Kentucky Teacher

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English/language arts, mathematics standards to be more rigorous

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Kentucky Teacher
News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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Front cover: *East Jessamine Middle School (Jessamine County) teacher Charlie Newquist and Professor Brenda Overturf, with the University of Louisville, spoke about new Common Core Standards during the joint meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Educational Profesional Standards Board on Feb. 10. Photo by Amy Wallot*

Photo by Amy Wallot

Art is a hoot

Art teacher Rick Harrison talks with 1st-grade students Shay Cobb, left, and Sommer Hicks while they painted ceramic owls at Hickman County Elementary School. The lesson focused on texture and form. The students finished the project by firing the ceramic owls in a kiln.

Web resource teaches about Kentucky history, government

Kentucky teachers and students can access a new Web site that focuses on Kentucky and Kentucky government. The site, launched by Secretary of State Trey Grayson, can be found at www.sos.ky.gov/kids. The site is designed to be a resource for students across the state who are studying about Kentucky in their classes.

"As part of our effort to reach more citizens and get them actively engaged in their communities and government, we recognized the need for more online resources for our young citizens," Grayson said. "This site will allow children to learn more about our great state in a fun and interactive way."

The site includes information about Kentucky and its resources including history, geography and regions, important industries, and places to visit. In one section, students can learn about famous Kentuckians and in another learn about the importance of agriculture, coal and other Kentucky resources to the state's economy.

One section of the Web site is dedicated to Kentucky government. Here, students can learn about elected officials from the federal delegation, Kentucky's constitutional officers and local elected officials in addition to the framework of Kentucky's law-making process.

With games, activities and links to contests, students can learn while engaging in fun activities that reference government or Kentucky.

The Web site is part of a recommendation from the Civic Literacy Initiative of Kentucky (CLIK). CLIK is a multi-year effort that will determine a strategy for enhancing long-term civic engagement and civic literacy within the state. As part of that effort, CLIK released a report, *Rediscovering Democracy: An Agenda for Action*, that calls upon the state to take tangible steps to increase civic literacy. The report, which details four principle recommendations and scores of additional recommendations, was developed from the work of the Kentucky Workgroup on Civic Literacy, which Grayson chairs.

MORE INFO...
www.sos.ky.gov/kids

KHS exhibition highlights Kentuckians' military contributions

"Kentucky Military Treasures: Selections from the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) Collections" is now on exhibit at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort.

The exhibition highlights personal stories that exemplify the military experience and also demonstrate the significant contributions and sacrifices that Kentuckians have made in service to the nation in battle and at home. This selection of artifacts is pulled from the collection of the Kentucky Military History Museum that is housed at the Old State Arsenal.

"Kentucky Military Treasures" is presented in a timeline chronicling major U.S. conflicts beginning with the War of 1812 and continuing through today. Within the exhibition, students can examine primary sources including artifacts, photographs and manuscripts from more than 200 years of military history.

They also have the opportunity to study signature stories highlighting the experiences of eight Kentuckians and their service in the military. In addition, a selection of personal experiences told through letters, poems, audio recordings, oral histories and e-mails are included in the exhibition.

Student groups have the option of seeing the exhibition on their own or participating in a guided tour. Guided tours can cover topics from "Homefront" to "Innovation" or can present a general overview of the exhibition. Both self-guided and guided tours are available with interactive Hands–On-History carts that address similar themes.

Two KHS Museum Theatre plays also are available in conjunction with "Kentucky Military Treasures." One play, suggested for high school students, is about Kentuckians in Vietnam. The second play, "Look for My Picture: Raising the Flag with Franklin Sousley," is about the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima during World War II and is suggested for 4th-grade students or higher.

Tour and theatre programs are included in the $2 per student school admission fee. Fees are waived for members of the Kentucky Junior Historical Society. Scholarships are available for groups from schools where 50 percent or more of the students participate in the free and reduced-price meal program.

MORE INFO...
http://history.ky.gov/military
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COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

By Terry Holliday, Ph.D., Commissioner of Education

Common Core Standards pave way for high-order learning

Last June, Gov. Steve Beshear and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) entered into an agreement with other states to participate in the Common Core Standards State Initiative, which creates new standards in the areas of mathematics and English/language arts for K-12 students.

Before Kentucky joined this initiative, Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) defined our education reform efforts in the state. It called for KDE to examine our standards, revise student assessment, take a second look at the question of accountability and revisit how we use data to inform our decisions.

Holliday

Standards form the base of Kentucky's education reform efforts. SB 1 requires that the department's work focus on critical knowledge and skills; result in fewer but more in-depth standards to facilitate mastery learning; communicate expectations more clearly and concisely; and be based on evidence-based research.

By signing on to the initiative, Kentucky showed its commitment to providing students with mathematics and English/language arts standards that have been internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations, and include rigorous content and skills.

The new standards process included opportunities for Kentucky teachers to react and offer changes to the draft core components through workgroup meetings held in November. These language arts and mathematics workgroups included 25 total participants, representing elementary, middle and high schools, as well as colleges and businesses from various regions of the state.

Last month, the Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Education Professional Standards Board met to jointly endorse the Common Core Standards, which made Kentucky the first state in the nation to do so. Now KDE and several partner organizations will begin educating key stakeholders on the new standards by:

- hosting opportunities to share standards information with the public, such as town hall meetings at school
- providing an educator webinar series that explains the new standards to P-12 teachers and institutions of higher education
- working with Kentucky Educational Television to create an educators' online learning series (P-12) through the Kentucky Virtual Schools

Kentucky won't stop there, and will create similarly revamped standards in five additional subject areas as mandated by SB 1. Already KDE has a SB 1 deployment group meeting to plan how to effectively implement these new standards and all that goes with them.

The new standards are just the beginning of a series of changes that amount to a tidal wave of opportunity to transform Kentucky public education and dramatically improve teaching and learning. In addition, the new standards will lead to better-prepared students, important new assessment tools to show teachers ways to improve and give a fuller picture of what students know, as well as new strategies for improving low-performing schools and improving the preparation of educators.

It won't be easy. Change never is. But I have great confidence in our state's educators and school leaders as they do the work that lies ahead of us. I encourage you to read the story on page 5 of this issue to learn more about the new standards in the areas of mathematics and English/language arts. *Kentucky Teacher* will continue be a vehicle where you can receive information about the new standards and how they will lead to higher, clearer learning in your classroom, school and district.

Photo by Amy Wallot

A game of chase

First-grade student Christian Saylor runs after fellow 1st-grader Tyler French during Derrick Bussell's physical education (PE) class at Brodhead Elementary School (Rockcastle County). According to Bussell, the focus of his PE classes for kindergarten through 2nd grade is to introduce students to moving their bodies. He says students develop body awareness along with spatial awareness of movements during activities such as relays and tag games.

Biennial budget process

As I go through my first legislative session as commissioner of education, the talk around Kentucky school districts, as well as here at KDE, has been what the state's budget situation will mean to public schools. I've tried to keep Kentucky educators informed about the state education budget as decisions were made about school funding for the remainder of this school year and about the budget that will fund the next two school years.

Kentucky's school districts, which have endured some deep fiscal cuts over the past few years, received good news when Gov. Beshear announced that because of budget changes he made this summer, excess education funds appropriated through the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) formula will be returned directly to districts. School administrators will still be looking for ways to operate more efficiently and effectively in FY10, but Gov. Beshear's commitment to P-12 education means that they won't struggle as much as previously projected.

I take the state's budget situation seriously. I also don't envy the General Assembly as the members deal with budget issues. These are difficult times that will require lots of collaboration and consideration of many ideas for improving efficiency and effectiveness of all programs. However, no matter the funding, our mission at KDE and yours as educators remains the same – ensure our children's future by educating them for success in the 21st century.

(To comment on this topic, contact Commissioner Holliday at terry.holliday@education.ky.gov.)

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Standard bearers

English/language arts, mathematics standards to be more rigorous

By Matthew Tungate
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Kentucky teachers have to present too many topics in a year to allow students adequate time to develop deeper understanding, said Charlie Newquist, a mathematics and response-to-intervention teacher who has spent his 34-year teaching career at East Jessamine Middle School (Jessamine County).

