

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ April 2011

Rooftop learning

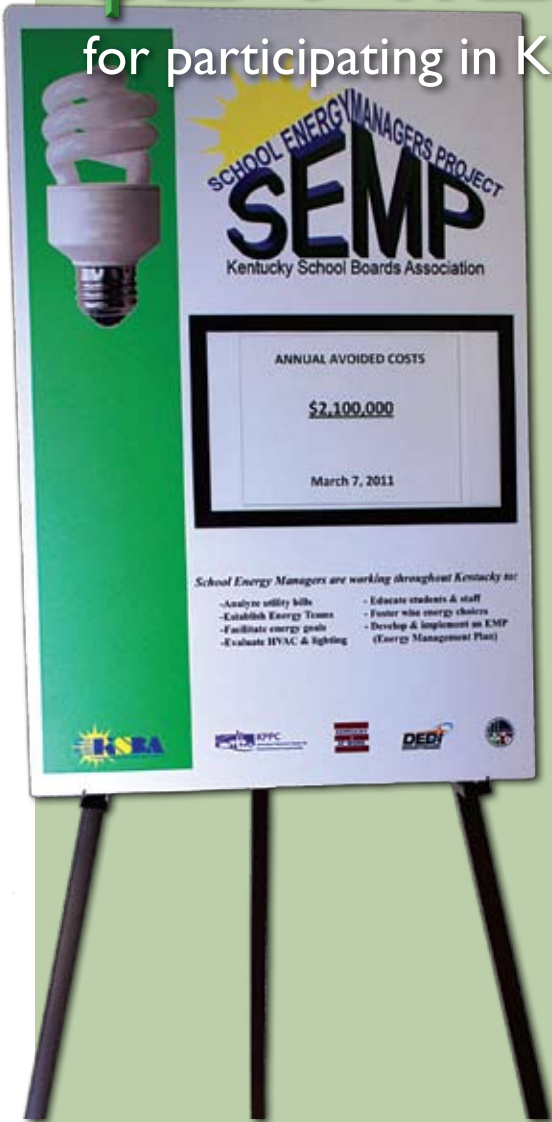
DROPOUT REDUCTION ON A SHOESTRING

Interdistrict walk-throughs

Calendar revisions: tweaks, not tremors

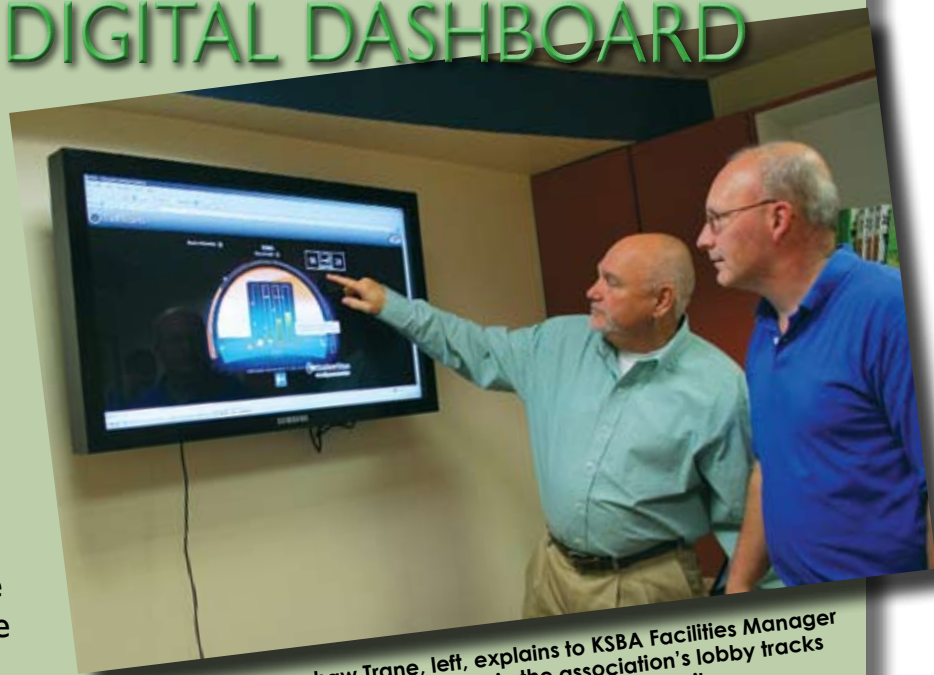
\$2 MILLION REASONS AND COUNTING

for participating in KSBA's School Energy Managers Project



In its first seven months, energy managers working in 145 participating districts have helped school leaders identify more than \$2 million in annual costs savings, as well as more than \$400,000 in refunds and rebates. Program leaders expect the number on the sign, left, in KSBA's lobby to continue to grow.

DIGITAL DASHBOARD



Kevin Heuser of Harshaw Trane, left, explains to KSBA Facilities Manager Jeff Million how the digital dashboard in the association's lobby tracks the building's energy use. Harshaw Trane donated the unit.

KSBA is following the lead of the school districts in the SEMP program, looking for areas where its office in Frankfort can become more energy efficient. The new digital dashboard installed in its foyer will allow KSBA to monitor its energy use and look for areas of savings.

SEMP is a partnership between KSBA and the Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence, funded with \$5.1 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to develop energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. SEMP enables districts to hire professionals to create and implement district energy-management plans.



FEATURES

CALENDAR ADJUSTMENTS

It's been another tough winter for school calendars and for the boards and administrators who juggle make-up day plans. But despite the weather extremes of the last few years, the situation hasn't generated any radical calendar moves – just a lot of tweaking ... Page 8

LOW-COST DROPOUT PREVENTION

The prospect of raising the minimum attendance age had some school boards worried about added costs for programs to keep kids in school. But some districts are using no-frills strategies that are not only successful, but cost efficient as well ... Page 12

WALK THIS WAY

Cooperation among neighboring school districts takes many forms, but scrutiny of each other's classrooms generally isn't one of them. Gallatin and Carroll county school districts are the exception, using a practice called Instructional Rounds ... Page 14

SERVICE LEARNING

The service learning program at Covington Independent's alternative school has it all: a tie-in to curriculum, a vehicle for polishing its community image and student leadership development. And the community benefits at the same time ... Page 16

THREE-PEAT

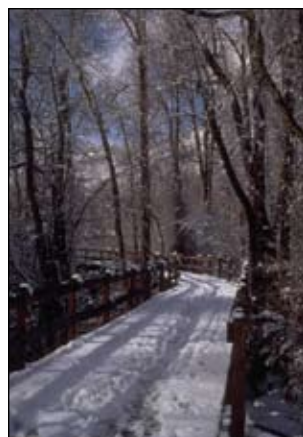
For the third year in a row, a Kentucky school district is among the list of national Magna Award winners. This year, Carlisle County Schools will pick up its award at the National School Boards Association's 2011 conference for its program that benefits both high school students and preschoolers ... Page 18



Sliding to a big win, Page 18



Collaborative counties, Page 14



Snow problem? Page 8

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On the cover



Bowling Middle School (Owen County) eighth-graders, from left, Elizabeth Stewart, Autumn Gover and Kaylee Boling, examine the details of the new school's vegetative roof — only the second for a Kentucky school. The roof is designed to be both environmentally sound and a learning space ... Article on Page 10.

