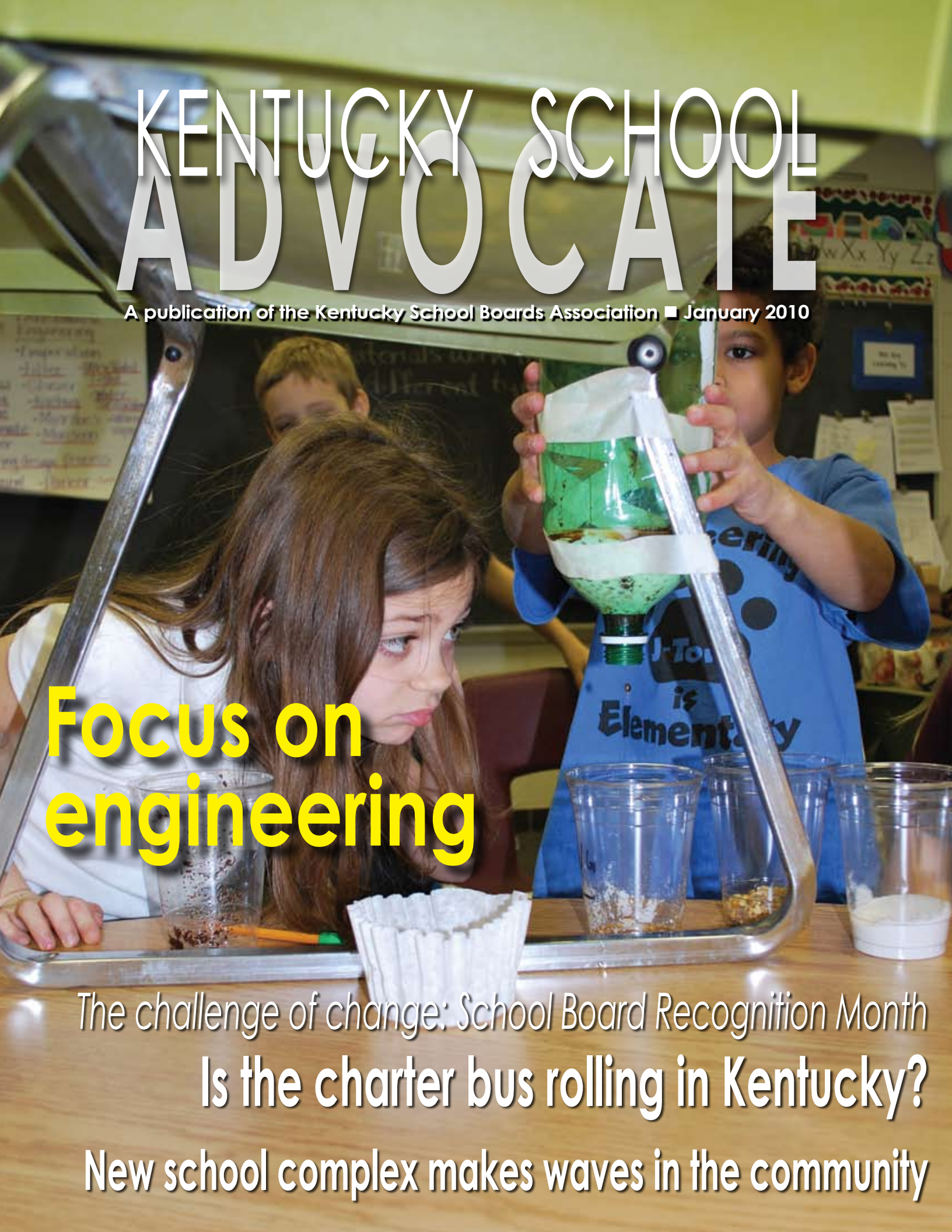


KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ January 2010



**Focus on
engineering**

The challenge of change: School Board Recognition Month

Is the charter bus rolling in Kentucky?

New school complex makes waves in the community



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FEATURES

DUAL PURPOSE

Russell County Schools' new \$14 million natatorium/auditorium complex offers physical education and cultural opportunities for students. But it is also benefiting the community as a performing and meeting venue – and as an economic development recruiting tool ... Page 8

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT

As Kentucky's local school board members are honored during School Board Recognition Month in January, they face changes that may rival those of the 1990 reform law. Three school board members of varying experience share how their job has changed – and how they will cope with still more change ... Page 12

IT STARTED WITH JOE BROTHERS

Kentucky Board of Education Chairman Joe Brothers inspired – and entertained – local school board members as he gave the inaugural talk on “It Started with a School Board” during KSBA's Winter Symposium on Dec. 12 ... Page 16

WORTH A NICKEL

Tax may be a dirty word, but levy is not, according to Taylor County Schools Superintendent Roger Cook who has a proven strategy for winning the public over to a nickel tax for facilities – a strategy he is in the process of using for a second time ... Page 17

CHARTER BARTER?

Charter-school bill requests have been prefiled for the 2010 session of the General Assembly. Charters also have increased their profile with competition for federal education innovation funding. Will the legislature open what one KSBA board member calls “Pandora's box”? ... Page 15



Multi-purpose fun and function, Page 8



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On the cover



Jeffersontown Elementary School students Brennan Johnson and Rajan Burnett keep an eye on an experimental water filtration system, comparing a method using sand and gravel with others that used coffee filters and a screen. This project is just one of many for students in Engineering is Elementary, a STEM-based program. Article on Page 10.

TAKE NOTE

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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.

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It's a sweep

November's OASIS (Outstanding Achievement in School Information Services) Awards kicked off a new feature for the annual professional development program, sponsored by KSBA and the Kentucky School Public Relations Association.

Added to the categories for 2009 was a "Sweepstakes" event to recognize school public relations programs for multifaceted achievement. Entrants in this category designated three of their OASIS entries for the Sweepstakes nomination. The inaugural honorees in the new category were Fayette County Schools, Nelson County Schools, Kenton County Schools and Mayfield Independent Schools.

Digital district

Kentucky's Madison County is among the top 10 districts of its size in the sixth annual Digital School Districts Survey, sponsored by e.Republic's Center for Digital Education, the National School Boards Association and Converge On-line magazine.

The digital school boards were honored during the National School

Boards Association's T+L Conference in Denver in October. Madison County Schools tied for seventh place with Jones County Schools in Georgia among medium-sized districts.

The survey's purpose is to recognize school districts and school boards across the nation whose use of digital technology is exceptional in interfacing with students, parents and community, district governing, and bettering of operations. Districts that demonstrated the most comprehensive use of digital standards were chosen as the top 10-ranking districts.

Back by popular demand

A committee has nominated four current regional chairpersons on the KSBA Board of Directors for a second three-year term. They are: Ann Porter of Mason County, Durward Narramore of Jenkins Independent, Allen Kennedy of Hancock County and Darryl Lynch of Christian County. Both Kennedy and Lynch had been serving unexpired terms. Local school boards also had until Dec. 18, past the *Kentucky School Advocate's* printing deadline, to nominate a member for any of those positions. ☞

Hanner time

Kenton County Schools Superintendent Tim Hanner is Kentucky's 2010 Superintendent of the Year. Hanner was recognized by the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents during its winter conference last month.

Hanner told the KASS audience that the state is on the verge of a period of change for public schools that will rival the early years of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, and made a pitch for funding for P-12 education. "Our public has to see that the way out of our economic troubles is an educated, well-trained society," he said. "We have to invest in and continue to protect education. And that only happens when we work together."

