

KENTUCKY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

A publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association ■ July/August 2011

'Green' lunches

Summer Leadership Institute:
Are you ready for Reform 2?

CARING ABOUT DAY CARE

State board eyes training credits

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FEATURES

TAKING CREDIT

The state board of education fired a shot across the bow of school boards when it took up the issue of board members who fail to receive the amount of annual training required by law ... Page 8

DAY CARE TRAINING

Why should school districts be concerned about what kids are doing in their local day care centers? The Madison County school district not only is concerned but it's taking the initiative to help both the centers and its schools ... Page 10

SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE COVERAGE

Unbridled Learning

The renaming of Kentucky's latest education reform may be catchier, but it won't make the new provisions any less complex. State education department leaders used KSBA's summer training to give school board members the highlights ... Page 14

Leaving NCLB behind?

The No Child Left Behind law has been around for nearly a decade. It's taking seemingly forever for Congress to act on its successor, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but in the meantime, NSBA's chief lobbyist says, the administration has been filling in the gap ... Page 14

In the alternative

State education department officials want to put some uniformity into alternative education programming in Kentucky through a state law that will provide guidance – and a definition ... Page 15

READY FOR REFORM

Senate Bill 1, Unbridled Learning – whatever the title, board members need to know what's in store as the state enters a new era of education reform. KSBA has designed some tools to help, as the Graves County school board demonstrated ... Page 18



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On the cover



Plano Elementary students Colton Baird and Katie Walker participate in one of four energy-free lunches Warren County elementary schools held this past spring. Article on Page 12.

TAKE NOTE

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Leading the nation

The Ohio Valley Educational Co-operative has kicked off the Kentucky Leads the Nation Project to get ahead of the curve on coming changes in federal policy and to focus on what it will take for Kentucky children to lead the nation in educational achievement. The effort brings public school educators and advocates together as Congress considers reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the changes it may bring, along with shifting federal education funding priorities.

The project includes a Kentucky Leads the Nation Roundtable, a monthly discussion among educators, advocates and Congressional leaders; a Kentucky Summit on Federal Education Policy; and an online blog, www.kyleadsthenation.com.

KSBA President Tom Blankenship, Executive Director Bill Scott and Governmental Relations Director Shannon Stiglitz represent the association at the roundtable.

Green teams

Twenty-six Kentucky schools and their students have been recognized by the Kentucky Green & Healthy Schools program and the Kentucky NEED project for energy efficiency and sustainability efforts in the 2010-11 school year.

For the second consecutive year, Fayette County's Henry Clay High School

received the highest level of award by being designated as a Model Kentucky Green & Healthy School. Three other Fayette County schools were recognized for their efforts, along with Old Mill Elementary, Bullitt County; and Tichenor Middle School, Kenton County. Other schools received certificates for joining the program.

New KASS officers

Pikeville Independent Schools Superintendent Jerry Green, pictured far right with



Fayette County Schools Superintendent Stu Silberman, has begun duties as head the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents after serving a year as president elect. Dot Perkins, who heads the Gallatin County school system, will serve as 2011-12 president elect. Simpson County Superintendent Jim Flynn and Pendleton County Superintendent Anthony Strong were chosen as first vice president and second vice president respectively. They were elected at the summer KASS conference in June. ❧

In training

KSBA's Board Team Development Service hosted the National School Boards Association's State Association Trainers Conference June 23-25 in Louisville. Seventy school board development trainers from across the nation gathered for the event. Session topics included using technology as an alternate way to deliver training, meeting the training needs of school board members, and student achievement research and training.



KSBA Board Team Development Director Kerri Schelling co-presented a session on boards and preschool education, while Council of Chief State School Officers executive director (and former Kentucky education commissioner) Gene Wilhoit headed another general session on common core standards.

Laura Shemick, a trainer from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, leads a session during the conference.

TELL survey results provide boards with valuable planning input

Earlier this year, 80 percent of Kentucky's public school teachers and school-level administrators participated in a survey designed to assess the working conditions of their schools and districts. Board members may be tempted to shy away from delving deeply into their district's survey results, since most deal with school-level questions. The underpinning of the survey, however, reveals why they should dive in: Studies show that teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their working conditions have a major impact on the academic achievement of their students as well as the job satisfaction and retention of the teachers themselves.

Those areas of impact fall squarely on the shoulders of school board members.

KSBA, as one of the coalition of partners, has supported the survey because our board of directors believes that members need to know how their certified employees rate the current working conditions of their schools and districts. Because this is the first year of a survey that will be administered every two years, the results provide a baseline, allowing boards to compare their districts with other districts as well as track their progress on key indicators of improvement.

KSBA and the New Teacher Center, the developer and administrator of the survey, have created training designed to help board teams – board members, superintendents and other district leaders – understand and utilize their survey results in their school and district improvement efforts. We hope that just as school administrators and councils will analyze and incorporate school-level results in their improvement efforts, board teams will do the same at the district level.

KSBA's training helps board teams put their survey results into perspective by comparing the results of key survey items



Bill Scott
KSBA Executive Director

across the eight major categories with both statewide averages and the results of two other districts of choice. This allows participants to identify those areas in which their district scores exceed state averages and comparison districts as well as those areas where their district scores fall below the state average and comparison districts. Discussion focuses on the reasons why district scores vary from the comparison groups – factors such as student demographics and inadequate resources – as well as what the board can do to improve those areas of highest priority. For high-priority areas of improvement, participants are encouraged to identify existing district supports that can be used to address the needs as well as what the ideal supports might be.

Here's an example: As boards discuss survey questions dealing with teachers' opinions of district or school professional development, they might ask:

- Have we provided the conditions needed for meaningful professional development?
- Have we provided extra time and financial resources for staff professional development?

Potential follow-up activities by the board are divided into the five leadership roles of school boards as identified in the Lighthouse research (setting clear expectations, creating the conditions for success, holding the system accountable, creating the public will to succeed, and learning as a board team).

In the final analysis, the results of the TELL surveys are one of many types of data that boards need to consider and track in developing improvement plans for their districts. If your board is interested in having KSBA staff facilitate a work session on your district's TELL data, please contact Kerri Schelling or Jean Crowley at 1-800 372-2962. ☞

TELL KENTUCKY SURVEY FOCUSES ON EIGHT AREAS OF TEACHING CONDITIONS

Time – Availability of time to plan, collaborate and provide instruction.

Facilities and Resources – Availability of instructional resources, technology, office support and communication.

Community Support and Involvement – The presence of regular, two-way communication with parents and community.

