he has been employed for 28 years. Allen also is an appraiser and a farmer. He is a trustee of the Clinton United Methodist Church and a Little League Baseball coordinator. A school board member since 1995, Allen won re-election in November.

Warren County's Wilson works in sales and is a graduate of Warren East High School and attended Western Kentucky University. He has been a school board member since 2003, and like Allen, just won re-election. Wilson, of Bowling Green, is a deacon at Living Hope Baptist Church and is a member of Bowling Green/Warren County Community Education.

# Higher learning standards require more leadership and support

As I write this column I am about halfway through the process of visiting Kentucky's 21 new superintendents. Although they are a diverse group in background, age, gender and personality, they all share a common focus on one goal – improving the academic performance of their students. In particular, they all seemed to embrace the challenge of Senate Bill 1 – increasing the number of graduates who are truly college and career ready.

Although their commitment to student success is obvious, they also seemed eager to share their concerns about the challenges of meeting this goal. Most notably, they all expressed some level of anxiety about whether their district would be able to find the time and resources to adequately train administrators and teachers in the new common core standards. Since Kentucky's new assessment and accountability system will be based on students' performance against the new standards, these superintendents are acutely aware that their future success as district leaders depends on integrating the higher standards into classroom instruction.

Perhaps it's the pressure of these higher standards that led to another common expression among these new superintendents: All of them acknowledged the critical role that their boards of education will have to play for their district to be successful. Specifically, they cited three aspects of that role:

- The importance of the board setting and publicizing an ambitious and measurable vision for student success.
- The need for the board's support in providing the necessary staff development related to the new standards and assessment.
- How the board can help the larger community understand the purpose behind these changes in our learning standards – in particular, the board's role in communicating the link between higher academic standards and the community's and nation's future standard of living, because making a living wage depends more than ever on receiving a world-class education.

The message I've heard from these superintendents is welcome because it affirms what KSBA also has been reinforcing in our training. Our Leadership for Student Learning training modules are based on the five leadership roles of school board members in improving student achievement.

These modules explore the commitment and "no excuses" attitudes boards must have to spur student achievement in their districts, and the board's role in ensuring student success through high-quality teaching and learning. Through this training, boards also learn how to set clear and focused goals for student achievement.



**Bill Scott**  
KSBA Executive Director

Other sessions focus on data – how it can be used as accountability and decision-making tools, on involving the general community and parents in the push for improved student learning and on establishing professional development policies designed to improve teaching and learning.

The roots of this training series grew from what's called the Lighthouse Project. This was groundbreaking research by the Iowa Association of School Boards exploring the characteristics of school boards in high-achieving districts. The research indicated that school boards in high-achieving districts "are significantly different in their knowledge and beliefs than school boards in low-achieving districts. And, this difference appears to carry through among administrators and teachers throughout the districts."

The KSBA training also is aimed at addressing a weakness identified in a 2009 education leadership study by the Kentucky Office of Education Accountability. School board members surveyed by OEA reported that they felt less prepared to deal with academic issues than with finance.

The need for boards to fully realize their role in improving student achievement is expected to be reinforced in more recent OEA research. At the request of lawmakers, OEA has been examining efforts to improve low-performing schools.

The interview data collected for the OEA report highlights the critical role boards play in focusing on monitoring, support and accountability for low-performing schools. Preliminary findings suggest a superintendent is more likely to take more aggressive action in those areas if they are a priority of the school board, and, conversely, is less likely to make changes without school board support for them.

Twenty years ago, many observers interpreted the passage of Kentucky's Education Reform Act as the removal of school boards from all aspects of student achievement. Since that time, both national research such as the Lighthouse Project and the actual experience of many Kentucky school districts through assistance programs like the Voluntary Partnership for Assistance Teams have proven that local boards are in fact a critical ingredient in school improvement. Not only can they provide the necessary financial support but they can also provide the superintendent with the political support necessary when school improvement requires changes in personnel and practice that may be controversial among employees and the community.

— For more information about the critical role that your local boards can play in improving student achievement please contact Kerri Schelling or Jean Crowley at 1-800-372-2962. ☘

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



Photo provided by Bellevue Independent Schools

**“It’s amazing how much we were able to save last year just by making small adjustments. That money can now help fund a lot of other programs in the schools.”** Bellevue Independent Schools Superintendent Wayne Starnes on the financial benefits the district has realized from the first few months of working with Becki Lanter, pictured here with Starnes, an energy manager for several area districts that are part of the KSBA School Energy Managers Project. From the Fort Mitchell *Community Press and Recorder*.

**“A** lot of the people we’re chasing are highly mobile, either in a vehicle or on foot. The fact that we don’t know where they are a lot of the time makes us want to make sure they don’t try to take refuge in a school. Any time a school is nearby, we’d like to exercise as much caution as possible and notify the schools and our school resource officers and ask them to lock down the school or restrict travel to and from the schools.” Major J.D. Marksberry of the Daviess County Sheriff’s Department on why four schools were locked down during the recent search for a suspected murderer. From the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

**“M**entor a child other than your own to help give them that support that my children had and that your children have. The impact made by providing that kind of support for a child reaches further than any of us can imagine.” Kentucky first lady Jane Beshear encouraging adults to become “foster education parents” for those students who don’t receive the vital positive reinforcement in their homes about getting an education. From the Frankfort *State Journal*.

**“I** think that you can’t assume things are going well. You need some hard data to truly know what type of impact your work is having. Obviously, we listen to our employees on a daily basis, but I think our employees appreciate an opportunity

to give us a formal response. Once you have that information ... sometimes what we find is we’ve not communicated well ... and other times it may be that whatever effort we’re making in certain areas is missing the mark, and we need to sit down and look and see if there is a better way to do this.” Bowling Green Independent Schools Superintendent Joe Tinius on an online feedback survey, created with assistance from KSBA, designed to gauge parent and employee opinions on a variety of topics, including the work environment, the superintendent and the school board. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

**“A**bout 70 percent of our students are projected to score distinguished or proficient on the 2011

KCCT test as of right now. In math, most schools are already showing growing projections in proficiency, and compared to 2009, our number of students below proficient is decreasing.” Kerry Fannin, Shelby County Schools assistant superintendent for student achievement, on what district leaders are learning in the second year using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests to track students’ academic progress. From the Shelbyville *Sentinel-News*.

**“T**hat’s what made it even more exciting to win this year. After placing third for the last three years, it was incredible.” Beechwood Independent High School Senior Logan Buck on earning the Kentucky Music Educators Association’s Class A State Marching Band Championship for a school where 15 percent of the students take part in the band program. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*.

**“R**egardless of how good a heart a person has, that person can see situations only based on the lenses through which they view them. Our lenses are ground in our culture. The way someone sees things is not wrong, it’s just that their vision may be limited based on their lenses. To have a diverse outcome, we must have diversity in planning. That’s of grave concern to me and should be to all of Lexing-

New voices

**“I**’m not going there acting like the head hog at the trough — you have to get your feet wet and see what actually takes place.” Newly elected Casey County school board member Anthony Edwards on his approach to starting board service after a 13-vote win in his second campaign for the position. From the Casey *County News*.

