

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ July/August 2010

Budding entrepreneurs

KINDERGARTEN SUMMER PREP

Summer Leadership Institute coverage

177-day calendar in danger?



KET has been honored with a
My Source Education Innovation Award
from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for 'Literacy Leadership.'



This award recognizes KET's contribution to the community through 'Literacy Leadership: Stories of Schoolwide Success,' the last in a series of professional development resources produced jointly by the Kentucky Department of Education and KET. This resource provides important tools that help K-12 administrators improve their schools' literacy instruction.

"Public media is the definitive education partner for a new generation of learners and CPB congratulates KET for its outstanding contribution to the community," said Pat Harrison, president and CEO of CPB.



FEATURES

EDUCATING ENTREPRENEURS

Enterprising middle schoolers in Hart and 14 other counties are getting hands-on experience in entrepreneurship – creating products, then marketing and selling them ... Page 8

CALENDAR CONUNDRUMS

State funding cuts, snow days and the option to adjust the length of the school day are all combining to produce school calendars that have fewer than 177 days in a growing number of school districts ... Page 10

LEGWORK FOR LEARNING

Instead of closing the books at the end of the school year, kindergarten teachers in McLean County open their enrollment books for the next school year and hit the road, visiting incoming students to help prepare them ... Page 12

CHECK THOSE BILLS

The scrutiny paid off when Scott County Schools’ energy team began looking over past utility bills. The district received an up-front rebate and on going savings by identifying an incorrect electric rate ... Page 14

PERSISTENCE TO GRADUATION

Increasing graduation rates and reducing the number of dropouts is not only an economic issue for the student, but also for the state and nation. That was one of the messages at KSBA’s Summer Leadership Institute where the association kicked off its yearlong focus on those issues ... Page 16

CHANGES IN EDUCATION

Common core standards, No Child Left Behind reauthorization, charter schools, and principal and teacher evaluations were all topics of discussion at last month’s KSBA Summer Leadership Institute ... Page 16



Neighborly welcome, Page 12



Green gathering, Page 14



Summer learning, Page 16

Kentucky School Advocate
Volume 17, Number 1

DEPARTMENTS

Take Note 4
 People Are Talking 6
 Ed Innovators 8
 In Conversation With 20

COMMENTARY

Executive Memo 5
 Get Your Message Out 22

On the cover



From left, Munfordville Elementary eighth-graders Libby Kelly, Elizabeth Cook, Ally Kessler and Kayla Locke, try to sell their handmade bookmarks to teacher Becky Shuffitt. Students participated in the E-Discovery Challenge program, which promotes entrepreneurship among fourth to eighth grade students ... Article on Page 8.

Kentucky School Boards Association

260 Democrat Dr.
Frankfort, KY 40601
800-372-2962
www.ksba.org

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

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

KSBA Board of Directors

Officers

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

Directors-at-large

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

Regional Chairpersons

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

State board shuffle

There are five new members on the Kentucky Board of Education, joining two other members on the 12-person panel who are returning for a second term.

Gov. Steve Beshear on July 1 appointed former Marion County Schools Superintendent Roger Marcum, who currently is executive vice president of St. Catharine College; education consultant and former Glasgow Independent administrator William Twyman; Jonathan Parrent, dean of student affairs at Madisonville Community College; Mary Gwen Wheeler of Louisville, a senior policy adviser on education and youth for Mayor Jerry Abramson; and former continuing education counselor Martha M. Jones of Ashland to the board. They replace five members whose terms had expired. The outgoing members are Joe Brothers, Austin Moss, Kay Baird, Doug Hubbard and Jeanne Ferguson.

The governor reappointed C.B. Akins of Lexington and Judy Gibbons of Lakeside Park in Kenton County. The terms of the seven appointees run through April 2014.

KSBA board changes

President Delmar Mahan has appointed Scott County school board member Phyllis E. Young to serve as one of the 12 directors-at-large on the association's 27-member board of directors. Young replaces former Christian County Board of Education member Darryl Lynch, who recently moved out of state.

A six-year member of the Scott County board, Young is a graduate of Wash-

ington County High School and St. Catharine College. The mother of two students in the Scott County system, she has served on the NSBA Finance Committee, Scott County Leadership and the district's teacher recruitment and retention task force. Young currently serves as the vice chairwoman of the Scott County board and was recently appointed to the board of Kentucky's School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council.

Young will serve the remainder of the year on the KSBA board and must win election to complete the final two years of the unexpired term during next year's business meeting and elections at the KSBA annual conference.

Healthy schools

Three Kentucky schools are among the 179 schools in 30 states recognized nationally for transforming their buildings into healthier places for students to learn and staff to work.

The National Recognition Awards were presented by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation at its Fifth Annual Healthy Schools Program Forum in New York in mid-June. The Kentucky schools receiving a bronze award for making significant changes in healthy eating, physical activity and staff wellness are: Lotts Creek Community School (Cordia School), Knott County Schools; Owsley County Elementary School; and Perry County Central High School.

The Alliance was founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation to combat childhood obesity. ☞

New KASS leader

Fayette County Schools Superintendent Stu Silberman moved up to the presidency of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents at its summer meeting in June. He had been serving as president-elect while Christian County Superintendent Brady Link held the top spot. Pikeville Independent Superintendent Jerry Green will serve as president-elect and Gallatin County Superintendent Dot Perkins will be vice president.

Silberman has headed Fayette County Schools since 2004, after holding that same position in Daviess County Schools. He has been a finalist for national superintendent of the year, was twice named Kentucky superintendent of the year by Kentucky Association of School Administrators and once by KSBA.



School energy managers, savvy students and tar balls

It appears likely that most of us will remember the summer of 2010 more for deep-water drilling and oily pelicans than World Cup soccer matches or baseball's pennant race. Whether we want to admit it or not, the crisis in the Gulf is just one more reminder of how dependent and vulnerable we have become on a natural resource that is increasingly difficult and dangerous to access.

Like most Americans, this dilemma has left me with a personal and professional sense of frustration and helplessness due to the size and complexity of the problem. After all, what can we as individuals do about it? For that matter, how can a state school boards association and its members affect a problem of this magnitude?

In recent weeks, two separate but related events have made me feel a little more optimistic about the potential impact that KSBA and local school boards can have on America's energy crisis. One of these initiatives was the orientation and training associated with the School Energy Managers Project (SEMP) and the other was a celebration of student energy-savings projects at the Drawbridge Inn in northern Kentucky.

Energy and local boards

Let's start with a reminder of why KSBA and local boards should even care about energy issues.

Energy costs represent the second-largest expenditure (after personnel) in your district budgets. As the cost of energy continues to rise while school funding remains flat, districts are facing unenviable choices in where to make up the difference.

As boards are responsible for developing and managing the district's budget, controlling energy costs has become an unavoidable priority for every board in the Commonwealth.

This brings me to the first reason for optimism: the recent orientation of 35 newly hired school energy managers. KSBA teamed up with the Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence and several other partners July 7-9 to provide the initial training for these newly hired staff. The energy managers come from a variety of backgrounds, including recent engineering school graduates, veteran engineers, educa-



Bill Scott
KSBA Executive Director

tors, and those who worked in industry.