"When I was in elementary school 45 years ago, I remember spending a whole year on fractions, and as a consequence, we really knew fractions," he said. "I don't see that now in my students. They are exposed to many concepts, but they don't always understand the mathematics of what they have learned."

But Kentucky teachers will teach more rigorous mathematics and English/language arts core concepts during the 2010-11 school year than they have been teaching traditionally, according to state experts and teachers who reviewed and revised the national standards.

In 2009, governors and state education leaders from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia committed to developing a common core of state standards in English/language arts and mathematics for grades K-12 called the Common Core State Standards Initiative, coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Content-area experts and educators developed the core standards, which then were reviewed at the national and state levels. The standards were reviewed again at the national level before being posted for comment by the public, according to Felicia Cumings Smith, associate commissioner of the Office of Teaching and Learning with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).

She said Kentucky teachers and university faculty have been involved all along the way, as representatives of primary and secondary education and business and industry comprised the work teams at the state level.

Photos by Amy Wallot

Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Reading Consultant Becca Atkins-Stumbo, seated, speaks with Saundra Harmon, KDE Early Literacy Branch manager, during a meeting about new standards.

"This has really represented a joint effort of all the communities in trying to make sure we developed common language and a shared understanding around the expectations of what we want students to know and be able to do," she said.

The Kentucky Board of Education, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education and the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board approved the standards at a joint meeting Feb. 10. Kentucky will not start testing students on the new standards until the 2011-12 school year as part of a new assessment and accountability system.

The new standards are more rigorous than Kentucky's current standards, said Bill Bush, a professor of mathematics education at the University of Louisville who reviewed the standards at both the national and state levels.

"Students are expected to understand mathematics more deeply and use and apply the mathematics in a variety of ways," he said. "To use mathematics effectively beyond simple textbook exercises, students must have a deeper understanding of the concepts and processes of mathematics. They must also know how to perform important mathematics processes. Students must develop reasoning skills to solve real-world and mathematics problems that they encounter."

Newquist, who was part of a state work group, agreed.

"My first thought in reviewing the standards was that rigor is finally going to be more than just a word that we use," he said. "The standards are rigorous, but reachable. I am excited by the changes that will be brought about as the new standards are implemented."

Seventh-grade language arts teacher Karen Edwards, who is in her 18th year at Boyle County Middle School, said the same is true for the English/language arts standards, which she reviewed as part of a Kentucky work group.

Artavia Acklin, a 3rd-grade teacher at Clear Creek Elementary (Shelby County), who is in her 14th year in education and who reviewed the English/language arts standards, said teachers should not be concerned about the standards' rigor.

"The team has worked extremely hard to make comments and ask for changes where we thought that some aspect may be lacking as far as the rigor," she said. "Actually, for the most part, the content contained is quite rigorous. There is a strong focus on critical knowledge."

When KDE brought teachers together to look at the common standards, they were very satisfied with what they saw, said Michael Miller, director of the department's Division of Curriculum Development.

"I think they are more challenging than what we currently have in place," he said. "The expectation is going to be higher, and that's why professional development becomes such an important piece to this. We don't expect to just pass these standards out and have them start making differences in Kentucky classrooms the next day."

Smith said the focus of the new mathematics and English/language arts standards has been for "fewer and deeper" standards. "Fewer" standards allow teachers to have more time for critical content each school year. That, she said, allows teachers to go deeper with standards to make sure students have mastery.

Boyle County Middle School language arts teacher Karen Edwards looks over standards information during a meeting in Frankfort. Edwards was part of a workgroup reviewing new English/language arts standards students will be tested on during the 2011-12 school year as part of a new state assessment and accountability system.

Miller said "deeper" standards allow students to understand content in a more complex way.

"Research shows that if students are engaged deeply in a fewer number of topics, they'll still get the concepts that they need to perform well on a broader range of concepts," he said.

Newquist said additional time brings "fewer" and "deeper" together.

"As a result of fewer, deeper standards to be met in a given year, teachers will have more time to explore a concept in depth, more time to differentiate instruction in order to meet the needs of all learners and more time to create activities that will challenge students and extend their understanding," he said.

Acklin said the new standards will help teachers prioritize what is important for students to know.

"Prior to this work Kentucky had way too many standards for teachers to teach in each content area in one year. We were doing a lot of surface teaching and moving on in order to teach all that *Program of Studies* and (Kentucky's) *Core Content* said needed to be taught. Many students were not mastering skills and understandings," she said. "Hopefully, with fewer standards we should have a greater number of students gaining mastery of the content."

Miller said teachers are going to like having one set of more-specific standards. Kentucky teachers have been using the *Program of Studies, Kentucky's Core Content,* academic expectations, teacher's guides produced by their districts, national standards and syllabi produced by textbook company, he said.

"We are going to mean it this time when we say, 'These are the standards. Teach these, and this is what you should be teaching,'" Miller said

Smith said the new standards have grade-by-grade progressions that have clear expectations of what will be taught in each grade for elementary, intermediate and secondary teachers will have a better idea of which standards align with each course.

"The expectations will be clearly delineated at some point around who's responsible for what particular content," she said.

Teachers may be held accountable for standards they weren't teaching before, she said. For instance, some standards may not have been taught until later in a student's academic career.

"This will provide the vertical alignment that we have been focusing on for so long in the state," Smith said.

Edwards said the new common reading standards are more grade-specific than Kentucky's current ones. Instead of generally addressing skills and saying, for example, that they will be introduced in 6th, practiced in 7th and assessed in 8th, different and specific skills are set up sequentially so that students are always meeting goals and building fundamental skills to become proficient readers, writers and learners.

> *"The standards are rigorous, but reachable."*
>
> Charlie Newquist, mathematics teacher
> East Jessamine Middle School
> (Jessamine County)

"In each area of the standards there is a clear statement of the goal and then clearly written standards to help students reach that goal," she said. "These standards are much more specific than the Kentucky's Core Content standards."

Bethany Watson, who teaches 5th-grade students at Niagara Elementary School (Henderson County), is in her 21st year of teaching and reviewed the mathematics standards at the state level. She said the elementary common core standards were presented in a clear, concise document.

"The strong, in-depth emphasis on number sense and the understanding of quantity is a common thread found throughout the document. The narrative presented with each grade's standards provides a brief explanation of how children learn mathematically," she said. "This provides teachers with a background based on the skills and concepts for each level. It allows teachers to have an understanding of what was learned in the previous grades and the reason for the progression of learning."

Changes for teachers

Smith said the new standards will have a big effect. "This is going to transform how we do business in classrooms on a day-to-day basis," she said.

With the new standards, Bush said, teachers will need to diagnose and assess what students know and don't know quickly.

"Because the rigor is higher, they must constantly monitor which students are 'getting it' and which are not. They must have resources and support available to them in order to help students develop the skills and understanding needed to learn subsequent mathematics content and solve relevant problems," he said. "Mathematics is hierarchical in nature. That is, usually students must understand important concepts and perform important skills before moving on to the next topics. Teachers also will need the tools and support necessary to help students who fall behind to catch up."

Teachers will need time to realign their units and figure out how to best implement the standards, Edwards said.

"As teachers who know our students, we recognize that some will be ready for the rigor and others will need to be brought along and motivated over time until they form new work habits," she said.

Watson said many teachers have already adjusted their instructional practices and strategies. What teachers will be challenged with is adjusting their instructional strategies and mind set to being able to completely explore a concept in mathematics, she said.

"Hopefully we will be provided with meaningful professional development activities that will reinforce the theory of how children learn mathematically and how as educators to move from surface level instruction to in-depth study of mathematical concepts," Watson said.

Smith said the state Department of Education is still refining the plan of how the standards will be rolled out to teachers. The tentative plan is for the department to work closely with districts and education cooperatives to establish leadership networks, which will assist district leadership teams to deconstruct, or "unpack," the content standards. Universities will be intimately involved, she said.

District leadership teams will go to school leadership teams, who will work with professional learning communities within schools, Smith said.

Miller said, "May it look different in every school? We would hope that it would because we know that schools have their own needs. We certainly want folks to feel free to get the information they need in the way that they need."

There will be common expectations that teachers will be able to deliver the standards in appropriate ways, he said.

"But this is not going to be your typical KDE rollout – come to this meeting for three hours and get your packet and go home," Miller said. "We see this as a two- to five-year kind of approach where, over the course of the next several years, all Kentucky educators are going to be deeply engaged in conversation about educational practice."

