

Kentucky Teacher

Great things happening
in Eminence Independent District
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October 2004

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

www.education.ky.gov

Three middle school programs are schools to watch

By Cathy Lindsey

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Middle school learners face many challenges. Besides the biological turbulence of adolescent angst, middle school

students are just that — in the middle. They're no longer elementary children but not quite high school teens.

This transitional period is a most vulnerable time for most students. Success and support at this level are critical.

So when schools do an exemplary job of providing support and success for middle school students, the Kentucky Schools To Watch program recognizes them. Three Kentucky schools were chosen last spring as models of academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity and organizational structures that sustain dynamic improvement and reform in their middle grades.

Those Kentucky Schools To Watch are Adairville Elementary and Auburn Elementary, both in Logan County, and Mahaffey Middle School in Ft. Campbell in Christian County. Both Logan County schools are pre-school through 8th-grade

buildings. Mahaffey serves students in grades 6-8 who are dependents of service personnel stationed at Ft. Campbell.

Adairville Elementary School

Adairville Elementary was recognized for the strength of its looping program, its building capacity for internal teacher leadership and its character education programs.

The looping program enables each student in grades 6-8 to have the same teacher for each content area all three years they are in middle school.

"This allows students a greater opportunity to understand the expectations of their teachers," said Principal Larry Lock. "More importantly, it allows teachers to gain greater insight into the individual and unique needs of their students. Over the course of the three years in middle school, our teachers develop a very positive and intimate relationship with students and their parents that we believe allows us to have a greater chance of helping students reach their maximum potential."

At Adairville, teachers have regular opportunities to plan, select and engage in professional development as a team with an instructional specialist. Teachers also get support through weekly horizontal team meetings, team teaching, model lessons and team study groups.

"We believe strongly in having a culture of shared responsibility and decision-making through a positive experience with input from all," Lock said. "We also focus strongly on continuing to build a positive learning climate and culture that supports our goals and objectives."

Adairville faculty and staff recognize that educators must address compelling developmental and social needs in some students to sustain academic excellence. As a result, the school has initiated programs that encourage mutual respect and foster exemplary citizenship skills.

See **THREE** on Page 9

State dropout rate decreases

By Lisa Gross

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For the third consecutive year, dropout rates in Kentucky public schools have decreased. Data from the 2002-2003 school year show that Kentucky's dropout rate among 9th- to 12th-graders decreased by more than half a point.

The decrease in dropouts — from 3.94 percent in the 2001-2002 school year to 3.31 percent — was consistent in both male and female students and nearly all racial and ethnic groups.

Kentucky began reporting graduation rate data with the 2000-2001 school year to comply with requirements of the fed-

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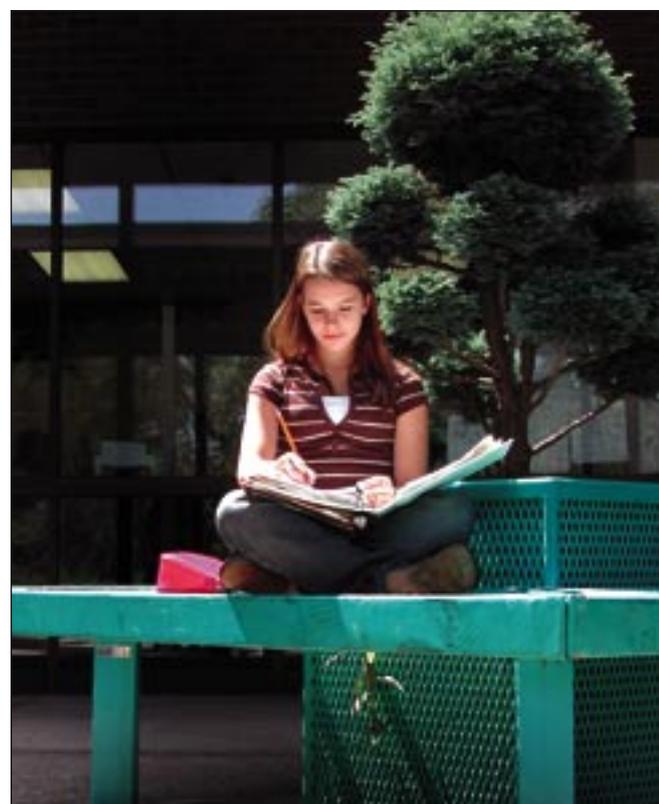


Photo by Rick McComb

Eighth-grader Jordan Schafer takes advantage of a sunny fall day to study in the courtyard outside Auburn Elementary in Logan County.

State board is looking to enhance CATS

In August, the Kentucky Board of Education elected member Keith Travis of Benton to serve as its chairman. Travis, whose term expires in 2006, is serving his second four-year term on the board. This month, *Kentucky Teacher* interviews Travis about the board's work.

KYT: What is the Kentucky Board of Education's vision for public education in Kentucky?

Travis: The board's vision is that "every child, regardless of parentage or poverty, geography or location, will receive a world-class education to prepare for productive adult life, continuing education, and responsible citizenship." That statement is posted on the board's Web site and appears in related publications. We really do come back to that vision every single time we discuss a pending policy issue. Many policy decisions could be based on what is most convenient for the adults involved, but that's just not appropriate. It's not the point of

our work. We stay focused on what's best for student learning.

KYT: How do you view the role of the Kentucky Board of Education and its relationship to schools and districts?

Travis: Our role is to focus the efforts of the Kentucky Department of Education, the local districts and schools, and all the various and valuable partners in public education, to help all schools reach the high standard of proficiency by 2014 — and to assure that every public school student in Kentucky gets the maximum opportunity to achieve at high levels.

Yes, the state has important regulatory responsibilities with respect to schools and districts. The board and department take those responsibilities seriously. But our real focus is on support and service: to help districts and schools achieve the goals Kentucky has set for high student achievement.

KYT: What are the board's responsibilities?

Travis: The board develops and adopts all regulations that govern Kentucky's 176 public school districts and directs the actions of the Department of Education. This is set out in state law. It includes management and control of interscholastic athletics, the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf and community education programs and services. Department officials follow board guidelines as they both lead and serve public elementary, middle and high schools.