Managing Student Conduct – Policies and practices to address student conduct and ensure a safe school environment.

Teacher Leadership – Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices.

School Leadership – The ability of school leaders to create trusting, supportive environments.

Professional Development – Availability and quality of staff learning opportunities that enhance teaching and learning.

Instructional Practices and Support – Data and other types of support available to teachers to improve instruction.

Quotes on education from Kentucky and elsewhere



Photo provided by the Gattton Academy

“This honor highlights the outstanding students from across the state. We share this recognition with each of the (100-plus) schools these students represent. Being among the top schools in the nation

shows the strength and caliber of young people across the Commonwealth.” Tim Gott, director of the Carol Martin Gattton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky at Western Kentucky University on it ranking it as the fifth best high school in the nation by *Newsweek* magazine. From the Bowling Green WBKO-TV.

mitted to the fact that we’re finding more efficiencies in our budget to help pad the cuts and we’re adamant that we will not ask community taxpayers for an increase in taxes because of this.” Crittenden County Schools Superintendent Rachel Yarbrough on the likelihood that this school year’s budget won’t include a pay raise for staff. From the *Marion Crittenden Press*.

“I don’t like going to regular classes. You get distracted by the kids who are trying to be goofy. Most of the time, being on the computer, I can concentrate better.” Campbell County High School senior J. R. Stanley on how online courses helped him make up social studies and science classes that he had failed, allowing him earn his diploma. From the *Fort Mitchell Community Press & Recorder*.

“The road leading to this part has been a number of things, but easy is not one of them. As state law requires, we took a three-hour training on the proper protocol on the hiring process. It was made very clear to us before we considered a ‘who,’ we must consider ‘what’ we were looking for in a new principal.” Corbin Independent High School Council Vice-chairman Jimmy Cornn on the serious work the panel put into its recent principal search, a process that included a writing test for the candidates. From the *Corbin Times-Tribune*.

down AustinTracy. If they wanted to, they could shut down Hiseville.” Barren County Schools Superintendent Bo Matthews explaining to the district’s local planning committee why projects at two elementary schools need to be high on the four-year plan they were writing. From the *Glasgow Daily Times*.

“It’s very disheartening to think that we may not be able to give our teachers the raise. We’re very com-

“At our meetings now, with the exception of student recognitions, we’re just taking care of business and not looking at a lot of student data. With this additional meeting, we will have the opportunity to talk with principals, counselors and teachers to see where they’re at, ask questions and look at student data. The bottom line is keeping the district focused on students and look at student achievement

“No retirements from our current teaching staff at the end of the school years has made the staffing at the schools interesting. That fact has changed things a little for our young and prospective teachers.” Grayson County Schools Superintendent Barry Anderson on the impact of reduced state funding and staff stability on 2011-12 personnel decisions. From the *Leitchfield Grayson County News-Gazette*.

“It’s a big septic tank that empties into a sand pit and the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) says, ‘We don’t want these anymore.’ If the EPA wanted to, they could shut

Retaining learning in the summer

“They don’t have the summer lag time. If you take too much time off, you get a little slow. You cannot be slow in quick recall.” Danna Powers, longtime Boyd County Schools academic coach on how summer camps can benefit academics just as they do athletics. From the *Ashland Daily Independent*.

“As a parent, I can tell you, you lose some (skills) if you don’t keep those brain cells going through the summer. This is an opportunity for kids to stay sharp and have fun in the process.” Debi Wade Jordan, executive director of Bowling Green-Warren County Community Education, on the organization’s allocation of resources for three summer camps that attracted more than 400 students. From the *Bowling Green Daily News*.



to measure the progress we're making." Superintendent David Raleigh on the Owen County school board's decision to add a work session for a second meeting each month. From the *Owenton News-Herald*.

"It's an experience, it's good. It's always good to help people with something you're interested in. When it finally clicks with the kids with what they are doing, it kind of ignites a desire to go into the field and make them excited about becoming engineers." Scott County High School senior Shawn Bohac on his experience helping sixth-graders at the district's summer Gateway Academy. From the *Georgetown News-Graphic*.

"It's a community event a lot of people are leaving their fingerprints on." Don Cravens, superintendent of Anchorage Public School, on the involvement of many people in the Jefferson County community to plan the school's 100th anniversary celebration this fall. From the *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

"The idea that AP classes are viable to all students has spread through our student population. We try to give the impression that all students can experience the AP curriculum if they are willing to work hard and experience some diverse content geared toward college-level thinking. These classes are hard, but obtainable." Marion County High School Advanced Placement language teacher Laurie Followell on the quadrupling of students in the school's AP classes in five years. From the *Lebanon Enterprise*.

"All of my copy requests since becoming a board member have been for legitimate government purposes and a board member's public function, not as a citizen making a request under the Open Records act. I'm not an attorney, and am no expert on case

law, but I believe that a request made by a board member acting as stated above is not subject to charge." Bath County school board Chairman Bill Boyd responding to an Office of Educational Accountability charge that he had refused to pay charges assessed by the school district when he asked for copies of records. From the *Carlisle Kentucky News Group*.

"Nobody anticipated this domino effect, but it's going to give us a fresh start. And I think that's exactly what the high school needs." Newport Independent Schools board Chairwoman Andrea Janovic on all of the changes coming for the high school after landing on the expanded KDE list of persistently low-achieving schools, which led to replacement of the principal, the school council and the superintendent. From the *Fort Mitchell Nky.com*.

"Three engineers have looked at the field so far, and none of them know what is wrong with it. The field was tested last year, and nothing unusual was noted. They played football [and soccer] on it (but now) you can feel it giving way under your feet." Mike Smith of the architectural firm Sherman Carter Barnhart to the Shelby County school board in recommending \$360,000 in remedial measures that may or may not fix sports field conditions at the year-old Martha Layne Collins High School. From the *Shelbyville Sentinel-News*.

"We're viewing these computers as an essential instructional tool, just like a textbook was previously. They're going to have to have it (the laptop) to be successful." Owensboro Independent Schools Superintendent Larry Vick on the district's plan to provide more than 2,200 students in grades 5-12 with take-home laptop computers. From the *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*. ☞

Oversight of student newspapers

POINT...

"It's just kind of a procedure here. There should have been an adult to look over it. There were things in there that were sensitive issues, and we decided it was best to collect those and not create a situation that could hurt students and damage students, potentially." Heath High School (McCracken County) Principal Jon Reid on his decision – backed by the central office and the board attorney – to pull copies of a senior newspaper, written by three students without faculty supervision, which drew complaints by other students.