Smith said the state Department of Education will support districts, schools and teachers, as there will be a time when the old standards are still in place but the new standards are approved.

"We will be committed to providing that kind of support along the way," she said.

Watson agreed that there will be challenges and asked for teachers to be patient as the new standards are unpacked.

"As always, we will face those challenges and do what is best for the children of Kentucky," she said. "I believe in a couple of years, we will look back and be amazed at the positive impact this process has had on Kentucky."

MORE INFO…

www.corestandards.org
http://bit.ly/EngLAstandardsdraft
http://bit.ly/draftmathstandards

State board endorses Common Core Standards

By Matthew Tungate
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Kentucky made history as the first state to accept the preliminary version of new common standards in mathematics and English/language arts during a joint meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education, Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) in February.

"Kentucky is once again at the forefront in education reform," said Paul Patton, CPE chairman and former governor. "I am very pleased with the level of cooperation and commitment by Kentucky's policy and education leaders in the development of these draft content standards. Consistent academic standards, aligned to college and work expectations, will help our students reach higher levels of success."

Launched in 2009, the Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia committed to developing a common core of state standards in English/language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. *(See page 4 for more on the new standards.)*

CCSSO and NGA plan to release the final version of the standards, which were not finished at the time of the meeting, in early spring.

The state Board of Education had already endorsed the common standards earlier in the day when it unanimously changed *Kentucky's Program of Studies* and eliminated the *Core Content for Assessment*, replacing them with Kentucky's Core Academic Standards, the new mathematics and English/language arts standards.

Commissioner Terry Holliday said the regulation changing the name and endorsing the core standards will be open for public comment in March and likely be final in April. Teachers will begin to provide instruction related to the standards in the fall of 2011. Students will be assessed on the Common Core Standards beginning in the spring of 2012.

Students in the graduating class of 2012 will have tougher graduation requirements, thanks to regulatory changes approved during the board's regular meeting.

The changes clarify that students must take four methematics courses, with one course taken each year of high school. The courses must include Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. Students also must take language arts each year of high school

The changes also mandate that students meet college-readiness benchmarks, established by CPE, in mathematics and language arts or they must take a remediation course or receive monitored intervention before graduating.

In order to conform to newly approved legislation and corresponding regulation, the board also changed the regulation about how schools will be assessed until a new accountability system is in place in 2011-12.

In December, the board approved an interim accountability model that included how schools would be evaluated and the assistance those schools would achieve. However, in January the state General Assembly passed and Gov. Steve Beshear signed into law a bill that changes the way assistance is provided to schools. House Bill 176 was put on a fast track for approval so that its provisions could be included in Kentucky's application for federal Race to the Top funding. That same month the state Board of Education approved 703 KAR 5:180E, a regulation enacting the changes required by that law.

The new regulation approved in January provides definitions for activities and processes that will be implemented in schools that are defined as "persistently low achieving," based on their performance on state academic assessments. The regulation:

- defines terms related to the assessment of school and district capacity to implement strategies for improvement
- specifies when school and district leadership assessments will occur, what elements will be assessed, methodology used and frequency
- requires the selection of one of four intervention options established by House Bill 176 for those schools identified as persistently low-performing
- defines specific actions that a school or district should take when engaging in one of the four options establishes a process and criteria for the selection of External Management Organizations

Photo by Amy Wallot

Commissioner Terry Holliday comments on the Common Core State Standards during a joint meeting Feb. 10 of the Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) while CPE President Robert King and EPSB Executive Director Phillip Rogers look on. During the historic meeting, the three boards signed a resolution formalizing Kentucky's agreement to integrate new English/language arts and mathematics standards into the state's public education system.

The passage of House Bill 176 and 703 KAR 5:180E required that the interim accountability model approved in December be changed to remove the assistance portion. The board also changed that regulation's name from "interim accountability model" to "interim assessment process."

Also following the board's December meeting, Department of Education staff proposed a regulation that will require schools to use uniform course codes for classes. The codes will help ensure that students taking classes with the same name are learning the same information, as well as providing more uses for student data.

That improved data could be important as the board endorsed the department's effort to develop a statewide common evaluation system that will link teacher and administrator effectiveness to:

- student achievement
- working conditions
- differentiated compensation

The regulation will come back for final approval by the board in April.

The board also took the following actions:

- approved the appointment of Jefferson County parent Jayne Seif to the Kentucky School for the Blind Advisory Board
- approved district facility plans for Owsley County, Anchorage Independent and Burgin Independent school districts
- approved 2009-10 local district tax rates levied
- approved 2009-10 local district working budgets
- gave final approval to state regulation that governs property insurance requirements for school districts

The Kentucky Board of Education's next regular meeting is set for April 13 and 14 in Frankfort.

MORE INFO …
www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=KBOE

Paint Lick Elementary keeps students coming back for more

By Susan Riddell
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Rachel Cole just can't get away from Paint Lick Elementary School (Garrard County), and lucky for her, she has no desire to.

Cole attended the school as a youngster, and though it was in a different building at the time, she has strong ties to it. Her parents attended the rural school as well.

Cole is in her 36th year teaching at Paint Lick Elementary, the last 25 teaching 1st grade.

"I have deep roots here," Cole said, noting that more than one out of every four teachers at Paint Lick Elementary attended school there and more than half have children or parents who attended.

"I believe this contributes to the success of our school in that a large number of those who work here feel a personal connection," Cole said. "Another factor in the success of our school is the 'seasoned' faculty, as we like to say. We have several teachers who have taught here more that 20 years."

Photo by Amy Wallot

Rachel Cole does the Hokey Pokey with her 1st-grade class during a break from reading activities at Paint Lick Elementary School (Garrard County), a 2009 Blue Ribbon School. Principal Larry Sparks said Paint Lick's success comes from a supportive school culture that works together to design and provide learning that assures the highest-possible levels of academic performance for all students.

This experienced staff has created a strong school culture at Paint Lick Elementary. That culture, according to Principal Larry Sparks, is a major reason Paint Lick was recently named as a 2009 Blue Ribbon School along with four other Kentucky public elementary schools.

The award recognizes schools that help students achieve at high levels and that make significant progress in closing achievement gaps as well as schools that score in the top 10 percent in reading and mathematics on state assessments. Blue Ribbon Schools also must make Adequate Yearly Progress under the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Paint Lick Elementary "has a great school culture with everyone supporting and working together to design and provide a program of learning that assures the highest possible levels of academic performance for all children," said Sparks, who is in his eighth year as principal at the school serving more than 360 students in grades PreK-5. "Teachers and staff work to create a nurturing environment for all students."

Like Cole, Sparks has been at Paint Lick Elementary for several years. Prior to taking over as the school's principal, he taught there for almost 20 years.

Pam Canter is in her 28th year at Paint Lick Elementary. She teaches 4th and 5th grade as well as on-demand writing to 5th-grade students.

"At Paint Lick Elementary we have hundreds of years of educational, social and emotional experiences," Canter said. "Those experiences are a combination of instructional assistants, secretaries, bus drivers, parents, custodians, cooks, administrators and teachers. This wonderful combination of people supports one another, helps one another and loves one another. That support, help and love is passed on to our students. Our greatest contribution to the students is that they find a loving home to which they can always return. Our home is all about caring, guiding and educating all."

"I feel that our school climate is second to none," Cole added.

Paint Lick Elementary test scores have improved each year, reaching 116.2 in 2008 after scoring a 110.2 academic index in 2007. Like fellow 2009 Blue Ribbon School Hager Elementary School (Ashland Independent), Paint Lick Elementary has improved on-demand writing scores, going from a 94.9 to a 106.1 index score.

Canter said she was able to help students improve by making better use of her class time. Her teaching partner, spelling teacher Linda Clark, teaches English during spelling time, freeing Canter to help students with on-demand writing. Professional development opportunities also have played a part in testing success.

Cole said Paint Lick Elementary refuses to rest on its laurels in terms of testing.

"The improvements we have made on test scores are due to reviewing test scores, identifying problems and working together to resolve those," Cole said. "We also work diligently to remediate early, especially in reading."

"In the fall, we go over the scores and use those to guide our comprehensive school improvement plan. This year, for example, we have targeted reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. Even though they already range from 106.72 to 119.94, we are always striving to improve."