The board also is responsible for setting standards for local school districts to meet in student performance, programs and operations. And, we mandate corrective action when any district doesn't meet those standards, or when its leaders are not successful in making improvements. But again, the board heavily tempers its legal power with a

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Bulletin Board

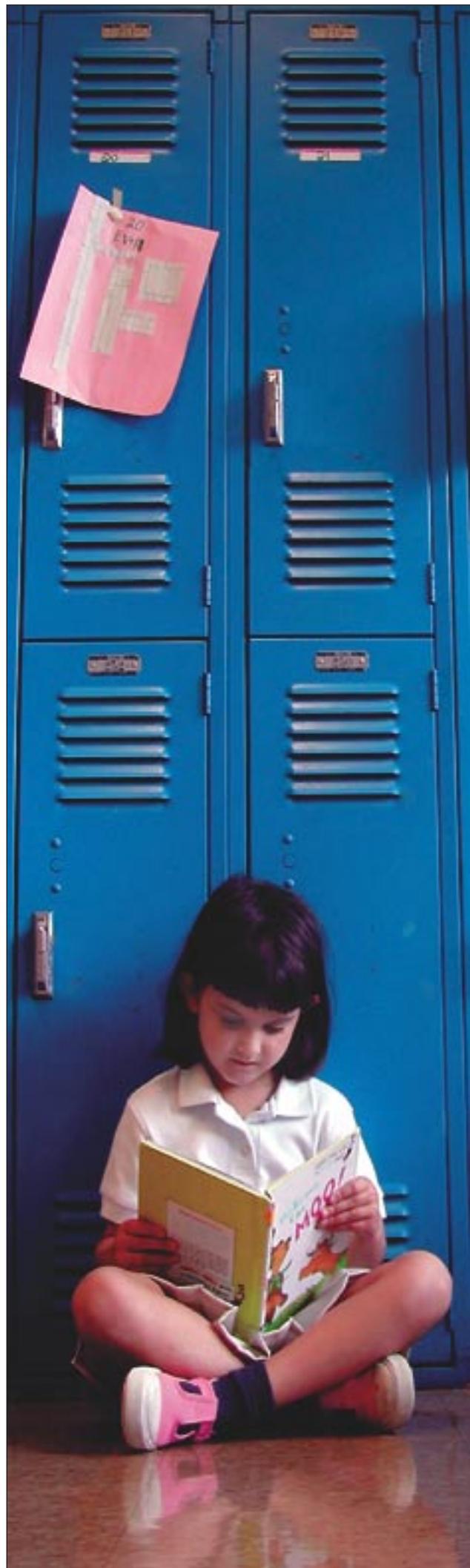


Photo by Rick McComb

Conferences

Higher-level thinking

Badgett Regional Cooperative for Educational Enhancement is sponsoring Spencer Kagan's "Higher Level Thinking Strategies" workshop on Nov. 29 at the Convention Center in Hopkinsville. Teachers will learn how to stimulate higher-level thinking through cooperative question prompts used across a range of curriculum areas.

Contact: Carolyn Ferrell, (270) 821-4909, cferrell@brcee.coop.k12.ky.us
www.brcee.coop.k12.ky.us/

Science teachers' meeting

The Kentucky Science Teachers Association will meet Nov. 18-21 at the Hyatt Regency in Lexington.

www.ksta.org/

KTLC

Plan now to send a team of teachers and administrators from your school to take advantage of the many professional development opportunities at the Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC), March 3-5, 2005. Check the KTLC Web site for information about the conference or to make hotel reservations.

www.kentuckytlc.org

Events

Kentucky Book Fair

The 23rd Kentucky Book Fair is Nov. 13 at the Farnham Dudgeon Civic Center in Frankfort.

Contact: Connie Crowe, (502) 564-8300, kybookfair@ky.gov
www.kybookfair.org/

American Education Week

Nov. 14-20

"Celebrating the American Dream"

www.nea.org/aew/

Children's theatre

The Lexington Children's Theatre announces these upcoming performances:

Where the Red Fern Grows, based on the novel by Wilson Rawls, on Nov. 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 and 12

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, based on the novel by Barbara Robinson, on Dec. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10

Contact: Box office for group rates and performance times, (859) 254-4546

www.lctonstage.org

Thoroughbred Center

The Thoroughbred Center's Theater for Children, located in Lexington, plans these late fall productions: *Mike Mulligan & His Steam Shovel*, based on Virginia Lee Burton's book, Nov. 4, 5, and 6

First in Flight: The Wright Brothers, by Arthur Giron, Nov. 18 and 19

Hans Brinker's Christmas, based on the classic by Mary Mapes Dodge, Dec. 9, 10, and 11

Contact: Box office for group rates and performance times, (859) 293-1853

www.TheThoroughbredCenter.com/theatre

Resources

Civics lessons

High school teachers can find civics and history lesson materials at Freedom's Answer Web site.

www.FreedomsAnswer.net

Spirit of Community Awards

Oct. 29 is the deadline for students in grades 5-12 to submit applications to the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program. The program recognizes young people who through volunteer activities are making their communities better places to live.

www.principals.org/awards/prudential.cfm

KET School Resource

The Kentucky Educational Television (KET) School Resource book provides a wealth of information about the network's educational programming as well as other resources and services for schools. The book, mailed to teachers throughout Kentucky, also is available online in a searchable database by grade and/or content area. Pages from the book and teacher's guides for programming can be downloaded and printed. The site also has links to professional development.

www.ket.org/education/onlineresources.htm

and click on "Instructional TV Catalog."

Kids Voting Kentucky

Election Day is Nov. 2 in Kentucky. One way children can learn about the voting process is through Kids Voting Kentucky. Currently operating in 11 counties and looking to expand, Kids Voting Kentucky is a non-profit, non-partisan program dedicated to civics education.

A part of Kids Voting Kentucky is a mock election that brings children to the polls to vote with their parents. On Election Day, Kids Voting invites children to come to the polls in participating counties with one or both parents.

Another component of Kids Voting Kentucky is the instructional unit, Civics Alive. K-12 teachers may access lesson plans online or request a CD-ROM. There are role plays, essay ideas and other exercises for teachers to use.

For more information about Kids Voting Kentucky, contact Mark Neikirk, (513) 352-2783, mneikirk@cincypost.com.

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr
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Commissioner's Comments

Enhancing CATS is the right step to take

By Gene Wilhoit, Commissioner
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If you've been reading *Kentucky Teacher's* coverage of the Kentucky Board of Education meetings over the past few months, you're aware the board is discussing ways to enhance and update the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS).

Any changes to CATS would occur in the fall of 2006. That's when the state's contract with CTB McGraw-Hill expires and a new five-year testing program becomes effective.

As the specifications for this new testing contract are put together, the board feels this is the perfect opportunity to address concerns we have heard from teachers and principals, lawmakers and other education stakeholders.

The board has made it clear that any changes to CATS would not be a total overhaul of the system. Rather, the board's changes would enhance how schools implement high standards that will result in success for all students.