Hanner, who has headed Kenton County Schools since 2006, will be recognized during AASA's National Conference on Education in February, and participate in a discussion forum on an educational issue that will be published in *Leadership for Change*, a white paper for educators worldwide.

Hanner is pictured far right receiving the award from Wayne Young, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators.



The Year in Review

My, how time flies! Incredibly, it has been one full year since I took the reins as KSBA president and I have already had many positive experiences and made some wonderful memories.

It is a real honor for me to have the opportunity each day to work with so many talented people, board members and educators, who have dedicated their lives to the children of Kentucky. In fact, throughout the past year I've found it difficult just trying to decide which venue to attend as there is always something productive going on and I try to make as many events as possible, whether statewide conferences, visits to districts or regional meetings.

With now more than 3,300 miles under my belt, I must say, however, the regional meetings are quickly becoming my favorite gathering. It's very beneficial for local board members to get together and share their enthusiasm and thoughts on improving public education.

Bill Scott is to be commended for his leadership role in putting together the regional meetings. He and his leadership team do an excellent job of planning and attending each meeting and doing what it takes to make all of us more productive school board members.

Perhaps the most moving and eye-opening moment over the past year took place at the Kentucky Safe Schools, Successful Students conference in Louisville. John Halligan showed great courage as he stood before those in attendance and detailed how his 14-year-old son was a victim of cyberbullying, bullying that ultimately drove the young man to take his own life.

The safe schools conference is a large event and the crowd was great, but as Mr. Halligan shared "Ryan's Story," the room fell silent. Up until then I was relatively unfamiliar with cyberbullying and how some students deal with this on a daily basis. However, I am relieved to be able to say



Delmar Mahan
KSBA President and Whitley County
Board of Education member

that the Kentucky legislature has addressed this issue and added provisions in KRS 525.080 that specifically address intimidation via the Internet.

I encourage all board members not only to be aware of the seriousness of bullying, electronically and otherwise, as it relates to our children, but also of our responsibility as outlined by our legal obligation. Please take the opportunity and attend the 2010 safe schools conference, now called the KSBA Safe and Healthy Schools Conference. Also note that there will be a pre-conference workshop dealing with bullying at the annual conference, Jan. 22-24 in Louisville.

As rewarding as the past year has been, it also has been a challenging one for the association. Just as every other business or organization has during these difficult times, we have had to adapt and change accordingly. One major development worth mentioning is the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust's (KSBIT) partnership with the Kentucky League of Cities.

With the Kentucky League of Cities insurance staff now operating the administrative duties of the KSBIT insurance program, your KSBA team will be able to devote more of their time and resources to education issues and external factors that affect our ability to educate the children of this state.

One constant factor with regard to the Kentucky School Boards Association has been the professionalism and the passion shared by the team members and their belief in the goals and the mission of KSBA, which is to enhance school board leadership in maximizing student achievement through superior support and services.

With team KSBA and the opportunity to learn from school board members across Kentucky and this nation, I am looking forward to my final year as your president. Thank you for your dedication and service to the children in your school district. ☘

"I encourage all board members not only to be aware of the seriousness of bullying, electronically and otherwise, as it relates to our children, but also of our responsibility as outlined by our legal obligation."

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

Photo provided by Warren Co. Schools



“All students need one person to turn to and Mr. (Principal Larry) McCraney was that for me. I’ve seen how much success he’s (had) and I want to be successful. I don’t want to be another statistic.”

Tyshon Kirkendoll, who recently earned his diploma from the Warren County alternative high school, Lighthouse Academy, addressing the audience at Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear’s first regional Dropout Prevention Summit at Greenwood High School. From the Bowling Green *Daily News*.

“If we can identify these kids that are struggling academically early on and meet their needs and catch them up... then that’s probably the biggest preventative we can do.” Bell County Schools Superintendent George Thompson in a conversation with Education Commissioner Terry Holliday about the initiative that has raised the district’s high school graduation rate from 60 percent to 80 percent since 2004. From the Hazard WYMT-TV News.

“I do not see how a DCHS (Davies County High School) graduate would have different needs than an Apollo (High School) graduate, and vice versa. We need to make things easier for students and their families, not more difficult. We should work toward schedules and transitions not being barriers to course offerings and ultimately student success.” Superintendent Tom Shelton on his school board’s desire that the district’s two high schools



adopt a common daily schedule. From the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

“From a district standpoint ... Obviously, an A. From the standpoint of the school, D would be the description of it. The reason for that is because a lot of the findings we had were things that were so basic, and there are dangerously close to being no controls whatsoever.” Auditor Artie White answering Jessamine County board Chairman Karl Smith’s question about the grade he would give after the annual audit pointed out 69

“conditions” in the management letter, mostly directed at the district’s two high schools. From the Nicholasville *Jessamine Journal*.

“I have just never seen a school in front of another school.” Interim Elizabethtown Independent Schools Superintendent Gary French on his school board’s reversal of an earlier decision on the location of a planned preschool and kindergarten center, which now will be constructed beside rather than in front of an elementary school. From the Elizabethtown *News-Enterprise*.

“They need to understand, we’ve been asked to do more and more and more every year with less and less funding, less resources, and if 80 percent of our budget is personnel, that means less resources means less personnel.” Campbell County school board member and Bellevue Independent Principal Janis Winbigger reacting to a Campbell County teacher’s



Calendar contortions

“It seems like it makes sense that it would be a good opportunity to get some good instructional time in.” Letcher County school board member Dr. Sam Quillen Jr. in support of requiring six schools to shorten their planned Christmas/New Year’s breaks by two days to make up for days missed due to student and staff illnesses. From the Whitesburg *Mountain Eagle*.

“We had to look at everything involved, and more than just the survey. What we had to think about is how that we as a district can get in the number of days that we’re required by law to get in. Some parents and teachers did not get to participate due to missing the call or not having an up to date phone number in the system. We will not use this method of survey again until all issues are cleared.” Berea Independent school board Chairwoman Deena Jones explaining why the board discarded results of a telephone survey in redrawing this year’s calendar to make up days missed because of high flu-related absenteeism. From the *Richmond Register*.

complaint that many district educators are stressed out because of demands that they do more with less resources. From the Fort Mitchell *Kentucky Enquirer*.

“We’re getting very close to having that plan worked out. Students can do that now, but they pay for it. This would cost the school district, but it would be free to students.” Hancock County Schools Superintendent Scott Lewis on the district’s plans to enable high school students to take 60 college credit hours prior to graduation. From the Hawesville *Hancock Clarion*.

“Well, a lot of them really don’t know what’s going on. The parents are passing rumors around. Our role is to take corrective action that is fair and reasonable and not overreact.” Montgomery County Schools Superintendent Daniel Freeman reacting to statements by some parents who wanted tough disciplinary action in the wake of an alleged middle school basketball team hazing incident. From the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

“I would like to get it banned from high school libraries. If they are not allowed to freely say it out aloud, then they shouldn’t be reading it.” Bardstown Independent parent Wendy Ackley on her effort to get the General Assembly to prohibit Kentucky schools from using the book, *The Chocolate War*, after the novel containing profanity and sexual language was discussed in her daughter’s high school English class. From the Bardstown *Kentucky Standard*.



“I was excited. I wanted one so bad. I wanted it and got it and then it cried and cried. If you want a life, don’t have a baby. I’ve always loved babies.... but we’re just not ready for this.”