Paint Lick Elementary's strongest scores come in practical living. In 2008, the school earned a 129.4 academic index, up almost three points from 2007. Sparks said the 4th- and 5th-grade science teachers integrate practical living into the science classes. The students receive a weekly guidance class that incorporates a research-based character education program that concentrates on teaching social skills such as empathy, impulse control and anger management.

"We have had years of revising and redoing our local maps to match *(Kentucky's) Core Content* and *Program of Studies* documents," Canter said. "Vocabulary is taught hourly in our classrooms."

Sparks added that reading difficulties are noted and addressed through differentiated instruction for individual students, and Response to Intervention strategies are in place at all grade levels.

Paint Lick Elementary also places a big emphasis in the visual and performing arts.

"We have a daily broadcast, *The Panther News*, that provides all students an *'Arts Minute'* where core content is taught and reinforced with music, dance, drama and visual arts," Sparks said. "These mini-lessons link art experiences to real life, future careers and continuing education. The art, music, guidance and media specialist teachers work together to create a wide range of art experiences."

MORE INFO…

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Elementary environmentalists

School uses lab to teach science, responsibility

By Matthew Tungate
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A Laurel County elementary school is demonstrating the circle of life with the circle of life.

Three years ago, Cold Hill Elementary lost about half of its students and staff to a new school through redistricting. But instead of looking at the loss of coworkers and children as the death of the school as he knew it, one teacher saw it as an opportunity to give new life to an empty classroom.

Fifth-grade teacher Darrin Hacker, now in his 15th year of teaching, was new to the school. His previous school had a science lab that was a big part of the school's curriculum. Cold Hill Elementary, he realized, didn't have such a lab.

"We lost approximately 200 students, 10 teachers and two instructional assistants," he said. "We were deeply saddened by this situation, but it created doors for educational opportunities that were not reachable in years past."

Hacker had experience working with Eastern Kentucky PRIDE, a nonprofit organization that encourages Kentuckians in 38 counties in southern and eastern Kentucky to take responsibility for protecting their environment by coordinating initiatives and grant programs.

The Personal Responsibility In a Desirable Environment (PRIDE) Initiative allows nonprofits, teachers and educational institutions to apply for grants designed to:

- develop education partnerships
- foster environmental involvement in young people
- provide resources to support environmental education
- enhance environmental literacy through the design, implementation and support of environmental projects
- encourage the understanding of actions beneficial to the environment

Because he had received prior PRIDE grants, Hacker wrote one for Cold Hill Elementary to get a state-of-the art, hands-on environmental science lab. That first $4,500 grant requested materials to get the foundation of the lab started at the end of 2008, he said. The school's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) added another $5,000.

Photos by Amy Wallot

Hunter Osborne watches an experiment progress in the environmental science lab at Cold Hill Elementary School (Laurel County). Teachers use the lab to teach plant and animal life cycles, plant and animal adaptations, weathering and erosion, and weather, among other topics.

"We started with an empty classroom that quickly became an educational environment that provides many opportunities that were never available before," Hacker said.

The following year the school received $3,500 from PRIDE and $3,200 again this year, he said.

"Working with this the past few years, the lab creates many opportunities that are not available in the classroom," Hacker said. "Whether it be a hands-on investigation or a teacher demonstration, students retain information more easily and longer."

Having the science lab has been beneficial to all of the school's 330 pre-K through 5th-grade students, who use it regularly for experiments, guest speakers and programs, among other things, he said.

"It introduces younger students to science and its concepts as it reinforces core content with older students. It provides hands-on activities and experiments that are not available or easy to do inside a classroom setting. The lab also promotes environmental awareness with various units such as pollution, life cycle, erosion, water cycle and more. It helps show students responsibility for their roles in the environment," Hacker said. "Students are more motivated and involved in higher-level thinking skills as they engage in various lessons in the lab across the curriculum."

The staff of Cold Hill has been very grateful and excited about the new lab, Hacker said.

Kristi Morgan, a 4th-grade teacher in her seventh year at Cold Hill Elementary and 10th overall, said teachers use the lab to teach plant and animal life cycles, plant and animal adaptations, weathering and erosion, and weather, among other topics.

"The lab makes the gathering and use of materials more convenient because they are located in one area," she said. "The lab is also good because it provides an area to make the presentation of content hands-on and to actively engage students in the learning process."

Teacher Susan Elza uses students Cameron King, left, and Saylor Haarsman to demonstrate the movement of warm and cold air masses.

Susan Elza, curriculum coach for the Laurel County school district and based at Cold Hill Elementary, said the lab helps students by addressing various learning styles.

"It helps them retain the content because they are actually seeing, hearing and doing activities, therefore they are making real-life connections," she said.

The lab, the first and only one in the state to be funded by PRIDE, is just part of what the school is doing to teach students to be environmentally responsible, Hacker said. Some of the money from PRIDE grants has helped the school's community-based recycling program. That includes a tiller and tools for the school garden; seeds and plants for the community garden; and educational materials aligned with the school's curriculum, he said.

"As a staff, we have implemented many things that we think are crucial in not only test scores, but life itself," he said.

Melody Curry, a 4th-grade teacher in her first year at Cold Hill Elementary and seventh overall, said the school is progressively increasing student awareness by helping them become responsible citizens.

Students raise their hands to volunteer for a demonstration in the environmental science lab. The lab is funded through grants from Personal Responsibility In a Desirable Environment (PRIDE) Initiative and contributions from Coldhill Elementary's Parent Teacher Organization.

Elza helps 4th-grade student Cameron Mills understand the movements of warm and cold air masses after Mills completed an experiment in the hands-on environmental science lab. The lab is part of an overall goal at the school to teach students environmental responsibility.

Fourth-grader Mallory Hammack drops a blue-colored ice cube, representing a cold air mass, into a dish filled with room-temperature water while 4th-graders Kenlee Rogers, center, and Sarah Hayes look on during Elza's class. The students then added a drop of red food coloring that represented a warm air mass.

Students had to draw a picture representing what they saw in the experiment and answer a few questions on a note card before they could leave.

The school participates in community recycling, which teaches students to be aware of limited natural resources and the importance of conserving, she said. Cold Hill Elementary's 4th- and 5th-grade students prepare the community garden, which teaches them agricultural skills and the value of depending on nature to meet their needs, she said.

"As a school we are teaching our students to be more environmentally conscious not only in their own community, but worldwide," she said.

Principal Vicki Jones, in her 7th year in the position and 20th year overall, said environmental education is important.

"Education is the basis for making a change in most situations," she said. "By teaching the students about the impact they have on our environment, we can develop good habits for life. Getting the students involved carries over to the homes, helping parents become more conscious of how they can improve the environment also."

Hacker said an overwhelming majority of the stakeholders at Cold Hill Elementary (parents, faculty, PTO, school-based decision making council and community resources) feels the science lab is a success.

"I have taught at two different locations within the county, and I have seen first-hand how crucial a lab can be in instruction and teaching about the environment," he said. "It has been a fun and challenging project to get the lab going. It is an excellent tool that I feel any school should not be without. The students, teachers, staff members and families have enjoyed the lab tremendously. It creates numerous opportunities and lessons unattainable inside the classroom."

MORE INFO…
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Trying trimesters

Anderson County High School students adjusting well to new class schedule

By Susan Riddell
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While most public high schools in Kentucky still use semester scheduling for classes and grading, more districts are implementing or at least considering switching to trimesters.

Anderson County High School is one of those schools that made the conversion for the 2009-10 school year.

"It has been very smooth so far," Anderson County High School Assistant Principal Ronnie Fields said of the transition. "We did a lot of research and planning, we learned from the trials and errors of other schools, and we had input from the stakeholders."

Before, Anderson County High sent report cards home every nine weeks in two 18-week semesters. Class time was either 50 or 90 minutes per class.

Now, with the trimester schedule, report cards go home every 12 weeks with cumulative grading. Progress reports are handed out three times during the 12-week trimester, and class time is 70 minutes per class. Students receive a half-credit for each class.

The advantages of a trimester schedule for students include more flexibility in class selection and a less stressful climate. Students and teachers alike can make the most out of their class time.