The orientation provided both general information – how they fit into Kentucky's overall energy plan – and specifics, such as how to recruit district and school energy teams and how to establish a baseline for tracking future cost savings.

By now most of you have heard about the SEMP, which provides \$2.5 million in federal stimulus funds over two years to help local districts pay for the school energy managers. The hope is that these energy managers, who serve 130 school districts, will save their districts enough money over the two-year time frame to justify picking up their full salaries in 2013.

Over the next two years these energy managers will engage in a range of activities designed to meet this objective, including analyzing utility bills and evaluating HVAC and lighting systems.

However, based on the experience of districts like Kenton County that already enjoyed the benefits of energy managers, the most powerful role they will play is changing human attitudes and behaviors related to energy savings and its impact on our environment.

Energy and students

This brings me to the second recent event that has fueled my optimism that school leaders are not helpless in the face of our energy crisis. On May 26 I had the privilege of attending Kenton County Schools' energy-savings awards luncheon.

As I watched and listened to student teams from every school in the district proudly present their award-winning projects, I couldn't help but think about the boards' most important role of all: preparing students to succeed in the world they will inherit. If there's one thing certain about that world, it is the even larger role that energy conservation will play. For that reason, I feel a little more optimistic about the future.

The School Energy Managers Project is a modest but important way to retake control over our future. Let's use it to change the way our students think and act about energy and the environment. Most importantly, let's hope that the knowledge and values received through this project can help prevent another summer like the one we're experiencing now. ☘

Kenton County Schools' E=WISE²

The district developed the E=WISE² (Education Creates Wisdom In Saving Energy and the Environment) program to educate school building occupants and the community about energy efficiency while reducing energy consumption in its schools. Each participating school creates an E=WISE² team of students, an administrator, a building support person and a team sponsor. A manual serves as a framework for the teams but each group decides on its own level of success and involvement. Each team receives an E=WISE² Award, with the amount keyed to the level of participation in the program. This past school year, all the district's schools participated.

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere

Photo provided by Casey County Schools



“These camps enhance what teachers might not have time for during the school year. Every year we try to offer different camps and change it up to fit interest to students, and make sure the camps are related to science and arts and humanities. We want them to have more hands-on learning, and to help prevent summer loss.” Casey County Schools 21st Century Director Rita Sweeney on her district’s “transition camps” designed to help incoming middle and high school students make a successful

move to new schools. From the Liberty *Casey County News*.

“We’re going to have crowded buses versus crowded classrooms.” Boone County Schools Superintendent Randy Poe on one of the trade-offs of budget balancing that includes keeping older buses on the road longer and using fewer routes. From the Fort Mitchell *Community Press and Recorder*.

“I would love for them to have a raise. But now, with the state of the economy, I think people are thankful that they have a job.” Hardin County Schools Superintendent Nanette Johnston on her district’s budget that includes neither pay nor experience (step) increases for employees. From the Elizabethtown *News-Enterprise*.

“The answer from the state is to hold on the textbook adoption cycle. This sounds fine, but we are now entering the third year of waiting to adopt textbooks and instructional resources for mathematics. This amounts to nearly a quarter of a million dollars annually that we must either do without and wait or subsidize. So although our budget does balance, it balances at the expense of eliminating something as fundamental as the

annual textbook adoption.” Shelby County Schools Superintendent James Neihof on the local impact of virtually eliminated funding for textbooks in the new state budget. From the Shelbyville *Sentinel-News*.

“The six school districts that I represent will have to pay

for one day each, but each and every one of those districts has the capacity to pay for that one day. Shared pain. Shared pain. Students will not see any difference, nor will the teachers nor any of the staff employees.” State Sen. Dorsey Ridley (D-Henderson) with a legislative perspective about requiring districts to use reserve funds to maintain a 177-instructional day school year. From the *Henderson Gleaner*.

“We have a rule that says when you can’t play, you can’t practice. How can we spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year promoting the value of participation, and then tell kids they can’t attend practices? It just doesn’t make sense. I’m a firm believer that athletics is the No.1 dropout-prevention tool that you have. Kids will keep their grades higher to remain eligible,



Nickel tax

“I’m going to continue to push for this cause – the nickel levy. This is round one. I may not always be superintendent, but I will be a grandfather. From this point forward, I’m dedicated to the cause of getting better schools for our children.” Taylor County Schools Superintendent Roger Cook pledging renewed efforts after a 132-vote defeat (out of more than 4,400 votes cast) in a special election on the board’s nickel facilities tax.

“I’m glad that we did what we did and, if need be, I’d do it again. I don’t regret anything. I just hope now that we can get settled down and get back to teaching our kids.” James DeWitt, leader of an anti-tax group and former Taylor County Schools custodian.

From the Campbellsville *Central Kentucky News-Journal*.



they'll stay in school and meet your other rules. We need to find ways to get kids to participate, not find ways for them not to participate." New Kentucky High School Athletics Association Commissioner Julian Tackett on his hopes to change some student eligibility rules. From the Frankfort KSBA eNews Service.

"A state that is so shortsighted as to try to balance a budget on the backs of its students is akin to a farmer who decides to eat his seed corn and save the expense of planting, fertilizing and harvesting. A less-educated work force is almost certainly going to lead to a downward spiral with more declines in revenue." Portion of newspaper editorial following the May special legislative session on the state budget. From the Bardstown *Kentucky Standard*.

"What you don't know, you can't fund." Pulaski County Schools Superintendent Steve Butcher succinctly explaining the reasoning for giving non-renewal notices to staff, then re-hiring many of them once the General Assembly finally adopted a state budget. From the Somerset *Commonwealth-Journal*.

"I thought the call was a joke at first. Surely People magazine wouldn't be calling us. But after the interviews, I feel good about the article because they focused on the conditions and difficulties of educating the kids in these conditions." Fannie Bush Elementary (Clark County) School Principal Angie Taylor on the national publication's identification of her school as one of the nation's six worst school facilities in the country. From the *Winchester Sun*.

"When we add up all the minutes that teachers were giving up, we equate it to taking almost 23 instructional days out of our school year for dress code."

Barrett Traditional Middle (Jefferson County) School Principal Tom Wortham on a decision to ban skirts for female students next year as part of the dress code. From WHAS-TV News in Louisville.

"We didn't know how bad the picture was going to turn out." Lewis County Schools Director of District Services Nick Addams somewhat tongue-in-cheek when eight employees were hurt after a wooden staircase at the central office collapsed as they posed for a year-end photo. From the Maysville *Ledger-Independent*.

"If we can approach literacy early on... that's where it's at to actually turn this thing around in terms of how many folks that we



have in our region who are functionally illiterate. And we know in this day and time, if you're not literate, you're not going

to be able to be very successful." Bell County Schools Superintendent George Thompson on the district's "Literacy Ambassadors" initiative to build greater community support for reading skills at all ages. From the *Middlesboro Daily News*.