Logan County High School sophomore Meredith Riley on the lessons learned after receiving a computer-programmed electronic baby doll in her parenting and child development class. From the Russellville *News-Democrat & Leader*.

“Cut it, cook it, eat it. Take the feathers off, cook in oven until little beeping noise goes off. Cook turkey in microwave for 30 seconds. Put it in the oven for a minute, put something on it. Mom has to hunt it and then we eat it.” Selected observations by “culinary experts” in Lesley Wesley’s first-grade class at Jones Park Elementary School (Casey County) on preparing a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. From the Liberty *Casey County News*.

“It cost you more money to feed fewer kids last year.” Auditor Wes Alford to the Hopkins County school board, explaining an otherwise positive audit that showed how the district’s food services budget was hurt by higher food costs, lower federal funding due to the days missed in the ice storm and steady overhead costs. From the Madisonville *Messenger*.

“We’re going to show you a little bit of science, but mostly we’re just going to blow things up.” Tyler Green, chairman of the chemistry department at Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, to several dozen math and science gifted fourth and fifth-grade students from Hinsdale Elementary (Kenton County), during a session of the college’s yearlong partner program to encourage younger students to set higher education as a goal. From NKY.com.

“If a child takes a language in elementary or middle school, then in high school, where do you go? It’s a wonderful program, and we hope we can expand it. But we’re not sure how.” Trimble County Schools Supervisor of Instruction Rebecca Moore on how to build on the impact of a computer-based foreign language program that has attracted 50 percent of the high school students. From the Bedford *Trimble Banner*. ☘

Raiding contingency funds

POINT ...

“With all certainty, we would have to critically scrutinize all positions for possible reductions in force. An impact that devastating leaves a small, rural district little avenues to reclaim funds except through reductions in personnel. Ours is a Cinderella story. The impending recall of our contingency would be like the stroke of midnight for us. We would not only lose our (glass) slipper, we would lose so much more for kids.” Metcalfe County Schools Superintendent Patricia Hurt on the potential impact of a loss of contingency funds for her district.

COUNTERPOINT...

“We’re in dire times and we’re going to have to do all we can to fill the gaps and holes in the budget. I think we’re going to have to look at that and weigh the pros and cons and make a determination about which direction we need to go.” Rep. Johnny Bell (D-Glasgow) on what he called a “drastic measure” that remains under discussion among legislators.

From the *Glasgow Daily Times*



Russell County district has big audience for new complex



(Top photo) Linda, Carlos and Austin McGowan enjoyed the After School Holiday Extravaganza in early December at the Russell County Auditorium/Natorium. The program featured students in the after school programs at Russell County's four elementary schools and its one middle school.

Dana Watts, on stage with Ben Sapp as a dog, performed in "A Christmas Wish" during the After School Holiday Extravaganza.

By Mary Branham

Just last year, the Russell County High School swim team boarded a bus three days a week for a 30-minute trip to Somerset just to practice.

This year, the team hosted a regional meet. What a difference a year—and the new Russell County Auditorium/Natorium complex—can bring.

The regulation-size swimming pool with seating for 400 is just part of the 63,464-square-foot facility that opened in May. There's also an auditorium with state-of-the-art lighting and sound system, two dressing rooms and a 16-foot by 20-foot drop-down projection screen. The building also houses 10 classrooms with one wired to be a computer lab, a multi-purpose/conference room outfitted with a presentation center and sound system, and an exercise room.

"I subscribe to the notion that children in rural Kentucky deserve every educational opportunity that every other child in every part of the Commonwealth does," said Superintendent Scott Pierce.

The \$14 million complex didn't come at the expense of classrooms – all of Russell County's schools have been built or remodeled since 2000, Pierce said. Instead, he believes the complex will enhance the educational opportunities for not only Russell County students, but those from surrounding counties as well.

The complex is also available for community use, said Susan Melton, the district's food services director who also



The Russell County High School swim team used to have to travel 30 miles to Somerset to practice. Now, the team is hosting swim meets at the new Russell County Auditorium/Natatorium.

everything was just great on it. There were good reviews all around – the other counties that came in were in awe when they saw it.”

Pierce said Russell County students won’t have to travel great distances to attend plays and concerts, because the school district now can offer a venue for those programs.

“When the gas prices shot up, that put a damper on field trips,” Melton said.

She has big plans for the facility, and hopes to attract various cultural events for the community. She’s working on organizing a concert by country singer Steve Wariner, who is from the area, for a Valentine’s Day event.

“The goal is to provide our students first and the community with top-notch quality performances culturally – art exhibits, physical activity opportunities and exercise

opportunities,” said Melton.

Secondary to that is providing those same types of opportunities to the community, she said, and “hopefully to bring in some revenue for the county.”

Development angle

Economic development is a side benefit of the facility, said Pierce.

“Our industrial board is using it as a recruiting tool because if you are looking at locating a business or industry in a community, when you look at the total educational package, this is one building that would stand out that other school districts might not have,” he said.

manages the facility.

“This facility is the connection between the students and families and businesses,” she said. “It’s a facility that truly can bring all entities together.”

Community members can rent lanes of the pool during hours it’s not in use by students, Melton said. The conference room has been used by law enforcement, community groups and others since the facility opened. School food service staff can cater events at the facility, and Melton said she tries to bring students into the mix as well, whether it is the home economics students serving the meals or the floral arrangement classes providing centerpieces.

That extra revenue from catering is pumped back into the food services division, Melton said.

Russell County school board member Harry Kimbler said the project generally has received community support.

“It all turned out great,” he said. “We had our first swim meet and brought in 17 schools, close to 400 participants, and

That lends to the recruitment of business and industry.

Cory Stearns, president of the Russell County Chamber of Commerce, agrees.

“I think it will help us in promoting other developments here and hopefully this will help the development of Russell County,” she said.

It’s unusual to have such a facility in a small town like Russell Springs, Stearns said. She said the facility could draw concerts and other performances that would add to the quality of life for the community.

“Just to be able to have a building to have the capacity to hold a large volume of people is a plus for us,” said Stearns.

Pierce and Melton expect it to only get better.

“We’re still trying to figure out our place here,” Melton said. “It’s just limitless what we can do.”

Pierce went a step further:

“Five years from now it will be phenomenal the use and contributions that building will make.” ❧

— Branham is a writer from Frankfort



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Engineering is Elementary

Program introducing engineering to students as young as first-graders takes root in Jefferson County Public Schools

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

With some basic household items such as 2-liter soda bottles, plastic cups, and coffee filters, some students at Jeffersontown Elementary School may have embarked on a path that could one day lead them to creating engineering technology that could help people all over the globe.

These Jefferson County students, along with students at four other district elementary and five middle schools, are participating in the Engineering is Elementary program. It is a partnership started in 2006 between Jefferson County's Wheeler Elementary and the University of Louisville's J.B. Speed School

of Engineering. The program is geared toward Kentucky's Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) initiative to get more students interested in careers in math and science related fields.

"It's important that we get to these youngsters as early as possible to stress the importance of science and math," said Gary Rivoli, assistant professor and director of Speed's Outreach programs. "If we get to them early enough, it will become part of their daily curriculum and they will think of them as fun rather than as their hardest classes and the challenge won't be so great. When they get to their senior year they'll be prepared for the challenge, and when they apply to college they won't be turned away because they don't have enough science and math credits."



Jeffersontown Elementary School students from left, Sami Cook, Miguel Gonzalez, and Matthew Vest, watch carefully as they filter "dirty water" through a screen as part of an experiment in the Engineering is Elementary enrichment program.