COUNTERPOINT...

"The real simple principle here, that I think the school should take to heart, is if you have to ask if it's a disruption, it's not a disruption. Orderly complaints aren't going to cause a problem. The idea that something that can be disruptive in a way that nobody but the principal notices is laughable. It doesn't even approach what the legal standard is." Adam Goldstein, an attorney for the Student Press Law Center in Arlington, Va., who disagreed with Reid's action.

From the *Paducah Sun*

State board and training hours: No more Mr. Nice Guy

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

Some Kentucky school board members were scrambling to complete required training by July 29, following unprecedented action by the state Board of Education in June.

The state board issued an ultimatum to those members after receiving its annual report from KSBA detailing cumulative school board member training hours and also listing local board members who have failed to meet annual training requirements, which are set by law.

The report showed that 11 school board members had not received the minimum required number of training hours for 2010. None of those was appointed or elected during 2010 – in those

cases, the new board members are granted an extension.

One of the 11, noted board member Rev. C.B. Akin, has 14 years of experience. “Fourteen years, he should know the system by now,” Akin said.

State law says the state board is to forward to the attorney general the names of local board members who fail to meet annual training requirements. Among the attorney general’s options is removal from office.

At Education Commissioner Terry Holliday’s recommendation, the board voted to have him send the 11 an advance copy of a letter to the attorney general notifying that office of their non-compliance. The names of those among them who met the training requirements by July 29 would be taken off the list before the letter is sent to the

2010 Kentucky school board member training

Total hours completed	10,271
Hours above the minimum	4,498
Members above minimum	156 — 0-3 years service 220 — 4-7 years 376 — 8-plus years

2011-12 KSBA training opportunities

	Date	Planned credit hours
Safe Schools Conference	Nov. 7-8	8.5
Fall Regional Meetings	various	1.5
Winter Symposium	Dec. 9-10	7
Annual Conference	Feb. 3-5	13
Summer Leadership Institute	July 6-7	7.25
Other options: self-study, in-district training		

Training requirements for Kentucky school board members

0-3 years of service 12 hours of annual training

4-7 years 8 hours of annual training

8-plus years 4 hours of annual training

attorney general, Holliday said.

The state board, KSBA Executive Director Bill Scott said later, “is making it clear that just as students are being held to higher expectations through the new learning standards and accountability measures, other groups of education leaders are also expected to rise to these new demands.

“When local board members don’t meet their required number of training hours, it sends a message to the state board, as well as other policy makers, that they are not taking their duties seriously.”

Given the local board’s important role in supporting and implementing components of Senate Bill 1, Scott added, “it’s not surprising that state board members are scrutinizing this annual training report much more carefully than they have in the past.”

During their meeting, several members noted that some of those on the list were just .25 credit hours away from fulfilling the requirement.

“Is there not a button you can push or something that would cause these folks to get 15 minutes on their lunch hour or something to get this?” Akin asked Scott and Board Team Development Director Kerri Schelling.

A board member in that situation would not have to attend a full day of training just to get .25 hours credit, Schelling said. The small amount of time could be made up in the self-study materials that KSBA makes available, or in local training, Schelling said.

At the other end of the spectrum, two on the list were four credit hours short. One person also appeared on last year’s list. In one school district, pointed out board member Roger Marcum, three of five board members were not in compliance with the state training requirement.

“To me, that says something about the culture that exists and that the board ought to be a model to others about getting the necessary training and professional development,” Marcum said. “I wonder if this would be a concern if we were talking about teachers and principals or superintendents in those districts not being in compliance.”

Schelling told board members KSBA had received no explanation from any of the 11 as to the reason for the noncompliance. The state board last year asked KSBA to contact those on the 2009 list, asking them to explain why they had not fulfilled the training requirement, but response was minimal.

“We do everything we can to try to make sure that by Dec. 31 of each year all members are in compliance,” Schelling told the board.

“We track this pretty carefully throughout the year,” Scott added.

Schelling and Scott provided the board with a list of KSBA’s

training opportunities. In early December each year, KSBA sends a letter to board members who are on the verge of falling short, along with their current tally and suggestions for picking up the credits. A copy is sent to their superintendent.

In response to a question from board Chairwoman Brigitte Ramsey, Scott and Schelling said board members are aware of the consequences of noncompliance. Historically, however, it has been a “culture where blanket extensions were sort of expected because that is what happened in the past,” Schelling said. ☞

Editor’s note: The Kentucky School Advocate went to press before the July 29 deadline. Some of the 11 board members had earned their required hours.

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Day care centers+district = Readiness



Chris Zahn gives it her all as she tries out an activity she'll teach her day care charges, thanks to training by Madison County Schools. Zahn and Tracy Campbell, left, work at All Learn and Play in Garrard County.

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

One thing was certain after day-care center owner Kelly Wilson attended a recent training sponsored by Madison County Schools: “We will go back Monday morning and make shaky eggs,” she said.

Wilson, who owns Leaps and Bounds Day Care Center in Richmond, was impressed with an activity she had learned – and actually participated in – during the Super Saturday training that is part of the district’s Early Childhood Alliance.

The activity featured a song, dancing and the shaky eggs – plastic eggs filled with beans for making “music.” Wilson said the song had been played for children at her day care center before, but hadn’t been combined with the other elements.

“A lot of the things that are taught in the training are so simple, but you never thought of before,” she explained.

The first year of the Super Saturday training was wrapped up with the third session in late May. As many as 100 day care workers have attended each session, according to district Instructional Supervisor Mendy Mills. The service is free to all Madison County day care centers that are members of the Early Childhood Alliance, with a minimal charge to others, including those from nearby counties.

The idea is to provide school readiness training to the day care centers to create a seamless transition between a child care setting and public preschool and kindergarten.

“There is a lot of evidence that ‘gaps’ start appearing by the time a child is 3,” said Madison County school board Chairman Dr. Doug Whitlock. “We know that many of our future, and current, students spend a good part of the day in day care facilities because all the adults in the household work.”

Mills said the training provides suggestions the workers can use immediately in their centers, including literacy and numeracy activities. The district’s math intervention teacher, for example, held a session on how to use the Candy Land board game to teach math.

The effort goes hand in hand with the Early Childhood Alliance’s mentoring triangles, in which day care workers observe Madison County kindergarten and preschool teachers. Mills said day care center directors have said “they have seen this collaboration increase the confidence of their teachers.”

Madison County Schools Preschool Director Karla Willis said the training focuses on the state’s early childhood education standards and encompasses all ages, not just 3- and 4-year-olds.