"Seventy to 75 minutes is a good compromise between 60 and 90 minutes," Fields said. "Ninety-minute blocks are not always fully used, and 60 minutes isn't always enough time for labs, physical education classes and other activities."

For teachers, the options this schedule presents to them are a big bonus.

"The trimester schedule allows me to have a lot of flexibility in the classes I offer," said Tracy Probst, who heads the practical living and vocational departments. "I am able to adapt my program to different student interests and increase awareness of my program throughout the student body.

"I have more of a variety of classes now, so it does require more preparation on my part," added Probst, who is in her fourth year at Anderson County High. "This is the first time I have taught some of these classes. It also reminds me that I don't have as many days with the students, therefore I have to use my time wisely. It is a faster pace than I was used to; however, I do enjoy it."

The curriculum at the high school has expanded immensely this year thanks to the new scheduling. Anderson County High now offers almost 300 courses. Among the new classes are AP European History, Specialty and Small Animal Care, Printmaking, Sculpture, Women's Choir, Leadership, Floral Design and Aquaculture.

> *"There were a lot of doors opened for me to teach different things. I like variety and so do the students."*
>
> Tracy Probst, practical living/ vocational studies teacher

"The new classes would not necessarily be impossible, but a lot harder to fit in," Probst said. "On our previous schedule, some of the new classes might only be offered every four years. Now I think we should be able to fit them in every other year - maybe even every year - allowing more flexibility on students' schedules."

Fields, a 1987 graduate of Anderson County High, said the opportunities the students have today far outweigh what he had more than 20 years ago.

"We did not have as rich a variety of electives at that time," he said. "I would have a hard time picking my electives if I were a student today because we have amazing elective teachers, and all their classes are engaging and relevant."

Probst, who teaches agriculture, small animal care, floral design and aquaculture, said students really responded to the new offerings.

"The new classes this year were all filled with about 35 students, so they were really big classes, and some students couldn't even get in them this year because there were not enough seats," Probst said. "Floral design had 25 students, but this class was capped because of the cost to put on the class as well as having enough room in the lab when we made arrangements. All of my classes are really big this year.

"This is the first year I have taught floral design, which has been a huge hit, as well as small animal care and aquaculture," Probst added. "The students seem to be enjoying the classes, and I have had a lot of fun planning them."

With schools across the state considering making the switch from semesters to trimesters, Probst offers this advice.

"Be open-minded and focus on the freedom it gives," Probst said. "Students have more freedom in their schedules as well. There were a lot of doors opened for me to teach different things. I like variety and so do the students."

Fields also suggests doing a lot of research and planning to make sure it's the right fit for a school.

"Make sure there is input and buy-in from the stakeholders," he said. "Have conversations with other schools that have been doing trimester scheduling for a while."

Photo by Amy Wallot

Sophomore Ryan Whitaker, sophomore Madison Stidham, junior Courtney Nash, and sophomore Shelby Tracy (pictured left to right) work on a wreath during the floral design class at Anderson County High School. Anderson County High's new trimester schedule, implemented during the 2009-10 school year, has allowed students the flexibility to take a wider variety of electives.

Did you know?

Half of the high schools in the Jefferson County school district use the trimester schedule. Doss, Fairdale, Fern Creek Traditional, Iroquois, Moore, Pleasure Ridge Park, Seneca, Shawnee, Southern, Valley and Western high schools, as well as both Teenage Parent Program school sites, Jefferson County Virtual High School and state agency schools use trimester scheduling, according to Stephanie Bateman, director of communications for the Jefferson County school district.

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Writing project aids in teaching writing and the writer

By Susan Riddell
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Winn Wheeler, a transition teacher at Goshen Elementary School (Oldham County), has always enjoyed writing but felt she had never "accomplished much with my skills and talents beyond my own purposes."

That all changed almost five years ago after Wheeler participated in the Kentucky Writing Project (KWP), an event that left her feeling like a kid at Disney World.

"The invitational institute is designed to empower teachers to become leaders within their classrooms, schools and local communities," said Wheeler, who is in her seventh year teaching at Goshen Elementary. She added that the central theme of the project is to improve the teaching of writing to K-12 students.

Cindy Parker, language arts branch manager for the Kentucky Department of Education and director for the Kentucky Writing Project, has seen how KWP has influenced many teachers across the state.

"As a KWP fellow, former classroom teacher and someone who frequently works with Kentucky's Writing Project network, I have seen and experienced the impact that participating in a writing project has," Parker said. "It results in improved writing instructional practices in the classroom, enables teachers to gain confidence in their abilities as literacy leaders, and provides an ongoing learning and support system for educators.

"Being a participant not only increases teachers' confidence in their ability to teach and to write personally and professionally, but also builds confidence in their leadership skills and professional knowledge of literacy research and best practices in instruction."

Wheeler has integrated practically everything she learned at the Kentucky Writing Project into her teaching, but feels that one of the biggest benefits of the project has been her ability to take her newfound knowledge and share it with other teachers.

"Teachers should be equipped to become powerful mentors and coaches for other teachers," Wheeler said. "Classroom teachers and those in the trenches have the knowledge to teach, transform and facilitate the understanding of other teachers. I look carefully at my own practice and think and reflect on the implications on the teaching lives of others; I also look at the practice of other teachers to find implications for my own teaching."

Wheeler said the writing project taught her to understand how "published writing is the result of single-minded focus and perseverance," she said. "I came to understand that writing well is in many ways an act of faith – being willing and open-minded about writing the stuff that is not so good, so that the 'really good stuff' will come. I came to understand that I could work with the ideas that I censored through never writing them down and craft them into something meaningful.

Photo by Amy Wallot

Winn Wheeler, flanked by 3rd-grade students Shivani Nellore and Evan Dorse, listens to a student's letter during class at Goshen Elementary School (Oldham County). The students were writing letters to their parents/guardians about something they have learned from them. After completing the Kentucky Writing Project, Wheeler said one of the biggest benefits of the project has been her ability to take her newfound knowledge and share it with other teachers.

"This has been a powerful 'a-ha' for my students, as well," Wheeler added. "Writing is labor intensive; writing takes repetition and practice; not everything that is written will be published, but the act of writing works for our thinking and our mind as aerobic exercise develops the muscles of our body and organs of our cardiovascular system."

After participating in the writing project in Louisville, Wheeler continues to present professional development (PD) for the Louisville Writing Project. Three years ago, she became director of professional development involved in organizing and planning PD throughout the school year. Additionally, she plans a summer experience that incorporates a writing camp in which teachers are able to participate in a workshop with students.

"This experience did not so much change me as a teacher of writing as it seasoned me as a teacher of writing," Wheeler said. "My understanding of how to facilitate a successful writing workshop became stronger, and I began to develop my own style for that process as I listened to ways that other teachers worked within the context of a reading/writing workshop.

"Additionally, I came to really understand and embrace the idea of teaching the writer rather than the writing," she added. "I want my teaching and instructional strategies to support learning for a lifetime rather than support learning for a few days within the confines of a single assignment."

Just like teachers participating in the writing project, Wheeler said she has been able to see improvements in her students' writing just based on her changes in the way she has taught them.

"Students leave my class identifying themselves as writers," Wheeler said. "This is a foundational understanding and belief in their writing to expand and grow throughout their futures. Students connect to authors, use texts as mentors and are able to talk about and apply their understanding of the craft of writing. Most come to see writing as a tool for communicating ideas, but also as a way of preserving their childhood for the future. Writing is important to the students, and it is thread that binds us together within our classroom community."

Kentucky Writing Project

The Kentucky Writing Project includes seven individual projects throughout the state:

- Eastern Kentucky University Writing Project
- Louisville Writing Project
- Morehead Writing Project
- Mountain Writing Project
- Northern Kentucky University Writing Project
- Purchase Area Writing Project
- Western Kentucky University Writing Project

Kentucky Writing Projects typically offer two types of programs. **Open programs** are usually filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Open programs may have admission or registration fees and may offer professional development or graduate credit.

Invitational programs, such as the Summer Institute, are open to Kentucky public school teachers of all content areas, primary through college. Participants are selected on the basis of criteria such as a successful interview, principal recommendations, exemplary teaching record and interest in and potential for leadership. A year-long commitment is required. Tuition for six hours of graduate credit is provided, along with a stipend.