Gary Rivoli, an assistant professor and director of the University of Louisville's J.B. Speed School of Engineering's Outreach programs, holds up a cup of filtered water and asks students if using a coffee filter produced better results than the other methods tested. Students in the Engineering is Elementary enrichment program were studying a lesson on building water filtration systems.

This enrichment program, which was created by the Boston Museum of Science, involves modules built around different fields of engineering and provides lessons in areas such as bridge building, alternative energy, machines and wall construction.

"They get to learn about the different types of engineering and how they contribute to society," he said.

Rivoli said each lesson includes discovery, design, building, testing, vocabulary, and answering questions.

"Each module starts with a story that personalizes the lesson, such as in bridges, a little boy lives in a place where a small stream keeps getting wider and wider, making it harder to get to his playhouse, so he must build a bridge," Rivoli said.

On this day, first- second- and -third-graders continued their lesson on water filtration systems, using the story of a girl in India who noticed that a turtle in the nearby Ganges River was surrounded by pollutants. With the help of her environmental engineer mother, she began the process of trying to find the right type of water filtration system. The Jefferson-town students poured "dirty" water – made with loose tea – through a screen, a coffee filter and a gravel and sand mixture secured in a 2-liter bottle, observing how each method worked. At the start of the lesson, teacher Julie Dailey asked the students to predict which method they thought would work best. After the experiment, the students documented their findings.

"They have so much fun doing these projects, so much pride," Rivoli said. "The kids have to use their imaginations and draw designs. In the middle school, the projects are more hands-on, with students creating and building bridges, solar panels, and other items that go along with the lessons."

The program is working as a pipeline, with the first of the Engineering is Elementary students this year entering Jefferson-town High School, an engineering science magnet school.

Improvement in math and science is not the only benefit the program has produced.

"I have had some regular classroom teachers comment to me that since some of their students have been in this program, they are participating more in their classes and are more enthusiastic and confident," Dailey said.

Teachers recommend students for the enrichment program. Dailey is among nearly two dozen Jefferson County Public Schools teachers who have been trained to teach this program. In the beginning, Rivoli or other Speed school staff led the lessons; now he acts as an assistant to the teachers.

"It's really fun to teach these kids because they want to be here and they are starting to pick up the language and to think like scientists," Dailey said.

At the end of the year, these students take a field trip to the Speed school and will meet college students they may one day aspire to emulate.

"They will be able to see the things they have been doing in a small way on a real world level," Rivoli said.

Rivoli said Jefferson County Schools plans to begin expanding the program into all elementary schools this year as part of the daily curriculum. ☚

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School boards adapt as winds of

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Kentucky public education is about to be rocked by changes not seen since the 1990 state reform act. Just consider these forces that are converging to hasten change:

- A flagging economy with resulting budget cuts

- Federal stimulus funds that require innovation
- A new state “transforming” education task force
- The legislative mandate to revamp Kentucky’s assessment system
- Upcoming revisions to the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind)

Newer school board members might be forgiven if their initial reaction is, “I didn’t sign up for this!” Those who served

Dave Morris, Gallatin County Board of Education

Morris contrasts his typical duties pre- and post-KERA: Twenty -seven years ago you were involved in almost everything, although not the day-to-day operation of the school. Although back then board members took a lot of phone calls about personnel issues, coaching, sports teams and classroom issues and just so much – you name it – I think board members really got involved in it. The board

members were well-known; almost everyone knew a board member back then and I’m not sure everybody knows a board member now, but I think they know their kids’ teachers better, they know their kids’ administration, counseling and administrators and superintendent. I think board members felt like they were involved in public relations, too, and we still are.

I think now we’re more involved in the important things, which is working with the superintendent, hiring the superintendent, developing the best possible working relationship with the superintendent and setting and establishing policy, following the policy, changing it when it needs to be changed.

I think it’s more critical, being a board member.

On keeping up with new technology and new approaches to student learning:

I think we’ve been committed to lead change as best we can. It takes resources and some things we just don’t have a lot of, such as money. But we’ve got some other good things: dedication, a staff that will give of themselves and give of their

own resources, and we have the best superintendent, period, in the Commonwealth. I think the willingness to lead change rather than to just accept it – that’s important: we should lead and be willing to lead. No one board member is an expert in anything; we all have our strengths and our opportunities but if we’re all willing to lead change and to be led by the experts in helping us change, then we’re going to be fine.

On the required knowledge base now vs. pre-KERA:

You have to know where to find it, where your resources are. And you know the most important thing in the world today with all of us is relationships. But that’s the way it’s always been: those who can succeed and do the best at relationships and relationship-building are going to be the most successful in life, regardless. So I think with board members having a relationship with the superintendent is most important, with the community and then finally those resources such as folks who work with you, the legislators, our experts, the attorney – you name it.

Lessons learned in adjusting to school reform that will help now?

Just some simple principles: I think being open-minded, being willing to accept change and look at different ways to do things. Those are key, very basic principles we should go by. ☿



Gallatin County board member Dave Morris watches while fifth-grader Lance Oditt works on a project in the Gallatin County Upper Elementary School media center.

change blow through Kentucky

during the early 90s as education reform was taking its first steps probably can sympathize with them as they go through it again. And longtime board members who've served both pre-reform and post-reform have lots of experience adapting to large-scale changes in education and their role in it.

Which brings us to both the topic of this year's School Board Recognition Month feature – change –and the school board members who discussed its ramifications. Each represents one

of those aforementioned experience levels:

- Kelly Baird, a member of the McLean County Board of Education and a farmer, took office in 2007.
- Ashland Independent board Chairwoman Patricia (Trish) Hall, who works for a nonprofit agency, was seated in 1991.
- Dave Morris is a Procter & Gamble executive who has been a member of the Gallatin County school board since 1984. ☞

Kelly Baird, McLean County Board of Education

Baird on bracing himself for the changes ahead:

For me, I was just trying to get my hands on what was going on and now with the changes, it's like a whole new perspective on how the systems work in schools. But I don't think you lose sight of what you want for your kids and your school system: you still want them to achieve and do their very best at whatever grade level they're in.

I listened to our central office staff members talk about the (test) results and how we're progressing and what needs to be implemented so we can achieve and reach our goals. And we have been – we've done really well in this school district – and then it changes and I'm wondering, what do I have to get my arms around now? In some respects, I don't think everything's changing; you're still looking for the students to improve and to receive the education we want them to receive.

How he feels about the statewide financial reversal for education:

You don't like it. You get frustrated. I find myself wanting to pinch pennies. Whenever we make a decision on a budgetary item, I'm thinking if I do this, what am I going to have to give up later on because I made this decision? We have never been blessed with a great deal of money in this school district, but it's certainly frustrating, to want to offer the kids more, do more and not always have the funds.

On how the role of a school board member might evolve in the future:

I think it's going to be important that we know our legislators real well in order to keep the funding, to guide their



McLean County Board of Education member Kelly Baird prepares to settle in for a regular board meeting with fellow members, from far left, Wendell Miller, Chairman Bill Lovell and Joyce Sutton.

expectations of the schools, the students, where they need to be. Because they become lay people, too; they depend on people to tell them, whether it be KSBA or KDE or whoever, to kind of guide them as they look for knowledge ... But I'm not saying that's your whole purpose at all. I'm just saying that role may increase with the need for funds. For me, I see that you need to be proactive and say, 'Hey, you can't cut our SEEK funding – the cost of business is going up and we can't continue to deliver services if you take our money away from us. And we'll have to cut back somewhere, too, if we can't produce the revenue.' So I see it taking more time, more of your own personal time – not to say that people who are board members aren't dedicated – but I see it becoming more time-consuming. You're going to have to educate yourself, whatever way it takes. And you will have to be committed to learn what's going on to make effective decisions. ☞

JANUARY IS SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH



Trish Hall, chairwoman of the Ashland Independent school board, talks with choral director Karen Hopkins in the music room of Paul Blazer High School.