I have identified for the board seven areas that should be addressed before a new testing contract proposal is issued:

- Content and student performance standards
- Writing assessment and assessment of the arts
- Longitudinal assessment
- Online testing, teacher scoring and faster reporting
- Student accountability
- End-of-course assessments for secondary students
- Snapshot assessments for diagnostic data

Standards

Six years ago, Kentucky teachers went through an intensive and inclusive review of our content and performance standards. Since that time, new national standards — the American Diploma Project, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Framework, ACT, SAT, mathematics and science — have emerged.

With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, we really need to look closely at our mathematics and language arts standards. As before, teachers will be involved in reviewing Kentucky's standards to make sure they are aligned with national and international standards, and they are organized and presented in a clear, concise and teachable way.

Assessments for writing and the arts

Because of Kentucky's highly sophisticated writing assessment, our students are much better writers than they were in 1990, before education reforms were in place. We must hold on to our commitment to produce outstanding writing, yet you have identified concerns we will address.

A Writing Focus Group, comprised of educators, parents and other stakehold-

ers, will give recommendations to the state board at its October meeting about how to improve writing instruction, as well as components of the writing assessment.

The board also is searching for ways to better measure students' understanding and appreciation of the arts, practical living and vocational skills.

Longitudinal measures

The board and a legislative committee have directed the Kentucky Department of Education to look for ways to use NCLB test data from grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics to assess academic growth of the same group of students over time. Compiling the data in this way will give schools new information to improve instruction and will allow state policymakers to consider ways to incorporate student growth over time as a part of our accountability system.

Faster reporting

We have long been frustrated that we have not been able to expedite the delivery of test results to schools early enough to give teachers time during the school year to teach the content on which students will be tested. Today's technology may finally make that possible. We know Kentucky schools must have sufficient modern technology to administer and score the tests.

In the near future, we believe students will be able to take the multiple-choice part of the Kentucky Core Content Tests online. Teachers can then see their answers — and scores — almost immediately.

Department staff is exploring scoring models that would allow Kentucky teachers to score open-response questions from the state tests. Answers and scores,

again, would be immediately available.

When online testing and in-state teacher scoring are implemented, Kentucky will dramatically reduce the turnaround time for final results getting to our schools.

Student accountability

With the availability of immediate feedback from the state and federal tests, teachers will have students' results and released test items available to hold individual students accountable for their performance. Department staff will propose a scoring model.

Secondary content mastery

I'm not in favor of making graduation contingent on whether a student can pass a single exit exam like many other states require. Promotion and graduation decisions are made most appropriately at the teacher level, graduation exams are given too late to intervene and these exams tend to measure skills at unacceptable levels. However, it is important for our teachers to know whether students have mastered required content well enough to move on.

Department staff are evaluating end-of-course assessments from other states and national vendors, as well as assessments used in some of our districts and by the Kentucky Virtual High School. We will have end-of-course assessments available for mathematics by January 2005. Such assessments in English/language arts, science and social studies will be available soon after that date.

Diagnostic assessments

Teachers have told us that you need to have "snapshot assessments" — multiple-choice and open-response — available to you to help determine where students are

on the path to mastering content. We are in the process of developing assessments that are aligned to Kentucky's core content. They would be used at the teacher's discretion and would not be included in the accountability index for a content area.

As you can see, there is a lot of research, work, piloting and discussion that must occur between now and April 2005 when we finalize our design of the next testing cycle. My intent is to use every resource available — *Kentucky Teacher*, the department's Web site and messages to school e-mail addresses — to keep Kentucky educators informed about developments with our education system.

Be aware, also, that there will be multiple opportunities for you to communicate your ideas and opinions about potential changes to CATS. We learned during the development of CATS how valuable your insight as classroom teachers, building leaders and administrators is to the successful implementation of our education system. We will again be partners in this important undertaking.

With a mandate from the legislature, the state board has set high standards for all Kentucky students. We know our students are meeting the challenges and moving closer to proficiency each year. We educators must see that each child has the opportunity to compete successfully, at state and national levels, whether they enter postsecondary education, military service or the job market.

Enhancing the state's education system is the right step to take to ensure that our students are competitive. I welcome your input on these important issues as we move forward.

To comment on this topic, send e-mail to the commissioner at gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us.



Photo submitted by Fred Gross

Reviewing student work

Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit kneels to discuss an answer Eminence Independent Elementary student Trey Lindsay had written. The commissioner visited the district last school year to see first-hand how programs are helping students at all levels make steady progress toward proficiency. (See related story on Page 4.)

Great things come from small school district

By Joy Barr

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The old adage about “good things coming in small packages” certainly holds true for Eminence Independent Schools. Located in rural Henry County, the district may be small in size but its success is large.

All 575 students — preschool through 12th grade — attend classes in one building. Yet, learning is occurring at high levels in every part of the facility.

Superintendent David Baird praised the school’s teachers, students and parents for the steady academic increases. “Our success does not come without tremendous teamwork and an outpouring of support from the community.”

The entire school district is focused on developing world-class students in all aspects of life. All programs in the district are designed to take a step forward to 100 percent proficiency for all students and to provide a vision for a world-class school district.

“The main focus of their success is the positive school culture. Every teacher cares for their students and holds them accountable,” said Louise Byrd, the Kentucky Department of Education’s achievement gap coordinator working with Northern Kentucky schools to close achievement gaps. “The students know the expectations and govern their behaviors appropriately.”

The elementary school has embraced the America’s Choice literacy design. America’s Choice is a comprehensive, K-12 school improvement program developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy.

Primary students receive two-and-a-half hours of literacy instruction each day. This includes skills instruction, mini-lessons, author and genre studies, writers workshops and readers workshops. Teachers establish other rituals and routines that enable them to spend time with individuals and small groups of students.

Eminence has seen dramatic growth in state test scores over the last four years. There were no novice portfolios in the district during the 2002-2003 school year.

“We begin with each child at their level of academic ability and move him or her forward,” said Literacy Coordinator



Eminence 6th-grade science teacher Lynn Wilson assists student Larry Morgan in identifying the parts of a tree. Programs in this district are designed to move all students to proficiency.

Tommy Baxter. “It is based completely upon developmentally appropriate best practices that begin with our youngest preschool students and continues across all grade levels.”

Another literacy component is the school’s 25 Books Campaign where students and adults pursue the goal of reading at least 25 books by the end of each school year. Each person keeps a log of books read, and student book reviews are selected for display in the school’s hallways. Last year, the elementary students read approximately 18,000 books.

Michael Doran, principal of the elementary school, was instrumental in developing a Book of the Month program. Doran reads the selected book of the month to each classroom.