The day care centers “are helping us reach children that we cannot reach” outside of preschool and Head Start, said Superintendent Tommy Floyd.

Floyd got the ball rolling with a letter to child care centers, inviting them to a meeting with school officials about childhood development and kindergarten preparation. With help from state education officials, the district was able to get certification as a child care center trainer.

Whitlock said from the board's perspective, the day care facilities have embraced the concept. "The feedback I have received has been uniformly positive," he said.

The training reinforces to both parents and staff that, "You're not just a child-care center. You're an early learning center," said Kathy Shew, director of Richmond Child Care Center.

The district promotes awareness of the training among parents by creating banners for alliance members to hang at their front entrance.

"If you take a young couple that's got to make a choice about where they put their children in child care and the cost is the same, why would you not choose the day care that's coordinating with the county school system?" Floyd asked.

Lessons learned

Dr. Megan Purcell, who specializes in the early intervention program at Eastern Kentucky University's special education department, said the training the Madison County school district offers for day care center workers is unique in Kentucky. Some school districts work with local child care providers, she said, but not to this degree.

"I don't see school districts building relationships with community-based child care like this," she said.

Purcell and a colleague have been laying the groundwork for what is expected to be several years of research on the program aimed at seeing whether it will produce significant results.

While the work is still in the baseline-gathering stage, she said her gut reaction is that the training is producing "better connections, better relationships, better communication between the child care centers and the public schools, and a better transition to the school system."

Next steps

Floyd said for the second year of the program, the district will reach out to home-based child care settings with just one or two children. Floyd said the district will try to communicate with those workers through churches.

The message, he said, is "that if anybody keeps children – one or two – that they, too, could be eligible for participation" in the training.

"We don't want to tell them about their beliefs," he said. "If they want to make it a secular or a religious approach, fine. We want to help them with the kindergarten readiness standards. We want to help them with preparation for kindergarten, period." ❧



ENERGY TAKES A LUNCH BREAK

Warren County's energy-free lunches promote fun and responsibility



By Jennifer Wohlleb
Staff Writer

Sam Dorris, who will be a second-grader at Natcher Elementary in Warren County, spent a happy lunch period toward the end of this past school year, spelling out his name with a bag of Scrabble Cheez-it crackers while munching through the rest of his lunch.

He and his classmates were enjoying the novelty of eating a bag lunch in the cafeteria instead of the usual hot plate lunch on a tray. And the fact that this lunch was saving energy?

"I like that, too," he said.

Elementary schools in Warren County held four "energy-free lunch" days this spring, which had the cafeterias shutting down ovens and fryers, turning off heat lamps and running other kitchen equipment at minimal levels.

"We found that 22 percent of the energy in our schools was being consumed by the kitchens," said Food Services Manager Gina Howard, who said the district made that discovery as it planned and built Richardsville Elementary, the nation's first public school built to be net-zero energy, completed last year.

Howard said the idea for energy-free lunches came from an article in the *School Nutrition Journal*, and students and staff have eaten it up.

"It's actually a lot easier (to make) than a regular menu," said Plano Elementary Cafeteria Manager Paula Hale.

"Other than making the sandwiches, everything else is less time consuming. It's easier and the kids have more fun. It's like a picnic lunch for them."

Instead of picking up a tray when they go through the lunch line, students get a brown paper bag and fill it with a sandwich, fresh fruits and vegetables, cracker packs, or even a salad in a bag that has proven wildly popular with students.

"Salad is one of the harder things to get kids to eat," Howard said. "The last time we did this, we sold 200 salads in a bag. It's presented to them in a different way and students like that. They just open it, pour in their dressing and eat it out of the bag."

School board Chairman Mike Wilson said the program has been successful on several levels.

"Students know why we're doing this," he said. "They understand the rationale behind not having the kitchen all fired up that day. And this is also a new way to engage in nutrition. You may not like one item, but if it's presented to you in a different way or in a different setting, you may try something you previously thought you didn't like and find out you do like it. It broadens students' horizons."

Natcher Elementary fourth-grader Melek Muradova said there are several things she likes about the energy-free lunches.

"I like the energy savings," she said. "I like how they give out the carrots (in little bags) because carrots are really



Above, students at Natcher Elementary fill their brown bags as part of an energy-free lunch day.

Right, Plano Elementary student Elijah Burckhard, relishes an apple during lunch. Students say the fresh fruits and vegetables are one their favorite parts of the energy-free lunches.



good. It's more fun to eat this way and you don't have to do trays."

Jay Wilson, Warren County's energy manager, said the energy savings from these few days can't be determined, but efforts like these are still important.

"Definitely, it is important for our food services to serve such meals for the nutritional-educational benefits," he said. "It also displays the overall support from Mrs. Howard and her food service personnel for the district's ever-evolving energy conservation program."

Board member Mike Wilson said being energy conscious is just good policy for school boards.

"You build a building one time, but you heat it, cool it, and equip it every day for the next 40 or 50 years," Wilson said. "Seven or eight years ago when we entered into our energy education program, we wanted to be good stewards for the taxpayers' dollars and be as efficient as possible. Every dollar we save in energy costs goes back into teachers, salaries, textbooks, and other areas that directly impact students' learning." ❧

DARK IS THE NEW GREEN

At Walton-Verona Independent Schools, green isn't only the color of money and conservation, but it is also becoming the color of safety. By turning off the lights at night, the district is both turning on savings and increasing safety.

All the district's lights, from the classroom to the parking lots, are on motion sensors at night.

"When police come by doing their patrol and they see lights on in the building they know that there's a problem because it should be dark," said Superintendent Bill Boyle.

The district has had a dark campus since 2008.

"We wanted to do it years ago, but back then, building codes required a certain amount of light in buildings at night," he said. "That's changed. The building codes have caught up with energy savings. We can now have all lights off in the building when it's closed, except for the ones by an entrance. So 99 percent of our building is dark. When some one walks into our building, it trips the motion sensor."

The same goes for parking lots, making it easy for police and others to spot anyone who shouldn't be there at night.

Boyle said because Walton-Verona is a growth district, trying to determine the savings from this is like trying to hit a moving target. But he said the change has been effective.

"We've gone the opposite way in terms of the old prevailing wisdom that said the more light the better, and we haven't had any incidents so far. We didn't want the lights on for the criminals to be able to see what they are doing," Boyle said, laughing. ❧

Unbridled training

School board members get crash course in Kentucky education reform II

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

School board members attending KSBA's July 8-9 Summer Leadership Institute got an overview of next-generation education reform. A team of top Kentucky Department of Education leaders gave a synopsis of the state's new accountability and assessment systems, which are entwined with the push for college and career readiness for all students.