"I'm not counting on getting a lot of money out of the school board, but I'm planning on getting what I put in. To think they're going to come in and just take our houses is naive. That's not going to happen." Homeowner Chad Conder whose house sits on land that could be needed as part of a 17-acre, state-required area for a new Paducah Independent middle school. From the *Paducah Sun*. ☞

Tax revenues and school resource officer funding

POINT ...

"We didn't originate this program — we didn't put it together — but we are expected to help fund it. I don't have \$30,000 to contribute this year, and especially in a year when we lost \$59,000 from the same source we are going to pay it to." Wilmore Mayor Harold Rainwater on reluctance by some city leaders to continue helping fund school resource officers in light of the Jessamine County Schools' relocation of its Early Learning Village, and with it thousands of dollars in payroll taxes, to another community.

COUNTERPOINT...

"In my mind, there's no connection between the village not being in Wilmore and the SRO program, but certainly in (the council members' minds), because it affects their bottom line, I can see why that would be a consideration. We will have to find some ways to tighten the belt on the program. Without those dollars, we're either going to have to come up with more money or we're going to have to scale back the program." Jessamine County Schools Superintendent Lu Young.

From the Nicholasville *Jessamine Journal*

Growing future entrepreneurs

Grant program geared toward economically depressed counties teaches students how to create a business

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

In a time of double-digit unemployment, a program promoting entrepreneurship among Kentucky elementary and middle school students may be making a timely impression.

"If you look at the economic situation, communities need to grow their own jobs and businesses," said Melony Furby, with the Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Institute at the University of Kentucky. She is one of the creators of the program.

The E-Discovery Challenge program provided entrepreneurial training and materials for 55 teachers in 15 school districts in Appalachian Regional Commission counties this past spring. The program, funded through a federal grant, also provided \$15 in seed money to each student, who worked with other students in small groups to create a product to sell at a school event. Students were able to keep any money their group made beyond the initial seed money.

"That \$15 in seed money is retained by the school and will be used for the program next year," Furby said.

She said student groups, which sold everything from handmade jewelry to fishing bait and from healthy snack packs to duct tape accessories, had both successes and losses.

"And that's part of it," Furby said. "We have been thrilled with how it's gone. We received these e-mails from teachers all the time, saying the light bulb has gone on for these students."

Munfordville Elementary student Emili Trousdale is one of them.

"I've always thought I would like to start my own business," she said. "I had gone online before to look up, 'Start your

own business.' And when we started doing this (program), it really opened up more things."

Her group of four sold hand-painted bottle cap necklaces and bracelets, which was their final product idea after coming up with and discarding several others. The Munfordville students sold their products during a technology fair at Hart County High School near the end of the school year.

"The idea we had at first, we decided it was way too expensive, and that was depressing," Trousdale said. "But we had learned about pricing, and we knew that everything we do, you have to put a price on."

Team member Dara Wright said the bottle cap necklace idea worked out well because the materials were cheap – free bottle caps from a local market – but it took team members about three weeks to paint and mount the caps on strings.

"It was hard, but we had a lot of fun," she said, adding that a small business might be in her future. "It might make a good second job," she said.

The girls' social studies teacher, Lisa Phelps, said when her principal sent out an e-mail about the entrepreneur program, she was immediately interested in participating.

"I thought it would be a real eye-opener for our students, to see how much work it takes to raise money and to run your own business," she said. "It's also been good for team-building skills."

Phelps said the program guided students through different aspects of entrepreneurship.

"They started out with a brainstorming activity about how they would improve a product already on the market," she said. "They also had to come up with new uses for things that you find in a junk drawer."

When it came time to create their



Above: From left, Munfordville Elementary eighth-graders Sierra Coats, Emili Trousdale, Coral Linder and Morgan Matthews make a sale of one of their hand-painted bottle-cap necklaces, at left. In the background are eighth-graders Ashley Isaacs, left, and Cassidy Johnson, whose group sold hand-painted ribbons, pictured opposite page.

own product, students had to do market research, identify their target audience, create a supply list and determine how much each item would cost to make or buy and what the profit margin would be.

Students also learned how to present their ideas. “We learned how to do an elevator pitch,” Trousdale said. “That’s when you have to try to present your idea (to a potential investor) in under a minute. It was fun!”

Phelps said the program really opened students’ eyes. “I heard several of them remark about how they hadn’t realized how much work it was to run your own business,” she said.

Furby said feedback from teachers at the program wrap-up sessions has been “awesome.” “Teachers have let us know that most of the students have been very concerned that they pay back their seed money; that was top priority for them,” she said. “Of course, they loved making a profit and have learned the basic steps of what it takes to start a business.” She said pending final federal approval, the E-Discovery program is expected to receive an additional \$275,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission for the upcoming year to continue the program and expand it into 14 additional counties. ☘

CALENDAR QUANDARIES

Funding cut, equivalency issue contributing to fewer 177-instructional day calendars for 2010-11

By Brad Hughes
Staff Writer

For years, Lee County students and teachers have gone to class for longer than the standard six hours a day, while the district calendar was built on the maximum number of state-funded days.

But for the 2010-11 school year, the district's calendar will drop from 177 to 170 instructional days. Leaders cite three factors in the move:

- The General Assembly's budget balancing decision to cut funding of one instructional day;
- Twenty-nine "snow days" last year, which must be reflected in the new year's calendar;
- The budget bill's option to use the "equivalent" of 1,062 hours or 177 days in calendars.

"The commissioner wants us to go 177 days, but if we did, we'd be in the middle of July before we got out," said Lee County Board of Education Chairman William Owen. "We've had longer class days for years, and have never used banked time. Our teachers ask, 'Why do that when you can't count it?'"

"Then we missed 29 days this year. My superintendent and I made eight trips to Frankfort, but we got no help. We talked about the potential academic impact (of the 170 days), but we feel that by adding five more teacher development days, we are doing more there, too."

Murray Independent Superintendent Bob Rogers, far right, speaks with Kentucky Department of Education Deputy Commissioner Larry Stinson during the annual Kentucky Association of School Superintendents conference in July. Murray's school calendar will remain at 175 days this school year.

While Education Commissioner Terry Holliday and members of the Kentucky Board of Education and the General Assembly strongly encouraged local leaders to build 177 instructional days into this school year's calendars, a *Kentucky School Advocate* survey and interviews with randomly selected district leaders found many who felt they couldn't meet that objective.

With 104 districts providing information as of July 7, 33 had adopted calendars with 177 days. That 32 percent rate compares with 55 percent (96 districts) with 177-day calendars for the just-completed 2009-10 year.

Perhaps of more significance is that the survey counted 50 districts reducing the number of instructional days in 2010-11 – almost exclusively by using days longer than six hours – with only nine districts increasing classroom days compared to 2009-10.

"We hope districts will be able to meet the intent of the budget," Holliday said, "however, we do recognize that each district has unique circumstances."

When superintendents talked about this year's calendar



“We make an effort to maximize our time. We’d like to go with a longer school year, everybody would, but we make the effort for the most instructional time every day.”

— Wayne County Schools Superintendent John Dalton

decisions, funding and weather came up repeatedly, but so did student achievement and retaining good staff.