Students, faculty, staff and families have a common frame of reference for discussion and accountable book talk around the selected books. “Our entire staff demonstrates daily that they care about all students, and

they find a variety of ways to make sure each student is successful. The Book of the Month is just one of the ways students can express themselves,” said Doran.

Students’ hard work and determination is evidenced by impressive student work displayed throughout the school. Each example identifies important teaching elements.

“Our kindergarten students learn from rituals, routines and modeling beginning with a drawing rubric. The students are held accountable to meet writing and reading standards,” said Phyllis Jamison, a kindergarten teacher.

Jamison just received her National Board Certification. Teaching practices at Eminence are in line with what “the best schools are doing,” she added.

All students in grades 5-8 at Eminence develop their own individualized education plan. SPREE — Student Plan for Reaching Educational Excellence — is a set of seven

goals specific to the interests, strengths and/or weaknesses of each individual student.

The student, teacher and parents meet at the beginning of each school year to plan the child’s SPREE. They sign a contract agreeing that the student must meet a minimum of five of the seven goals to be promoted.

“SPREE helps give each student an atmosphere to grow academically, socially, personally and emotionally — the world-class citizen,” said Steve Frommeyer, middle and high school principal.

A three-step initiative is in place at Eminence that allows students to excel and to move toward proficiency. Wellness, assessment and accountability are all goals in development of this world-class school. “Some may be surprised about our emphasis on wellness, but each student must be mentally and physically fit in order to learn and be accountable,” stated Frommeyer.

To make certain all students

get the support they need, several high school students serve as mentors to younger students. The mentors work daily with designated elementary and middle school students to provide additional assistance in academic skills.

The Final Frontier is considered by many as the “missing link” to connecting some students to academic success. This committee, made up of various district resource people, addresses the at-risk population in schools. The committee assists students and families in finding resources to break down barriers that may prohibit students from learning.

Eminence Independent and the City of Eminence obtained a 21st Century Community Learning Grant. Their partnership gave new life and use to the city’s community center, located across the street from the school.

The building is used for after-school programs and a state-of-the-art fitness center. A federal grant provided equipment for the fitness center that can be used by the school and the community.

The district recently received a “School of Merit” designation from the National Association for Year-Round Education. Eminence is one of only eight in the nation to receive this distinction.

“We have been a year-round school district for eight years and believe that it contributes to the overall success of the district and continued test score improvement,” said Superintendent Baird.

He also feels Eminence students are self-reliant and confident as a result of the learning environment that exists. The teachers are all organized together. “It is a total-team effort, from staff to faculty, bus driver to custodian. We are all involved in helping students learn and thrive,” said Baird. “We believe that our success comes as a result of years of work in implementing strategies that lift Eminence students to a higher level of learning.”

For more information about Eminence Independent programs, contact David Baird, Steve Frommeyer or Michael Doran at (502) 845-5427; or send e-mail to dbaird@eminence.k12.ky.us, sfrommeyer@eminence.k12.ky.us, or mdoran@eminence.k12.ky.us.

Photo by Rick McComb

Educators create inquiry network

Educators throughout Kentucky are hearing more about inquiry-based learning this school year thanks to the Louisville Inquiry Summit. A diverse group of educators, professional development providers and content staff from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) spent a week together last summer at the Louisville Science Center learning about inquiry-based education.

Inquiry is a highly structured, hands-on method of learning. It encourages students to form questions, plan and conduct investigations to answer the questions, and then defend and communicate their conclusions to others. Educators can use this kind of student exploration to deepen students' comprehension of material.

Participants in the workshop got "basic training" in a model of inquiry espoused by the Institute for Inquiry at San Francisco's Exploratorium. Educators from the Exploratorium led the sessions in Louisville, which were customized to give Kentucky educators a deep and rich

experience of how inquiry learning looks and feels.

The training focused on inquiry in a science classroom. However, participants from other content areas quickly saw how inquiry-based learning can and should be implemented across the curriculum.

During the workshop, participants devised strategies to support classroom teacher efforts. To gain a personal understanding of what constitutes inquiry — as well as a sense of the knowledge and time required to properly plan it — participants worked through the same kinds of activities students experience.

They observed the effects of ice on a metal can, speculated about the effect of surface texture on a rolling toy and experimented with shadows. They later discussed and analyzed the activities from a teacher's perspective.

Lee Ann Nickerson, science content specialist with Jefferson County Public Schools, noted that the process skills involved in inquiry are the same as those for basic literacy. Jennifer Bernhard, writing consultant for

KDE, described how teachers could use inquiry activities in a literature class.

Phil Shepherd, arts and humanities specialist with KDE, and Dana Harader, assistant professor in the Department of Adolescent, Career and Special Education at Murray State University, agreed that inquiry can be an integral part of their programs.

Summit participants are meeting throughout this school year to create a statewide network of stakeholders who can direct resources and services toward supporting teachers' efforts in inquiry-based education. Others interested in inquiry-based learning can attend the Nov. 20 meeting of Summit participants during the Kentucky Science Teachers Association's (KSTA) fall conference. For more information about the conference, visit the KSTA Web site at www.ksta.org.

For more information about the Louisville Inquiry Summit, contact Amy Lowen, director of education at the Science Center, at (502) 560-7165 or amy.lowen@loukymetro.org.

Highly Skilled Educators application online

Oct. 31 is the deadline for teachers, administrators and other certified staff to apply to serve as Highly Skilled Educators in the state's assistance program for schools.

Approximately 20 individuals will be selected by the Kentucky Department of Education to participate in the program, which places educators in schools

that do not meet their goals in the statewide assessment and accountability system. Highly Skilled Educators support school staffs to improve teaching and learning.

Each educator will undergo extensive training before and during his or her two-year participation in the program.

Applications are available on

the department's Web site at www.education.ky.gov. Click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner and select "Highly Skilled Educators."

For more information, contact Steve Schenck, Division of School Improvement, (502) 564-2116, or sschenck@kde.state.ky.us.

Redesigned environmental Web site offers new education resources

Teachers looking for ways to use environmental education in their classrooms have an improved resource in the Kentucky Environmental Education Council's Web site. As the state agency that helps coordinate environmental education in Kentucky, the council seeks to provide "one-stop shopping" for teachers who wish to teach about the environment.

The redesigned Web site is located at <http://keec.ky.gov>. It offers the following features:

- A database — Teachers can search the database by county or by environmental topic to find resources about local and state environments.
- Materials — These instruc-

tional units, which cover topics such as water, solid waste and biodiversity, are standards-based and designed by Kentucky teachers. They contain numerous inquiry-based activities, essential questions, ideas for portfolio writing and open-response questions, technology extensions, activities for diverse learners, and assessment tools and rubrics.