Trish Hall, Ashland Independent Board of Education

Hall compares today's challenges with those when she took office in the early days of KERA:

People don't talk about KERA very much as such anymore, so that's a big change. I don't know that people this far in are so much aware of KERA. It's more like trying to maintain and with this new testing – it's the second time we've had new tests – to try to maintain our standards while we're adapting to the other pressures on the schools, pressures from the federal government, pressures from business for the kinds of graduates they need, trying to keep our public informed.

I think the challenge is probably to maintain and keep going because there are just a lot of new pressures in this economic downturn that are affecting everybody, affecting our budget process.

Of all things, finance is probably going to be a tremendous challenge. Especially since when I came in it was, 'If we need to do it, we have the money for it.' And now over time the money available has not kept up with our needs, but we've been able to work within that and the conversation has been, 'Well, we'll cut but we'll try to keep it away from the classroom.'

I think that shield is going – I think it's already affected us. We've had to reduce staff in the classroom and the concern is we just have the warning of more cuts to come.

On whether the job more complex than when she first started:

It's probably more complex, and we're more aware of the high stakes. Over time, we've had more and more conversations about the necessity for our students to compete globally, and the knowledge that they have to have. I think it was there when I came on the board, but it's just almost urgent now that our kids have to have to be prepared for – we don't know what. They've been telling us probably since I started going to classes with KSBA that your students will probably have jobs that don't exist today; they'll probably change jobs four or five times in their careers.

Lessons learned from implementing change:

I think you can't be afraid to innovate, but you need to stay in touch with your respected teachers with experience. It's hard, because we get comfortable and we have to be careful that we're not dealing with what everybody knows as the 'accepted wisdom;' we have to keep examining it, we have to keep examining what we do. We've had some examples over the years of superintendents who have led by saying we need to innovate, but then we need to evaluate and be careful that we're going where we want to go. ☚

Chartering a new course?

With federal Race to the Top funds on the line, charter schools become focus of interest in Kentucky

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The prospect of federal education reform dollars has given the issue of charter schools in Kentucky a bit more traction, or at least more visibility.

Just how much traction it has will depend on both the 2010 General Assembly – for which two charter-school bills already have been prefiled – and the details of the state’s application for the federal education innovation grant funds available under the Race to the Top program.

Ahead of those developments, the KSBA Board of Directors is studying the issue before taking a position. Kentucky is one of 10 states without a charter school law.

Charter schools are public schools that receive tax dollars but are more independent of many state regulations than regular public schools. They take different forms from state to state. As Shannon Pratt Stiglitz told the KSBA board during its meeting last month, “Charter schools are like snowflakes – no two are built alike.” Pratt Stiglitz is KSBA’s assistant director of governmental relations.

The first thing that comes to mind with charter schools is “Pandora’s box,” said Dr. John Inman, a director-at-large on the KSBA board and member of the Meade County school board. “It seems to me we’re creating a problem,” he said, while regional chairperson Larry Dodson of Oldham County worried that the uncertain impact of charters on enrollment will “create a bigger hardship on regular schools.”

David Baird, KSBA’s governmental relations director and associate executive director, noted that charter schools are more common in large cities with troubled public schools. “I’m not sure that anybody in rural Kentucky is going to be interested in a charter school, but you never know,” he said.

Charter proponents make their case in part based on the issue of school choice, Baird said. “Parents want school choice and so choice is a big issue,” he told the board. “And this notion is sold to them that you can have school choice with charters.”

This is not the first time charter school legislation has come before the General Assembly, Baird noted. Those bills historically have gotten nowhere. “If Race to the Top were not on the table, I don’t think we would be having as serious a discussion about charter schools,” Baird said. Pratt Stiglitz said the issue is probably going to be discussed by lawmakers, “but I don’t see it passing.”

Under Race to the Top’s 500-point scoring rubric, states without charter laws will lose 40 points – in Kentucky’s case, some of this could be offset by a gain of eight points for having school-based decision making. Kentucky will be applying for those funds in the first round of the two-phase competition and Baird warned if the state is not successful in the first round, the charter issue will take on greater import.

“If we don’t get RTTT in phase 1, I think there will be a lot of pressure on the legislators to pass some kind of legislation toward the end of the session,” he said.

KSBA’s board members will continue discussing charters when they meet later this month. Both the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents and Kentucky Education Association have gone on record opposing charter schools.

Charter legislation

The two bills expected to come before the 2010 General Assembly – one prefiled by Rep. Stan Lee (R-Lexington) and the other by Rep. Brad Montell (R-Shelbyville) – are nearly identical in many ways. Both would allow “sponsoring” agencies – local school boards, accredited universities, or city or county governments – to file charter applications, which, if approved, would amount to contracts. The nonprofit, public charters would be operated by a board of directors.

Each prefiled bill states that charters would have to participate in state assessments, adhere to the same audit requirements as regular schools and meet state attendance, instructional day and graduation requirements.

The prefiled legislation also outlines conditions for converting a regular school to a charter; for renewal of a charter’s five-year contract or its revocation; and the parameters for funding them with public school dollars.

However, there is a significant difference between the two proposals: Lee’s proposal would set up a state Charter School Advisory Committee that would screen applications and make a nonbinding recommendation to the sponsoring agency, which has the final say. Renewal and revocation of a charter contract would also be handled by the local entity.

Montell’s proposal, which calls the charters “public school academies,” would also set up a state commission – but in this case, it would be the commission that would approve or disapprove public school academy applications. The prefiled bill states that the contract would then be signed – no mention of a local approval process – by the sponsor and applicant. ☞

What I learned on the school board

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Joe Brothers, chairman of the state Board of Education and former 20-year member of the Elizabethtown Independent school board, has to look no further back than his childhood to pinpoint where his service to public schools originated.

"I can remember back in 1950, 1952 sitting around our dinner table at home... and I can remember my father talking to my mother about that he thought he'd run for the local school board and indeed he did become a school board member and that was the beginning of why I am here," he told a gathering of local school board members at KSBA's Dec. 12 Winter Symposium.

Brothers was the inaugural speaker for a new occasional KSBA series called "It Started with a School Board."

Brothers said the seeds of his own service to public education were sown in part by watching his father on the local school board "and setting a standard for us."

"It did for me, literally, start with a school board member," he said.

Brothers, a retired engineer, recalled his father wanting the school to have a "grade A cafeteria," and his positions on the issues of that day.

"Those things stuck with me for life," he said.

But Brothers did not dwell long in the past, outlining for the crowd his ideas on what it takes to be a school board member in the present.

"It takes a love of community and of children. I think it takes a love of educators and respect and appreciation for them," he said. "We're representatives of our community to empower our educators to help parents educate their children."

Brothers said the job also requires a "servanthood" attitude and humility. "We don't really need many superstars on boards, do we? We need people who know how to play team ball – know when to pass, when to listen, know how to support the coach, the superintendent," he said.