**“W**hen I was going door-to-door speaking with people, they were very upset about moving all the students into one middle school. I think the voters have spoken. I think we really need to start seriously studying and thinking about where we are going with that.” Dr. Mike Kuduk, newly elected member of the Clark County school board, who campaigned on a platform to halt the planned closure of several schools in the district. From the Winchester *Sun*.

ton, not just the minority community.” Kentucky Board of Education member Rev. C.B. Akins on Education Commissioner Terry Holliday’s pending action to fill a vacancy on the Fayette County school board on the heels of the election defeat of the board’s only minority member. From the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

**“We ran into their H.R. supervisor. We wanted to sell them a good product, meaning our students and our community. We’ve got access to that test now through my classroom, so I’m going to try to get a couple of students to try to take it, just to see what was going to happen.”** Trigg County High School engineering teacher Lori Ricks on a trip to a job fair to help prepare her students for jobs at a semiconductor plant being built nearby in Tennessee. From the *Cadiz Record*.

**“I was pretty shocked that playgrounds cost so much, but this day and age, \$100,000 is pretty much a basic playground. I’ve been doing lots of research about different equipment, and I know that this is something we might have to build in stages.”** Cheri Lineweaver, principal of Brooks Elementary (Bullitt County), on how much more there is to completing a new school than just the building itself. From the *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

**“I truly believe that seat time is important.”** State Sen. Ken Winters (R-Murray), chairman of the Senate Education Committee, on the importance of a longer school year as one element of improving student achievement. From the *Paducah Sun*.



**“When I got in the car, I was imagining what I would do, what I would’ve felt, if I had been in the car when it happened. It was emotional. (If that accident had really happened) there’d be no goodbyes or I love you’s said. It makes you appreciate what you’ve got more.”** Union County High School student Ladassa Davis on the personal impact of a mock drunk-driving event that included students writing letters to loved ones earlier in the day, documenting last words and thoughts of those victims they were pretending to be. From the *Morganfield Union County Advocate*.

**“New things come up every year, but I guess you’ve also got access to the Internet, and also other periodicals that you can keep up on what’s going on. So maybe six years might be a little stretch for textbooks, but it’s the cycle that we have.”** Eric Thomas, president of the Kentucky Science Teachers Association, on the state’s current six-year science textbook replacement schedule. From *WEKU-FM News* in Richmond.

**“In this case, they came up here basically and convicted some students and staff I guess, and sentenced them to invalidating those scores. They never did tell us what the allegations are. They never sat down with me and told me specifically what they’ve found, anything like that. We’ve never had an opportunity to voice our concerns. This has been handled different than anything I’ve ever dealt with in 17 years as superintendent.”** Perry County Schools Superintendent John Paul Amis expressing his frustration with a lack of information from officials of the ACT testing organization who sought an investigation into how tests were handled at the high school. From the *Hazard Herald*. ☞

## Selecting a site for a new school

### POINT ...

**“I find it interesting that the board has been so secretive about the site selection. I am surprised that the board would make such a major decision without at least some public input. The taxpayers of Fleming County and the rest of Kentucky are footing the entire cost of this facility. It seems to me that the people paying for and utilizing the facility should have some say as to the location.”** Ewing Mayor Wally Thomas, who wants a new Fleming County elementary school to be built within the city limits near the current school’s location.

### COUNTERPOINT...

**“The board and I appreciate the concerns of the people in Ewing. We are bound to follow agreements that we made when pushing to get the new school at Ewing. When this new school is finished, we want it to be a showplace for the area and along with the academic successes that Ewing Elementary has experienced, we feel that end of the county will be attractive for future growth. When the high school soccer complex is completed, schools from north and west of Ewing will drive through town on their way to games. The potential will be there for economic growth in that end of the county.”** Fleming County Schools Superintendent Tony Roth on the district’s point of view on the matter.

From the *Flemingsburg Gazette*.

# Edujobs to the rescue ... for now



Christy Drury, literacy coach at Second Street School in the Frankfort Independent system, works with students Jacey Wright and Jakob Tracy. Her position currently is funded with federal stimulus money and when that runs out next year, the district will use edujobs funding to retain it.

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

From restoring a lost payday for teachers to retaining key staff who help struggling students, Kentucky school districts did not use a boilerplate design when deciding where to allocate their share of the \$135 million in federal edujobs money that came to the state.

Districts also don't appear to be throwing the entire wad of funding, which must be spent by Oct. 1, 2012, into the current fiscal year. Frankfort Independent Superintendent Rich Crowe said the original federal economic stimulus package allowed his district to hire three literacy coaches and support staff. Rather than adding new staff this year, the district is saving its edujobs funding to continue paying for those literacy positions when the first pot of federal funding runs out next year.

"There's no reason we have to spend it all now. So our intent is to spend it next year and make it work for us next year," Crowe said.

Bracken County Schools is taking the same approach and has used "very little" of its edujobs money this year, Superintendent Tony Johnson said.

"Basically, we're going to roll that over and pick up the salaries that we're picking up out of the State Fiscal Stabiliza-

tion Fund monies this year. When they're depleted, we'll pick them up next year with the edujobs money," he said.

Hardin County Schools has used about a third of its allocation this year to shuffle funds and restore step increases that were cut earlier in the year, said Gary Milby, associate superintendent for finance and support services.

The district currently is doing a needs assessment similar to its planning process to determine how the remaining money will be spent next year. Programs at each school will be examined, he said.

The Owsley County school district is using "half this year and half next to maintain current staff levels," Superintendent Melinda Turner said. Funding also has been earmarked for enhancing math intervention and arts and humanities, and to give teachers a full 187-day contract.

Dawson Springs Independent also restored an instructional day and a professional development day to its calendar, effectively giving teachers two days' pay. Superintendent Alexis Seymore said the district will also use its edujobs share for a curriculum specialist for grades K-6 and a speech/language specialist position.

"We want the curriculum specialist to get our test scores up in grades K-6," she said.

Linda Zellich, assistant superintendent for Hopkins County Schools, said the district wanted to put money into the classroom and will do that by hiring 12 instructional assistants at the elementary and middle school levels – amounting to one per school.

"We just feel like that's going to give the children the best chance for success," Zellich said. Principals will decide where the new aides will be deployed in their schools.

Many of those new instructional assistants are expected to be certified teachers who weren't able to find positions for the current school year.

Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday had suggested districts set aside some of the edujobs money to bring teachers up to speed on new common core standards that will take effect next school year.

Teachers, said Murray Independent Superintendent Bob Rogers, were feeling "overwhelmed at the magnitude" of preparing to teach the new standards and asked for help.



So, over the next two years, the district will use edujobs money to pay for a curriculum specialist to work with teachers in grades 6-12, while an existing administrator works with the lower grades.

“Then we’re going to use some money for stipends to bring the teachers in next summer to try to roll out and crosswalk the standards so we know what we’re supposed to teach and where we’re supposed to teach them, what grade level,” Rogers explained.