- Environmental education standards for Kentucky — These standards are a subset of the Program of Studies and can be searched by subject and grade level. Each environmental education standard is highlighted in green. Many have teaching suggestions from Project Learn-

ing Tree, Project NEED (energy education) and Project Food, Land and People (agricultural literacy).

- How-to information — Two guides describe developing and using outdoor learning areas effectively.

- Information about the Youth Environmental Summit — The summit offers high school students the opportunity to research environmental topics in their own communities and then present their findings at a statewide forum.

The council staff also is available to talk with teachers about ideas for providing the best possible environmental education instruction. Call toll free, at (800) 882-5271.



Counselors can help students plan future at GoHigherKY.org

GoHigherKY.org is fast becoming a central point of contact for all information about postsecondary education in Kentucky. The Web site, managed by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, can assist students from the time they begin researching postsecondary studies until they head for college.

This online resource serves students from middle school through college, as well as their parents and other adults wanting to return to school. Access to all the GoHigherKY.org services is free.

The Web site also is a tool that assists middle and high school counselors in helping their students plan for the future. By clicking on the "For School Counselors" icon near the bottom of the Web site home page, counselors have online access to their students through e-mail and chats, can coordinate their calendars with student and college activities, and track their students' progress. Counselors across the country are using similar sites to help students plan their high school course work as well as learn what they will need in postsecondary studies.

The Web site offers online modules about financial aid, career exploration, selecting a campus, and other college and career planning needs. Adult learners also can get information about the GED program and online learning opportunities.

Students and their parents can take virtual tours of nearly 50 public and private colleges,

universities, community colleges and technical colleges in Kentucky. Some institutions also allow students to apply online.

GoHigherKY.org can help Kentucky students and families:

- Understand educational opportunities in Kentucky
 - Plan to meet all admissions requirements
 - Maintain a secure, private, multiuse portfolio
 - Explore and select the campuses best matching their needs and interests
 - Find online admissions and financial aid applications
 - Understand financial aid
 - Make educational and career plans
 - Access direct communication among students, campuses and financial aid providers
- Counselors and teachers will find:
- Accurate information on college entrance requirements
 - Key postsecondary contacts and facts, with access to a student's planning, if the student grants approval
 - Future features such as online letters of recommendation and electronic signatures to authenticate counselors' and teachers' identities

GoHigherKY.org is a Mentor Web site, similar to those used by more than 30 states to help guide students and parents through the postsecondary admissions and financial aid processes. For more information, check out GoHigherKY.org or send comments via e-mail to publications@khea.com.

Project Learning Tree workshops set statewide

Kentucky classroom teachers can attend several workshops this school year to learn new and interesting ways to deliver mathematics, social studies, art, science and literacy content using Project Learning Tree (PLT) materials and activities. The workshops, offered by the Kentucky Division of Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service and partners at locations throughout the state, will provide resources and Kentucky-aligned curriculum and activities for all grade levels.

PLT is a nationally recognized environmental education program that uses the forest to teach students about the world around them. Activities are hands-on and help students explore their place in the world.

Three different workshops are scheduled for 2004-2005:

A **Literature Workshop** will be held Oct. 16 at Blue Licks State Park near Carlisle in Nicholas County from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The cost is \$20 and includes lunch.

Teachers will learn to use selected children's books with PLT activities, which are correlated to Kentucky's Program of Studies and Core Content.

PLT Workshops show teachers how to use program materials and activities for interdisciplinary lessons in mathematics, social studies, art, science and language arts. Teachers will receive free supplies. Participants should wear comfortable clothes to participate in activities indoors and outside. The \$20 fee includes lunch.

Workshops will be held Oct. 23 at the Daniel Boone National Forest, Morehead District Office near Farmers; Nov. 30 at the Center For Rural Development in Somerset; Dec. 7 at Prestonsburg Community College; Feb. 15, 2005, at the Daniel Boone National Forest Headquar-

ters in Winchester, and March 11, 2005, at Lake Barkley State Resort Park near Cadiz. Workshops will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. local time.

A **Fire Workshop** will be held Feb. 4, 2005, at the Carl Perkins Center in Morehead from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This workshop offers training in helping students understand the role of fire in the natural ecosystem. Hands-on activities from PLT and a national fire program comprise the workshop.

This workshop costs \$10. Participants should wear comfortable clothes.

Professional development credit is awarded for each workshop and for a two-day **facilitator training for PLT and Project Wild**, an environmental and conservation program. Teachers attending facilitator training learn to lead workshops for both environmental programs. The training will be held Jan. 20-21, 2005, at the Natural Resources Leadership Center in Jabez (Russell County), beginning at 9 a.m.

Cost of the workshop is \$100, which includes lodging and meals. Bluegrass PRIDE is offering 10 scholarships for teachers in the central Kentucky area.

This year, participants will learn to help teachers develop and use outdoor classrooms. Participants receive free supplies to help facilitate training in both programs.

To register for a workshop or to set up a workshop in your school, district or region, contact Jennifer Turner, Division of Forestry, at (502) 564-4496, JenniferL.Turner@ky.gov. More information about Project Learning Tree is available at www.forestry.ky.gov/programs/education/Project+Learning+Tree.htm.



Photo submitted by Paul Schaumburg

Nash Canter, a primary student at Farmington Elementary School (Graves County), and local businessman Jeremy Mayes are reading together as part of the school's "One to One: Practicing Reading with Students" program.

Volunteers and students are 'One to One' partners in practicing reading

By Paul Schaumburg
Graves County Schools

A program that gets the community involved in teaching young children is thriving in one Graves County elementary school.

Farmington Elementary has 21 volunteers for "One to One: Practicing Reading with Students." It is one of several schools throughout the state using this program sponsored by the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, a statewide coalition of businesses, educational groups and government officials working to improve education.

"Farmington is a community-based school, so we want to get the community involved in helping students. The more students see adults valuing education, the more likely they are to value it as well," said Principal Denise Whitaker.

"This project is different than other literacy programs in a number of ways," explained Carolyn Witt Jones, Partnership executive director. "It uses and helps volunteers understand reading test data from both Kentucky's Core Content Tests and the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. It is based on research on how children learn. One to One was developed to augment classroom instruction, making the results more significant."

Volunteers receive six hours of training. Each commits to working with a specific primary student for 35 minutes one day a week for 16 weeks. Students selected for the program are reading below grade level.

"We eventually hope to have 800 coaches throughout Kentucky. Right now we have about 100," said Mary Lou Yeatts, associate professor in Educational Studies, Leadership and Counseling at

Murray State University. She represents the One to One program in western Kentucky and is working with Farmington Elementary. "We're currently targeting students from kindergarten through 3rd grade (exiting primary) because the primary grades provide the best opportunity to develop reading for the future."