The new reforms are driven by legislation passed by the 2009 General Assembly in Senate Bill 1. To drive home the message that the initiative is broader even than the provisions in that law, state education leaders have scrubbed it of the SB 1 reference and are now bundling it all under the title of "Unbridled Learning: College/Career Readiness for All."

Education Commissioner Dr. Terry Holliday asked boards to focus particularly on two prongs of the reform – improving the graduation rate and college/career readiness rate.

"Our choice in Kentucky is very clear: we can either prepare our children for an economy and jobs of the future that pay a living wage or we can prepare our children for low-wage service jobs, which will be few and far between," he said.

While KDE leaders outlined aspects of the upcoming reforms, the provisions currently are contained in regulations that are pending and may be changed.

Unbridled nuggets: new standards

Associate Commissioner Felicia Cumings Smith warned board members that the new core math and English/language standards that will be used in the classroom this year "will require quite a bit more from our students." She made clear,



Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday answers a question about the new accountability system. Summer Leadership Institute organizer Kerri Schelling is in the background.

however, that the new national standards do not dictate curriculum, teaching methods, enrichment, interventions or supports.

"This is really important for you to understand as board members and as we consider how this translates to everyday practice," as well as to ensure students get the supports they need, Cumings Smith said.

Core standards for science and social studies will be implemented in the 2012-13 school year. Nontested subjects – arts and humanities, practical living/career studies, writing and primary/world languages – will be assessed using program reviews. Using a state education department guide,

school teams will perform self-assessments of those program areas, which are reviewed by district staff and spot-audited by the department.

Unbridled nuggets: teacher preparation

The work of regional training networks around content areas and job functions is continuing, Leadership Network Project Manager Karen Kidwell told board members. The system is unique in that it builds in "continuous supports" for educators, she said. The first batch of deconstructed standards, along with resources and supports, are posted for teachers on the state education department's website.

A Gates Foundation grant has helped the state try out some new strategies for teaching the new math and English/language arts standards, Kidwell said.

Unbridled nuggets: assessment and accountability

The assessment that will be launched in the 2011-12 school year will have two components, said Associate Commissioner Ken Draut: grades 3-8 will be tested in reading, math, science, social studies and writing in a system is called Kentucky Per-

NSBA lobbyist: Effects of new education law will be far-reaching

By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The chief lobbyist for the National School Boards Association warns that whatever form the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act takes once Congress is done with it, Kentucky schools and districts could be stuck with its provisions for a decade.

"It's really important that Congress get

it right, and they're not going to get it right unless people on the ground such as yourselves explain to them what is needed to get it right," Michael Resnick told school board members and superintendents at the Legislative Issues Group meeting that was held prior to KSBA's Summer Leadership Institute, July 8-9.

Progress on renewing ESEA has been slow, Resnick said, and in the meantime, the flawed No Child Left Behind law – the current incarnation of ESEA – con-

tinues, with more schools falling short of its benchmarks as the bar is raised higher and higher.

Resnick encouraged Kentucky board members and superintendents to join a national effort by NSBA and the American Association of School Administrators, which have asked boards and superintendents to adopt a resolution asking U.S. education chief Arne

See "NSBA" continued on Page 19

formance Rating for Educational Programs, K-PREP for short. It will include a national norm-referenced element along with one that will produce Kentucky-specific scores.

At the high school level, the state is moving to end-of-course testing, starting in the 2011-12 school year with English 2, algebra 2, biology and U.S. history. These tests will be linked to the common core standards and to college readiness standards, Draut said.

“Schools are encouraged to use the end-of-course tests for a grade,” he added, to motivate students to do well.

Unbridled nuggets: accountability

Here is the accountability formula: Fifty percent of school scores will be derived from student proficiency, closing achievement gaps, college/career readiness, graduation rate and individual student growth. Thirty percent will be based on the program reviews and the remaining 20 percent on teacher and leader effectiveness.

Schools will be rated according to a formula in each of those three categories, with each category receiving a score with a single number and classification: distinguished, proficient or needs improvement. In turn, those three major component scores and classifications will be crunched to produce an overall score and classification for each school and for the district.

The idea is to give a “more balanced picture” of how schools are doing in these categories, Draut said.

Unbridled nuggets: recognition and supports

Within the three rankings – distinguished, proficient and needs improvement – there are expected to be some distinctions to acknowledge growth and success, said Associate Commissioner Dr. Larry Stinson. Schools and districts in the top 5 percent of distinction, for example, would earn a “high distinction” label. Those in the proficient and needs improvement designations that are making progress will be called “on the move.” There also will be low, middle and high levels of needs improvement, Stinson said.

The bottom 20 percent of needs improvement schools and districts will receive targeted supports from the state education department. This group will not include schools determined to be persistently low-achieving, which continue to be in a category by themselves with their own support system, Stinson said.

Unbridled nuggets: teacher and leader effectiveness

The accountability model is designed to help teachers and leaders be more effective, Stinson said.

“For far too long we have focused on highly qualified teachers ... it doesn’t necessarily mean they are going to be effective,” he said.

In this new system, teachers and leaders would be evaluated using multiple measures, including observation, student growth, professional growth and student/parent “voices.” Educators would be classified as accomplished, developing, exemplary and ineffective.

This also is where the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) Kentucky Survey fits in – it will identify what conditions teachers need in their buildings to be effective. The whole teacher effectiveness system will be implemented for accountability purposes with the 2013-14 school year. ☞

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS, REFINED

By Wayne Dominick

Ask a room full of school board members for a definition of alternative programming and you are likely to hear as many different answers as there are people in the room. At least that’s what happened when the question was posed at the recent KSBA Summer Leadership Institute. It’s not because the board members don’t know what alternative programming is; it’s because each of their districts treats alternative programming differently. The state currently has no laws or regulations for alternative programming placement, but according to KDE Policy Analyst Robin Chandler, that could change in the next legislative session when lawmakers once again consider a bill to that effect.

The legislation, which increases the dropout age but did not clear the last session, includes language to establish a definition of what constitutes alternative programming, guidelines for assigning students and data collection protocols within the student information system to assist in identifying best practices. Establishing best practices for alternative programs in statute will give districts a framework for designing effective programs for students who are unsuccessful in a traditional setting.

According to Chandler, the guidelines and protocols will not only help districts design effective programs, but they also will give educators hard data to show legislators when asking for funding for the programs.

“We all know these programs are more expensive to operate than the traditional classroom setting,” she told board members attending the workshop. “The problem is we can’t show them how much more it costs and why.”