Owsley County Schools arts enrichment teacher James Cornett shows sixth-graders Tanner Evans and Jesse Dean how to sketch out a drawing before painting it. Edujobs money enabled the district to hold on to Cornett’s position.

Photo provided by Owsley County Schools

### Sustainability

Glasgow Independent Superintendent Sean Howard said he and his team discussed sustainability “in depth” before the board approved using the federal money to expand pre-school and establish positions for a computer technician, two tech resource teachers and an instructional assistant to help struggling high school students. He said the technology and preschool programs in particular are not simply two-year ventures that will end when the federal money does.

“I think we’re just going to have to budget for those items in the future, but this was a good way to get us jump-started. That’s really how we looked at it,” he said.


Silver Grove Independent used its edujobs money to extend funding to pay its new librarian, shelving the money earmarked for the position for use after edujobs funding runs out, Superintendent Ken Ellis said. To sustain the position, he plans to ask the Silver Grove school board to continue taking a property tax rate that will increase revenue by 4 percent each year – which it did this year, but hasn’t always done in the past. “Because of that, I think I can work out down the road to keep (the librarian),” he said.

Dawson Springs’ Seymore hopes retaining the curriculum specialist position won’t be an issue. “I’m hoping a year and half is going to be enough to set us on the right path and that need won’t exist anymore,” she said.

Laurel County Superintendent David Young said his district has been careful to avoid using edujobs money to set up a program that becomes successful and then falls by the wayside when the funding ends.

“What we’ve tried to do is plan things to use it for and by the same token tried to plan within our contingency how to sustain a program if we’re using it for something that we find out is working really well,” Young said. ☘

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# From start to finish

Four-district scholarship program wins KSBA PEAK Award by meeting needs of students at all ages

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

The Four Rivers Scholarship Program bills itself as a west Kentucky treasure, and it is, meeting the needs of students not only at all grade levels, but across four different school districts.

It was started five years ago to provide Fulton Independent, and Fulton, Carlisle and Hickman county students with financial assistance, career counseling and ACT preparation to help them become successful adults and promote economic growth in the region.

It has become much more than that, and for that reason it is the recipient of the 2010 fall KSBA PEAK (*Public Education Achieves in Kentucky*) Award.

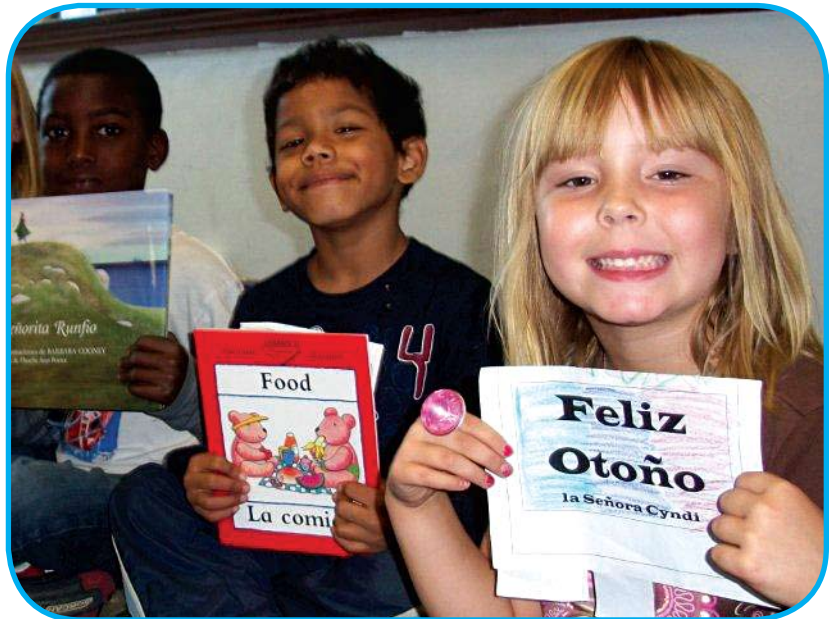
“The Four Rivers Scholarship program is successful because of the collaborative spirit that exists between the four school district boards of education,” as well as district staff, partnerships with four area colleges and local alums, wrote Fulton Independent Superintendent Dianne Owen, in whose district the program began.

Besides the scholarship aspect, the program provides career exploration and counseling beginning in middle school; sponsors an annual Christmas book giveaway for students in kindergarten through fourth grade; holds annual career fairs with a local focus; and offers dual-credit courses for a head start on college.

Scott County school board member and PEAK judge Phyllis Young praised the program for its multifaceted approach.

“It prepares the student at an early age to think of a career,” she said. “It benefits more than one community and more than one school.”

Owen said the total annual cost for the four districts is about \$150,000, with \$70,000 going directly to scholarships. The remaining funds are used to support the dual-



First-grade students at Fulton Independent's Carr Elementary show off their new Spanish lessons after a class with Senora Storey. The district is offering beginning Spanish to kindergarten and first grades as part of the Four Rivers Scholarship Program.

credit programs, textbooks, transportation, registration fees, books and staff. The dual-credit tuition is supplemented by federal GEAR Up grant funds and local business and individual donors, among them, Fulton Independent alumnus and businessman Robbie Rudolph.

“Realizing that an untapped treasure trove of talent existed in our region, Mr. Rudolph has worked with school officials to launch the Four Rivers Scholarship Foundation and Four Rivers Scholarship program,” Owen said.

She said out of the 400 juniors and seniors in the four districts, 198 of them are currently taking a total of 970 dual-credit hours, with an annual savings of future postsecondary costs to parents of \$97,000. The dual credits are offered in partnership with Murray State University, West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Mid-Continent College and the University of Tennessee at Martin.

“Our students will be placed on a track of success from the start (of grade school) with the belief that college is just another branch of the basic educational experience.”

— Hickman County High School English teacher Ann Jewel



Photos by Wendell Benningfield/Fulton Independent Schools

Carr Elementary fifth-graders listen to Capt. Mike Gunn and another local firefighter explain the skills needed to be a firefighter and emergency medical technician during the Fifth/Sixth Grade Career Fair. Gunn teaches EMT dual credit classes to juniors and seniors at Fulton High School as part of the Four Rivers Scholarship Program.

In its five years, the program also has given away more than 1,000 books, has held two annual career fairs and has awarded 50 scholarships to students who otherwise may not have been able to overcome financial barriers to continue their education. Kim Farmer's son is one of the students whose dreams would have been put on hold without the scholarship program.

"... in the middle of his senior year, his father was diagnosed with cancer, which put a tremendous emotional and financial strain on the family," she wrote in her nomination of the program. "It did not seem the best time for Patrick to attend school hours away, and he decided to scale back and take a look at schools closer to home."

Farmer said the scholarship helped Patrick, a 2010 Fulton Independent graduate, attend West Kentucky Community and Technical College, 45 minutes away in Paducah.

"The hidden and unforeseen costs of transportation, various fees ... not covered by most traditional scholarships and grants can seem minor, but are oftentimes the very thing that causes students to delay their education or even drop out," she said. "This program has provided the means to overcome these setbacks, not only in the first year, but the second as well, when funding can be even scarcer."