The National Writing Project sites share these beliefs about writing and teaching:

- Writing is fundamental to learning in all subject areas and at all grade levels.
- Teachers should promote the best that is known about the teaching of writing from literature in the field, research and the insights and experiences of successful teachers at all levels.
- Teachers are the best teachers of teachers.
- Teachers of writing must be writers themselves.
- Real change in classroom practice happens over time. Working as partners, universities and schools can articulate and promote effective school reform.

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PAL-ling around

Carlisle preschoolers, high school students build mutual bonds

By Susan Riddell
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Christopher Polivick, a senior at Carlisle County High School, was looking for an easy course. What he found instead was patience, respect and dependability.

Polivick signed up for PALs (Preschool Assistants to Learning), which puts high school juniors and seniors in the Carlisle County Preschool to aid teachers and build relationships with the young children.

"When I first became a PAL, my main reason for taking the course was so that I would receive an easy A, but over the past year I have learned that it's not the easy A," Polivick said. "It's the duty I feel and bonds that I am able to build with both the children and teachers (that matter now)."

Polivick is one of nearly 55 PALs who work in the preschool. Those students account for roughly 25 percent of the high school population.

Originally, the program was established to help at-risk high school students who had tardy and truancy issues, but it took off so fast that administrators opened it up to any interested high school junior or senior.

"The high school students are role models for the younger students, and they take that role very seriously," preschool Principal Lisa Canler said.

So who benefits more, the preschoolers or the high schoolers?

"That is difficult to answer because it is a mutual bond between the two," said Jennifer Brower, who is in her 13th year teaching at the preschool. "The high school students bring treats for them for holiday parties without being asked to, play with them with obvious affection, and I have been told by some PALs how much they love the children.

"The preschool students know them by name, ask when they are coming and have special activities they are waiting to do with them," Brower added. "A student may look forward to a PAL playing a game on the computer. In the gym, the preschoolers await the 'big boys' to come play basketball with them. It is a very nice thing to see happening."

"My favorite activity by far is going outside on the playground," added Polivick, who said he has learned to have more patience with others due to this program. "I get the chance to watch them play and interact, and I also get to be involved."

The PALs program has been in place at the preschool for several years after a former Family Resources Youth Service Center director presented the idea to Canler and the Carlisle County school district's director of pupil personnel.

"We took the program and made it our own," said Canler, who taught preschool at the center for 11 years before taking over as principal in 2003.

In 2008, Carlisle County won the Kentucky School Boards Association PEAK awardfor the PALS program. The award recognizes outstanding public school efforts aimed specifically at enhancing student learning skills, for the PALs program.

All PALs are graded in the program.

"They have to turn in writing assignments, journals and a scrapbook or PowerPoint presentation," Canler said. "They also have to take a final. A lot of our former PALs have gone on to major in education and plan to be teachers because of their experience as PALs."

> *"The high school students are role models for the younger students, and they take that role very seriously."*
>
> Principal Lisa Canler, Carlisle County High School

While both sets of students benefit from the program, teachers also gain from it.

"The benefit for teachers is significant," Brower said. "Most of the day, there are two high school students in the room helping with a variety of tasks including meals, reading books, art activities, setting up and putting up rest time materials, monitoring and assisting with center time play, and more. This help enables the teacher to work in small groups with students and individually, especially at center time, when there is a lot of activity and more supervision is needed."

"Each preschool classroom has 20 students with one teacher and one assistant, so the extra pair of hands is really helpful," Canler added. "Several of the preschool students are special-needs students who require extra attention, too. Teachers have reported that having PALs in their classrooms has made them better teachers."

Photos by Amy Wallot

Preschool student Jordan Reynolds sits on Carlisle County High senior Christopher Polivick's lap during a group activity. Polivick said being a part of the program has helped make him a more responsible, dependable student.

Brower said that depending on the time of day, PALs are responsible for specific duties.

"A commonality among all of the PALs is that they must be on time, have a positive attitude, show good character, be directly involved with the preschoolers and have a good work ethic," Brower said. "They must engage in conversation with as many preschool students as possible each day.

"One aspect that I really love to see is the relationship between the male students and male PALs," Brower added. "Many of my boys do not have a father figure in the home, and this bond with the high school males is good for them. The high school guys really relate to them well and love to play freeze tag, super heroes and even a little spinning around like airplanes. I have even had the preschool students invite them to their birthday parties."

While Polivick feels he has made some of those bonds with the students, he's also developed an admiration for the teachers.

"I respect them for what they have to go through each day, and I also feel important to them because they depend on me to come each day," Polivick said. "It's a class that I feel that I have to go to because the teachers and kids depend on me. Now that I have this class, I think twice before skipping school because I know how much more trouble the teachers will go through (if I'm not there)."

For other schools interested in starting a PALs-type program, Canler offers this advice:

"This program is a win-win program for the high school students as well as the preschool students, but everyone has to be committed to making it work," Canler said. "Remember that you are dealing with high school students. They are not adults or certified teachers; they are students. You have to be willing to push the high school students to do their best."

MORE INFO…

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LEADERSHIP LETTER

Compiled by Susan Riddell, susan.riddell@education.ky.gov

Plans set for national certification of principals

By Lesli A. Maxwell
Education Week

After years of talk and stalled efforts, the creation of a national certification program for principals is finally under way, with plans to launch the initiative formally sometime in 2011.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) – which is spearheading the effort that will mirror the now 20-year-old advanced-certification program it runs for teachers – announced recently that it has completed work to define what skills and characteristics school leaders need to be effective. It is in the final stages of crafting specific standards for principals.

The nonprofit organization has raised roughly $3 million to help pay for developing the certification program so far, including a $1 million appropriation from Congress and $1 million from the Chicago Public Education Fund.

As is true for the teachers who pursue voluntary national certification, the NBPTS program for principals is intended for those with at least a few years of experience who can prove a high level of accomplishment.

If done right, said Joseph A. Aguerrebere, the executive director of the Arlington, Va.-based national board, "we will end up with broad professional consensus around standards for principals and can use the framework we create to talk about different ways to develop principals in the first place."

Critical Time

In an era of high-stakes accountability and intense public scrutiny, especially for the most beleaguered schools and districts, there is widespread consensus that who runs an individual school can make or break it.

"I think many of our teachers support this effort and are saying, in so many words, 'Give me a principal who gets it and I will go work for them anywhere,'" Aguerrebere said.

Diane Cargile, the president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, which is also based in Arlington, said a highly regarded national-certification designation for school leaders is long overdue.

"There are those of us who've been waiting for something like this for years," said Cargile, who is the principal of Rio Grande Elementary School in Terre Haute, Ind. "This is a profession with a very high-level set of skills and competencies that are necessary for success, just like physicians and lawyers. We need this both for a professional-development tool and for recognition of outstanding accomplishments."

Both Cargile's association and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) have been pushing for advanced certification for years. Gerald N. Tirozzi, the executive director of the NASSP, based in Reston, Va., said the program has the potential to change rigid state policies around education requirements for would-be administrators.

"I think that creative states are going to look at this," he said, "and say this certification can take the place of requiring principals to obtain Doctor of Education degrees, for example."

Aguerrebere said NBPTS also hopes that certification can take the place of an individual state's licensing requirements.

"Right now, we've got different rules for licensure in every state, and that makes for a very fragmented profession," he said. "This is a designation that should allow talent to move more easily to where it's needed."

As envisioned by NBPTS, the principal-certification program is the first phase of what will ultimately be an advanced certification for other school leaders, namely teacher leaders.

The nine "core propositions" – a specific set of skills and characteristics that dozens of practitioners helped the NBPTS to define over several months – were designed to apply across all school leadership roles. With work on the draft standards nearly complete for principals, NBPTS will begin next to design the assessment that will measure how accomplished principal-candidates actually are.

However the final assessment looks, it will be as rigorous and thorough as that given to candidates for national teacher certification, Aguerrebere said. For example, principals will have to show evidence that they are succeeding in raising student achievement and will have to answer "tough questions" about their work. The certification process will take place over "an extended period of time" and each candidate's assessment will be evaluated by peers in the field, he said.

State school bus specifications process

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has initiated substantial changes for the development process of the 2011 Kentucky School Bus Specifications. In the past, KDE hosted three meetings for three different groups of people who were responsible for providing input into the development of the specifications.