Calloway County board member Leeann Myers agrees that guidelines, procedures and additional funding would help, but she said it takes a lot more to have an effective program. Myers should know: Calloway County’s alternative program has been recognized as one of six Best Practice sites in the state in all three categories scored by KDE.

“Everyone – board members, superintendent and staff – has to be involved and working together,” she said.

Chandler said leadership is a big factor in program success.

“I don’t know that it’s something you can prove, but if you look at all the Best Practice sites, I think the one common thread is leadership. It takes a strong commitment from the board, the district office and the other schools to make these programs work,” she said. ☞

DEFINITION

“Alternative Programming” is defined as activities for students assigned to alternative campuses, centers or classrooms designed to remediate academic performance, improve behavior and/or provide an enhanced learning experience. Typically, alternative education programs are designed to meet the needs of students that cannot be addressed in a traditional classroom setting.

— Dominick is a writer from Frankfort



RECOGNIZING ADVOCACY FOR KIDS

KSBA presented the Kids First Advocacy Awards during its Summer Leadership Institute July 8-9 to a superintendent and a school board member. Above, Valerie England, the widow of the late Barren County and KSBA board member Tim England, accepts a plaque from KSBA President Tom Blankenship in recognition of the renaming of the Kids First board member award in his honor. At left are England's parents, Clyde and Dorothy England.

Above right, Spencer County school board Chairwoman Jeanie Stevens, left, was the first recipient of the award under that new name. Stevens' nomination praised her effort to unify the board during a turbulent time and her work with local government to build the district's infrastructure. KSBA Director of Governmental Relations Shannon Stiglitz presented the award.

Right, Kenton County Superintendent Dr. Terri Cox-Cruey accepted the Kids First Award for a superintendent on behalf of her predecessor, Tim Hanner, who was unable to attend. Hanner was recognized for, among other things, keeping his board informed about legislation affecting schools and for helping form the Northern Kentucky Education Action Team. KSBA Associate Executive Director David Baird presented the award.



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TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF SB 1

Graves County Board of Education members Kevin Curtsinger, left, and Ronnie Holmes, far right, work together during a Senate Bill 1 training exercise in their district. Superintendent Pete Galloway looks on.



By Madelynn Coldiron
Staff Writer

The Graves County school district is getting ready for the changes that are coming via Senate Bill 1, which mandates a new assessment and accountability system for Kentucky schools, with an emphasis on college- and career-ready students.

In fact, the district has been preparing for the changes, which include new national standards for math and English/language arts in 2011-12, for the past 18 months, said Superintendent Kenneth “Pete” Galloway.

Despite that, Galloway said, “We’re anxious and nervous.” He’s likely not alone, which explains the reason for new training being offered by KSBA.

Galloway made his observations in June as the district became the first to pilot the new KSBA training for school boards on their role in implementing parts of the new law and related changes. As the title of the first module of “Unbridled Learning: All Students College and Career Ready,” indicates, the training emphasizes the board’s role in making sure all students are college- and career-ready. It’s an extra service beyond regular KSBA opportunities.

There are a lot of unknowns in the new systems mandated by the 2009 legislation, Kerri Schelling, director of Board Team Development, told the Graves County school board team. “It really is changing the game.”

But there is at least one certainty about the SB 1 changes, she said:

“It starts at the board level, just like everything else in the district.”

The training, Schelling said, is designed to give boards an overview of SB 1, melding the state education department’s strategies for college and career readiness with the board’s

leadership role as outlined in the Lighthouse Study. That research by the Iowa Association of School Boards identified characteristics of school boards in high-achieving districts.

Among the strategies are course and assessment alignment with the new standards, targeted interventions, the definition of college and career readiness, acceleration, and academic and career advising.

The KSBA training prompts board members to review those strategies and devise ways, within the parameters of their leadership roles, that they can ensure their students are college and career ready.

Board members also get a vivid illustration of the tough new standards by reviewing a sample language arts question at different grade levels.

Schelling cautioned that this is not designed to be “the one and only” vehicle for boards to learn about the state’s new core content and assessment and accountability systems.

However, Galloway praised the information presented in the training and the accompanying workbook. “I assure you this will be used in our district,” he said.

Schelling urged the Graves County contingent to become familiar with SB 1 in preparation for fielding questions from the public.

“You have to help carry the message (of SB 1) to the constituents,” she said. Part of the training includes tips on how to prepare an “elevator or supermarket speech” that board members can use to give constituents a succinct explanation of the changes and the reasons for them.

“Figure out how you’re going to talk to your community,” Schelling said. “It’s going to be on their minds and you’ve got to be ready to talk to them.”

Board Chairman Kevin Curtsinger, who afterward said the training had cleared up some of his questions, is anticipating some buttonholing from the public.

Back-to-School Checklist for Buildings

The summer months are an excellent opportunity to inspect your buildings to make certain there are no potential hazards awaiting students when they return to school in a few short weeks. Here is a quick checklist:

- Test all emergency lighting and inspect the “Exit” signs.
- Check doors to ensure they properly close and lock.
- Remove all stored materials from the hallways to prevent trips and falls, and eliminate blocked egress routes.
- Review playgrounds, paying particular attention to the protective surfacing. Also, inspect the playground equipment to ensure it is operating safely. Make sure there is no exposed hardware to catch clothing and no free-hanging ropes attached to the equipment.

- Evaluate visitor sign-in procedures.
 - Review your parent/guardian sign-out procedures.
 - Make sure there are no exposed electrical wires. Inspect outlets and electrical cords. Lock all breaker-panel boxes in hallways and common areas.
 - Keep locked all custodial closets, mechanical rooms and storage areas.
 - Review the district’s crisis management plan.
- For more information about playground and building safety, contact one of KSBIT’s loss control specialists at 1-800-876-4552.

— by Joe Isaacs, loss control specialist, Kentucky School Boards Insurance Trust

“This coming school year you’re going to see a lot of changes,” he said. “This fall there’s going to be a lot of questions from the community.”

Board member Donnie Reed added, “Senate Bill 1 is still fuzzy to us and I know every board member wants a clear picture of SB 1, especially when we’re having to talk to the public about it. This helped take some of the fuzziness away from it.”

Board member Ronnie Holmes said the board needs to be patient with school staff because they are tackling a new system, “but on the other hand, administrators need to be patient with us, too,” because of the questions board members will be asking about all the changes.

Curtsinger said the school board has a bigger role in these changes than he expected, and Reed said the board will have to be aware of the impact of the change on the district’s budget.