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

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TAKE NOTE

Kentucky celebration

This year's Kentucky Reception at the National School Boards Association's 2011 conference will have a celebratory theme. The reception on Sunday, April 10, will celebrate the ascension this year of Boone County school board member Ed Massey to the office of president-elect of NSBA. Massey last year was elected as the national association's secretary/treasurer, which put him in line to move up through the organization. He is a former KSBA president.

The Kentucky Reception will be from 5-6:30 p.m. at the San Francisco Marriott Marquis, in Golden Gate B. The annual NSBA conference runs April 9-11.

Deadline duo

The deadlines for nominating the best in school information services

and the best in teaching are coming up. May 31 is the last date for submitting entries in the Outstanding Achievement in School Information Services professional development program, co-sponsored by KSBA and the Kentucky School Public Relations Association. OASIS awards recognize excellence in education information products ranging from videos and special events to press releases and brochures.

Meanwhile, nominations are open for the 2012 Kentucky Teacher Awards, sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Education and Ashland, Inc. The deadline for nominations is May 15.

Any full-time public school teacher in the state with at least three years of experience is eligible. Teachers may be nominated by students or their parents, teaching peers, principals or superintendents or anyone from the community who is interested in honoring an outstanding educator. Other qualifications for the award are listed on the application, which nominated teachers must complete by June 30. ☞



New on board

A Paintsville Independent school board member has taken a seat on the KSBA Board of Directors. Eddie R. Cornett was appointed as a director-at-large by President Tom Blankenship. An air traffic controller, Cornett has been on the Paintsville board since 2009 and currently serves as its vice chairman. He attended Prestonsburg Community College, Alpena Community College in Michigan and the Community College of the Air Force. Cornett served in the United States Air Force from 1980-1988 and is an adjutant at the American Legion Post 117.

Rockcastle County school board vice chair Catina Hasty will join Cornett on the KSBA board, also as a director-at-large appointee. Hasty is a Brodhead resident and a pharmacist who graduated from the University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy. A Rockcastle County board member since 2002, she is a director and medical advisory chair for Operation UNITE and is active in her church.

Both new members will fill unexpired terms and must be formally elected by the KSBA membership at the 2012 annual meeting. Cornett fills the seat that had been held by Jenkins Independent board member Durward Narramore, who moved up to the position of KSBA president elect, while Hasty fills a vacancy.



Setting high expectations, meeting challenges

I would like to share four words with you, the association members, that mean a lot to me. Perhaps I would like them to be rather descriptive of my tenure with KSBA leadership. They reflect some personal feelings, offer a challenge and express a personal hope.

These words are: *expectation, engagement, appreciation and compensation.*

Expectation

As of April 17, this association will be officially celebrating its 75th birthday. This is an old institution, but remains a work in progress. As a member of this association, you have the right to expect it to proceed with the same pertinent, beneficial service as it has in the past. You have the right to expect the association to remain relevant to your needs. The service of this association should never be relegated to yesterday, but should stay focused on tomorrow. As association members, you have every right to expect no less.

You are well aware of the services the association provides for its members – policy, legal, superintendent search, insurance, training, communications and advocacy, among others. Those who work for you in this association could make a strong case for any of these, but the good thing is that you have options regarding any of the services provided. You can participate in some, all or none of these services. I would challenge you – and would expect you to consider – all the services the association offers and weigh what each service would offer your district and the quality of service it would provide.

The staff and Board of Directors appreciate your continued loyalty to KSBA. Without you, the association would cease to exist. We encourage you to contact any of us with inquiries, complaints or suggestions. We would encourage you to get to know your association officers and Board of Directors. Let's maintain that contact and dialogue. Hold us accountable. You have the right to expect your association to empower you to be better prepared to serve, as witnessed by the theme of this year's annual conference, Building Better Leaders. We hope and expect to help you with the knowledge and skills to be that type of leader.

Engagement

If there is one thing that will characterize my time in a leadership position, it will be my encouragement of you to consider the unique opportunity to serve in the state association's leadership as a member of the Board of Directors, either as a regional chairperson or as a director-at-large, or perhaps in some type of committee



Tom Blankenship
KSBA President

assignment.

Some of you may have no interest in doing so, which is perfectly all right. For those who may be interested, I would say, pursue it. There is no guarantee of the outcome of an election, but you will never know if you do not try.

To be quite frank, I will not be content until all our regional elections are contested. One might think that would be contentious. I would contend this would be an indication of greater interest in and a willingness to participate on behalf of the association membership and would be healthy for any association.

In fact, I propose that the current committee endorsement of one individual to serve as regional chairperson be replaced by a specified number of nominees placed on a ballot with the membership of each region selecting its representative. This would be the democratic process in action.

Being a part of the governance team provides individuals with a greater opportunity to work with other board members and superintendents across the state, which in turn enhances personal growth as a local board member and broadens the opportunity to make a contribution on the state level.

Personally, I have often said that my role as a local board member has been improved and expanded by three distinct things. First, my preparation for the position by the previous positions I have held and the various life experiences I have encountered. Second, improvement comes from the experience I've gained incrementally as I have proceeded through local board service; and third, I will always be appreciative of the opportunity to have served on the KSBA Board of Directors, a genuine source of beneficial experience and growth.

I personally do not know of any KSBA board member with whom I have served who has expressed negative feelings about his or her time of service. The simple joy of serving as a member of your local board of education can be enhanced with a greater connection to your state association.

My invitation and challenge to you is to consider being involved. Come and join us and be a part of the process.

The other two hallmarks, *appreciation* and *compensation*, will be highlighted when the President's Corner appears in the June issue of the *Kentucky School Advocate*. ☘

— Blankenship also is vice chairman of the Lincoln County Board of Education

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



“We have a budget each year that takes tightrope management. I want a strategy in place while we’re still in the position of strength...when days are not as good as today. No one makes good decisions when they have to. We need to plan what a merger would look like in the case it would have to happen.” Fulton Independent school board member Sam Hancock on his push for joint discussions on merger and shared services with the Fulton County system. From the *Fulton Leader*.

“We have a budget each year that takes tightrope management. I want a strategy in place while we’re still in the position of strength...when days are not as good as today. No one makes good decisions when they have to. We need to plan what a merger would look like

sion decisions based on who shows up at the door.” Harlan Independent Schools Superintendent David Johnson about claims that his district is cherry-picking top students for admission as part of the ongoing nonresident student contract dispute with the Harlan County Schools. From the *Harlan Daily Enterprise*.

“When you miss nine days of school you just don’t have any good options.” Marshall County Schools attendance officer LeDonia Willamson summing up the feelings of many Kentucky school leaders as her board voted to extend instructional days for the rest of the year to end school in May. From the *Calvert City Lake News*.

“She said she’d rather be dead than go to school. She’s not suicidal, but those are not normal feelings. I just stood there and watched her and cried. I thought, ‘How could they do this?’ (But) the school system took it seriously right away. I was amazed. It was a very fast response.” The mother of a Washington County Middle School student who said her daughter had been the victim of school bullying but who also praised officials for working with the student to keep up with her studies while she was out of class. From the *Springfield Sun*.