Given that there are only a minimal number of changes for the 2011 school bus specifications and the current economic constraints, KDE will adjust the process.

This year, all meetings have been cancelled and will be replaced by a webcast. The webcast will be March 10 from 9 a.m. until noon ET. During the webcast, interested parties will be able to e-mail questions, suggestions or comments. Following are the links to the webcast:

- for audio and video – mms://video1.education.ky.gov/encoder3a
- for video only – mms://video1.education.ky.gov/encoder4a
- to e-mail questions during the broadcast, use the following address – roy.prince@education.ky.gov

For more information, contact Pupil Transportation Services at (502) 564-5279 or Dave Mangum, dave.mangum@education.ky.gov.

Photo by Amy Wallot

Laptop language arts

Natalie Hayden helps 8th-grade student Taye Love during Hayden's language arts class at Mayfield Middle School (Mayfield Independent). Students in Hayden's class were working on paraphrasing and point-of-view. Hayden said she and her students use as much technology in the classroom as possible. She added, "Students rely heavily on technology in their own lives, therefore, I am constantly staying on top of innovative technological programs to use in my classroom."

BULLETIN BOARD

Compiled by Susan Riddell, susan.riddell@education.ky.gov

Photo by Amy Wallot

Mayfield Middle School (Mayfield Independent)

Conferences & Workshops

Experts discuss autism

This spring the Kentucky Autism Training Center is featuring several speakers including:

- Dr. Brenda Smith Myles – Comprehensive Autism Planning System: Supporting Individuals with Asperger's syndrome, March 12 at Natural Bridge State Park in Slade
- Dave Hamerick and Lindsey Nebeker – Weathering Autism in Relationships and the Work Environment, April 9, at Barren River State Park in Lucas
- John Thomas, Director of Training, Autism Society of North Carolina – Successful Transitions for Individuals with Autism, May 3- 4, at the University of Louisville Shelby Campus
- Peter Tanguay, Christopher McDougle, G. Richmond Mancil, Debbie Lorence – Practical Aspects of Understanding, Supporting and Treating Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders for Healthcare Professionals, May 14, at the University of Louisville University Club

For more information, contact Diandre Glover Thomas, katcpd@louisville.edu, at (502) 852-2467.

https://louisville.edu/education/kyautismtraining/spring-workshops

Opportunities for gifted teachers, students

The Frances A. Karnes Center for Gifted Students, located at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, has information about programs and services for youth, parents and teachers posted on its Web site. Programs for teachers include Day of Sharing for Teachers of the Gifted, as well as certification in gifted education for master's, gifted education specialist and doctorate with an emphasis in gifted education. Programs for youth include: Career Explorations for Girls Conference, Saturday Gifted Studies Program, Leadership Studies Program, Summer Gifted Studies Program and Summer Program for Academically Talented Youth.

www.usm.edu/gifted

Ecuador summer study abroad

Eastern Illinois University invites undergraduate and graduate students, teachers, friends and adult family members to experience the land and people of Ecuador, the Amazon rainforest and the Galapagos Islands July 27 - Aug. 15. All majors are welcome to learn about geography, earth science, culture and history in this four-credit course titled "Environment, Society and Culture of Ecuador." Program fee includes lodging, international and in-country airfares, meals, boat and ground transportation, and tuition. Out-of-state participants are welcome and pay in-state tuition in the summer. For more information, contact Betty Smith, besmith@eiu.edu, at (217) 581-6340.

www.eiu.edu/~edabroad/programs/facultyled/smith

TI-Nspire calculator training

The Clermont County Educational Service Center, located in Batavia, Ohio, has developed online professional development for teachers while partnering with Texas Instruments to design and create three online courses that teach how to use the TI-Nspire calculator. These courses will be available from June 18-Aug. 20. All courses are self-paced and include all instructional materials. For more information, contact Cathy Macdonald, macdonald_c@ccesc.org, at (513) 735-8356.

www.ccesc.org/online_registration2.htm

Contests & Other Events

Free history outreach program

Liberty Hall Historic Site in Frankfort offers the "Meet Margaretta Brown" program free to schools this spring. Margaretta Mason Brown, a leader in education and religion in Kentucky, brings her traveling trunk to your school. Brown speaks about her early life in New York and her life in Kentucky during the first half of the 19th century. She focuses on topics of social history, religion, education, childhood and issues facing women. Program topics can be aligned with 4th-grade curriculum. The program includes hands-on activities for students and is available for students within 60 miles of Frankfort. Liberty Hall Historic Site covers the cost of travel. For more information, contact Jennifer Koach, educator@libertyhall.org, at (888) 516-5101.

www.libertyhall.org

Consignment sale for educators

Educators are needed to take part in the Everything for Educators Consignment Sale June 16-20 at the Fern Creek Fire Department in Louisville. Participants can recycle teaching materials purchased out of pocket and no longer in use, while making money back for each item sold. The sale is free to attend and open to the public. There will be resources for preschool through 12th-grade teachers, along with home school families and preschool groups. Anyone wishing to consign their teaching materials can do so by registering online after March 1. Consignors pay an $8 registration fee and will receive 70 percent of the sale proceeds. Volunteers are needed to work the sale, and they will be allowed to shop first. New teachers (up to five years in the profession) also will shop before the general public. For more information, call Jill Byrd at (502) 939-1437.

www.everythingforeducators.com

PBS Teachers Innovation Awards

Teachers can enter the PBS Teachers Innovation Awards with an essay 200 words or less. Teachers also can submit a video clip or a photograph showing how they inspire students. Entries will be accepted through March 12. Winners will be announced April 5 and winning entries will be featured on the PBS Teachers Web site.

www.pbsteachers.org

We the People Summer Institute

Social studies teachers in grades 5, 8 and 12 are invited to participate in the We the People: Ohio-Indiana-Kentucky Summer Institute at Indiana University in Bloomington July 17-24. This professional development program covers the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and takes teachers through a course on the history and principles of constitutional democracy in the United States. Participants receive free room and board, travel expenses, free curriculum materials and books for the classroom, and optional graduate credit hours from Indiana University. Participants will be accepted on a rolling admissions basis with limited slots available, so teachers are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Application deadline is April 15. Contact Kyle Burson at kburson@inbf.org or (317) 329-5833 for an application or more information.

NBFAA youth scholarship program

The Kentucky Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (KBFAA), an official chartered chapter of the National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (NBFAA), is offering college scholarship awards to sons and daughters of active-duty police and fire personnel. The $1,000 scholarship awards for first prize are available to qualified high school seniors. State members of the KBFAA are companies that sell, design, install, maintain and

BULLETIN BOARD *(continued)*

monitor electronic burglar and fire alarm systems. Application and essay deadline is March 31. First-place winners from Kentucky become eligible for the national scholarship awards. The NBFAA Youth Scholarship program awards two college scholarships. The first place national winner receives $7,500, and the second place award winner receives $2,500. For more information, contact Chris Raupp, execdir@kbfaa.org, at (502) 558-8866.

KET contest for young writers and illustrators

Students in grades K-3 are invited to submit original illustrated stories to the KET Young Writers and Illustrators Contest. KET will select state winners at each grade level and award prizes, and winners will be entered into the national PBS Kids GO! Writers Contest. Those winners, which will be announced this summer, will receive prizes including laptops, digital cameras and MP3 players. Stories must be the original work of the student and must be accompanied by at least five original color illustrations. The deadline for entering the KET contest is April 1. Works should be sent to KET Writing Contest, 600 Cooper Drive, Lexington, KY 40502-2296.

www.ket.org/writingcontest

Student exchange program

AFS (American Field Service) offers many study abroad experiences, as well as opportunities to host a high school foreign exchange student and volunteer. AFS-USA has been hosting and sending high school students and teachers on international foreign exchanges for more than 60 years and is the leading organization of its kind. Applications for hosting and sending a student abroad may both be made online For more information, call (800) 463-6237.

www.misstennky.org
www.afs.org/usa

Wireless lab contest

Teachers can enter the ninth annual Win a Wireless Lab Sweepstakes for a chance to win one of three grand prize wireless computer labs for their schools. Labs include 20 notebook or tablet computers, interactive whiteboard, mobile cart, projector, printer, wireless access points, portable document camera, digital camcorder and a $5,000 digital media grant from Discovery Education. Teachers can enter once per day until May 3.

www.discoveryeducation.com/cdwg

Photo by Amy Wallot

The write stuff

Paintsville Elementary School (Paintsville Independent) student Cody Haney works on cursive writing during Sherri Sturgill's 2nd-grade class. Sturgill said students in her language arts classes focus on learning skills that include comparing and contrasting, sequencing, and theme and plotpartner reading. Other activities such as partner reading, reading a chapter book, working on phonics or working on fluency, occur simultaneously, which allows students to work on the skills that will meet their individual needs.