Brothers thoughtfully read aloud the code of ethics of a school board member, elaborating on each and summing up:

"Never in any way compromise the public trust we've been given for the most important resource we have in this state or any state, and this is our children."

The school board member's job has given Brothers skills



There was a line of board members waiting to talk with Joe Brothers, left, after the state Board of Education chairman gave a rousing presentation at KSBA's Winter Symposium.

and lessons that he has applied in other areas of life. He listed teamwork, consensus building, establishing policy and strategies, working for others, having a focus, being data driven, listening skills, valuing education, and, of course, leadership – the ability to "make it possible for other people to play, make it possible for other people to lead."

Brothers, whose three-plus years on the state school board have not been controversy-free, urged local board members to be team players for the benefit of children.

"The meek inherit not the earth but the problems that are created by misguided board members," he said. "It takes one member to destroy the effectiveness of a commissioner or of a superintendent."

Parting words

Brothers said while the state has made progress in education, he cited some of its deficiencies, noting, "We have work to do."

He rallied the troops with a Biblical example of the passion and cohesiveness of early Christians. To turn education around in Kentucky, he said, requires a plan, the will to win at any cost and a sense of urgency.

Brothers, whose presentation garnered a standing ovation, reminded local board members to view their job as "a sacred commitment that you have been given to represent our children."

"When you think about all of Kentucky's children – and there are over 650,000 of them – I want you to think of them, as board members, as your children."

Our mission, he said, "is to go back to our homes and put into those kids' little heads those things they need to go out and be successful and help them find a place in life where they're productive citizens." ❧

Lessons in winning over a community to a tax increase

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Taylor County Schools Superintendent Roger Cook has a word of advice – literally, a word – for hard-pressed districts that would like to get more local tax revenue:

“Never say tax.

“Call it a levy because everyone hates the word tax,” he advised those attending his clinic at the KSBA Winter Symposium last month.

That was among the strategies that Cook and the board at his former district, Russellville Independent, used successfully in approving a nickel tax for facilities without prompting a recall referendum.

Cook once again is applying the techniques in Taylor County, practicing what he preaches. After starting the job there in July, he knew he and the board wanted a nickel tax for new construction. But the first step, he said, is to wait.

“I always take one year to sell what I do,” he said. “You can’t cram it down people’s throat – it doesn’t work.”

During that year, Cook uses tactics that can best be described generally as “show and tell,” and “tell and sell.”

For example, shortly after he arrived in Taylor County, a Louisville television station launched a story about mold problems in the district’s elementary school – a building Cook is trying to persuade the state to classify as category 5 to improve prospects for state construction funds.

With that in mind, he threw open the doors and let the TV camera record the worst.

“I didn’t want to hide it,” he said.

Cook duplicated the strategy – and then some – for presentations to various civic and community groups.

“If people think you have good schools and everything is hunky-dory, do you think they’re going to give you money?” he asked.

The presentation to Taylor County groups juxtaposes photographs contrasting the worst conditions, facilities and equipment in that district with sparkling pictures of modern school buildings, some in neighboring counties. The headings above the photos couldn’t be clearer: “This is what you

have,” and “This is what others have.”

“Show the taxpayers what they have now and what they would get for their money,” Cook said.

He attempts to quiet pocketbook concerns in these tough economic times by equating the value of the proposed tax increase in real terms: the cost of pizza, cigarettes and beer. Using a carton of cigarettes and disposable lighter as one example, he asks residents whether they’d be willing to give up one cigarette every 1.83 days to build new academic/athletic facilities.

Cook also contrasts the cost of educating a student with incarcerating a prisoner in Kentucky and with other local taxes – in Taylor County’s case, a tax for the local for-profit hospital.

In addition to presentations before community groups, Cook makes his pitch formally and informally at “local hangouts,” sports banquets, band concerts and parent meetings. He says he makes sure to speak in terms of children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews and family.

Communication ideas

Communication is the foundation for much of the groundwork. At Russellville Independent and now at Taylor County, Cook has organized a district parent advisory council to get input and allow gripes to be aired.

“Give the people of the community a voice,” he advised. “If they think you’re not listening to them they’re not going to give you a nickel.”

He urges district teachers, staff and their families to spread the word, “and it’s important for your board to know how little (the tax) is and to sell it.”

Districts also can win points with the community by buying local products where possible, Cook said, in hopes local businesses will want to give back to the schools. Likewise, pledging to help students achieve and save parents money while doing

so – by offering dual-college credit classes, for example – also can pay dividends and get them excited about their schools, he said.

“Promise parents this, you promise the community this, and they might give back to you,” he said.

Ideally, in the end, Cook said, passing a tax is like going through the stages of dying:

“You go through these emotions, but in the end there’s acceptance.” ☘



Taylor County Superintendent Roger Cook reviews one of the arguments in his arsenal of strategies to gain community acceptance of a nickel tax for facilities. Listening in the foreground is Winter Symposium attendee Thomas Luken, a member of the Erlanger-Elsmere Independent Board of Education.

**Don't look here
for next
month's
issue ...**

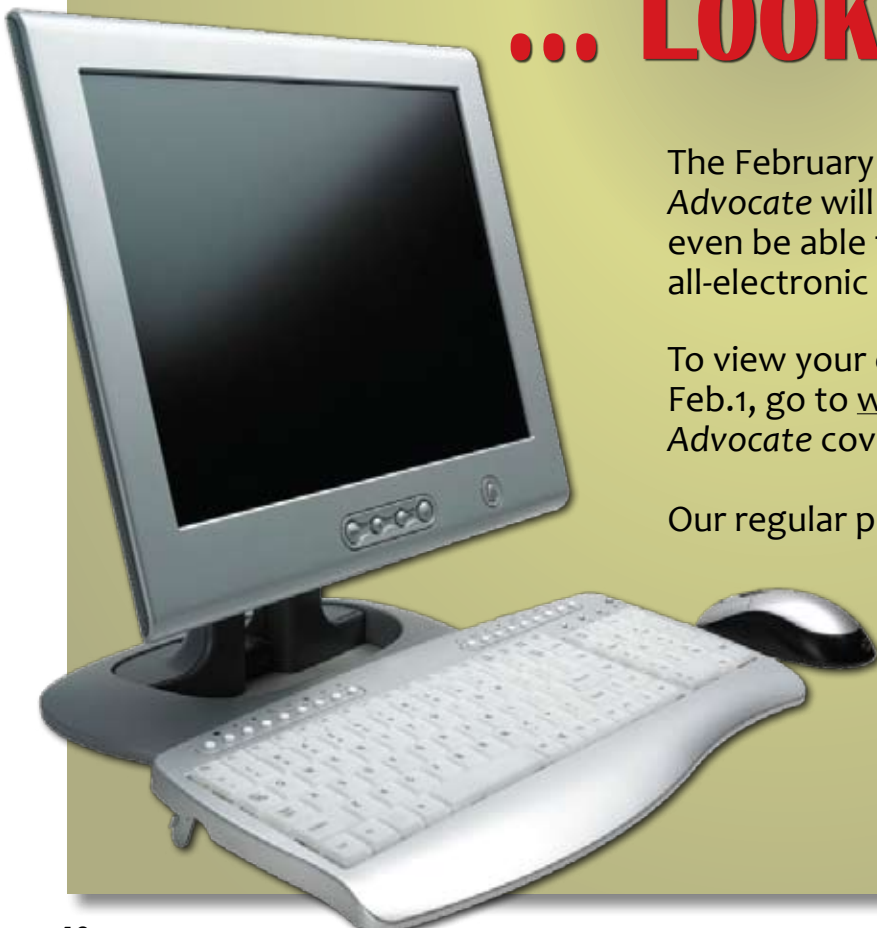


... Look here

The February edition of the *Kentucky School Advocate* will look exactly the same — you'll even be able to turn its pages — but it will be all-electronic next month.