Hickman County High School English teacher Ann Jewell said she has never seen a program with a greater direct impact on students' lives. Currently, Hickman seniors are enrolled in 182 hours of college classes each day, and are paying nothing for tuition and books, thanks to the program and the generosity of donors. She said many of them will graduate high school with nearly two years of college credit, a tremendous financial boon to them and their families.

"Our students will be placed on a track of success from the start (of grade school) with the belief that college is just another branch of the basic educational experience," she wrote. ☞

— *The PEAK Award was established in 1997 to focus statewide attention on outstanding public school efforts aimed specifically at enhancing student learning skills and, in doing so, to promote the positive impact of public elementary and secondary education in Kentucky. For more information, got to [www.ksba.org/peak](http://www.ksba.org/peak).*

## Elements of the Four Rivers Scholarship Program

Financial assistance for postsecondary education

Dual-credit program, which partners with four area colleges and offsets expenses

Career fairs

Assessments and counseling beginning in middle school to encourage a career path

Annual book giveaways

Beginning Spanish for kindergartners

# NOT YOUR MOTHER'S (OR YOUR) HIGH SCHOOL



Students hang out in the lounge at Elkhorn Crossing School before starting their morning rotation of classes. The Scott County school takes a different approach to education, beginning with the atmosphere.

By Jennifer Wohlleb  
Staff Writer

Ask students at Elkhorn Crossing School in Scott County if they like attending there, and you'll get an unqualified, "Yes" – but you probably won't have to wait to ask.

Students at this one-of-a-kind school are encouraged to introduce themselves to visitors and talk about their school, which has been open only since August.

"It's the highlight of your day," said sophomore Sarah Stewart, who is in the school's media arts village. "It's so much fun to come here. The teachers make it a fun atmosphere for us to work in."

## What is Elkhorn?

The school, which this year is enrolling 430 sophomores and juniors, plus two seniors, is an extended campus of Scott County High School, with students attending for either three morning or three afternoon classes. Its focus is integrating curriculum not only with core content but with specific career areas, divided among three villages.

The school currently houses media arts, engineering and biomedical villages, with plans to add three more in the next three years. The three classes in the engineering village include engineering, math and English; the biomedical village has medical, science and math classes; and media arts includes media, English and science classes.

Principal Francis O'Hara said the village concept allows the

three teachers in each village to closely collaborate, integrating curriculum and giving them better relationships with students.

"This is a career high school, with two core content classes and one career class," O'Hara said, adding that the new three "Rs" – rigor, relevance, relationships – permeate the school's mission. "We have brought in an occupations-based teacher (usually someone with a private-sector background), along with two academic teachers. It improves relevance."

O'Hara, an engineer, helped design the school from the ground up after visiting model schools in the United States, Hong Kong, South Africa and England. He said the program does not cater to "gifted" students, just those who want to be there.

"All that we asked was that they be on grade level," he said. "After that, it was first-come, first served."

Scott County school board Chairwoman Rebecca Sams said the school was created to meet the needs of all students.

"I had someone make the remark, 'Oh, it's just for the gifted and talented students,' and I said, 'No, absolutely not!' It's for all of the students," she said.

She said the school board wants the hands-on program to be an incentive to keep some students in school who otherwise may have dropped out.

"You have to find something of interest for all of the students, whether it's for the best and brightest or for the ones who are struggling," Sams said. "You can find that one thing that they will come to school for, that they're really interested in."



out. We're giving students responsibility and there have been very few discipline problems."

Create a problem, he said, and it's Saturday school. "Students are figuring out that they are going to get Saturday school, and they hate it," he said. "And guess what? That's the point. Every child has to choose to be here and they don't want to lose their spots."

And in an atmosphere in which they want to learn, students are working hard.

"They know if they fail any class, they can't come back," O'Hara said. ☞

— For more information, go to [www.scott.kyschools.us](http://www.scott.kyschools.us), and click on Elkhorn Crossing School in the left column.

**Left:** Cozy groupings of chairs and couches beneath a wall of windows are just inside the front door of Elkhorn Crossing School.

**Below:** Students in the engineering village work on a project. Each of the villages is identical, with a large open room and two attached classrooms. Students don't even need to leave their villages to get to their lockers.



### Atmosphere

The minute you walk into Elkhorn Crossing, it's clear this is not a typical high school. The front doors open into an open, airy student lounge, with groups of comfy sofas and chairs by large windows.

Slightly to the left, the student lounge turns into a chic café-like area, with tall tables and chairs grouped together under wavy, blue neon lights. And unlike most high schools, this school includes a vending area with several machines, a microwave and toaster.

"I like it because it has a college atmosphere," said senior James Scogin.


That's what O'Hara was going for.

"There are no bells," he said. "There are no lockers in the hallways. We have wireless (Internet) in the student lounge. The students take a lot of pride in their school and clean up after themselves. We have a recycling program, started by the students."

Lockers are inside each self-contained village, so students don't have to haul around heavy bags, or worry about getting what they need between classes. With no bells, few announcements over the PA system and high ceilings to disperse noise, the school was designed to remove stressful stimuli that create subliminal tension. Even the building's mechanical systems are housed in a mezzanine. "Noise is stress," O'Hara said.

The students are also treated more like college students.

"There are no hall passes and not a lot of rules," O'Hara said. "It's been a learning curve for all of us, but it's working



# School board elections 2010: The more things change...

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

The atmosphere around this year's general election could not be more different than the one four years ago: there was no Tea Party in 2006, no major economic recession or skyrocketing national debt to propel incumbents out of office.

Yet, the changed climate did not appear to filter down to the Kentucky school board level, proving once again, perhaps, that all politics is local. Like this year, in 2006 most independent districts had elections for three seats, while county districts generally had two seats on the ballot, making up the 400-plus school board slots to be decided.

The number of new school board members who will take office in 2011? 116 in 88 districts. The number sworn in four years ago? 115 in 93 districts.

Returning incumbents elected Nov. 2? 314. The number who were returned to office in 2006? 306.

It gets even more uncanny: The percentage of defeated incumbents this year is 39.4 percent. Four years ago, that figure was 38 percent. The result was almost identical even though 35 percent of incumbents drew opposition in 2010, compared with 29 percent in the previous three independent-, two county-district seat cycle.

Finally, the makeup of 83 school boards will not change as a result of the 2010 election. In 2006, 82 were unchanged.

Of the newcomers, about 68 percent will take a seat that was vacated when an incumbent decided not to run. Among that group is an unusual pair – two brothers who will take their seats on the Glasgow Independent Board of Education.

Businessman Leigh Lessenberry said his older brother Barret, a surgeon, encouraged him to file for a school board seat when they both thought only two seats were up for election. After learning three seats were on the ballot, Barret Lessenberry also decided to make the leap, and they filed together.

"There was no hesitation on my part," the younger Lessenberry said. "I didn't think of him beating me or me beating him. We have worked together on a number of projects."