"What really comes out of this is relationships," Yeatts continued. "Each student has a mentor who they know cares about them. They really form a bond, and the coaches probably get as much out of the relationships as the students. They get to see the child grow."

Volunteer LaVerne Waldrop, whose daughter attended Farmington and is now a student at Graves County Middle School, agrees. "The way this program is designed, it allows the child to build a trust and an excitement with the adult that I think can only lead to success," she said. "I think it could benefit all children."

"My wife and I heard about this at church and decided to participate," said Jeremy Mayes, a local businessman. His wife, Rachel, taught in Graves County but currently is a stay-at-home mother with two young children. "From a child's point of view, it would be great to come in to spend some time reading and develop a very important skill. From my point of view, I'll get to know some kids and feel good to see their progress. I think this is great and compliment Ms. Whitaker for inviting the community to participate."

To learn about the One to One program, contact Mary Lou Yeatts at (270) 762-2794. To learn more about the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, log on to www.pfks.org.



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And the Emmy goes to . . .

Henry County media program produces national winners

By Cathy Lindsey

clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

Lights! Camera! Action! Who says it takes the glitz of Hollywood and the glare of spotlights to win an Emmy award?

Apparently no one told Megan Imel and Liz Smith. Last spring, the Henry County High School students scripted, shot and edited a 60-second public service announcement about dropout prevention that snagged for them the Award of Excellence. This “scholastic Emmy” is awarded to school media projects by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

Now juniors, the two award winners continue to develop their broadcasting skills as participants in the media program at the Henry County school.

Countless plaques on the walls of the media classroom indicate that recognition for media class projects is nothing new for Henry County students. Last year, students won first place at a National Music Video contest in Los Angeles. Honors from the Kentucky High School Journalism Association and the Corbin Film Festival join the collection of awards.

While awards are gratifying, they are just a fringe benefit for students enrolled in the program, according to media teacher Steve Galyon. Many occupations are now using some form of visual communications — state and federal government, the armed forces, private industries, just to name a few — he said.

“These students learn communications skills that will follow them the rest of their lives,” Galyon said. “I have students come back and tell me that something they gained from this class has translated into other fields. The computers they edit on, the software they use and the freedom they have to create give them skills that many employers are looking for.”

Galyon started the school’s media program in 1996. He sought community support to raise start-up money for the program, and the local school board matched the funds he raised.

“I encouraged local businesses to invest in this program so that we will have students that are better prepared for the workplace in our community,”



Photo by Rick McComb

Last year, Henry County High students Megan Imel, left, and Liz Smith produced a public service announcement on dropout prevention that earned a “scholastic Emmy,” which is awarded to school media projects by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

Galyon said. “You can’t go anywhere without technology being part of the work force. The earlier we can expose them to it, the better.”

Henry County High School’s media program gives students experience using digital cameras and computer editing programs. Some small-market television stations work with less equipment than the school has, Galyon said.

“We had this equipment before some colleges,” Galyon said. “We hope that putting this equipment in their hands now will help them later in college.”

Galyon teaches beginning and advanced media classes at the high school. One class produces a weekly news show that airs throughout the school every Friday. The students cover the school news, as well as features from the community.

Another class produces a monthly variety show that includes humorous features, music videos and dramatic pieces. Students also produce highlight films for the athletic department, a senior video at the end of the school year and a bi-monthly news magazine show.

Not only do students learn trade skills, they also have fun and take pride in their work. Galyon said the students know the whole school will see the

products of their labor, so they make sure the result is something they can be proud of creating.

Students do all the production work. Each is assigned a job, such as news producer, sports producer, line producer or graphics team. They hold production meetings, make assignments, shoot and edit news, sports and feature stories, write scripts and record the shows.

“Students really have ownership of the program,” Galyon said. “It can be teacher-led, but it should be student-based. Students have the freedom to create, but with this responsibility is more accountability.”

“I try to set high standards, lofty goals and expect them to reach them,” Galyon said. “We have been fortunate to win many state and national awards. When new students come into the class, they see all the awards hanging on the walls. They know that the bar is set high, and it takes hard work to reach it.”

Because keeping up with technology can be expensive, the advanced students’ entrepreneurial skills are put to the test. All students work for the school-based production enterprise called “Back Pocket Video Productions.” Students record weddings and produce memory videos, commercial videos for

local businesses, training videos and more. The money earned from these projects helps fund the media program.

Galyon is president of the Student Television Network, a national organization that promotes scholastic broadcasting and video production in schools. He said he encourages schools to enhance their media courses and network with other programs across the country. He realizes that other schools may not have the resources that he has tapped, but advises that this should not be a deterrent to building a school media program.

“I’ve had the opportunity to speak to a lot of schools,” Galyon

said. “Some had television studios that would rival major markets and others had one camera and one editor. My message is the same. It’s not what you have; it’s what you do with what you have.”

“If teachers teach their students how to tell a story, it won’t matter what resources they have or don’t have. It’s all about telling a story — using pictures and sound — that people will care about. If you’re not telling a good story, you’re not going anywhere,” he said.

Contact: Steve Galyon at sgalyon@henry.k12.ky.us or (502) 845-2888.

Safe Schools Week is Oct. 17-23

Get involved, take action and make a difference are suggestions the Kentucky Center for School Safety Clearinghouse is giving to students, parents, community members and educators for marking Kentucky Safe Schools Week, Oct. 17-23. All Kentuckians must work together to spread the message of Safe Schools Week — “Safe Schools Begin with Me!”

Kentucky students need a safe, welcoming learning environment to feel free to learn — both at school and in their communities. Substance abuse, gun crimes and bullying are among the school and community issues that can hinder learning.

Students and student organizations are being encouraged to develop community events that emphasize the importance of solving conflicts in nonviolent ways and of reducing the factors that lead to violence. Involving young people in violence prevention efforts is a crucial piece of the school safety puzzle.

“This year, we’re aiming for even greater student involvement,” said Jon Akers, executive director of the Kentucky Center for School Safety. “Our goals include creating valuable experiences and teaching life lessons that students can apply every day to make our schools and communities even safer places to grow and learn.”

In conjunction with the national Project Safe Neighborhoods, the Kentucky Crime Prevention Coalition and other state agencies, the safe schools clearinghouse offers a variety of free resources, such as handouts, event ideas and curriculum resources on its Web site (www.kysafeschools.org/clear/ssweek/index.html) to make local events successful and effective.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher, Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit and other government and education leaders will join Akers in a discussion about school safety during a 10-minute video, produced by Kentucky Educational Television (KET). The discussion will air on STAR 703 during October. Visit www.ket.org for viewing times.