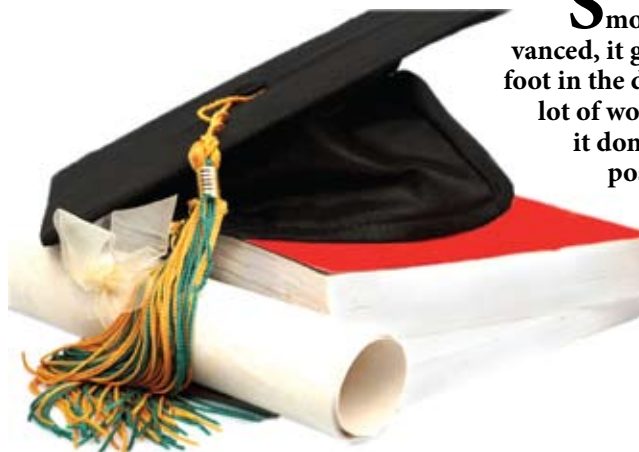
not ask students what their grades are. We do not ask their test scores. We don’t select students based on their family income. Our student population is based on the students that want to enroll here, and that’s what determines the makeup of our student body. We’re making admis-

“The only option the district has right now to raise additional funds is the recallable nickel tax, and you all haven’t had any success there.” Joe Nance from Ross, Sinclair & Associates to the Adair County

“It shows that when you have a cause, and you’re willing to stand up for that cause, that you can make a difference.” Lyon County Schools Superintendent Quinn Sutton on the multifaceted campaign – including students’ letters and a DVD for every legislator – that helped win authorization of special state funding to replace the middle school, where damage reports have been tied up for years in litigation. From the *Princeton Times-Leader*.

Learning at the next level

“You don’t make progress from time to time if you don’t take risks.” Madison County school board member Doug Whitlock, who also is president of Eastern Kentucky University, on the long-term funding issues of a district/university partnership on a “middle college” to enable at-risk students to earn college credits. From the *Richmond Register*.



“Since the world is becoming more technologically advanced, it gives you a way to get your foot in the door with technology. It’s a lot of work, but once you finally get it done and get the way it’s supposed to work, it’s worth it.”

Scott High School (Kenton County) sophomore Land Perraut on his school’s Microsoft Office Specialist certifications, another college credit opportunity. From the Fort Mitchell *nky.com*.

“We do not have a selective process. Students who come to our district are all run through the same process. We do

Schools Local Planning Committee on the district's options for financing facility upgrades, including the replacement of an aging elementary school, in light of at least two unsuccessful attempts to pass nickel property tax increases for such projects. From the *Columbia Adair Progress*.

“Teachers have a hard time saying, ‘I disagree with what you’re thinking because this is what we need to do first.’ But it’s happening more often.”



Ryan Clark, principal of Old Kentucky Home Middle School, on the use of professional learning communities in Nelson County schools, where teachers discuss and critique instructional issues. From the *Bardstown Kentucky Standard*.

From the *Bardstown Kentucky Standard*.

“We waited three hours in line in the rain and finally got tickets, then they told us we couldn’t get in. It was ridiculous.” Elana Russell of Louisville, who was one of an estimated 1,000 people who couldn’t attend a set of Jefferson County district tournament games because the gym’s seating capacity had been oversold. From the *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

“I think it’s going to go beyond aviation. We’re faking the kids out – teaching them math, science, engineering, and they don’t even know they’re being taught.” Jon Foote, volunteer aviation teacher at Monroe County High School, on the school’s participation in the Kentucky Institute for Aerospace Education, a nonprofit organization devoted to improving science, technology, engineering and math learning and creating career

pathways in aviation and aerospace. From the *Glasgow Daily Times*.

“I told the referee, ‘I don’t care if you T (technical foul) me, just don’t throw me out of my last game.’” Augusta Independent high school basketball coach Robin Kelsch on calling a play at the end of a regional tournament loss whereby he stepped on the court and took a shot at the basket in his final game as coach before becoming the school’s principal. From the *Fort Mitchell Kentucky Enquirer*.

“I would much rather see that money go for programs that benefit students than to pay a fee for an environmental problem that is not an environmental problem if you pay a fee. I just don’t understand that.” Clark County school board member Judy Hicks on her opposition to a decision to pay the state \$234,000 of “in lieu environmental fees” after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers discovered a previously unknown stream flowing along the site for a new high school. From the *Winchester Sun*.

“If you’re shy, they’ll make you un-shy.” Jared Hayes, a member of the all-male volunteer program, Watch DOGS – Dads of Great Students – who works with students at Heath Elementary School (McCracken County), promoting positive role models while promoting safety. From the *Paducah Sun*.

“They just have to know whether (the incident) is a felony. That’s why they involved me, is to determine whether it rises to that level. Regardless of which level it is, whether it’s a felony or not, the parent is notified.” McLean County Schools Resource Officer Gary Campbell on his role in the district’s new anti-bullying guidelines for staff and students. From the *Calhoun McLean County News*. ☘

Making mid-year calendar changes

POINT ...

“Last year, it was in the newspaper that spring break would absolutely not be taken away. It was guaranteed. Each time I was told ‘it was written last year. It absolutely will not be taken away.’ Every step of the way, if at any point someone had said there is a possibility, but that’s not what was said to me. Someone made a promise, and now you want to take it away.” Parent Christy Heck whose family, including a student who has never missed a day of school, paid for a spring break trip before the Marion County school board voted to use three days of the break to make up for snow days.

COUNTERPOINT...

“Boards change. Sometimes boards make decisions that they can’t keep. This is one of them. That statement was made. There is no doubt about it. But that board can’t guarantee that because that board is not intact.” Marion County school board member DeLane Pinkston, referring to the 2010 election that put three new members on the board that voted to cut spring break.

From the *Lebanon Enterprise*

Tweaks, not Transformations

2011-12 calendars not driven by last two winters

By Brad Hughes
Staff Writer

Despite back-to-back harsh winters, Kentucky school boards and superintendents seem to be planning more minor modifications instead of major makeovers for their school year calendars. The reason? Few local leaders are hearing clamors for change from parents and staff. In fact, many of the changes planned for this fall's opening days are due to factors completely unrelated to snow, ice or vacations.

For example, opening days for the 2010-11 year in Kentucky began with Logan County on July 29 and ended with Covington Independent on Aug. 23. While those districts may share that distinction again this fall, both will be opening the 2011-12 year later.

Classes in Logan County begin Aug. 1. District leaders remain solidly behind the early start.

"Things have changed from the days when we were in school," said school board Chairman Kenneth Robertson, an 18-year member of the Logan County board. "Because of the instructional time required by the state, you have to start almost in late July or early August to get in the required hours

or days.

"Our purpose of starting early is because some children don't retain what they learned over a long summer break," he said. "We wanted to reduce that loss, and our test scores show that it's working."

Covington Independent could again be the last district to start the new year, but for very different factors.

"We are starting later because of renovation at (our) high school, so our opening day will be Aug. 29," said Covington Independent Superintendent Lynda Jackson, whose district's opening day this year was delayed by construction at the middle school.

Covington leaders also hope another result of the later start continues this fall.

"Historically, we've had a problem getting kids to start the first week of school," Jackson said. "This year, because the Kenton County students were back in school, our kids said, 'Oh, I guess I'd better be in school.' And our board members noticed that we have a real significant peak in attendance for the first week of the year, compared to last year."

According to the Kentucky Department of Education, nine districts began the 2010-11 year in July (mostly with in-service days), while another 81 districts opened in the first week of



August. Ten districts started the class year after Aug. 15.

A *Kentucky School Advocate* random check of districts with 2011-12 calendars adopted found more in common with current year timetables than dramatic departures for students and staff this coming fall.

Early advantages?

Edmonson County students and staff will start the 2011-12 school year the same as this year – on the first Monday in August. The schedule is popular locally, according to Superintendent Patrick Waddell.