Leigh Lessenberry said he can't see any potential for conflict

## Election tidbits

- The new member on the Ludlow Independent school board will be there by virtue of a write-in campaign. When the candidate for one of the three seats had to withdraw after the filing deadline because he moved out of the district, Amy L. Hayden won the post as a write-in candidate.
- Kelly Noble Jr., who was removed from the Breathitt County school board by the state board of education after his indictment related to his job as a state employee, ended up withdrawing his name after filing for a seat on the Breathitt County board.
- The election's squeakiest squeaker was in Magoffin County, where incumbent Carl Howard won against challenger Ralph Allen by a single vote. The count was unchanged after a recanvass.
- The former Covington school bus driver who was working for the district when he was elected to the board in November 2006 and removed because of that conflict was denied a seat on the Covington board the second time around, finishing just out of the money.
- Former Woodford County Superintendent Paul Stahler, who was unopposed, will take a seat on the school board there.
- One of the biggest barn-burners took place in Marion County, where three incumbents were wiped out. Alex Ackerman, who was elected in 2007 to finish out the term of Mike Mullins, was defeated by Mullins. Brad Mattingly, who had been serving an unexpired term since his appointment earlier this year, did not retain the seat. Chairwoman Kay Carlew, a 15-year veteran, also was defeated.
- School consolidation was the issue that shot Dr. Michael Kuduk into the Clark County seat of veteran board member Rick Perry, who garnered just 27 percent of the vote. Kuduk is pledging to try to undo the board's plan to consolidate several small schools and create a single middle school.
- Greenup County is one of three districts where the board will have a new majority. One incumbent didn't run and two were beaten. The contest saw the school district filing a lawsuit to determine the eligibility of three of the candidates on the ballot. Just one of the three, an appointee seeking election, actually won.
- Anchorage Independent also will have a new majority because none of the three members whose term is ending filed for re-election.

between the brothers.

“We disagree a lot, but it’s respectfully disagree,” he said. “It’s one of those things that kind of produces positive things.”

The younger Lessenberry said he also doesn’t believe the public will perceive the two as a voting bloc.

In another unusual pairing, two former board members who previously served together will return together to the Pikeville Independent school board. In a six-way race for three seats, former board members Forrest “Buddy” Beeler and Ann Carty nabbed two of them, finishing first and second respectively. Carty was first elected to the Pikeville board in 1996, serving a little more than 10 years. Beeler hasn’t been gone long – after two terms, he didn’t run for re-election in 2008.

“Sometimes you just need a little break and I’m one of those type people, and then you get away from it and miss it,” Beeler said. “The people that I’ve worked with in the past, most of them are still there, and it’s just a real good school system.”

Beeler said he “kept up with (the district) some,” in the interim. “Maybe that’s what kept pulling me back.”

Carty, who was defeated for re-election four years ago, said the loss “just absolutely broke my heart. It’s my school system and I have just always been passionate about education.”

Carty described her win as “rebounding.” A retired educator, she has kept busy during the interim developing a school district museum in the old board meeting room complete with memorabilia of all kinds. The project, she said, is “exciting,” and will probably never end.

Finally, several longtime school board members lost their bids for re-election. Dr. Franklin Belhausen, a member of the Johnson County school board for nearly 40 years, lost his bid for another term. Twenty-seven year Henry County board of education member Roy Winchester also will not be returning. In Edmonson County, Bennie Vincent, coming up on his 24th year of service, was defeated. Charles Keith, a member of the Clay County board for two decades, lost his race. ☘

## 2010 elections by the numbers

361 incumbent board members ran

72 did not run

47 incumbents lost

### New board members

(three independent , two county seat cycle)

2010 – 116

2006 – 115

2002 – 128

1998 – 112

## Kentucky Superintendent Vacancy

### Montgomery County Schools

4,900 (PS-12) [www.montgomery.kyschools.us](http://www.montgomery.kyschools.us)

The Montgomery County Board of Education is seeking an individual who has evidence of being a proven instructional leader. The successful candidate should have administrative experience, good oral communication skills, evidence of good fiscal management, and should be an effective motivator for the 650 staff members. Along with

excellent people skills, the candidate must display a willingness to be visible and involved with the community. Experience with budgeting and building projects is a plus.

The salary is negotiable, with contract to begin July 1, 2011. Candidates must hold or be eligible for a Kentucky superintendent’s certification.

To apply, send seven copies of all of the following: a cover letter/introduction, resume, application form, responses to eight questions, certification, three (3) letters of recommendation, and one video (optional) to: Montgomery County Superintendent Search, Kentucky School Boards Association, 260 Democrat Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601. Find application form, video information and questions at: [www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org); go to Employment Opportunities. *Application deadline is March 4, 2011.*

# Preschool group hopes legislators learn a lesson

By Wayne Dominick

**I**t was show-and-tell time in preschool class at Breathitt County's LBJ Elementary School on a recent November day, but while the students did the showing, adults did the telling.

The 3- and 4-year-olds recited the Pledge of Allegiance, named the day, month and year, reported the weather conditions and counted all the way to 100. The youngsters left their group activity to work in stations, choosing the toys and learning aids they wanted to use.

"It looks like play, and in a lot of ways it is," teacher Carla Gabbard explained. "But while they're in stations, they're learning social skills. They learn to work together and take directions – things they need to know in kindergarten."

While the students are busy in stations, Gabbard has the opportunity to work one-on-one or in small groups with those students who need special attention. "We can't afford to waste any time in here," she said. "We make every minute count."

Her explanation was for the benefit of adult onlookers who were watching the children recite and work in groups.

The visitors were state Rep. Ted Edmonds from Jackson, state Sen. Johnny Ray Turner of Floyd County and local Chamber of Commerce President Doug Fraley. They were invited to the school by Strong Start Kentucky, an offshoot of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, so they could see what quality preschool looks like.

The Breathitt County preschool was the first "demonstration" site in the group's latest bid to promote awareness of the value of early childhood education;

other preschools around the state will host their area lawmakers and business people as part of the initiative.

Strong Start Kentucky Project Coordinator Angela Brant said the sessions with legislators are designed to educate



Sen. Johnny Turner tried to guess what was in preschool teacher Carla Gabbard's mystery bag by sniffing it. Turner was unable to name the contents, but he did rule out one of the guesses — broccoli. Rep. Ted Edmonds, center, and Jackson/Breathitt County Chamber President Doug Fraley, right, look on.



them about the importance of preschool and to show them what quality preschool programs are like.

“Today’s quality preschool programs are what kindergarten and first grade were like 20 or 30 years ago,” Brant said. “We’re trying to make everyone, not just legislators, aware of what quality preschool looks like.”

Once the public is aware of what quality preschool looks like, they will see why preschool is so important to student success, according to Brant. “All the data supports (preschool’s importance). Kids who have been in quality preschool programs have much more success later on,” she said.

Breathitt County Preschool Director Wayne Sizemore agreed. “We’ve spent a lot time on our preschool curriculum. We wanted to make sure that everything we do throughout the day has purpose.”

After visiting the classroom, Brant and Sizemore gave the visitors some ideas of what direction they would like preschool to take.