A special Newspaper in the Classroom tabloid addressing school safety will be included in the Oct. 12 issue of The Lexington Herald-Leader. Teachers can go to www.nieconnects.com/ to request copies for their classrooms.

For more information about Safe Schools Week activities, call the clearinghouse toll free at (877) 805-4277.

Five principles of effective instruction can help teachers find what works to keep students from being left behind

By Ellen McIntyre and Diane Kyle
University of Louisville

With all the focus in Kentucky and across the nation on closing the achievement gap between whites and minorities or between poor and middle class students, many educators are scrambling to find out what works. We hear about many innovations and programs. But how do we decide what is right for our schools and our districts?

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE), a national research center focused on studies of students who have historically been left behind, collected information for decades on what works. The center subsequently developed five principles for helping all students achieve.

Forty years of research on what works for students at-risk provide Kentucky educators with guidance for making those decisions. This research suggests that if we keep five principles in mind, we will meet the needs of those usually left behind.

The first principle is *joint, productive activity*. This happens when teachers and students work together to produce something, such as an essay, a mural, a chart, a graph, a science report, a play. The work should be meaningful and relate to something the students have read or discussed.

We know the importance of group work, so what makes joint, productive activity different? The focus is on the *product*. When students work jointly on something to share with others, the product drives the process.

To work this way, keep groups small. Participate with the students as much as you can. This way, students will see that you value the end product as much as they do and that it's more than "just for a grade." They also will learn so much from your contribution.

Second, include *language and literacy activities across the curriculum*. More and more teachers of mathematics, science, social studies, art, music and even physical education recognize that they are teachers of reading and writing, too. Try having students read the songs they sing, write a plan for their own wellness or compose a story that includes a journey through the places studied in world history or geography.

We all know that developing oral language skills and vocabulary is critical across the curriculum. Our students need to learn to talk like scientists, use the language of mathematics, express opinions and develop arguments. Remember that when you combine language and literacy with joint, productive activity, you more than double the benefits for your students.

The third principle is to *connect school learning to the lives of the students*. So



Many students need opportunities to share ideas with one another in an environment that values their ideas and contributions.

often, "school" concepts are separate from students' everyday experiences. As teachers, we can bridge the two. When we do, students who are usually left behind can make better sense of the content and why they are learning it.

For example, in a study of the Civil War, you might invite students' family members who experienced the Vietnam War to compare it to the Civil War. Or you could ask them to relate the purposes, costs, emotions and controversies of past wars to today's wars.

When learning chemistry, students must struggle with memorizing the periodic table. Relating chemistry to concepts and skills they meet every day, such as cooking, will help them understand the content and why they are studying it.

This principle is relevant for language arts as well. To build toward understanding transactive texts, students can read and discuss advertisements found in their community or popular magazines as a way to understand the subtleties of persuasion.

One middle school English teacher helped her African-American students see that their use of the oral genre called "signifying" (or sounding, rapping, "playing the dozens") contained many "school" concepts she was teaching, such as metaphor, irony and symbolism.

Principle four is *keep the curriculum rigorous*. One way to ensure kids don't

learn much is to "dummy down" the curriculum. Instead, we educators need to keep our standards and expectations high, and then give struggling students the support they need.

Of course, this is easy to say and more difficult to do. The thing to keep in mind is that students will learn more if the curriculum is difficult, even if they struggle with parts of it.

Most of these students "left behind" have enough intelligence to learn the concepts, but may have a reading problem. You can still keep the curriculum rigorous if you can provide supportive materials for students who need them. Providing books written about the topic on lower reading levels and teaching explicit strategies on how to read certain texts, such as those with subheadings, captions and asides will help these students understand and learn.

Principle five is create opportunities for *instructional conversation*. The importance of dialogue for learning cannot be overstated.

We talk in order to understand in all parts of our lives. So, students need an opportunity to try out their developing concepts through dialogue, preferably in small groups with the teacher as the guide.

When teachers pose open-ended questions that get students to think, provide time for them to share and discuss view-

points with one another, and offer feedback on responses, they learn to think at higher levels.

If in your classroom, you are doing all the talking, then you are also doing all the thinking. Let's turn this around!

As you can see, these principles mirror what we have been attempting to do in our reform-focused state since education reform began in 1990. Our curriculum and recommended pedagogy support these principles.

The message is clear: Students achieve more when instruction is collaborative, meaningful, language-related, challenging, dialogic and connected to their lives.

For more information about these principles, as well as research reports, books, CDs of teaching examples and opportunities for professional development, go to the CREDE Web site at www.crede.ucsc.edu. You also can contact us at ellen@louisville.edu and diane@louisville.edu.

(Ellen McIntyre and Diane Kyle are professors at the University of Louisville Department of Teaching and Learning. Both have authored numerous publications on primary and middle grades education with emphasis on closing the achievement gap through literacy, effective classroom instruction, and family involvement strategies.)

THREE

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These programs include “Students Caught Being Good,” “Student of the Month” and the “Essential 55”—based on a book by Ron Clark that cites character-building examples of appropriate behavior for students. Each program is aligned to character education.

“We focus on the ‘Essential 55’ from the first day of school until the last in hopes of accomplishing two objectives,” Lock said. “One, to develop good behavior and character traits in all of our students. Two, to build a learning community in our school that values each individual and respects the rights and efforts of each individual.”

Auburn Elementary School

Auburn Elementary School was recognized particularly for its arts integration. As a result of focusing on infusing the arts and the integration of content, Auburn students are making connections between the arts and humanities and mathematics, and the arts and social studies. The school’s arts and humanities scores have climbed 17 points over the past three years.

“The curriculum work, alignment, electronic lesson plans and change in instructional methods were the driving force behind the dramatic rise in arts and humanities scores,” said Mike Hurt, who was principal at the school when it received the School to Watch designation.

“Integration of the arts was part of that, along with changing our teaching and assessment thinking to include allowing students to demonstrate ‘proficiency’ in different ways, including the arts,” Hurt added.

Auburn’s use of rubrics in assessment is another reason it is a school to watch. Students are not assessed by the traditional end-of-the-chapter tests alone. Every activity and strategy is paired with an appropriate assessment.

Teachers can then assess student understanding and application. This enables teachers to prepare instructional strategies that meet individual student needs through such means as flexible groups, mini-lessons or by approaching the content through a different learning style or multiple intelligences.

Auburn also supports and encourages internal teacher leadership. The principal is the instructional leader. Teachers share the responsibility and the power to effect necessary changes that are aligned with the school’s goals.

“Our district allowed the adding of a curriculum specialist to our staff,” Hurt said, “and then I added two other teachers on a school leadership team, which added a lot to our common goal, making it more of a shared vision.”