“Most folks want students out by the time June arrives. With as many days as we missed this year (16), the early August start gives us quite a bit of flexibility that we may need at the end of the year.”

Logan County Superintendent Marshall Kemp points out that, in addition to his district’s early start, the alternative calendar – nine weeks of classes followed by two weeks of breaks in the fall, at Christmas and in the spring – has numerous options that helped deal with 12 snow days this year.

“We can cut our spring intercession (week before spring break) before we add days to the end of the year,” Kemp said. “We’re pushing opening day back this fall because we’ve listened to our constituents (but) I’ve only had four people in my 12 years as superintendent who didn’t like our calendar.”

Breathitt County Superintendent Arch Turner would enjoy a year where he only had 12 or 16 days to make up. This year, the district had 26 snow days, following 30 in each of the past two years. But Turner sees reasons beyond winter weather to stay on an early-start calendar.

“We feel students do their best work in the first semester, so every day we can get them in gives us a bonus,” Turner said.

Later better?

Kenton County Schools will use a mid-August opening date next year, just as it did this year. “We don’t have a full week for fall break and we start a little later to give parents and kids a little more time in the summer,” said Superintendent Tim Hanner.

But when Kenton County classes do start up Aug. 17, Hanner said the “win-win” calendar is designed to handle a typical winter while maximizing instructional time.

“What we have done is to devise a surplus calendar, meaning by extending each school day 11 minutes, our kids will be in class the equivalent of 182 days if we don’t have snow days,” he said. “Our parents know their kids are going to be in school more than neighboring districts, and they don’t have to be constantly readjusting their family calendars.”

Like Covington Independent, Bracken County will start classes in mid-August for the second straight year due to ongoing construction projects. Superintendent Tony Johnson said some calendar tweaks will help in the wake of this year’s 12 snow days.

“We’ve shortened Christmas break; we used to take off the day before election day and two days for teacher conferences,” Johnson said. “Now we (add) almost a week of instructional time before the end of the fall semester through these changes.”

Next year’s delayed testing a plus

The winter of 2010-11 resulted in eight snow days for Burgin Independent, the most in Superintendent Richard Webb’s 13

years. While that exhausted the make-up time built into his calendar, Webb sees no reason for big changes, in part because his community is so supportive of the current plan.

But Webb, like several other superintendents interviewed, feels one calendar change that will benefit everyone is coming from Frankfort – the push back of state accountability testing to the last two weeks of the year starting next spring.

“I think the later in the year the testing, the better off you are,” Webb said. “Testing needs to be the culminating event of the year, but if it’s three weeks before school gets out, it doesn’t always happen that you spend those three weeks getting students ready for next year.”

Covington Independent’s Jackson agreed wholeheartedly.

“The later we test, the more instructional days we can get in (regardless of the weather),” she said. “We also like it because those days after testing are some of the hardest days to deal with kids.” ☞



Owen County grows overhead classroom



New middle school boasts roof that is both functional and educational

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Eighth-grader Autumn Gover can't wait to conduct experiments on the roof of her new school, Bowling Middle in Owen County.

The facility, which opened its doors in January, is only the second school in the state with a vegetative roof, which is both a "green" space as well as a learning space. Turkey Foot Middle School in Kenton County is believed to be the first.

"I think it's awesome," Gover said. "I really liked the idea when they told us about it. We'll actually get to observe the plants growing and see how sunlight and shade affects how they grow."

Project architect Roland Mueller with RossTarrant Architects, Inc., said school leaders wanted Bowling to have its own identity in the district.

"Our goal was to make it a unique space for the students, and we wanted to make it a space that students would really want to use," he said.

He said in addition to being an outdoor classroom, vegetative roofs originally were designed to be environmentally friendly.

"The idea of a vegetative roof is to absorb rain water and keep it from going into the storm sewer system, which goes directly into our waterways," Mueller said. "We've learned over the years how much additional stress rooftops place on our ecosystem."

He said 94 percent of the water produced by a one-hour rain that yields an inch of water is absorbed and retained by the plants.

School board Chairman Terry Patterson said the board looked at the approximately \$40,000 roof – which is just a small part of the school's overall roof – as another learning space rather than just a part of the building structure.

"When we first started working with RossTarrant, we wanted to be energy efficient and create a green environment in the district," he said. "With utilities going

up, this was a good time to do this, but we wanted to use this as an educational opportunity to get students interested in the environment and doing things to protect it. It's a long-term investment and about changing attitudes."

The 1,200-square-foot roof is over the art classroom and just outside of the library, which provides the only access to the roof from inside the school. Mueller said the vegetative system on the roof is planted in shallow trays as opposed to other methods that make it a direct part of the roofing system.

"The plantings go in 2-foot-by-2 foot, or 2-by-4 foot trays, which can be pulled out," he said. "Since they're not a permanent part of the roof, you can more easily replace the plants, or even put in a new tray."

The plants are sedums, which are hardy and drought resistant.

"It's very weather resistant and doesn't require a lot of maintenance. It can go a month without watering," Mueller said.

The plants tie into another environmental and educational aspect of the roof – a rain barrel system that is used for water reclamation.

"It collects rainwater off the roof by channeling it into the gutters, through the downspout – just like every other roof – but the water then goes into barrels instead of going onto the

roof membrane and into the storm sewer system," Mueller said. "We have nine barrels that hold about 30 gallons each.

"It's basically teaching students about water reclamation and how we can use that to irrigate the vegetation. If there is a dry month, you can hook a hose to the barrels and water the trays, just like you would at your house—except it's gravity fed, not pressurized."

Eighth-grade science teacher Melissa Cammack has been waiting for nice weather to take her classes on the roof. Now that spring is here she has several projects in mind.

"I plan on using the roof to teach life cycles of plants, how living things need the sun to survive. We are also going to use it for measurement and graphing," she said. "Another aspect of the roof is going to be observing how living things react to their surroundings and students will use various taxonomy skills to identify the plants that they have grown."

Mueller said it's exciting to be able to partner with schools as educational designers.

"It really is using the school as a teaching tool, and I think it is extremely exciting to see how architecture can enhance learning," he said. "Plus, it's teaching students a lot of sustainable principles that I think are important to the future of our environment." ❧



Bowling Middle School eighth-grader Autumn Gover checks out the vegetative roof on part of the newly constructed school. The roof is meant to be both environmentally friendly and educational. In the background are the nine rain barrels the comprise the water reclamation system to prevent runoff into the sewer system. The water collected can be used to irrigate the plants on the roof, which were selected for their resistance to drought.

No bells or whistles – *just lower dropout rates*

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Effective dropout prevention doesn't have to be either costly or fancy, judging by the results achieved by some school districts. "We haven't done anything that's a big secret," said Joe Henderson, assistant superintendent of Mayfield Independent Schools, which has steadily reduced its dropout rate from 5.56 in 2006 to 1.02 in 2009.

The issue of the cost of dropout prevention was raised recently as the General Assembly weighed increasing the mandatory attendance age beyond the current 16. The cost concerns focused mainly on an anticipated increase in alternative education placements, but some school districts have used low-cost dropout prevention strategies in a regular school setting.

"There are not any bells and whistles on our dropout prevention program," said Harlan County Schools Assistant Superintendent Brent Roark. "You just have to look at it top to bottom." The district's dropout rate has plunged from a high of 9.71 percent in 2007 to 2.06 percent in 2009.

MAYFIELD INDEPENDENT

Mayfield Independent made a districtwide commitment to increase its graduation rate three years ago.