Longer but fewer days

“All of our schools far exceed the 1,062 hours of instruction,” said Simpson County Superintendent James Flynn, whose board chose to stick with its 168-day “innovative” calendar approved by Holliday last year. “We’ve built in time for teachers to learn, collaborate and plan high quality instruction. We feel it is beneficial to ensure we meet the needs of our students.”

With longer school days already in effect, Wayne County Superintendent John Dalton said a reduction to 170 class days won’t diminish instructional efforts.

“We make an effort to maximize our time,” Dalton said. “We’d like to go with a longer school year, everybody would, but we make the effort for the most instructional time every day.”

In Monroe County, Superintendent Lou Carter is confident that the 170 instructional days this year won’t negatively impact teaching and learning.

“We were sixth in the state with our elementary test scores. I’m positive we’ll do the same thing again,” Carter said. “I dealt with the fewer days like this: I told our staff it was four teachers or \$40 less (in pay). And 99.9 percent said they would rather have teachers keep their jobs.”

Budget balancing act

Henry County Superintendent Tim Abrams said his district dipped into its reserves to cover the unfunded day’s expenses.

“It was the intention of the legislature for us to have kids in school 177 days, and I think that’s in the kids’ best interests,” he said. “If the economy doesn’t get better and we don’t get more money from the state, we may have to revisit this in the future. We knew that going in.”

Ludlow Independent Superintendent Curtis Hall said the extra day is important. “We took it to the board and they value the extra instructional days (177) for students, and were willing to pay it.”

But Murray Independent Superintendent Bob Rogers, whose district is holding at 175 days, worries how legislators will view district decisions to pick up the cost of the 177th day. He compared the situation to the action legislators took in funding kindergarten for a half day, citing the number of districts that found money to retain a full-day program.

“If we go ahead and fund 177, the legislature may interpret that like they did all-day kindergarten, Rogers said. “They might say, ‘Well, they went to 177 days, so they can do it on their own.’”

Elliott County Superintendent John Williams said the “equivalent” option of 1,062 instructional hours will help him manage his money.

“I’m losing at least five positions this year and instead of a check for \$14,000 for textbooks, we get a ‘Dear John’ letter

that that money is gone,” Williams said.

Beating Old Man Winter?

Snow and ice days during the winter of 2009-10 was cited by several superinten-

dents in their decision to go with fewer than 177 instructional days. Holliday has floated the idea of a pilot project in eastern Kentucky to create “virtual snow day” options for districts to continue to have instruction online when ice and snow cover roads. The proposal drew cautious support from Menifee County Superintendent Charles Mitchell.

“The virtual idea and giving every kid a laptop is a good idea and I like what the commissioner said about focusing on mastery of subject matter rather than seat time,” Mitchell said. “But a lot of our kids don’t have Internet access.”

Williams said he knows people tire of hearing eastern Kentucky superintendents “play the poor card,” but adds there is a reality when it comes to building calendars that will work 12 months after they are adopted in his part of the state.

“When you are sitting there and you have to make a decision (about having school during inclement weather), which way are you going to err? I’m going to err on the side of safety,” he said. “I can live with criticism but I can’t live with going down to a funeral home and walking in that line.” ❧

Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC

R S A


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

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

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

Our School District division contact information is as follows:

Joe Nance
Ross, Sinclair & Associates, LLC
325 W. Main Street, Ste. 300
Lexington, Kentucky 40507
(800) 255-0795
jnance@rsamuni.com



SIPC **FINRA**

Ready, set, kindergarten!

McLean teachers pound the pavement for kindergarten prep

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Sometimes they make their deliveries under the broiling summer sun. Occasionally they have difficulty pinpointing addresses, turning to a GPS device for help. Then there are the dogs to dodge.

These kindergarten teachers in McLean County have much in common with UPS drivers or mail carriers as they visit the homes of their incoming students in mid-June, well before school begins. The visits are part of the rural school system's early childhood education initiative.

"Everybody is thrilled to see us – especially the kids," Livermore Elementary kindergarten teacher Christina Belt said during a round of visits in mid-June. "We love seeing where the kids come from. And they talk about it when they get to school."

Three Livermore teachers and their principal, wearing school polo shirts so they're not mistaken for state social workers, bore gifts: a plastic bag filled with items such as crayons, paste, scissors, flash cards and Play-Doh, along with a school calendar, supply list and information about the back-to-school bash. Perhaps most importantly, it also contains suggested activities for parents to help prepare their child for kindergarten.

"We tell them it's their homework," Belt said.

The reception is good, Principal Carrie Ellis said, "because we have things to give them. They realize we're not wanting anything."

The early-summer kindergarten visits have been expanded to the other grades at Livermore and to the district's other two elementary schools.



Livermore Elementary kindergarten teacher Stacey Davis helps her incoming student, Cofie Casey, look through the bag of activities and information she's brought to her home. Her mother, Kasady Casey, talks with Davis and Principal Carrie Ellis.

The visits make both students and their parents feel more comfortable when they come to the school and avoid "piling everything brand-new on them at one time" when the children first start school, Ellis said, as well as cutting down on the number of first-day "criers."

Ellis, whose school has a 72 percent free- and reduced-meal rate, said it also makes a difference for teachers to see their incoming kindergartners on their home turf.



Tivorcía Reyes keeps an eye on visitors from the school while her sister Marlina Boyken checks the contents of the bag they've brought for her.

“The teachers have more patience with children because they realize a lot of times where they’re coming from,” she said.

McLean County school board member Joyce Sutton isn’t surprised at the effectiveness of the initiative. As a former Head Start teacher, she made plenty of home visits. “It was just wonderful how receptive these parents were,” she said.

One part of the whole

The visits are part of the district’s early literacy initiative (ELI) that began in 2005-06 as a kindergarten readiness program and has grown to become a multi-pronged program for grades K-2, said McLean County Schools Assistant Superintendent Judy Brown Campbell.

The effort was triggered by a review of CTBS data from the kindergarten program, which pointed to a lack of preparedness among incoming students.

For the readiness program, testing identifies 10-15 kindergartners from each elementary school (fewer at the smallest of the three schools) to receive one-on-one instruction and attention, using a pre-K math and reading curriculum, along with socialization and hands-on activities.

“By the end of that first year, we had at least 76 percent of our kindergarten students (in the readiness program) who were able to go on to the primary one classroom,” Campbell said.

A Reading Recovery program also was implemented that first year with grant money, mainly benefiting four to five first-graders with the lowest reading ability in each school. And the district began assessing the reading skills of second-graders and providing interventions for those who perform below benchmarks. Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing was also added to the K-2 toolbox.

“It gives us the whole picture of how the student is progressing. We keep student data files on every student

below benchmark,” Campbell said.

This year, the district’s family resource center has gotten in on the act with a program that promotes school readiness at birth. New parents are given brochures and suggestions for age-appropriate activities.

Fighting the odds

Campbell said the district’s ability to get children ready for kindergarten is hampered by a lack of funds to start its own preschool. There also are few private preschools in McLean County and there are no professional day care centers, she said. Each elementary school has a Head Start program, but Campbell said some students who need those services don’t qualify.

“If we were able to have the money to (start a preschool), we would love to,” Sutton, the school board member, said.