To view your edition of the *Advocate* beginning Feb.1, go to www.ksba.org and click on the *Advocate* cover on the home page.

Our regular print edition will return in March.



KENTUCKY
SCHOOL
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KSBA

"A brighter future through better public schools"

The PEAK of teacher/student/parent links in Harrison County Schools



Harrison County Schools' eClassroom Journals – online blogs by teachers to communicate with students and parents about homework and other school activities – drew a packed hall at Northside Elementary last month to celebrate the program's selection for the KSBA PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award.

Above (right to left): KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott presents the PEAK Award to Board of Education Chairman Ed Taylor and Superintendent Andy Dotson as KSBA President Delmar Mahan looks on.

Left: Mahan gets into the action as Northside students demonstrate how they use the blogs to check homework assignments and do related research for class projects online.

Kentucky Superintendent Vacancies

Jackson County Schools

(2,221 enrollment, PS-12) www.jackson.kyschools.us

The Jackson County Board of Education is seeking a proven educational leader as its next superintendent. Strong character traits including those of honesty, integrity and being ethical and fair are expected. The successful candidate should also possess excellent people skills along with good public relations skills. The salary will be competitive and negotiable with the contract to start July 1, 2010. *All applications must be received by Feb. 24, 2010.*

Pending until January 2010

McCracken County Schools

(7,038 , K-12) www.mccracken.kyschools.us

Pending until January 2010

Trigg County Schools

(2,051, PS-12) www.trigg.kyschools.us

To apply, send seven copies of a cover letter/introduction, resume, application form, video, responses to eight questions, certification and three (3) letters of recommendation to: (Insert district name) Superintendent Search, Kentucky School Boards Association, 260 Democrat Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601. Find application form, video information and questions at www.ksba.org, under "Employment Opportunities."

William Hamilton

on KSBIT's merger with the Kentucky League of Cities



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 William Hamilton, executive pool administrator and chief insurance officer for Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Service, which on Jan. 1 took over management of the Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trusts' fleet, liability, property and workers' compensation self-insurance pools. Hamilton, a former independent insurance agent, has been with the Kentucky League of Cities for 17 years, during which time the organization's book of business has risen from 110 insurance policies to more than 1,000.

William Hamilton, executive pool administrator and chief insurance officer for Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Service, near right, speaks with Myron Thompson, KSBIT director, center, and Graves County Schools Superintendent Pete Galloway during KASS' conference last month.

Q. Why did KLC get into the self-insurance business in the first place?

A. In 1978, we entered into a self-insurance, risk retention pool with the Kentucky Association of Counties to provide workers' compensation. In the mid- to late-1980s, we had cities that couldn't get insurance or only could get insurance with high deductibles; some wouldn't insure law enforcement. So in 1987 we started a property and casualty division and in 1992 we split from KACO and created what we have today. In essence, we got in the business for the same reasons KSBA did. It's not unique to Kentucky. In California alone, there are 200 pools for the transfer of risk (among participants).

Q. Other than the basic vehicle, property, liability and workers' compensation coverages, what are some of the insurance services KLC provides to its members?

A. Some people look at this as insurance, but we look at it as membership services and added-value services along with the transfer of risk.

We have a drug-free workplace environment discount, whereby they can receive a 5 percent discount if they model their (personnel) policies to our specifications that are approved by the state. If a school district's drug-testing policy meets these specifications, it could qualify as well. We look at this as loss control. If it stops one claim, one school child from being hurt, it's well worth the 5 percent.

Another one is a program where cities – and it would be the same for schools as we lay these programs over as time permits – can call and ask a lawyer a question. I know KSBA does the same thing for schools; this is designed more for insurance issues.

One of our newest programs is a partnership with a company called Agility, a firm that specializes in business continuity. If you have any time of disaster, a computer virus, a burst water pipe, whatever, we'll help you stay in business. So during last year's ice storm, we were delivering generators to city halls, water companies and shelters within eight hours. One phone call, you go back to doing business; they bring in the equip-

ment you need.

Another is our “online university,” a 24/7 access to online training. If we decide cities need a refresher course on defensive driving, it’s right there, it’s interactive, it’s a lecture and questions to answer. It’s a heck of a lot cheaper and realistic way to deliver services from sexual harassment prevention to OSHA requirements. We now have over 500 classes available.

Q. What do you see as the similarities between KSBIT and KLCIS in terms of goals and services?

A. I think it gives us an opportunity to enhance relationships between cities and schools. We’re not going to have successful cities without successful schools and vice versa. You’ve got to have a place for people to work when they finish their education, and we hope cities can provide that. You’ve got to have an educated work force. Mayors, superintendents, council members and board members can work on a school/city relationship.

Q. Most of our readers know KSBIT management’s perspective about the partnership. What made this partnership attractive to KLCIS?

A. This is the ultimate win for everybody. Insurance is a very professional, precise industry. When we buy reinsurance together, we’ll get a better price. When we buy loss control services, it will drive the cost down for both of us. Obviously, we feel strongly in the concept of risk retention pooling. We feel our members and school board members are better served by the extensive, comprehensive nature of this combined program. I see it as a way to reduce costs on our side, on your side. If you want to know the truth, this probably could have, should have been done 15-20 years ago. We have about \$40 million in premiums; KSBIT has about \$17 million in premiums. When investment people come to town, you get a better price from the combination.

Q. What are some of the challenges the new KSBIT/KLCIS team faces in the next few months?

A. I think the toughest thing will be putting a face on the partner-

ship. Obviously, at KLC, we’ve invested heavily in technology, so some of the things we are doing, we won’t need additional help to do. We do online claims reporting, policy issuance, monitoring where cities can see the status of their claims, how much has been paid and how much is in reserve, what their loss-control issues are.

We don’t want to change the level of service or the commitment KSBIT has made to schools. That’s incredibly important for everybody to know. This is not devaluing one program to benefit the other. This is about having a successful program where we do things together.

Q. What do you see as the opportunities coming from this partnership?

A. I think the biggest opportunity for KSBIT is the continuation of its services. Certainly, we want to do everything we can to avoid an assessment (on KSBIT members). There obviously is a deficit. We’re going to put enough money into KSBIT to eliminate that deficit. On our side, we think that with the joint buying power, our program could save close to a half million dollars in expenses. That will keep costs down for both organizations in the long term.

Q. Who will school personnel be dealing with on such matters as the bidding process, claims filing and on-site loss prevention services?

A. There will be some changes. There will be some new people they will be dealing with. But the level of expertise in answering questions on a phone call about claims will be just the same. You’ll still call an 800 number. You have an external claims company, we have an external claims company. We’ll probably merge those operations sometime in the first of the year. We actually run three claims offices – in Prestonsburg, Mayfield and Georgetown. We try to eliminate as much windshield time as possible. But our commitment to claims is that if a city hall is on fire, we want somebody there before the fire is out.

And we’ve done that. Our claims people are used to calling on members when there are no claims, just to estab-

lish those relationships. That level of service is absolutely paramount.