"The main thing we've done is made a more conscious effort to see that kids don't get behind and stay within their grade level or their class," said Joe Henderson, Mayfield assistant superintendent. "We've done enough reading and research to understand that if a kid leaves third grade and they're not on grade level in reading then they're probably never going to be on grade level and the chances of those kids dropping out are much higher."

At the high school level, the district has worked with teachers to make sure students understand content before moving them on to new material, and to work with them until they do. But the philosophy of keeping kids on track has percolated throughout the system.

"We had to make it a conscious effort all the way down to the primary level that they understand how important and how vital it is, not just for test scores, but for kids in general because if they get behind the likelihood of them dropping out is a whole lot more," Henderson said.

Mayfield uses an online credit recovery program so high school students can recover credits before falling too far behind. The system also offers summer school. Henderson said the credit recovery program had been supported by extended school services money but general funds have had to be used because of ESS funding cutbacks.

The independent district shares an alternative program with Graves County Schools, but has cut down on the number of students it sends.

"We've learned that the best-case scenario for our kids is if we can keep them in our building, they're a whole lot easier to track and keep up with and make sure that we're getting them where they need to go, creditwise," Henderson said.



Mayfield High School senior Josh Jones works with Beth Scarbrough, Success lab instructor, on his student recovery program.

Photo by Melinda Craig/Mayfield Independent Schools

ELLIOTT COUNTY

"It's almost too simple," Elliott County Schools Instructional Supervisor Trish Carroll said about the district's dropout prevention efforts. "We've just really done a more concentrated effort on following up on absences. Really and truly what it all boils down to is basic communication with parents and students."

The district's dropout rate has gone from 4.71 percent in 2005 to 1.16 percent in 2009. The school system uses an automatic calling system to the absent child's home, but an absence of more than a couple of days means a personal phone call to the student and parents. The message is motivational, Carroll said, "We miss you, we need you back in school."

Parents of those at-risk students are targeted for parent conferences where educators can stress the importance of being in school. The sessions are nonconfrontational, she said.

"It's more of an invitation and not just parent conference night. We ask them to come in at their convenience – if it's 5 o'clock, then we'll stay and meet at 5 o'clock," Carroll said. "We just try to make it more convenient for them and really just get the message out there that we're just trying to do what's best for your child."

School staff also begin identifying underperforming students at the middle school level, using indicators such as high absenteeism. Because behavior issues can be a dropout factor, behavior intervention strategies come into play at both the elementary and middle school level, "trying to keep them on track, basically," Carroll said. The district offers both before- and after-school tutoring.

The school counselor also talks with potential dropouts to convince them to stay in school. If students are determined to leave school, a counselor or other staff member makes sure they know about GED and adult education options.

HART COUNTY SCHOOLS

Hart County High School began a bells-and-whistles program this year that has already been effective in keeping students interested in school: individual student laptops for grades 9-12 at a \$1.4 million lease cost over four years.

But the system, which has seen its dropout rate go from 3.92 percent in 2007 to 1.08 percent in 2009, also has a couple of shoestring approaches.

One of those, said Superintendent Ricky

HARLAN COUNTY



Photo provided by Harlan County Schools

These are just a few of the JROTC members at Harlan County High School. It's one of the school's biggest elective draws.

The most expensive part of Harlan County Schools' dropout prevention strategies is the credit recovery program produced and marketed by Jefferson County Schools and the part-time retired teacher who tutors students using the program.

"We found out the reason kids were dropping out of Harlan County High School was they were getting behind in their credits. They felt hopeless, and sometimes there wasn't any hope for them," said Assistant Superintendent Brent Roark.

As part of the effort, schools constantly screen students and identify those at risk of dropping out or getting behind in their credits. Once a student begins to fall behind, they are placed in the credit recovery program, which uses both online and written materials, Roark said.

To keep students interested in school, the number of elective offerings expanded with the opening of the district's new high school.

"We don't lose our athletes, we don't lose our basketball players, our football players, our cheerleaders. It's the kids that don't have anything to get them to come to school, to motivate them to want to come," Roark said. "So we have a huge elective base of classes – we've got jazz bands, we've got bluegrass bands, piano labs." JROTC and career and technical classes have been big attractions.

Harlan County has an aggressive push with teachers to reduce course failure rates – which were running as high as 50-60 percent – a no-cost strategy.

"We sat down with our teachers the last two years and told them that's just unacceptable. Anything over 15 percent is going to red-flag us in your class, and we're going to come in and want to know why your failure rate is that high," Roark said. Formative assessments are now required for math classes and encouraged in others.

The district also quickly addresses truancy before it reaches the point of court action. Taking Harlan County parents to court for truancy, Roark said, pushes some of them into home schooling their children.

See "Dropouts" continued on Page 17

CROSS COMMUNITY

TRAINING

Cooperative spirit reaps results in partnering districts

By Wayne Dominick

When teams from Gallatin and Carroll county schools face each other on the field or the court, the rivalry gets pretty heated. Everybody wants to win.

When they get together in the classroom, however, everybody does win.

That cooperative collaboration took a big step forward this year when the two districts decided to visit each other for Instructional Rounds.

“We’ve been working together on a variety of projects, math curriculum, teacher leader networks and other things for several years now. When we started working with Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative on Instructional Rounds, Lisa (Carroll County Superintendent Lisa James) and I decided we should do rounds in each other’s district,” said Gallatin Superintendent Dot Perkins.

During Instructional Rounds, a team of trained district



A big part of doing Instructional Rounds is following up on the findings. Cartmell Elementary Principal Doug Oak makes regular visits to classrooms to check on progress. Here he quizzes Carrie Bates' third-grade class on what they know about fractions.

teachers and administrators visits every classroom in a school. Team members objectively focus on a problem or practice and examine specific solutions, much the way doctors make their hospital rounds, observe patient symptoms and work on a cure. The strategy originated at Harvard University and OVEC has been providing training on it for its member districts.

While teams generally work in their own districts, James and Perkins decided that since the process is specific and objective, it wouldn't hurt to have some outside eyes doing the observations.

"We are both small districts," said James, "so a good number of our teachers already collaborate on projects with the person who teaches the same subject in Gallatin. So we know each other pretty well."

Perkins said the trust factor was an important part of the decision to start the cross-district program.

"Our people know that the folks from Carroll aren't coming over to do a 'Gotcha' type of review. They know that what the team sees will stay in the school and not be talked about in the community. I'm sure their folks feel the same way," she said.

Both superintendents also have the strong backing of their boards in the process. "They thought this was a great idea and a good way to get some new ideas to help our district," Perkins said.

Carroll County Board Member Mona Kindoll said she and the other board members thought the cross-district training was a great idea. "When we compared what it would cost to have substitutes and a little bit of travel expense against the information we would get, it was a pretty easy decision to make," she said.

Even though there was a strong element of trust, there was a bit of apprehension among the staff at the first Carroll County school to be visited.

"I'll admit I was a little nervous about having a whole team of people come in and go through my school," said Cartmell Elementary School Principal Doug Oak. "Even though you know they're here to help, you can't help but worry about it."

James said her staff selected Cartmell to be the first school visited because grades were reconfigured this year and turnover has been high due to retirements and promotions.

"I think everybody was a little nervous about it," said third-grade teacher Carrie Bole. "But we had met several times about it and knew that they weren't coming to try to find problems, but to solve them."