Most working residents commute to jobs in neighboring Daviess County, Campbell explained, bringing their children to day care centers there.

“It’s the lower economic group (that stays in McLean) that we need to get our hands on here that could use preschool,” she said.

Even with those obstacles, the district’s early childhood initiative has demonstrated results. CTBS scores for kindergarten in 2005-06 were in the 40-50 percentile, Campbell said, and last year they were in the 80s-90s. Discipline and attendance also improved because the students with readiness issues are getting help and don’t feel as insecure and frustrated about their abilities.

“The kids are not as apprehensive about the school experience because they have already met their teachers and their principals. The parents already know the expectation for the students as they begin school. So the whole culture and the attitude to the kindergarten experience has changed,” Campbell said. ☞



Energy detectives check bills, uncover savings

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

When the 35 newly minted school energy managers hit the ground running in local school districts in July, one of the first things they did was to... sit down.

That is, after all, the best way to pore over utility usage records and related billing – which is, in turn, one of the best ways to save money.

Need proof? When an energy team in Scott County Schools did just that last year, it ended up putting \$121,000 in the district's bank account, courtesy of Kentucky Utilities.

"I noticed that several of the locations were on the wrong rate," said team member Ron Willhite, a retired Kentucky Utilities executive who now heads the School Energy Managers Project based at KSBA. The federally funded program, a partnership between the association and the state Department for Energy Development and Independence, is paying for a portion of the energy managers' salaries.

In analyzing the bills with the Scott County energy team, Willhite found that KU had been billing the district at a commercial rate for five schools that are all-electric with geothermal systems. All-electric schools should have been billed at a then-special rate, he said.

There was a rub, however: KU leaves it up to the customer to choose a rate and the district had filed requests for the all-electric rate for just two of the five schools, Willhite said.

"Our assumption was that KU would put us on the right rate. Obviously, that didn't work," said Zan Rexroat, Scott County Schools' maintenance director.

School board Chairwoman Rebecca Sams said she was surprised by the discovery. "It was quite enlightening to think that that was going on, but at least we found out about it," she said.

Had it not been for a 2008 state law (House Bill 2) requiring districts to develop an energy plan, Rexroat added, "we'd have never known about it."

The district was correct in its assessment of the rate situation, KU spokesman Cliff Feltham said. And, he said, the all-electric school rate must be requested. "It's not automatic," he said.

Negotiations

Though Kentucky Utilities has frozen the all-electric school rate, the company agreed to refund the Scott County district the difference between the two rates, Willhite said. For the two schools for which the all-electric rate had been requested, the refund went back to the original request date; for the three others, it went back to April 2009, when the Scott County team brought the rate issue to the company's attention. KU also agreed that all five schools would receive the more favor-

On the energy team

Two veteran superintendents will help coordinate the work of school energy managers as part of the Kentucky School Energy Managers Project.

Tim Eaton, who retired after 10 years as the head of Pulaski County Schools, and Larry Woods, most recently superintendent of Lincoln County Schools, will be project coordinators. Eaton serves the southeastern part of the state, while Woods works in the western half.

A Pulaski County native, Eaton spent more than three decades in the district, serving as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, transportation director and deputy superintendent. He moved up to the superintendency in 2000.

Woods served 12 years as a high school teacher before moving into school- and district-level leadership. He has worked in six school districts, including Fayette, Garrard and Breathitt counties, and was superintendent in Butler County.



Eaton



Woods



New school energy managers work through an exercise in team building in small groups during their three-day training session July 7-9 in Lexington. Consultant Molly Sutherland, center, works with a group that includes, seated from left, Scott Caslow, Jon Collins and Randy Leger. School Energy Managers Project coordinator Tim Eaton, standing, also led the discussion. The event served as a foundation for launching the work of the 35 energy managers.

able rate going forward.

“It took us about a year to unravel that,” Willhite said.

Thus far, the savings amount to an upfront rebate totaling \$76,000 and savings going forward of \$27,000 annually.

Further, a separate billing issue on a three-school campus – involving a switch from a single meter to individual ones – netted the Scott County district a \$45,000 refund from KU and \$74,000 in annual savings going forward.

Feltham said the all-electric school rate was frozen when KU submitted a proposed rate increase and restructuring to the state Public Service Commission. Once the PSC has ruled in the case, he said, the utility plans to re-establish that rate.

Energy detectives

KU is the only provider that has an all-electric rate for schools, Willhite said, “but that doesn’t mean, though, that there aren’t facilities out there that are on the wrong rate for utilities. There are other rate options out there.”

The new school energy managers will be checking for that. “There’s going to be a level of persistence that there wasn’t before,” Willhite said.

Feltham said there could be other districts in the same situation as Scott County Schools. “At this point, we’re not sure,” he said. The energy managers should get in touch with one of the company’s commercial account representatives if they have

questions, he added.

The energy managers will look at the type of utility rate being applied to schools and do a 12-month bill comparison to see what various types of rates would have produced and which ones would generate the most savings.

“That can quickly determine whether or not they’re on the wrong rate. And that’s going to be something we’re going to find – we’re going to find instances of this; it just happens,” Willhite said.

Among other things, energy managers also will look at the power schedule for each school building, which is tied to how much a building is in use. For example, a large high school with many athletic and other activities would be open for longer hours and drawing more power than a central office building. This is a factor in rate selection.

After the initial analysis, the school energy managers will continue to monitor the bills each month and “give them a higher level of scrutiny,” Willhite said, or they’ll train district accounting staff to do the monitoring.

Scott County Schools Finance Director Randy Cutright said one purpose of the monitoring will be “to make sure conditions don’t change to where you could be on a better rate.”

And, Rexroat said, the district “will be more aware of any new building that comes on, making sure we get the right rate up front.” ❧

PERSISTENCE TO GRADUATION

Yearlong focus on graduation kicks off at annual summer conference

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

In 2008, 6,472 students dropped out of school in Kentucky. If that number isn't staggering enough, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education, those students will cost the state \$4.2 billion in lost wages during their lifetimes.

"The best thing we can do for our economy is to send all kids out with a high school diploma. Our state and nation cannot afford dropouts, and more importantly, these individuals can't afford to drop out."

That was the impassioned message from Christine Powell, director of secondary education and virtual learning for the Kentucky Department of Education, who helped KSBA kick off its yearlong focus on the "Persistence to Graduation" during its annual Summer Leadership Institute last month.

Powell, a former high school associate principal, made the case for improving graduation rates and reducing the number of dropouts by using statistics and numbers. Four students who could have been those statistics used their personal stories to drive home the consequences of not intervening.

Tyrie Stone, a Jefferson County student now on track for graduation, said his path to dropping out started in sixth grade, when after a successful



Sarah Colley, a recent graduate from Christian County Schools, fields a question from a board member about her decision to go back to school after falling behind and dropping out. Colley, and Lequita Bussell, left, were among four students who shared their experiences about why they returned to school. Christine Powell, director of secondary education and virtual learning for the Kentucky Department of Education, is at right.