“What I’d really like to see is preschool made available for all 3- and 4-year-olds,” Sizemore said. Currently, state preschool funding covers only students who qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch or have special needs. “If we want to move ahead as a state, we have to make sure all our students get a good start.”

Brant added that in addition to funding, the legislature should work to enhance the quality of all preschool programs and support community-based programs. “The data show that students who have been in quality preschool programs are less likely to need interventions later and are more likely to graduate,” she said.

Fraley, the chamber of commerce president, likened the situation to clean rivers: “You don’t clean up a river at the mouth; you make sure the streams that feed into it are clean. We can’t have kids entering college that need remedial classes. We have to get them off to a good start so they



Preschool students in Carla Gabbard’s class in Breathitt County vote on what story they want to hear by standing by the reader holding the book. The day of the visit, instructional aide “Miss Connie” was the clear winner with a story about dinosaurs.

will be successful throughout their academic careers.”

Turner said he would favor putting more money into preschool to prevent students from dropping out of high school. “We shouldn’t be waiting till kids are on the verge of dropping out to do something,” he said. “That’s too late. We need to get them off to a good start and concentrate on them having a strong foundation.”

However, given the state’s current financial situation, it would be difficult to fully fund preschool, he added.

Sizemore recognizes that state money might not be readily available and that local districts will have to make a commitment to the program. He pointed out that Breathitt County Schools has used general fund money to increase the preschool program from half-day to full day. Brant added that local businesses also could be a source of support.

“I know money is tight,” Sizemore said, making his final pitch, “and you get hit every day by people who want money for good programs, but I like to think of money for preschool as an investment. It will not only mean less money for remediation down the road, it will also produce more graduates, a better-educated work force and a better Kentucky.” ❧

— Dominick is a writer from Frankfort

# Healthy students, healthy staff

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

Schools have a couple of advantages when it comes to employee wellness programs, according to Dr. Ellen Essick, health education consultant for Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Schools have built-in planning groups in the form of their school health councils, she said, while the staff and teachers already spend a lot of time together.

"It's a real good opportunity for them to have some healthy competition, some fun," she said.

Money can be a barrier or perceived challenge to staff wellness programs, but, Essick said, "Creative people can work around that barrier."

"Some of the schools across the country have been really creative in coming up with things they can do for free or asking community partners to donate things if they have incentives for their employee wellness programs," she said. "Or sometimes someone can come in and teach a class for them for free."

Essick made the comments following her presentation at the Safe and Healthy Schools and Students Conference, Nov. 15-16. The annual event is sponsored by KSBA and the Kentucky Center for School Safety. The Alliance for a Healthier Generation works to reduce childhood obesity, encourage healthy lifestyle choices among children and make changes in the school environment. One component of making healthy changes in schools is staff wellness, Essick said.

Factors affecting our health are heredity, environment and lifestyle – with lifestyle being the area we can control. "I can't totally control my environment; I can't control my genes," Essick said, "but I can certainly control the things that I do every single day."

Think about how to work in extra movement during the day, while finding an exercise you like to do outside of work, she said. Workplace wellness programs can work because, "We do things better in numbers. If someone holds us accountable, we'll show up."

Essick said school employee wellness programs set an example for students, reduce



Conference speaker Dr. Ellen Essick had to deliver her presentation while seated because of recent surgery.

absenteeism – which cuts costs for substitutes – and improve morale.

The steps for starting an employee wellness program in a school are the same as beginning one on your own, she said. First, conduct an assessment of current employee behavior or an interest survey.

"A quick survey tells you what they want to do. Once you find out what they want to do, start one or two activities at a time."

Pedometer walking programs get people motivated if they can log their steps, Essick said. Keep the program simple and low- or no-cost, and make sure it has high visibility. To encourage commitment, she suggested providing incentives such as T-shirts or water bottles, creating visual displays, and promoting both teamwork and friendly competition.

To keep interest from flagging, run three- to eight-week campaigns, she said. Leave the "biggest loser" for reality TV, as those programs are not effective. Aim for "a healthy weight loss that's sustainable."

And, Essick advised, "you will sabotage yourself" if you try to lose weight now because of all the holiday food. "Try to maintain until January," she said. ☘

## Holiday on safe schools

Education Commissioner Terry Holliday told attendees of the Safe and Healthy Schools and Students Conference that the state's program reviews in its new accountability system will include "measures related to healthy schools and healthy children."

"Poverty, obesity and academic performance are linked together. We must address obesity," he said.

Also in the context of the conference, Holliday cited bullying as a priority issue for him. "We have got to figure this issue out and we've got to deal with it head on," he said.

The commissioner also singled out alternative programs as a priority, saying, "We can't keep putting kids in holding tanks called alternative programs unless those programs offer them something different for their future. All you're doing there is creating potentially the next prison population."

The state has some exemplary alternative programs, Holliday noted, but he wants all alternative programs to be "strong options for children rather than punishment for mistakes that they made." ☘

# Anti-bullying blitz shows promise in Pulaski County

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**A**larmed about bullying and relational aggression among students, Pulaski County educators responded with a little creative aggression of their own.

They devised a program for fifth-grade girls that is aimed at preventing the kind of emotional bullying that is more prevalent among girls than boys. Very Important Girls sets aside a day early in the school year for activities that help girls understand bullying and its consequences, while promote bonding among the participants.

The highlight of the activities is a VIP luncheon where staff serve the girls a special dessert and clean up afterward. Pulaski Elementary guidance counselor Sue Stickley said she thought the lessons would stick with the students better with this treat. "If we give them the VIP treatment, we are going to make them feel so special," she said.

The groundwork for Very Important Girls is laid in advance when girls take a survey that scores them on a scale of behaviors relating to bullying. Once that's established, they are divided into smaller groups with a balance among the personality types and a female adult team leader assigned to each group.

The groups participate in fun, research-based activities with lessons about bullying in each. The session on cyberbullying, for example, helps them realize the effects of spreading gossip or writing mean comments on social websites.

"It's a real eye-opening activity for the girls," said Lori Hall, the

district's coordinator of student and family support services.

They also paint tote bags that show what they've learned and that also provide a visual reminder of the lessons, Stickley said. Very Important Girls doesn't stop with one day of activity. The groups meet throughout the year with their adult leaders to reinforce the messages.

"I think the follow up is what makes it so beneficial," Hall said.

The organizers didn't think the fifth-grade boys would be envious of the exercise, but their reaction prompted creation of a concurrent day for them – dubbed No Girls Allowed. The boys get a character-building movie, grill hot dogs for lunch and use fabric markers to decorate T-shirts. Their activities are more hands-on than the girls' sessions, and include discussions about hygiene and respect for girls.

The cost of the programs is minimal, Stickley said, estimating it was less than \$500 for both sessions.

Because the programs are fairly new, there is no data yet to gauge the results, only anecdotal evidence, Hall said.

"We're not eliminating the problem, but I think we're giving them skills they can use," Stickley said. ☘



Pulaski County Schools Administrator Lori Hall.