That focus even extended to the interviews the teams



Carroll County School Board Member Mona Kindoll visited Cartmell Elementary School to have lunch with third-grade student Diana Jimenez. Kindoll said the board supports the idea of doing cross county instructional rounds. "From what the superintendent has told us, we're getting a lot of valuable information from this program."

conducted with students. "They didn't talk to me about anything except what we were learning," said 8-year-old Samantha Foreman.

The hardest part of the visit for Oak was waiting to hear what the teams observed. "I was going crazy waiting for them to finish so I could hear what they had to say."

The team wrote its observations on large sheets of paper hung in the school media center. "As I walked around reading, I kept seeing the same things over and over. Because the rounds are so focused, the feedback you get gives a very specific target to work on," Oak said.

Cartmell curriculum coach Jonica Ray said she could not believe it when she started to read the observations. "I thought I'd have to start defending everything we do, but the more I read the more I saw things that we could work on to make our school better."

From the feedback they got from the team, the Cartmell staff now has specific targets and a plan to attack them. "We now have a much better plan of action to get where we need to be," Oak said.

James cautioned that Instructional Rounds aren't the answer to all of a school's problems. "There are no silver bullets out there. What Instructional Rounds do is help schools focus on problems. They still have to do the work if they want to improve."

If you would like to learn more about Instructional Rounds, Jim Flynn, superintendent of Simpson County Schools, has done a PowerPoint presentation that is on the district's website at www.simpson.k12.ky.us/docs/Instructional%20Rounds%20and%20Walkthroughs.ppt.

— Dominick is a writer from Frankfort

Transitional TRANSFORMATIONS

Covington alternative program transforms students and the community through focus on service learning

By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Students at Covington Independent's alternative school – the Transformational Learning Center – have a new appreciation for clean, blank walls.

One of the school's many service learning projects over the past few years has been cleaning graffiti from around the neighborhood.

"They were really getting frustrated with the graffiti because they would clean it and it would be back the next day," said the center's media specialist Debbie Winkler. "They got a feel for how hard it was to get it off and to keep it that way."

Leaders at the alternative program – whose students are placed there for disciplinary reasons – have integrated service learning into its curriculum, and students have been rising to the occasion.

"We really focus a lot of our academics around our service learning," said Principal Robin Shuttleworth. "For example, we're doing Pennies for Peace right now (to raise money for children in Afghanistan). It involves international issues. It involves social studies; we look at their cultures. The project is wrapped around the book *Three Cups of Tea*. We try to incorporate all of our academic areas with our service learning. Then our kids don't even know they're doing their content."

Projects like these are also helping students create positive relationships with local police, firefighters

Students at Covington Independent's Transformational Learning Center raise money for its service learning project, Pennies for Peace, which will be donated to children in Afghanistan.



and community members. Winkler said students worked with police on the graffiti cleanup. Later, when they collected more than 600 pairs of shoes for those affected by the Haitian earthquake – far exceeding their goal of 200 – three Covington police officers volunteered to drive the shoes to a shipping center in Tennessee.

Because students do not graduate from the program but transition back to Holmes High School or the Covington Adult Learning Center, the more than 100 students a year who participate in the service learning projects take those lessons with them.

“We may have a limited population at any one time, but it touches more than just who’s here at the time,” Shuttleworth said.

These students may have the chance to take on a leadership role when they transition back to high school. Children, Inc., a nonprofit organization that has helped support the center’s service learning projects, is now working with Holmes High School to do service learning there.

“Children, Inc. really wants to use the kids returning from here as leaders in service learning there, which is a great transition piece for those students because they can participate in something they know and that has had a positive impact on them,” Shuttleworth said.

Covington Superintendent Lynda Jackson said these projects are important because they help students make connections with

the broader community and understand why it’s important to give back.

“When a child is not successful, we all pay: the child pays, society pays,” she said.

Covington school board Vice Chairman Mike Fitzgerald said service learning projects give students a chance to focus outward.

“It doesn’t have to be something earth-shattering,” he said. “It may not change them today, but it is something that will come back to them.”

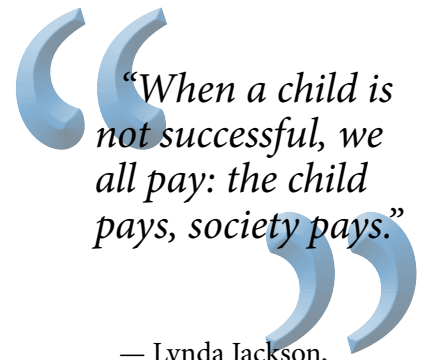
Winkler said service learning is something every school can do.

“It doesn’t have to be long and drawn out and last all semester,” she said. “For example, on Sept. 8, we decided we wanted to do something for 9/11. We looked around and thought that we could plant some flowers at the police and fire department memorials.”

Winkler said she called around, pulled together some resources and three days later they were able to complete the project.

Shuttleworth said the next project will be adopting a local park.

“We’re cleaning it up and we’ve already got places that are going to donate plants and other items, along with that particular neighborhood association,” she said. “That will give the community a better view of our kids. And that’s an opportunity for the kids to really give back to their communities. That’s something they can really see when the flowers bloom and everything looks nice.” ☘



“When a child is not successful, we all pay: the child pays, society pays.”

— Lynda Jackson,
Covington Independent
Schools’ superintendent

DROPOUTS

Continued from Page 13

Line, is a mentoring-type program called My Team. Every administrator, including principals, assistant principals and central office staff, works with five students who are identified as at-risk now or in the future. The program encompasses both elementary and high school students.

The adults make personal contact with the students every other week, read with them or take them to events such as a ball game or band concert.

“They go to the students and say, ‘You’re on my team – I picked you,’” Line said. “For a principal or someone to go and spend three minutes of break time to talk to a student, for a student that’s pretty big.”

Hart County High School also added more electives to its course load to keep students interested, including a popular

forensic science class.

Line said the district’s alternative program has been “ratcheted up a notch,” with some restructuring. Five slots are now reserved for students placed for behavioral reasons, while 10 other slots are for students who simply seem determined to drop out. Two teachers work with those 10 students.

“For the first nine weeks, they come every day and after that they come long enough to do their work,” Line said. “Most of them get out quickly because they don’t need much. Most of them are seniors who are bored, tired, need a job or are a mother-to-be ... Some of them have been at the high school for the fifth year and don’t think they can get out, but we can get them over there where they give them one-on-one attention.” ☘

PAL-ing around nets Carlisle County Schools national honors



By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Carlisle County school board Chairman Brian Grogan knows firsthand why the district's program linking high school students with preschoolers won a national award.

Grogan's son, Zack, now a kindergartner, benefited from Preschool Assistants to Learning – PALs – last year, as did the high school students who were his preschool aides.

“When he sees a PAL on campus, or if a PAL sees him on campus, even though he's out of the program, he instantly draws to them and they draw to him and it's like they're best friends. When they're recognized by older students on campus, it gives them something,” Grogan said. “Not only that, but I think it lifts the high school student, too. You can just see them light up.”

PALs is one of five winners of a national Magna Award in its 5,000-and-under enrollment category. The award, sponsored by the *American School Board Journal* and Sodexo, will be presented during the National School Boards Association's annual conference April 9-11 in San Francisco.

This isn't the first time the program has been honored. It won a KSBA *PEAK (Public Education Achieves in Kentucky) Award* in 2008.