“Preparation is going to be the key to implementing this,” Reed noted. ☘

NSBA

Continued from Page 14

Duncan for a waiver of some of the NCLB provisions, such as sanctions, pending reauthorization of ESEA. Kentucky, for example, has asked to substitute its own system for NCLB’s.

Duncan has responded by saying waivers could be given to states, but they must apply and agree to reforms.

But there isn’t enough time to apply and launch new re-

forms before the upcoming school year, Resnick said. “We told the department this is absolutely nuts,” he said, drawing applause by adding, “If you’ve got a bad policy, get rid of the bad policy, don’t put some other policy in place of it.”

Because Congress has been unable to act on the reauthorization, “the administration has really just occupied the vacuum. The Department of Education walked in and has unilaterally decided this is where education policy can go, without really having it vetted in a representative way,” Resnick said.

The administration has tried to influence the delivery of education, he said, through grants such as Race to the Top and school turnaround models, for example. Resnick said the federal education department wants even more money to go out in the form of competitive grants that are aligned with the administration’s reform ideas.

“We think this is the wrong direction to go. Many school districts, particularly those that are most needed, don’t have the grant writers in order to be in competition,” he said. “It’s almost enabling the biggest and the wealthiest districts to have the best leverage point to get those funds.” ☘



Michael Resnick, chief lobbyist for the National School Boards Association, speaks with Jefferson County board members Deborah Wesslund, left, and Linda Duncan following his presentation at KSBA’s Summer Leadership Institute.

Mike Leadingham

on KDE's MUNIS move to the clouds

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 Mike Leadingham, director of the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Engineering and Management Services, who discusses the state's move of school districts' MUNIS financial software to the "cloud." The first four districts completed the move in June, with all 174 districts expected to make the change by the end of next year.

Mike Leadingham, standing, KDE director of the Division of Engineering and Management Services, discusses an application with Phil Coleman, director of Operations and Services.



Q. Why is the MUNIS financial system being moved to the cloud? And can you briefly explain what the cloud is?

A. Cloud services is essentially a hosting model, where instead of having the equipment, the hardware, the software, the operating system, the different pieces located locally – whether at the district locally or at the state level – it's at another location.

For this example, it's in Maine where the MUNIS parent company, Tyler Corporation, is located. Tyler maintains those, keeps them up and running and that eliminates school, district and state personnel from having to a lot of that maintenance work.

A little more than a year ago, we moved our e-mail services to the cloud through Microsoft. It has been very successful. That eliminated a lot of overhead and maintenance that district personnel were having to do.

The reasons we're moving MUNIS now, is the company, Tyler, was moving to a new platform. Regardless of whether we moved to a cloud solution or we went to a transition of the equipment we had in place at the district level, we had to make a transition because the company was making a transition from one platform to another.

We've known about the move for several years; it was just about reaching the point where they were going to discontinue maintaining the old environment. They identified timelines to transition. They allowed us more time to do it because we have a statewide implementation. They wanted to work with us on that.

They are making this change to enhance their product. There are features that are more easily accomplished under this new platform versus the previous one.

So we had the company that was making a change, so it was kind of inevitable. The choice then was do we go to a cloud-type situation, or we could have transitioned to where we kept hardware distributed out to all the school systems.

That's a primary reason we had to transition.

Q. Will those new features trickle down to the district level? Will this be a better product for Kentucky school districts?

A. One example would be a dashboard feature, which enhances the self-help capability. More users are going to be able to access the system in the schools and districts. For example, in the past, finance officers would have to capture information or create information from the MUNIS system and then provide it to personnel at the school level and then get feedback from them to enter it into the system.

The new features will allow more users – with the appropriate permissions – to be able to access the system themselves and run a report or look at their part of the budget. Finance officers that I've been in conversation with have said this is a huge feature that will be very beneficial.

I think there are a lot of features yet to come. The environment is more flexible, so the company has the ability to be more responsive to customers' needs as opposed to the previous operating system where it was a little more stringent, a little more difficult to be able to react to customer requests.

Q. Will this change save districts money?

A. There is some debate about this, but it will free up some resources at the school and district levels. They no longer have to maintain this. They can access this application, they can focus on the business of using the application instead of having to have any real time commitment to keep it running, keep it patched, upgraded, all those types of things.

Another reason for the change is reliability and the availability on a 24/7 basis. This is a service that will be available around the clock – not that there’s going to be a lot of activity in the financial system outside of normal hours – but there could be.

It allows finance officers and other personnel with the proper credentials to access their information from multiple locations. If they are on a trip, with appropriate credentials they can access their applications to do some work they need to do. And while there were ways to do that before, it was a little more complex and required the district to have some ownership in how it ran.

Those are the reasons for the move. And while we initially thought it might introduce some cost savings, we really did not end up seeing it as a cost-savings move, but we are identifying it as a cost neutral move.

Q. How did it work out that way, if districts aren’t having to maintain this system locally?

A. We’re paying a fee to the company to host the service. Instead of paying for our local equipment and maintaining our local equipment, we’re paying a fee for their cloud hosting services. In some districts, it will be a little more, a little less, but across the board on average it’s pretty cost neutral.

Tyler worked with us on this. We told them we did not have the ability to do anything that was going to increase cost at the local level or the state level.

Q. As of June, how many pilot districts had made the change?

A. There are four that have made the move and two that are in the process. Paintsville Independent was the first one that made the move and is fully running on the cloud. The other three that have fully transitioned are Bath County, Elizabethtown Independent and Owen County. The other two pilot sites that were going to keep moving to implementation during July are Henderson and Laurel counties.

The idea is to do 10 districts a month and have it completed by December 2012. It really continues to be a choice, because districts could choose to still do a locally-hosted solution. We feel like there are not a lot of reasons you would want to do that, and pretty much all districts have committed to moving to the cloud.

Again, if it’s a cost-neutral move and it’s going to remove the responsibility of having to maintain the equipment and the

software and the operating system, you want to make that move. There’s also the accessibility from multiple locations, as well as 24/7 availability.

Q. Did many districts express a reluctance to make this change?

A. In the beginning of talking over all of these things, there were a lot of questions, there was a comfort level with the financial data residing within their district on that piece of software that they could see right there. Going through all the different assessments we did of how security is handled, I think we all reached the same comfort level.

Hosting services is not a new thing; it’s been around for a long time. Economically, it was hard to do in the past whereas now it’s a more cost-feasible solution. A lot of that is the decreased cost for connectivity versus what you had in the past, and just some of the advancements in the technology and how you can move data securely.