There is an opportunity with our local independent agent network that we’ve developed statewide over the years. We look forward to them working with the school districts in their home town. Everything we do in Kentucky is done by Kentucky people. We use about 100 agents around the state.

Q. What role does continued participation in KSBIT by schools and others play to the long-term success of this partnership?

A. Certainly, the KSBIT program with 92 members has lost some membership over the years. That’s normal. We do, too. But it is paramount that school districts really evaluate the level of service and the commitment of KSBIT. And they need to realize that if this program is not there, that means another competitor is gone. In the long haul, having KSBIT as an option will continue to keep rates down for everybody.

Now, the ultimate issue is that if school systems don’t stay in KSBIT and it fails, there will be an assessment. There’s no doubt about that. The real issue is if you don’t have this option and your choices are just the commercial market, when there are bad years, you have lots of rate increases. We are not profit motivated; we are service motivated, member service motivated. We’ve had years when we’ve lost money and we’ve had years when we’ve made money. We’re willing to spend some of the surplus to avoid the ups and downs of the cyclical business that is insurance.

Q. Finally, what do you most want Kentucky’s school board members, superintendents, school finance officers and other KSBIT members to know about this partnership?

A. The most important thing for them to know is that we are committed to providing the same level of service and fulfilling the needs school districts have. We just want to be given a chance to make this happen. We’ve got a lot of really good, professional insurance people here who want to do it right. ☿

The man behind many messages: so long, Steve Kirby...and thanks

By now, most Kentucky school leaders know that they have lost the services of longtime KSBA Legal Services Director Steve Kirby. At the end of December, Kirby, having provided insight on tens of thousands of school law issues over the last 27 years, hung up his KSBA office phone for the last time and heeded the call of the promised land: retirement.

Kirby's KSBA colleagues, superintendents, school board members and their attorneys who sought his legal advice over nearly three decades will miss that counsel. But fewer may think about the departure of a quiet but nonetheless vital player who helped school boards and this association to communicate with the public, legally and effectively.

I worked the past 17 years down the hall and around the corner from Kirby's office. If trips could be measured by the path of footsteps, there would be a visible trail between those two doorways. The conversations didn't always result in agreement. After all, he's a lawyer and I'm a journalist. But even in the agree-to-disagree-without-being-disagreeable moments, there was enlightenment – and clearer, if not legally safer, messages that were delivered.

But this isn't just about co-worker-to-co-worker guidance, because Steve Kirby's contributions to school boards and their communications with Kentuckians goes far beyond deciding what to say to a reporter with a question about a school law issue.

The public, the law and board meetings

From my observation, few legal issues publicly entangle school boards in our state (and maybe everywhere) more than the array of questions about what constitutes compliance with the state's Open Meetings Act.

Veteran superintendents and board attorneys can stumble over what can and cannot take place when a regular board meeting date changes and the gathering of the board becomes a special meeting.

At the recent Kentucky School Public Relations Association conference, former *Courier-Journal* political writer Al Cross suggested that school boards often go into closed session without the legally required language in the motion of the board. He's right. I've seen it often enough myself. And the Office of the Attorney General has voided board actions because one or more elements of meetings failed to adhere KRS 61.800 – 850.

In 1984, Kirby sought to provide school leaders with a comprehensive resource on the requirements of the state's public meetings sunshine law. Now in its fourth edition,



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

the KSBA Kentucky Open Meetings Act Guide is a time-honored tool on the desks and in the briefcases of board attorneys who don't want to get caught giving the wrong answer on everything from meeting notices to public participation.

Now that last point – public participation in board meetings – is a subject Kirby and I have discussed, debated, agreed and disagreed about for years.

Kirby the lawyer would point out – correctly from a legal standpoint – that there is no requirement in Kentucky law for a public-comment opportunity

at school board meetings. Hughes the journalist would contend – correctly by common sense – that these are the public's meetings, so the public should be allowed to participate beyond just sitting in and listening. Certainly, school boards should set rules for public comment at their meetings. But “the law doesn't require it” seems a poor answer to a mother who paid for a babysitter so she could come and speak her mind to the people she and her fellow voters put into office.

I never felt Steve disagreed with the principle; it was just that if it was a question of common sense versus the law, he would come down on the side of the law. And I'm confident that when he advised superintendents and board chairpersons on the subject, common sense wasn't discarded in favor of a “by the letter of the law – period” line of thinking.

The Last Word

There is no question that this association – and Kentucky school boards, superintendents and public education in the Commonwealth in general – have benefited from the countless times I consulted with Kirby before answering a reporter's questions for an interview. Any response that I gave that was bolstered by his experience and analysis was stronger, clearer and delivered with more confidence. I believe, in turn, that the stories written by those reporters more accurately reflected the issues and options facing school leaders.

Of course, KSBA will find another font of legal wisdom to assist school leaders. She or he may not have a background in the attorney general's office or 27 years in school law, but Kirby leaves behind a solid foundation in his former No. 2, John Fogle, and Teresa Combs, who heads up KSBA's new Legal and Administrative Training Service. You – and I – will have quality counsel to call upon.

But collectively we also will miss the advice and analysis of Steve Kirby.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☚



KSBA's 74th annual conference

Forty-plus clinic sessions. New topics. New school district presenters. A top national authority on preschool education.

That amounts to a wealth of information for Kentucky school board members: It's no wonder this year's KSBA Annual Conference theme is "Public Education: Kentucky's Common Wealth."

The major keynoters include:

- Billy Riggs, "Master Dis-illusionist," who will open the conference Friday afternoon, weaving humor, audience participation, humorous original songs and world-class illusions into his inspirational program, *How to Achieve the Impossible*, aimed at helping education leaders "see past the smoke and mirrors."
- Saturday plenary speaker Dr. Jerry D. Weast, who will focus on how investment in preschool builds a foundation that promotes equity and narrows the achievement gap. Weast has received numerous awards recognizing his innovative leadership in early childhood education, professional development, school accountability, and parent involvement.
- Sunday morning's brunch headliner, Mark C. Metzger, a longtime school board member from Illinois who also sits on the National School Boards Association's board of directors. His presentation is entitled, *No One Warned Me About This! Lessons and Laughs from a Life in School Service*.

The three-day event also features pre-conference sessions, KSBA's annual business meeting, student performances and an exhibit hall filled with school product vendors and district success stories. Clinic topics range from food services and a school district advertising campaign to single-gender schools and training student leaders.

Registration information has been mailed and online registration is available at www.ksba.org under "Featured Events."

Questions? Call Tammie Conatser or Kerri Schelling at 1-800-372-2962, ext. 1100.



An ounce of prevention in Muhlenberg County



Like many other Kentucky school districts, Muhlenberg County Schools hosted in-school H1N1 vaccination clinics in November. At Greenville Elementary, Muhlenberg County Health Department nurses administered the

vaccine nasally to 90 students. The nursing team visited one district school each day and nurse Duska Bethel reported no problems with the school clinics. "Everyone has been very efficient and well organized," she said.

(Above) These students obviously weren't very enthusiastic as they waited their turn to be vaccinated. They are, left to right, Cheyenne Gibson, Payton Caldwell, Brayden Lee and Matthew O'Bannon.

(Above right) Nurse Rosemary Winn gives the vaccine to Eli Williams. While the nasal method didn't hurt, most children winced at the vaccine's cold temperature.



(Left) Before getting his immunization, Bryan Durall listens to instructions from nurse Betty Hendrix while his mom, Becky Brooks, looks on.