The program originally was designed in 2005 as a way to involve at-risk high school students in school while also giving preschoolers mentors,



Top photo: Carlisle County High School senior and PAL Erica Wilson spends time with preschooler Lany Shehorn. Wilson also is a trained bus monitor for preschool students.

Carlisle County High School Senior Nic Babb reads to his “pal,” preschool student Jaxon Lemons.

but its scope and size have expanded since then.

While participation in PALs had been offered as an elective for juniors and seniors from the start, that aspect has taken off in recent years, said Lisa Canler, Carlisle County's preschool director. Of the district's 225 high school students, 55 are PALs.

"It's just grown that much," she said. "We still target that (at-risk) population first but then we have everybody who wants to be a PAL. We have valedictorians who are PALs; everybody wants to be a part of it. We even have middle school students who say, 'When I get to high school, I want to be a PAL.'"

Grogan said the Magna honor shows that "good things can come from small districts, too," and also that it doesn't take a lot of money to have a successful project. Costs are minimal.

"It's not an expensive program at all," Grogan said. "That has been a really positive part of this program – that anybody is capable of doing it."

Superintendent Dr. Keith Shoulders said he thinks both the mentoring and cost aspect drew the attention of the Magna judges.

"The biggest cost financially is the incentives we try to use for the students – things like T-shirts or after-school bowling trips," he said.

The program also has spurred interest among high school students in becoming educators. Several former PALs have received or are working on preschool certification, Canler said.

"A lot of the students want to be PALs or we kind of recruit to be PALs, make the decision to become educators based on being in the preschool classroom. They decide to go on and major in elementary education as a result of being with kids," Canler said. "So that's a kind of a teacher recruitment program."

The reverse also is true, she said, with some students learning that they shouldn't or don't want to work with children.

More than anything, it's a program about relationships, as Grogan's account of his son illustrates. The high school students are involved with the preschoolers outside the classroom, Canler said.

"The things they do on their own would really surprise you – the relationship building," she said, pointing to the example of the 50 PALs students who put on dress clothing to attend a preschool graduation.

"The greatest thing about it is what kids at all levels bring away from the program, from the preschool students to the high school students who work with them," Grogan said.

Because the district's schools are on a single campus, the high school PALs know that their small charges may be watching them at any time. "It holds them to a higher standard," Canler said.

Kentucky has been on a Magna roll in recent years, with Mason County Schools winning a grand prize Magna in its enrollment category last year and Owensboro Independent capturing a Magna the year before. ☚

Kentucky Superintendent Vacancies

Marion County Board of Education

3,159 – (K-12) www.marion.kyschools.us

The Marion County school district seeks as its next superintendent, a student centered instructional leader with a record of improving student achievement. The successful candidate should demonstrate an ability to create high expectations and accountability while being an effective communicator. Along with promoting teamwork and excellent people skills, he/she will be expected to be highly visible throughout the school district and community. The salary will be competitive and negotiable. Candidates should have administrative experience and must hold or be eligible for a Kentucky superintendent's certification to apply.

Application deadline is April 12, 2011.

Kenton County Board of Education

(13,737, PS – 12) www.kenton.kyschools.us

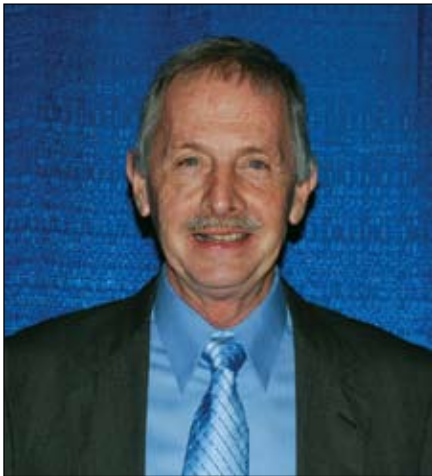
As its next superintendent of schools the Kenton County School district is seeking an experienced administrator with a proven record of leadership that will ensure the progress of this exemplary district. The successful candidate should have a working knowledge in "next generation learning". Candidates should be highly organized educators who can effectively delegate and also have strong interpersonal skills. Kenton County is one of Kentucky's larger school districts with 11 elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools and two specialty schools. The salary will be competitive.

Application deadline is April 14, 2011.

To apply, send seven copies of all of the following: a cover letter/introduction, resume, application form, responses to eight questions, certification, three (3) letters of recommendation, and one video (optional) to: *Name of district* search, Kentucky School Boards Association, 260 Democrat Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601. Find application form, video information and questions at: www.ksba.org; go to Employment Opportunities.

Margie Cleveland and Bill Lovell

Members of the Governor's task force
for Transforming Education in Kentucky



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 Margie Cleveland, a member of the Woodford County Board of Education, and Bill Lovell, a member of the McLean County Board of Education. Both served on Gov. Steve Beshear's Transforming Education in Kentucky task force, which recently released its final report. Thirty-four people representing school boards, teachers, parents, business people, community members and legislators worked for a year on the task force, whose mission was to help develop new strategies to ensure Kentucky has the curriculum, teachers, standards, organization and structure in place to prepare children for the 21st century while reinvigorating public and business support for education in the Commonwealth.

Q. How did the task force do its work?

CLEVELAND: Most of the time it was presentations about the different options that are out there for improving student achievement. We traveled to Scott County, Jessamine County, Frankfort and Louisville for meetings. As the process moved on, we spent more of our time in discussion, either after a presentation or for the entire program.

LOVELL: I think the first four meetings were entirely presentations from different groups, like 21st Century Learning, groups from New York, Washington, D.C., getting information about school reform.

Then we began to have discussions on what we thought about the different presentations, programs, and we prioritized what we thought was most important.

CLEVELAND: From meeting to meeting, we prioritized where we were in respect to developing recommendations and we continued coming back to the same areas to be addressed.

Q. Did any of those presentations stand out to either of you?

LOVELL: The one that caught my attention was 21st Century Learning. That was one of the early programs that we were presented. It's a program that's been going on around the United States. It's a process of integrating a huge amount of technology into your schools and using it in a way that will help take student learning to a higher level.

I shared that information with our superintendent and we're having 21st Century Learning meetings with teachers, parents and others around the community to see where we can go with this.

But there were many things that stood out: early childhood learning — we heard from several groups about that; dual credit, getting students into college courses right away.

CLEVELAND: Early on at one of the presentations, information was provided on different alternative-type learning situations. One program described

a situation where dropouts with few high school credits were placed in a college setting and were successful, completing high school requirements and college-level courses. Different approaches were discussed on reaching out to students in the school setting before they reach that point of dropping out.

It was very interesting to see these alternative settings where any student can be successful. We know the advanced students are successful in programs such as the Gatton Academy, but these presentations showed us programs, like the Gateway to Learning group, which demonstrated that lower-achieving students who don't fit into a regular high school setting can be successful and graduate from high school with two years of college. The discussions led to looking at different high school settings to challenge everybody.

It was rewarding to sit and talk to people coming from different perspectives and we were all hearing and saying the same things. We were not trying to reinvent the wheel. Many of these programs are going on – it's just a matter of sharing the information and including more districts and students in these programs.

Q. Is there anything you saw that you would like to take back to your district?

CLEVELAND: I shared the information on Board Examinations and early-college opportunities with my district. The high school applied to be included in the Board Examination Systems pilot program. Race to the Top funds would have implemented the pilot.

Q. What were some standout recommendations the task force made to the governor, regardless of our ability to pay for them right now?