Q. Did everything go smoothly with the four pilot sites?

A. Yes. There were a few little things learned. One of the things that came out during the pilot was that we do have some districts that are using third-party software in addition to the MUNIS software and that software has to interact with the MUNIS software. I know there were a few instances where they had to find a way to make those things work. None of those was difficult or identified as major roadblocks. For all intents and purposes, the pilots have gone well. We haven’t run into anything that we would view as an obstacle or anything that’s going to increase costs associated with implementing.

Q. So districts getting ready to make this change shouldn’t be too worried since so far no serious problems have cropped up?

A. I think districts can expect it to be pretty straightforward. Representatives from Tyler-MUNIS are going to contact the districts ahead of time to go over the preparation they need to do, because there is a transition or migration of the data from their existing system over to the cloud solution. There is some prep work, but it’s pretty minimal, pretty straightforward.

Q. Is there anything specifically that school board members should be aware of?

A. I think the benefit from the school board perspective is that they can continue to rely on up-to-date, reliable information regarding the financial status of their district and regarding budget and payroll, and all the things that a school board is going to want to be aware of. They also anticipate even better opportunities for that kind of information to be provided for them. Reliability will continue and there will be the enhanced functionality of being able to access the information easily. For multiple people to be able to go in and look at that, it should lead to an even more thorough, reliable solution. ☘

The commissioners and the tobacco ban policy request

Give Terry Holliday credit – and I frequently have in this space – Kentucky’s commissioner of education is willing to take tough positions to improve the lives of Kentucky children.

When Holliday joined Gov. Steve Beshear to ask the administration of President Barack Obama to let the state substitute its in-the-works school progress targets for the all-or-failure yardsticks of the No Child Left Behind law, he quickly got what he called “some push-back.” Senate President David Williams labeled the move “premature.” Others at the Capitol questioned his lack of legislative consultation. But Holliday quickly secured endorsements from what he likes to call “the K-groups,” such as KSBA, the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents and others.

His message to the education establishment was that he needed a “united front” to make his case for confidence in the Senate Bill 1-mandated new accountability system as U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan considered the waiver request. The commissioner also said he’d appreciate having representatives of superintendents and school boards with him if legislators on the Interim Education Committee wanted to grill him during their summer meetings.

Holliday took another bold step within days of the NCLB appeal. It was bold not just because he’s the leader of elementary and secondary education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, but also because he built his leadership skills in the school board rooms and legislative halls of North Carolina.

No, he didn’t recommend de-emphasizing basketball in K-12 schools. But he surely struck a chord just as discordant for some by calling on all 174 local boards of education to adopt policies banishing the use of tobacco by man, woman or child anywhere on the state’s K-12 campuses, in vehicles and at venues for football, basketball, soccer, baseball, softball, track, field hockey, etc. Why, former band director Holliday would even deny paying spectators for marching-band contests the option of lighting up in the stands or parking lots!

Now, this is a column about communications and leadership, not a forum on social issues, whether they be medical, economic or personal rights of adults to use a legal product. But for a usually consummate communicator, the commissioner may look back and wish he’d taken a more collaborative approach on this topic.

Careless or calculated?

On June 16, Holliday co-signed a letter with state Public Health Commissioner William Hacker in which they urged the state’s superintendents “to pass and implement this 100% TFS (Tobacco-Free School) policy as a district policy. It’s definitely the right thing to do for the health of your schools and communities. A 100% TFS policy prohibits tobacco use by staff,



Brad Hughes
KSBA Member
Support Services Director

students and visitors twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, inside Board-owned buildings or vehicles, on school-owned property, and during school sponsored student trips and activities.”

Clearly, the intent of the Hacker/Holliday letter is to make a case for improved health for all students, teachers, staff and other adults who visit our schools, our campuses and our school events.

But, just as clearly, there are some puzzling questions:

- Why would Holliday send such a request to the state’s superintendents, and then appear at their summer conference the same week, appeal for their collective and individual supports for the NCLB waiver... but make not a whisper about the tobacco-ban issue?
- Why would the commissioner sit down two days later with members of the KSBA Board of Directors – his local school board member advisory council – and make the same NCLB pitch but not mention a word about the letter that would have them take a leap of leadership that only a few boards in Kentucky have even discussed?
- Why would the two commissioners encourage school boards and superintendents to attempt in 174 local jurisdictions a “legislative” action that they know would be very difficult to move through the General Assembly as a statewide initiative?
- Why would Holliday – six months out of a 2012 General Assembly that will heat up over new educator evaluations, teacher pension reform and restoration of previously cut funding – suddenly drop such a hot potato into the laps of the same local leaders he has repeatedly called upon to be part of a united voice for public education?

The Last Word

I’ve never smoked a cigarette in my life. I lost my parents to cancer and heart failure, and both smoked for years. I also was raised on a farm with a small tobacco base that undoubtedly helped put food in my belly, clothes on my back, and a roof over my head as well as contributing to countless other positives. Among those were the opportunities to go to college and start a career that for the last 28 years has focused on helping leaders communicate more effectively.

According to the KSBA Policy Service, as many as 15 school boards have adopted 24/7 tobacco-free policies in recent years. A decade ago, that was unthinkable.

Commissioner Holliday took a leadership position encouraging more local leaders to take similar action. He deserves credit for that, even if you disagree with his stance.

But he also may receive a “needs improvement” label for what one would hope was an unintended misstep when it came to reaching those he wanted to do the heavy lifting.

And that’s a message worth getting out. ☘

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Summer learning is fun in Boyd County



Catlettsburg Elementary in Boyd County went all-out for its summer learning program through the school's 21st Century Community Learning Center. This year's theme was Racing for Your Success. Besides the 75-100 students who attended, 25 older volunteers, from sixth-graders to college students, worked as aides.

Eight rooms were outfitted for different hands-on learning activities with a racing theme – from horse racing and bottle rockets to building miniature roller coasters and kites. Students also got a college and career message daily from a community member.

Clockwise from top left, Yasmeen Bashadi got excited every time she found a new object in the owl pellet she was pulling apart with the help of teacher Sascha Friley. Kayelynn Fuller was working at the same table. (Owl pellets are regurgitated parts of what the owl couldn't digest.)

Teacher Stacy Lyons discussed plans for the launching of the hot-air balloons the children made while Sidney Winters, Joey Perkins and Gary Johnson (with back to the camera) listened.

Logan Slade proudly showed off the bicycle he built out of nuts, bolts, wire and scrap metal to the school's 21st Century Community Learning Center coordinator Terry Spurlock.