Resources

Kentucky atlas for elementary, middle students

The Kentucky Geographic Alliance (KGA) is in the process of producing a Kentucky atlas for elementary and middle school students. KGA is looking for two teachers from grades 4-8 to meet for three hours to evaluate potential maps and brainstorm ideas for other maps to include in the atlas. The meeting will be March 27 from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Western Kentucky University. If interested, e-mail kay.gandy@wku.edu. Participants will receive a small stipend for attending.

Information, free services offered by CTL

The Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has developed a proven-effective adolescent literacy model being tested now through a federal Striving Readers grant in 21 middle and high schools across Kentucky. The model is showing very positive results and CTL hopes to implement in more schools throughout Kentucky. Meetings between CTL and educators and education leaders can take place in person, via telephone conferencing or as webinars. Those interested in setting up a time to talk with CTL about its adolescent literacy model and the free program assessment should contact CTL at (800) 995-3965, ext. 329, or info@ctlonline.org for more information.

Art to Heart series, training

Art to Heart is an eight-part KET production that explores the importance of visual arts, music, dance, drama and literature in the lives of infants, toddlers and young children, providing useful ideas and information for parents, caregivers and early childhood teachers. KET has added a training series to accompany the resources and information provided in the original series. The *Art to Heart Training Series* is designed for childcare professionals, teachers and parents. It consists of training modules exploring the arts in early childhood that provide a foundation of understanding of brain development and the connections of creative activities such as visual art, dance, movement, music and drama to early learning and development. Each module contains a training plan, a PowerPoint presentation with embedded video segments, participant handouts, activity instructions, a needs assessment, an evaluation form and a participant certificate. For more information, contact Kathy Day, kday@ket.org, at (859) 258-7451.

www.ket.org/arttoheart/training.htm

Comic Web site assists in literacy

MakeBeliefsComix.com has launched a new version of its educational comics Web site with added features to enrich the experience of students as they write, read and tell comic strip stories online. Spanish can be used on the site, and a teacher's guide is provided. The site is used by educators to teach language, reading and writing skills, and also for students in English as a Second Language programs to facilitate self-expression and storytelling, as well as computer literacy. Some educational therapists use the online comics with deaf and autistic people to help them understand concepts and communicate. Parents and children can create stories together, print them to create comic books or e-mail them to friends.

www.MakeBeliefsComix.com

Career, college preparation booklet

Teachers and counselors can share with their students *The College Circuit*, a useful resource for students of all ages published by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA). The booklet includes information about careers, college preparation, student financial aid and financial literacy. To request copies, please e-mail publications@kheaa.com or use the order form on www.kheaa.com. To learn how to plan and prep for higher education, go to www.GoHigherKY.org. For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaa.com; write KHEAA, P.O. Box 798, Frankfort, KY 40602-0798; or call (800) 928-8926, ext. 6-7372.

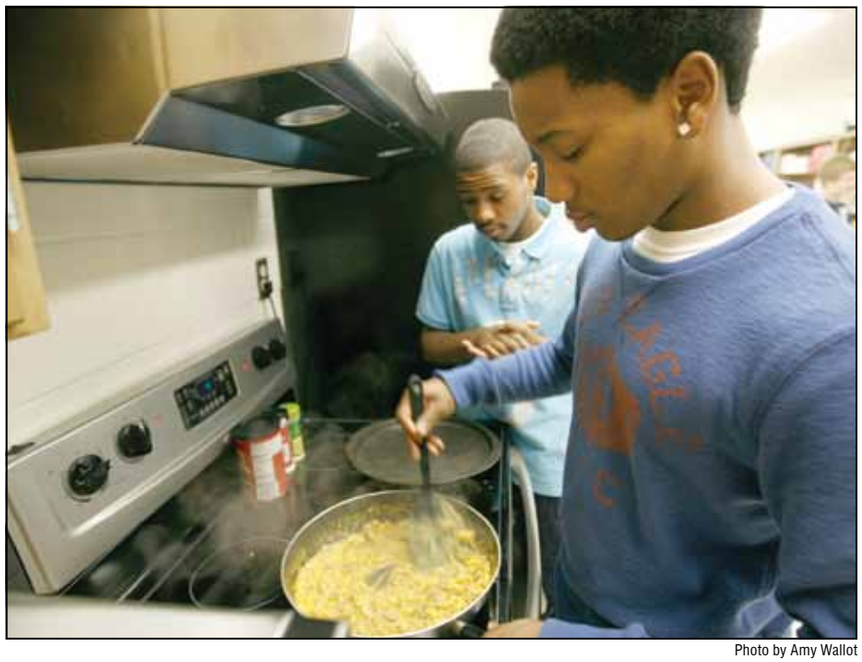

Photo by Amy Wallot

Classroom chef

Sophomore Vance Maze stirs a dish during Diana Schwenk's Consumer Economics class at Fulton High School (Fulton Independent) while sophomore Deparis Chambers looks on. Schwenk said students study many areas in her foods and life skills classes, including cooking methods, how cooking differs depending on the appliance used, nutrition and the food guide pyramid, and mealtime customs, which looks at the different ways families share meals together.

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Drug-abuse resources available through easy-to-use Web site

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) announces DrugPubs, a new Research Dissemination Center.

Research dissemination is a key part of NIDA's mission. The new Research Dissemination Center is designed to distribute free materials to NIDA's target community, including health professionals, teachers, advocacy groups, youth and the general public.

DrugPubs distributes a wide range of free or low-cost materials – including fact sheets, brochures, pamphlets, posters and videotapes – on a variety of drug-abuse topics. For example, DrugPubs houses NIDA's most popular publications, including:

- *Marijuana: Facts for Teens*, which provides teens with answers to frequently asked questions about marijuana
- *Brain Power! The NIDA Junior Scientist Program*, a series of science education materials on the brain and the effects of drugs for children of all ages
- *Mind Over Matter*, a series of eight booklets for middle school-aged children that discuss drug-abuse topics such as inhalants, methamphetamine, nicotine and steroids

In addition, popular NIDA materials for health professionals include a chart of commonly abused drugs and *Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations: A Research-Based Guide and Preventing Drug Abuse Among Adolescents and Children*.

Those interested in the resources can contact the NIDA with requests for publications. NIDA information specialists also can suggest publications that are appropriate for the requester's situation, event or reading level. NIDA publications are available to view or download online and for order in English or Spanish.

MORE INFO…
http://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov

New artists join Arts Education Roster

The Kentucky Arts Council (KAC) has added Kentucky artists to the agency's Arts Education Roster, a resource for teachers and community educators planning for an arts-enriched learning environment. Additionally, two artists currently on the roster have had their eligibility approved for demonstrating and teaching another arts discipline.

There are now 55 artists from across the state qualified and available to conduct short-term residencies in Kentucky schools and communities.

Acceptance onto the roster is based on artistic excellence, teaching and residency experience, and the quality of proposed residencies, as judged by an independent panel of arts and education professionals through applications review and personal interviews.

The Arts Education Roster also is useful in identifying artists for community projects, youth-at-risk programs, early childhood education, special education and lifelong-learning programs.

Artists joining KAC's Arts Education Roster are:

- Charles D. Bissell, media arts, Lexington
- Beth Dotson Brown, literature, Lancaster
- Janis Carter, music, Louisville
- Darla Jackson, literature, Cranks*
- Marie Mitchell, literature, Richmond
- Judy Sizemore, folklife/traditional arts, McKee*
- Charles Mason Smith, literature, Richmond
- Mariya Tarakanova, dance, Louisville
- Deborah J. Thompson, folklife/traditional arts/music, McKee
- Melanie VanHouten, visual arts, Frankfort

**Denotes artists currently on roster for a different discipline*

MORE INFO…
http://artistdirectory.ky.gov/aer