CLEVELAND: It's hard to say. Early childhood education makes an impact from day one. The high school initiatives to reach lower-achieving students are critical, as are the new criteria for training and sustaining strong teachers. The effectiveness of the teacher drives student success.

The task force stressed the need for initiatives to be funded before adoption of any of the recommendations.

LOVELL: One of the things we talked about at the task force's next-to-last meeting – and this is especially important for schools boards – is no unfunded mandates. It's vital. We can have all of these great ideas and somebody can pass it and say, "You do it." But if we have to do it locally, then we're just going to have to cut something else that is very important, too.

If we had the backing in the Commonwealth that we did in 1990 after education reform was passed, we could make a huge difference.

Q. Is there anything that came out of the task force that you think might be of particular interest to board members?

LOVELL: As Margie mentioned, some of these great things are already going on in districts around the state. Somehow, we need to bundle everything up, all of the best practices, and get that information out to all the districts.

We talk about this a lot, people being able to see what's going on in other districts that may work in another. There are a lot of great things going on in our schools; if more people were able to know what's going on, they could see if it could work in their district.

CLEVELAND: It may be that several districts could find a way to collaborate on these programs if it looks like individually we're not going to be able to offer these on our own.

Q. Were there any suggestions that came out of the task force that were not money-dependent that districts could look into starting now?

LOVELL: We have a great resource with our community colleges and I would say practically every district has someone teaching who would be certified to teach a dual-credit college course at the high school. If we could do that, I think there would be more young people coming out of high school with college credit.

CLEVELAND: A couple of areas that did come out that do not cost a lot of money: enhancing parental and community involvement. When parents are involved, student performance is at much higher level. We have to think outside of the box, be more creative and get those parents in the building, not just in pre-K and elementary. We've got to get them in the building in middle and high school.

Improving the quality of teaching is another area. That's just improving the professional development and opportunity for professional development. Those things are of little additional cost and just need to be more focused and results-driven.

LOVELL: Professional development in the past has been – for some places – days off or not much going on. It has to be relevant to what the needs are of your students. Professional development needs to be energized and I think that was one of the areas of the report.

Q. Are there any other areas of the report that you would like to touch on?

LOVELL: An area that school boards would be interested in, other than the unfunded mandate issue, is the recommendation for funding all-day kindergarten. You don't hear much about it because there's not any money. In the early childhood area, that was one of the recommendations. We need to do a better job of early childhood development. The folks that know tell us one of the big keys for having success in your schools is getting kids started correctly. ☘

Team effort kept school leaders on top of, involved in activities of 2011 General Assembly

Not all that long ago, when the Kentucky General Assembly acted on a bill, it could take days for school board members and superintendents to learn whether the bill moved forward or was dead. In the crush of legislative activities, only a few education bills caught the attention of the state's major media outlets. So if the bill's status didn't rate a story in the mainstream press, local school leaders would get updates through the mail by organizations like KSBA and the Kentucky Association of School Administrators.



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

Of course, you could sit in on committee meetings or in the House or Senate gallery and know what took place immediately. That meant, however, traveling to Frankfort and spending hours, a day or days away from the office, letting the regular work pile up.

That was then. This is 2011.

On Feb. 4, when the Senate Education Committee passed a bill to give snow day relief to school districts, hundreds of school leaders learned of the action within an hour of the senators' vote. Although that bill died, both houses of the General Assembly passed alternative calendar action on March 4. News of the action was delivered within minutes of the votes in the House and the Senate.

On March 1, out of the blue – publicly, at least – the House Education Committee adopted a compromise to give superintendents more authority in the selection of principals. As the measure moved through the House and finally the Senate, local leaders got the specifics of the proposal and were updated on its progress almost as soon as the voting switches were thrown at legislators' desks.

The work to keep board members and superintendents in the loop on major K-12 legislative issues was a collaborative effort. A look inside the process shows how different KSBA units partnered to keep our members in the know.

Technology plus teamwork

When it comes to getting accurate information out in a timely manner, there never will be a substitute for knowledgeable people at the scene of the action. You see that when a newspaper sends a reporter halfway across the state to cover a story or a TV station has a live crew broadcasting during the evening newscast. That's what KSBA Governmental Relations Director Shannon Pratt Stiglitz and Associate Executive Director David Baird provided from the committee rooms and the halls of the Capitol. They collaborate on a weekly e-mail to school leaders, complete with status reports on key bills.

Another bonus is the partnership between the Frankfort cable outlet and Kentucky Educational Television, televising live committee meetings daily along with afternoon

sessions of the House and Senate. Our eNews reporters can have those sessions on a monitor, watching key discussions as they take place.

Then, when something of significance happens, we're able to use KSBA's variety of member communications options to get the word out.

The eNews Service now directly reaches more than 2,000 school people with the latest news, as was the case with reports on the education committee meetings noted above. As the major education bills moved through the House

and Senate, our Facebook and Twitter accounts were instantaneous outlets for regular visitors or followers who use those services to stay on top of breaking news. Stiglitz and Baird would e-mail legislative votes, and our member support staff would post the actions on those online social media outlets.

Regular checks of the Legislative Research Commission's website enabled KSBA staff to get the details of amendments to add to eNews stories and e-mail updates. At times, members of the advocacy staff would get yet-to-be posted bill amendments that had just been adopted and pass the language along, providing important specifics for our members.

And knowing when legislative action had taken place allowed eNews staff to be on the lookout for mainstream media stories and interviews with legislative leaders, often giving an indication of the next steps in the progress from bill to law.

Ultimately, the result was a consistent flow of same day – in fact at times, same hour – updates to give school leaders accurate, timely information to support better local decision making.

The Last Word

This spring, Kentucky school boards were forced to write – and rewrite – instructional calendars because of the harsh winter weather. District leaders needed to know what was cooking in the Capitol as they made hard choices to cut or save spring break or push classes into June. The same can be said of the proposal to further reduce state SEEK funding as next year's district budgets were being drafted.

Someday, technology doubtless will make it possible for any school board member or superintendent to watch the goings-on of the General Assembly live right up to the moment they must act in a board meeting.

When that time arrives, look for KSBA staff to have found new ways to give members even greater real-time insights into the legislative process.

And that's a message worth getting out. ☘



**KSBA's 4th Annual
Federal & State Law Update:
Impact on Your School District**
Marriott Griffin Gate Resort
May 13, 2011

Join us for this timely update of federal and state legal changes that will affect school district management next school year. We will inform you of critical new legal requirements, including the new Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act regulations, cyberbullying issues, the 2011 Kentucky legislative session and local board implications of the information presented. We also will cover practical implementation aspects of new case law and agency opinions.

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

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





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Meeting of the minds on merger in Fulton

Members of the Fulton County and Fulton Independent school boards met Feb. 28 in a rare, joint public forum about whether to look for ways to share more services or to begin talks to merge the two districts.

Upper right: Fulton Independent board member Dr. Joshua Whittedge (center, flanked by fellow board members Dr. Lee Seng- left – and Bill Robinson) responds to a question from the packed house at Fulton High School. The session was moderated by KSBA Associate Executive Director David Baird.

Lower right: Fulton County school board Chairwoman Melanie Atwill looks on as Superintendent Dennis Bledsoe lists some of the services already shared by the two western Kentucky school systems, as well as potential benefits from merger.

Lower left: Speakers included students who expressed opinions, pro and con, about a possible merger of the two school systems during an hour-long public comment period. In early March, the Fulton Independent board voted not to pursue further merger discussions at this time.