Change is on the educational horizon

By Mary Branham

Local school districts face change in the next few years as Kentucky joins other states in adopting common educational standards, state education laws change and Congress works to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

School board members had the opportunity to prepare themselves for these educational changes during the KSBA Summer Leadership Institute July 10.

Kentucky was the first state to adopt the Common Core State Standards, an effort to align curriculum standards in English/language arts and mathematics across the country. Fifty-one states and territories joined the effort a year ago to look at standards; since the standards were finalized, 22 state boards of education have adopted them.

In the past, states have applied different standards, according to Michael Miller, director of the Division of Curriculum Development at the Kentucky Department of Education.

"If states adopt these standards, they have to take them the way that they are," Miller said, adding states can add standards. States

See "Changes" on Page 19



Roberta Stanley, director of federal affairs with the National School Boards Association, discussed federal policy updates during the Summer Leadership Institute.

elementary school career, he was bussed to a middle school far from his neighborhood.

“They shipped me out to a place I was never familiar with, where none of my accomplishments in elementary school mattered,” he said “People had their perceptions of how I was because of where I was from and how I lived, which was far from the truth.”

By what should have been his sophomore year, Stone said he was so far behind he dropped out, for about a month.

“I didn’t feel like I had anyone to reach out to me, so I quit,” he said. “I didn’t have no one to reach out to me when I quit, neither, but I sat and thought about it at home, how far can I go without a high school diploma? I came to the conclusion that I only have two options: I can go to jail or go back to school.”

Stone chose school.

“I look at those things as mere obstacles that I’m going to have to overcome, that I am overcoming. But for other students, those things may not be mere obstacles, they may be walls that when they hit them they quit, they don’t get up and fight through the wall,” he said. “Which is why I say, if everyone reaches out, you all can help be that wrecking ball that knocks down those walls.”

KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott said there is a growing urgency across the state about this issue, which is why the association’s Board of Directors chose to create this initiative.

“We’re not doing this just to have a high graduation rate; we’re doing this because as we’ll learn, this is something that affects every aspect of American lifestyle,” he said. “We’re going to be talking about two critical questions: Why do school boards need to graduate every student? What can boards do to make that happen?”

Scott said if a district is going to have a comprehensive program addressing dropouts and graduation, it must address these four components:

1. Prediction: How do you identify students who are likely to drop out?

2. Intervention: What do educators do for high-risk students once they’re identified?

3. Prevention: How can our schools reduce the risk factors for dropouts?

4. Recovery: What are educators doing for students who have already dropped out?

“Recovery we so often forget,” Scott said. “It’s easy: out of sight, out of mind. Research makes it clear that recovering students who have dropped out is critical because late graduates do very well after their recovery. We know they do better than GED recipients and certainly a lot better than dropouts over a whole range of life indicators.”

It was the recovery component that saved the students who shared their stories.

See “Graduation” on Page 18

THE COST OF DROPOUTS TO KENTUCKY

\$11.9 million — the annual cost of support programs like housing, food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid for dropouts. That is \$2,113 per dropout.

\$87.4 million — the combination of revenue and savings the state would see in reduced crime spending and increased earnings each year if the male high school graduation rate was increased by 5 percent.

\$161.8 million — the amount Kentucky would save in health care costs for each cohort of dropouts. Cohort groups track each graduating class from their freshmen through senior years.

\$4.2 billion — the amount that dropouts from the class of 2008 will cost the state in lost wages over their lifetimes.

Source: Alliance for Excellent Education



Jefferson County student Tyrie Stone and Bullitt Central High School graduate Ashley Mattingly were both entertaining and honest as they answered questions about what led them to drop out of school, and what inspired them to go back.

GRADUATION

Continued from Page 17

Ashley Mattingly, who just graduated from Bullitt Central High School, had plenty of reasons to drop out of school: the early deaths of both her parents, being placed in the foster care system and a car accident that could have been debilitating. But she persisted.

“Some of the people who have helped me and encouraged me are my foster family, and there’s a wonderful Youth Services Center at Bullitt Central that’s helped me a lot,” she said. “Having someone to talk to is helpful.”

After completing three AP classes this past year and graduating with 3.7 GPA, Mattingly will attend the University of Kentucky this fall, where she plans to take courses to become a pharmacist.

Recent graduates Lequita Bussell and Sarah Colley said they owed their success to Christian County Schools’ Ace High School, an alternative program geared toward graduating students.

“ACE High School is a different experience,” said Bussell, who dropped out after falling behind after giving birth to a daughter. “When I was in school, students were loud; they weren’t paying attention and by the time the teacher said, ‘settle down,’ class was about over.

We weren’t learning anything.”

Colley said the loud classes made her easily distracted and she, too, fell behind before dropping out.

“I was hopeless,” she said. “My mom encouraged me to get my GED, but I knew my career options would be limited with it. I got into the ACE program and I have even gone to the high school to tutor students like myself who are in credit recovery.”

Both are on their way to college, where Bussell plans to become a nurse and Colley, a behavioral analyst.

Persistence to Graduation will continue in the next few months during KSBA’s Fall Regional Meetings (see back page for schedule). In preparation for those meetings, board members were encouraged to go back to their districts and familiarize themselves with their district’s dropout and graduation rates.

“As you go back to your districts and look at these numbers, ask yourself: Do you have policies and procedures in place to deal with persistence to graduation,” Powell said. “Do you have a system of interventions in place to deal with dropouts?” ☞

LATE GRADUATES VS. GED RECIPIENTS AND DROPOUTS

Late graduates are:

- Much more likely to obtain an associate or bachelor’s degree
- More likely to find full-time employment
- More likely to have retirement and health insurance benefits
- More likely to vote
- Less likely to smoke

Source: Center for Public Education, NSBA

— For more information, go to the following websites: www.education.ky.gov/ KDE; www.all4ed.org; www.graduate.ky.gov; and www.betterhighschools.org.



Training for Directors of Special Education and Special Education Legal Update

August 26 - 27, 2010
Park Inn Louisville East

This conference offers information that all directors — new and experienced — need to know. Hear about current court cases, hot topic issues, budgeting and resources. Our presenters have many years of valuable experience to share with you.

For more information or to register, go to www.ksba.org

CHANGES

Continued from Page 16

will monitor the standards to determine whether adjustments are needed, he said.

The standards—all aligned with post-secondary expectations—are grounded in basic skills as a foundation for learning, Miller said. For instance, the standards in reading establish a staircase of increasingly complex reading materials. A list of reading materials is provided, but Miller said the items are not required reading; instead, they are examples of the levels of complexity at different reading levels.

While the accountability system based on the new standards won't begin until 2012, Miller said schools can begin to use the standards now. The state will conduct interim accountability between the end of CATS and the next assessment tool.

Kentucky has had a "huge impact" on the final standards, according to Miller. In earlier versions, he said, the standards placed no emphasis on literary writing. But Miller said young students need to learn this style of writing as they learn to read, and, he said, it gives them a narrative way to make nonfiction writing better.

"The standards are just the beginning," he said. "They will mean nothing if instruction is not changed."

Sen. Vernie McGaha said the state should work with higher education to continually upgrade and improve teacher preparation. In addition, he said, "we need to educate our principals on how to better select teachers."