## High poverty, high achievement how-to's

By Madelynn Coldiron  
Staff Writer

**R**obert Barr and William H. Parrett prove that it's not necessarily a bad thing to share someone else's secrets.

As two of the headliners at this year's Safe and Healthy Students and Schools Conference, they teamed up to share the secrets of schools that have become high-performing despite having a high-poverty student population.

Barr, senior analyst for the Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies at Boise State University, and Parrett, the center's director, said there are common threads among hundreds of high-poverty, high-performing schools across the country.

Leaders of these schools have built leadership capacity and distributed leadership within their buildings, focused on both student and teacher learning, and fostered a safe, supportive and healthy environment.

"These are not one, two, three," Parrett said. "They do all of these things."

Their presentation was based on their synthesis of research about what works in these schools, but they also outlined what works against improvement.

"One of the things you must confront in your commu-

nity, whether you're a board member, a superintendent of schools, a teacher, a parent, is make certain that you're not practicing functions within your schools that doom a kid to failure," Barr said. "And the first one is low expectations. We now know without a shadow of a doubt that kids will live up to our expectations or they'll live down to our expectations."

What are some other negative practices? Parrett listed inequitable funding, tracking, pullouts, mis-assigning special education students, ineffective teaching and inappropriate teacher assignments, and blaming.

Conversely, Barr said he saw the transformative power of instilling hope, pride, confidence and a sense of belonging in poor children during a visit to Johnson County Schools in Kentucky.

High-performing, high poverty schools have systematic remediation and re-teaching, an emphasis on reading, extended learning time, and caring relationships between adults and at-risk kids.

Barr asked attendees what their schools are doing to offset the effects of poverty on kids, including poor nutrition, a lack of books and limited exposure to a rich vocabulary at home, lack of preparation for the early grades and unchallenging summer breaks.

"Be conscious of the needs of poor children," Barr said. "You are the door of opportunity for children in Kentucky." ☘

# Joanne Lange

Executive Director  
of AdvanceKentucky

*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 Joanne Lange, right, executive director of AdvanceKentucky, a statewide math and science initiative dedicated to helping Kentucky students reach new heights in rigorous academic achievement. The program, a partnership between the Kentucky Science and Technology Corporation and the National Math and Science Initiative, is part of the state's effort to increase and improve the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curriculum so students will be better prepared when they enroll in a postsecondary program, and to create more scientists and engineers to help the United States remain globally competitive in these areas.*



Photo provided by AdvanceKentucky

## Q. Why was AdvanceKentucky created?

A. In 2007, Kentucky was one of six states that won a competition for funding from the National Math Science Initiative, which at that time was a new foundation, privately funded, to make investments in already proven STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) programming for high schools and colleges.

The program significantly expands access to, participation in and success in AP math, science and English programs. This is supported by an interconnected set of Elements of Success.

We have 44 schools in the program. Each year for the three years of the program, we have added 12-16 new schools. We hope to continue adding a new cohort of schools each year.

## Q. What are the program's goals?

A. Our goal is one, really – to significantly increase the numbers of qualifying scores on the math, science, English AP exams. To have the scores, you have to have the enrollments; to have the enrollments, you have to have the courses; to have the courses, you have to have the teachers. The system is built on producing success as measured by students' qualifying scores of 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam, which is a measure of college-level accomplishments by high school students.

## Q. Is making these classes available half the battle?

A. It's an important part of the battle, but in and of itself is not sufficient ... every single piece of the pie is important and that is how the tremendous success is occurring. And it's all or none. It's not, "Well, we're going to offer more courses and then we'll see how that goes," or, "We're going to send teachers to training one year and we'll see how that goes;

we'll help pay for exam fees and see how that goes."

It's making investments in teachers and students. Everything is geared toward success and support of students, which means the success and support of teachers are vital.

There's content-intensive training for AP and pre-AP teachers in these subject areas. We have mentors available, content coordinators and an administrator in each school, communicating with us and making sure that we're providing the support that they personally need at that school, not what we think they need.

There is some support for AP exam fees. There is a budget for supplies and equipment. But I can tell you the two biggest pieces are teacher training and more of what we call student time on task.

There are multiple teacher training activities that are done throughout the year by both national and local trainers who have experienced considerable success with their own students.

With more student time on task, like anything, the more you are able to spend concentrated time on the content, the students are more apt to learn at rigorous levels.

This is defined as three extra study sessions, six hours each. That's 18 more hours of content opportunity, training opportunity, classroom instruction opportunity for students for every AP math, science, English course that they're enrolled in.

Their teachers are expected to attend these extra study sessions as well. We bring in a "master teacher," a teacher who has demonstrated proven, sustained success in their content area with their AP students.

We hire them as consultants to conduct these Saturday study sessions, and the teachers see that at some point, they need to be doing these exercises in their lessons and they see the expectation of the level of instructional time for those extra lessons needed for student success.

**Q. What should school board members know about this program?**

**A.** There are some policy issues that I talk about to school boards – which I try to do each fall after the results come out, because that is part of the sustainability.

We encourage them to really understand what open enrollment means (when it comes to AP programs).

What open enrollment is about is incenting and rewarding practices that scan through every ounce of data the district has on every student, down to the EXPLORE scores. Are there data that begin to identify a student's capacity that perhaps that student is not yet aware of? Do the Individual Learning Plans indicate that a student wants to be a researcher, a physician, an engineer, but is not on track yet to be ready to take the rigorous courses that will serve them well if they pursue that career? Not that they must pursue it, but give them the choice to pursue it without so much difficulty.

Open enrollment is a practice that is really important if you are going to see the level of growth that we have seen in 28 schools. In 44 schools, we have 11,000 enrolled in AP math, science, English for the 10-11 school year. We started with nothing. So you can see when you make that commitment to go find your students, know your data so more students are identified and invited to participate in AP and pre-AP courses, look at it over and over again, it's really important.

**Q. What is another policy area that boards need to address?**

**A.** It's really important to understand the sequencing of courses. I'll give you an example: if a student is not taking Algebra I for high school credit in the eighth grade, it means they will have to double up on the math courses in order to be eligible to take AP calculus by the time they are a senior.

For us, that's a hurdle that is potentially unnecessary – particularly in an open enrollment environment involving many more students who are traditionally underrepresented in AP. If you're thoughtful about it, it's not that they must take AP calculus, but if they even have the choice of taking AP calculus, they need to be successful in each year of math, starting in the seventh and eighth grades. The pre-AP sequencing is important.

It also is a branding issue in some respects. What you title your courses, if you call it pre-AP, then maybe the student develops some confidence, "Maybe I can do AP because I've already experienced success in a pre-AP course." It's changing the culture, it's building confidence, capacity in the students that they can pursue that track.

Another policy issue relating to open enrollment is what administrators and policy makers value. Nowhere in our documentation does it say anything about pass rates. You can impact pass rates simply by restraining who takes the exam. So if you only have the best and brightest in your AP class take the

exam, you can have very, very high pass rates. So as a board or principal, if we are rewarding and acknowledging that pass rates are a valuation measure of any kind, we are inadvertently sending a contradictory message about what we all really want to achieve in an open enrollment environment.