Rep. Carl Rollins said in addition to improved teacher training, the state should work to make the teaching profession honorable again.

"We need to quit beating up on public schools and teachers," he said. "Public schools are the most valuable things we do in the state of Kentucky."

Rollins would like to see the dropout age raised to age 18, but McGaha said sometimes getting students to that age is difficult and schools are not adequately addressing the problem early on.

"When I feel like we're prepared to handle these students, I will vote, 'yes'" on a bill to increase the dropout age, McGaha said.

Rollins and McGaha disagreed on teacher and principal evaluations. Rollins said it's rare for teachers to get a poor evaluation, and he'd like to see some standardization. "There are 174 school districts in Kentucky and 174 ways to evaluate teachers," he said.

McGaha disagreed. "I'm not convinced it's not a local jurisdictional matter," he said.

He added that getting better principals would help, and suggested allowing the superintendent and school boards more say in the principal selection at local schools.

Roberta Stanley, director of federal affairs for the National School Boards Association, said the federal



Kentucky Rep. Carl Rollins of Midway talked with Shelby County Board of Education member Allen Phillips following the luncheon session about state changes to education law during the Summer Leadership Institute July 10.

model for addressing problems in schools is not a good one.

"In so many instances, they want to just fire principals," Stanley said. "You people are more suited to determine an effective principal than testing ... a snapshot in time."

Charter schools are another item on the federal agenda. McGaha said those schools have more flexibility than traditional public schools. Rollins is an avid opponent, saying if charter schools work because of added flexibility, why not give all public schools that same flexibility?

The Obama administration and Education Secretary Arne Duncan support the creation of charter schools, which were part of the criteria used for Race to the Top funding, part of the 2009 stimulus bill.

But Stanley said research on charter schools shows results are uneven or less than equal. "They're a false promise," she said in discussing the federal policy update.

Discussion of educational issues in Washington has centered on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as No Child Left Behind since its last reauthorization in the Bush administration.

While many in Congress believe the legislation will be reauthorized this year, Stanley is skeptical. She said the educational community doesn't need another rushed piece of legislation.

She has other concerns, particularly regarding funding for education. For instance, there has been talk of making Title 1 funds competitive.

"We'd like them to base funding on the issue of fairness," Stanley said. She'd also like to ensure that any accountability system is fair. ❧

— *Branham is a writer from Frankfort*



Sally Sugg and Connie Lester

on KDE's new District 180 initiative

In Conversation With... features an interview between a leader or figure involved in public education and a staff member of the Kentucky School Advocate.

This month's conversation is with the Kentucky Department of Education's Sally Sugg, (far left) associate commissioner, Office of Leadership and School Improvement, and Connie Lester, director, Division of Scholastic Assistance. They discuss the new District 180 initiative, aimed at providing earlier, more targeted assistance for low-performing schools.

Q. What is District 180?

Sally Sugg: The three Centers for Learning Excellence will be housed at three universities – the University of Louisville, Western and Eastern. The attempt there is to bring all of the resources in the geographic service region of those universities together with the lowest-performing schools, the first priority being the 10 persistently lowest achieving schools that have been identified. But also, any other Tier 3 schools or other schools in need of assistance.

Those universities will be responsible for providing professional development, for doing any type of language arts/English or math PD that would be specific to those schools' needs, any other type of professional development, teaching strategies. And there are some programs at these universities that districts have already taken advantage of.

They will be one of the main providers for schools in need of assistance. One of the goals is to bring that university expertise out of the college and get it into the practitioners' hands. I think some of our universities do a good job of that, but this will be a next step in that direction.

Those will not be the only three universities involved in this project. We are starting with those three because geographically, that is where the 10 persistently lowest achieving schools fall. Other universities will be partnering with them, learning from them as they go through the process. Our expectation, pending funding, is to add others throughout the state.

Q. How did this get started?

Sugg: The District 180 concept was developed by the department as we were looking at how we could intervene in a more systemic way, in a more urgent way. It's partially funded by the

School Improvement Grants coming from the federal government.

In looking at how we could intervene in a more urgent, deeper way, this was part of our Race to the Top application.

Q. In addition to professional development, what other types of assistance will be available through District 180?

Sugg: The Centers for Learning Excellence (the universities) will also be charged with bringing in parents, community and faith-based organizations, and their expertise and willingness to help will be critical to turning around these schools. That is something that is probably unique for a model. I think probably most states are not focusing on that, and that is something in our grant application that the CLEs will be addressing.

There are some very specific targeted resources at each of the 10 schools.

Connie Lester: There are 10 schools in five districts that have been identified as the bottom 5 percent of the persistently lowest achieving schools across the state. Each of those schools will have an educational recovery leader assigned. That is a person who has had leadership experience. Their role will be to mentor and coach the principal of that school.

Each school will also be assigned two educational recovery specialists. One's responsibility will be math and the other's will be reading.

The funding for those comes through the Kentucky Department of Education, and then these schools get their federal School Improvement Grant and they use that money for other support services. Each of these 10 schools will receive \$1.5 million over a three-year period.

The schools and districts will be required to submit quarterly progress reports to KDE. If they are not showing progress, then other changes will be necessary. In order to keep receiving the money over the three-year period, they have to keep showing progress. Each of them has submitted an application to the federal government for that money and each is in the process of being reviewed and feedback given to schools to make revisions until they meet all of the guidelines.

In addition to these 10 schools, there are 98 other schools that qualified and are receiving money for improvement. So those 98 schools will receive SIG grants, just not as much as the 10. There's a formula that varies depending on the size of the school.

Sugg: Those are Tier 3 schools. The 10 are Tier 1 and 2 schools.

Lester: These 98 will get support through the Centers for Learning Excellence, they will get professional development and they can use their money to hire experts to come, but it is the 10 schools that will receive the three KDE-funded specialists.

Q. **Going back to the 10 schools and the goals they set, what are the consequences of not meeting those goals?**

Lester: Money can be withheld at the end of next school year. The principal could be replaced.

Sugg: We did leadership audits at these schools. That was key to giving them a road map and determining capacity in each of these schools and districts.

Lester: The leadership assessment teams had three charges: They had to determine if the principal had capacity to lead the turnaround and if the school council had capacity. If it was deemed the school council had not been effective, its authority was turned over to the superintendent.

Sugg: That process is unique to Kentucky. We have not heard of any other states through these federal guidelines doing anything in addition to the guidelines to help assess the leadership capacity in the schools and district, or to give them a summary report from an outside team. So those leadership audits are unique to Kentucky's model.

Lester: We already had the Scholastic Audit process in place, so we were able to take that and make a few changes and make it work.

And those 10 schools, there are four models for improvement and they had to select one to implement over the next three years. So the grant application had to focus around a model. (See sidebar for details about improvement options).

Q. **What else should school board members know about District 180?**

Lester: We are providing two weeks of turnaround training for the principals and a team from each school. Educational recovery leaders and specialists will also be involved in that training; they will work as a team with their schools. And there will be some follow-up days throughout the school year.

Q. **What will those two weeks focus on?**

Lester: National research, what works, best practices in turning around schools.