Rather, we look at statistics that level the playing field by equating each school's number of qualifying scores to what they would be if it was a school the size of 1,000 juniors and seniors total. So you can get away from pass rates, but you still have a measure of success that is equitable and fairly calculated. Regardless of the size of your school, you know how your students are performing and if they can do better – compared to state and national rates of qualifying scores per 1,000 juniors and seniors.

**Q. And how are AdvanceKentucky students performing?**

**A.** We are finding that with our participating schools, the qualifying math, science, English scores per 1,000 juniors and seniors is skyrocketing past the national rate. You can see it over and over again.

In the first and second years of the program, they are between 11-17 times the national rate of increases in AP math, science, English qualifying scores. So not only have they improved, they have transformed the success they are experiencing in these rigorous courses.

**Q. What are your goals at the end of the six years?**

**A.** Obviously, sustainability. We are also changing the culture. We have seen a transformation of these schools that are in the program for a year. We have a set of schools that have been through it for two years and are now in their third year, and they get it. Students get it because success breeds success.

What we are investing in is schools understanding the value of teacher training, more training and training again, even for experienced, successful teachers: how to do these study sessions; the value of exam fees – if you get these kids prepared and they can't afford even the partial exam fee - that's an investment as a school and a state that we need to consider.

Equipping your labs. Even if you are fortunate enough to have a full complement of AP science courses, they are so lab intensive that if you don't have a well-equipped lab, or the ability year after year to buy the consumables that are essential to do those labs, we miss key learning opportunities.

All the pieces – Elements of Success — are pretty well defined, straightforward and each contributes to student learning. Our intent is to help educators adapt the Elements of Success to their local circumstances, enabling these proven strategies to be embraced and implemented long after the life of any grant program. ☞

*“In the first and second years of the program, they (AdvanceKentucky students) are between 11-17 times the national rate of increases in AP math, science, English qualifying scores. So not only have they improved, they have transformed the success they are experiencing in these rigorous courses.”*

# How did Kentucky students do in 2010 testing? Depends on who's talking and when

**M**artians circling the Earth to gather information about our culture were hovering over Kentucky. As part of their surveillance, they followed the major news developments across the state.

One week this fall, the Martians – who had mastered English – read these headlines:

- Most Kentucky high school graduates not ready for college, jobs
- 5 percent fewer schools reach federal proficiency targets
- School board seeks reasons for bad scores
- Test scores reflect weaknesses
- Analysis shows Kentucky students moving too slowly toward goals

One Martian said to the other, “Poor Kentucky.”

However, a week later, as the Martians scanned the state’s media websites, they read very different headlines:

- School scores 100 percent on NCLB for 2010 progress
- Hard work adds up: students recognized for latest test score achievements
- School district has met target goals of NCLB
- School system’s test scores returned with positive results
- Region’s students making progress

One Martian looked at the other through his single eye and said, “€Ωδδ?” Rough translation: “Huh?”

Poor Martians. Who can blame them for their confusion?

Poor Kentuckians, especially parents of school-age children. Many of them must be just as confused.

### A lot riding on new test

Let’s drop arguments over the be-perfect-or-you’ve-failed No Child Left Behind measurement of school progress. End the debates over whether testing changes permit a real comparison of 2010 scores with those of previous years. And please don’t throw in, “But our interim index ranking shows...”

Clearly, the work to develop Kentucky’s new school accountability system – and marrying the test to the national common-core standards – is crucial. You don’t hear anyone disagree with the goal of knowing how Kentucky students match up academically with youth in Indiana or India.

But way too many Kentucky parents I’ve been listening to are confused by what this year’s testing results meant. Just being “new and improved” won’t gain their confidence in whatever is used to assess student, school and district growth two years from now.



Brad Hughes  
KSBA Member  
Support Services Director

There is no disrespect intended here either for the post-testing messages of Education Commissioner Terry Holliday, superintendents or district assessment coordinators, as explained in the stories represented by those news headlines above.

Holliday gave both a straightforward evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the data, plus a refreshingly candid (for a chief state school officer) analysis of the No Child Left Behind law’s all-or-nothing end result. District leaders demonstrated

that they understand it is up to them to point out where progress was made as well as where lack of it must be aggressively addressed.

Here’s hoping someone is working on a parallel plan to educate parents, employers and the rest of us non-teachers what the outcomes of the new system mean. If not, public school advocates face the very real task of having to get people to buy a new yardstick that we say is 40 inches in length.

### The Last Word

The 2010 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll released last month showed that 48 percent of Americans surveyed gave the nation’s public schools a grade of A or B, but 77 percent of those same respondents gave their local public schools the same high grades.

In short, Americans cut their local schools – maybe their alma mater districts – a level of slack we don’t afford to the nation’s public education system in general.

Kentucky’s new accountability system, specifically designed to permit greater comparisons between schools, districts, states and nations, may work against that tendency to give local schools the benefit of the doubt. There’s nothing wrong with that. A school that doesn’t move all of its students forward deserves to be called out – publicly – and challenged to make a dramatic turnaround.

But let’s not wait another two years – when it’s now projected that Kentucky’s new system of assessing school progress will be fully implemented – to be ready to help parents and the public at large understand the length of the new yardstick that shows how we are advancing learning locally and across the Commonwealth.

When that part of the plan is in place, the job of educating the public on that yardstick won’t rest in the lap of one education commissioner and 174 superintendents. It must be undertaken by every leader’s voice working to give Kentucky students the best shot at standing tall compared with learners regardless of where they’re from.

And that’s a message worth getting out. ☚

# LAST CHANCE, FIRST CHANCE

## KSBA's 2010 Winter Symposium

When: Dec. 3-4

Where: Louisville Marriott Downtown

For seasoned school board members, Winter Symposium is the last chance to earn training credits for the year. For newly elected board members, it's the first chance to learn about their new job. That's why the day-and-a-half training event is a mix of sessions covering both the basics and more advanced courses from the Academy of Studies.

### Snapshot:

- Emphasis on finance and facilities
- Half-day session on school energy management
- Training sessions at all Academy of Studies levels
- Basics for new board members
- The return of the Friday night tailgating reception

Go to [www.ksba.org](http://www.ksba.org) for details and registration information.

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# Energy instruction is elementary



The 2010 Energy Awareness Day at Henderson Community College Campus was a day for fourth-graders from Henderson, Union, Webster and Crittenden county schools to not only learn about energy conservation, but to teach each other. More than 200 students attended the day, which was coordinated by those school districts' energy manager.

Students were treated to Harry Potter-themed skits, as well as hands-on learning activities and games where they could win "energy bucks" to redeem at the prize table.

(Above) Karen Reagor, Kentucky coordinator for the National Energy Education Development project, prepared a group of Henderson students to enter the Energy Carnival, where they learned fun and entertaining facts about energy.

(Above right) Henderson County student Camille Whitby shows students how to use a "Kill A Watt" monitor, which measures the power consumption of a standard electrical device.

(Right) Students from Sebree Elementary in Webster County participated in a hands-on activity demonstrating the transfer of energy from light to electrical to mechanical.



Photo by Ellen Redding/Henderson County Schools