Sugg: There are different models. One of them looks at the culture that exists in a school and community. Looking at a concept of continuous improvement, that's a big part of it. The other thing is specific strategies around math, reading, language arts, efficiency.

One of the books that is an assignment for all of them to read is William Bratton and how he turned around the New York City crime epidemic. It's looking at it from a business perspective. Even though we are educators, there are some things similar to the organization. They are not only going to be studying education best practices, but business best practices in turning around failing companies and organizations.

And what school board members might like to know, the things that were looked at in identifying these schools are things that all school boards and central office staff should be looking at: math and reading proficiency of their students, dropout rate and making Adequate Yearly Progress and closing achievement gaps. So it isn't really a magic formula, it's what successful schools and districts are looking at every day.

Q. **Have the schools been pretty receptive to these changes?**

Sugg: I think there has been a real good spirit of cooperation, and obviously schools and districts want to do what's best for students. None of us will ever agree on all of the strategies and guidelines on the federal, state or local level, but I think there is a really good spirit of cooperation at this point. It was disappointing to be named (to the list) early on because some of them were quite surprised. But those statistics are there and they're going to be reported this fall and other schools will be named and added to the list. We'll be adding schools that will get resources after this list comes out.

Q. **That's going to keep happening each year, the 10 persistently lowest performing schools?**

Lester: It's the lowest 5 percent. That just happened to be 10 schools this year, and projections are that that number is going to continue to grow. The budget issue is how do we finance all of this.

I think one thing that has helped with that positive attitude is that they're developing their own plan, we're not dictating a plan to them. And we're providing resources to assist with implementing that plan. ☞

Is being a school superintendent worth it?

It was an ordinary day...
...a newspaper called on a school board to reverse itself and extend the contract of a superintendent who admitted to mistakes, but who the editor felt had earned the extra year due to his focus on students...

...a blogger obtained e-mails under the Kentucky Open Records Act and published messages of a board member disputing a decision by the superintendent, who in turn made a plea to stop harassing him...

...a superintendent's last day of the year was complicated by a bus accident involving minor injuries but with a driver who had been the subject of parental complaints...

...and along the way I spotted this headline in the June edition of the American Association of School Administrators' magazine, *The School Administrator*:

"The Superintendency: Is It Worth It?"

According to Department of Education figures, the average salary for a Kentucky superintendent last year was \$116,957. The U.S. Census Bureau reports the most recent median income of Kentucky households (2008) was \$51,729. So one can understand an average Kentuckian might respond, "Heck, yes, being a superintendent is worth it!"

But anyone who would take a superintendent's job based on salary probably should ponder a few things that can't be put in an Excel file of crunched data.

Mountains and potholes

Would it be worth being superintendent considering that the job involves:

- losing a promising young teacher to another career after two years of non-renewal notices and a fear of going through the emotional trauma of a third;
- knowing that tonight's snow means a 4 a.m. start of the day and a decision on having or calling off classes that will be condemned by roughly every third person affected;
- advocating for an expensive academic initiative, seeing it produce promising results but two years later having to recommend the program be terminated because the money to maintain it just doesn't exist;
- improving a school by bringing to the central office an underperforming administrator whom you can't fire but whose transfer also means a person down the hall is going to have to pick up the resulting slack;
- recommending expulsion of a student who you know has a pitiful home life but whose disruptions at school have incited demands for his removal to avoid possible future interaction with other children;



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

- being vilified at a school board meeting – by a member of the board – for a position that you were so confident of at the time but later leaves you wondering how you ever reached that conclusion.

Or would you consider the superintendent's woes more worthy because of the opportunities to:

- hand a diploma to a graduating senior whom you had personally convinced to persevere through academic struggles early in high school;
- see the eyes of a kindergartener as you read a story aloud about a child overcoming life troubles to save her family and a whole town by quick-thinking action in time of crisis;
- read a parent's e-mail about a child whose improved behavior is attributed to the support of a teacher whose job was preserved in part by your efficient money management;
- hear a school board member refute a constituent's complaints about your work, citing contribution after contribution you have made to advance learning in the system;
- watch a student athlete's game-winning goal, 3-pointer or home run or a student scholar accept a Governor's Cup medallion or a family's first college scholarship;
- and frame a front page newspaper story on a visit by the commissioner of education to praise one of your schools for its phenomenal success in raising student test scores.

Expect to see these examples – and the impact of and on a Kentucky superintendent – to be repeated, perhaps in slightly varying forms, in the new school year that has just begun.

The Last Word

Superintendents aren't perfect. Most folks can point to superintendents whose actions warrant reactions ranging from an endorsement for the annual F. L. Dupree Outstanding Superintendent Award to the infamous Jay Leno question to Hugh Grant after the latter's arrest with a prostitute, "What the hell were you thinking?" You earn a beating; you take your lumps.

But even a superintendent who catches a critic's barbs today should be examined in light of his or her full record of leadership, decision-making and attention to what is needed to give every student in every class a shot at a quality life through a solid education.

If the scales don't tip way on the side of good results, the superintendent should be in another field. Superintendents with overall good records can still deserve the occasional off-stage counsel along with a bit of trumpeted heraldry. At the very least, they've earned the respect for a job whose every day could involve reaching a mountain peak as easily as getting sucked into quicksand.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☘



2010 KSBA Fall Regional Meeting Schedule

Persistence to Graduation

Join us at this year's fall regional meetings aimed at helping school districts increase their graduation rates and decrease dropouts. This yearlong effort is a partnership among KSBA, the Kentucky Department of Education and local school districts.

Presentations and testimonies from board members, policy makers, practitioners and students will address:

- consequences of low graduation rates
- Implications of changes in the definition graduation rate
- Role of local school boards
- Effective strategies and promising practices

Invitations will be sent from the host district a month prior to the meeting.

MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND

DATE	REGION
Sept. 20	Upper KY River
Sept. 21	Eastern KY South
Sept. 23	Central KY
Sept. 27	Upper Cumberland
Oct. 5	Eastern KY North
Oct. 7	Fifth
Oct. 12	Middle Cumberland
Oct. 14	Northern KY
Oct. 19	Second
Oct. 21	Fourth
Oct. 26	Third
Oct. 28	First





260 Democrat Drive
Frankfort, KY 40601

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

Better together



Danville Independent and Boyle County school districts continued their community outreach work together at a June meeting of an ad hoc advisory council of parents, interested citizens and school staff.

The session was a follow-up to a larger December 2009 forum that kicked off the effort to discuss ways the districts can improve.

Attendees at the June meeting heard an overview from Boyle County Superintendent Mike LaFavers, above, with Boyle County school board member Alane Mills listening at far right; and Danville Independent Superintendent Carmen Coleman, bottom right, about a future initiative that could place the districts on the national stage. It would involve the districts' high school students, University of Kentucky and the state education department in implementing an innovative, project-based, technology-heavy learning center, according to the superintendents. The effort is part of Kentucky's role as one of six states in the national Partnership for Next Generation Learning.

The briefing drew plenty of comments and questions from the group, including several from Kent Mann and Nancy Robinson, top right.

Coleman and LaFavers said they would be visiting innovative high school sites in the coming months to get ideas.