Auburn’s leadership team, developed through Different Ways of Knowing, is refining and implementing new and existing instructional and assessment strategies. As part of the process, the team also is determining the “next steps” based on teacher observations and is identifying barriers to learning.



Middle school student Andrew Yell compiles resources on ancient Greece during his social studies class at Adairville Elementary in Logan County.

Mahaffey Middle School

Educators typically perceive absent parents as a barrier to student learning. But that’s not the case at Mahaffey Middle School where more than two-thirds of the school’s student population has one or both parents deployed to a combat zone.

Strong family and community partnerships — as well as an exemplary school counseling program — are providing the support necessary to offer these students optimum learning experiences.

“The willingness of community members and parents to share their personal knowledge and experiences exposes the students to situations that will broaden their educational background,” said Principal Suzanne Jones.

The use of interdisciplinary teaching teams and “Prime Time” advisory groups are helping address the academic, social and emotional domains of these emerging adolescents. Prime Time is Mahaffey’s advisor/advisee program. Its main focus is the relationship that develops between the Prime Time teachers and the small group of students each works with during the school year.

“This concept allows for students to connect with a particular individual and not get lost in the group,” Jones said. “In addition during this time, the social and emotional domains of the students are addressed. The students know there is always an adult advocate for them.”

Combinations of teachers from different subject areas work in interdisciplinary teams to plan and conduct instruction for particular groups of students. Stu-

dents are assigned to a team, and team teachers are better able to understand the individual needs of a small group, according to Jones.

“Using this organization format allows for communication, coordination and cooperation among subject matter specialists,” she said. “The team approach enables teachers to coordinate so that students can relate one subject to another and leads to greater breadth of understanding for students.”

You’ll often find Mahaffey students taking on service and leadership roles. Whether it’s via the Buddy Reading program, SHARE class service projects or the Peer Mediation program, students

learn that the goals of personal growth, responsible citizenship and proper preparation for the future are as integral to their school success as is their intellectual achievement.

“It is imperative at the middle school level that we deal with the entire child,” Jones said. “Our goal is to provide our students with the skills necessary to be successful in any situation.”

For more information about the Schools To Watch program, contact Julia Harmon, middle school consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education, at (502) 564-4772 or jharmon@kde.state.ky.us or visit the Web site at www.middleschoolhouse.eku.edu/kentucky_schools_to_watch.htm.



Strong family and community partnerships help Mahaffey Middle School provide support to students whose parents are serving overseas through classroom activities and special events like a schoolwide picnic.

STATE DROPOUT from Page 1

eral No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Because NCLB requires that graduation rates not include students who received certificates of completion and those who took longer than four years to graduate, a more rigid formula to determine the rates was adopted by the Kentucky Board of Education in 2002.

The 2001 and 2002 rates include students who received certificates of completion and those who took longer than four years to graduate. The 2003 rate includes only students who finished high school within four years and those with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that allowed more than four years to graduate.

The school retention rate — the percentage of students held back a grade — decreased slightly, as did the school attendance rate. The percentage of students making a successful transition to adult life increased slightly.

Release of nonacademic data is one component of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). The other two components — the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) and Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) results — will be released Oct. 13.

“There is some good news in these data,” said Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit. “Fewer students are

dropping out. In fact, of the 171 districts that report high school dropout data, the rates in 112 either declined or stayed the same from 2002 to 2003. Eight school districts and 14 schools have no dropouts at all. And, there are no double-digit dropout rates.”

More students are retained in 9th grade than at any other grade level reported. “That’s a major area of concern,” said Wilhoit. “The department and the Kentucky Board of Education have a number of support programs to improve secondary education, and many schools are implementing innovative ideas (such as freshmen academies) to try to address

the problem. We’re continuing our combined efforts to eliminate dropouts from Kentucky schools.”

Non-academic data is comprised of dropout, graduation, retention, attendance and successful transition to adult life rates. With the exception of graduation rates, which are required under NCLB, each rate contributes a specific percentage to a school’s overall accountability index.

Complete 2003-2004 CATS data will be available online at www.education.ky.gov after Oct. 13 by clicking on “KDE QuickLinks” and selecting the “Kentucky Performance Report” link.

STATE BOARD from Page 1

respect for the local autonomy of each school district.

Finally, the board reviews the department’s budget requests and makes recommendations to the governor.

KYT: How does a board made up of volunteer citizens set these standards for student performance, programs and operations?

Travis: We believe very strongly in two-way communication with all constituent groups. Every Kentuckian holds a stake in public education. We seek out input — and we get it — from administrators, teachers, university educators, parents, business leaders, taxpayers. We get guidance from the state legislature and, in the area of testing, we have a panel of the nation’s top testing experts to make sure the tests are valid and reliable.

We have lots of input, formal and informal, from everybody involved. And this is real, substantive input we want and need to inform our decisions. We know that not everybody will agree with every decision. But we also know that, if we have a strong system of public involvement on the front-end, then reasonable people will understand our decisions and accept them as the result of a trustworthy process, even if they don’t entirely agree with every detail.

KYT: What are the most critical issues the board will be addressing in the near future?

Travis: Our entire education system is based on the concept of continuous improvement — and this applies not only to student achievement and school performance, but also to the way we measure

that performance. So we are looking at enhancing the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS).

Now is the time to do that, because our contract with the testing vendor ends in 2006. We have to start now on what the next contract will look like. So, it’s an opportunity to look at what we’re doing and make improvements.

Our commissioner, Gene Wilhoit, his staff and members of the state board have been listening to educators, parents and other stakeholders. The commissioner has identified seven areas for enhancements. One is to review our core content and student performance standards, which needs to be done every few years. We’re looking to make sure that teachers can tell from the document what is most important to teach. And, we need to spread the responsibility for teaching it across the grades and not just put all the pressure on the assessed grades.

We’re looking at the writing assessment to make sure we have a program that is implemented correctly and doesn’t accidentally encourage inappropriate strategies, but actually supports ideal instruction.

We’re looking at how we test the arts, and practical living and vocational studies.

We’re going to have longitudinal data, student accountability, and a way for teachers to assess students at any given time throughout the year to diagnose where they are and what they need in the way of instructional help.

And, we are going to be working very hard toward an online assessment —

giving the CATS tests on computers so that teachers can get some of the results back immediately. We’re looking at having Kentucky teachers score the tests. This is huge and, of course, it will be piloted first. We have to think about whether students have the keyboarding skills they will need for online testing, and whether schools have the equipment they will need and the training.

KYT: How will the board get the collaboration it wants before deciding how to enhance the testing system?

Travis: We have special committees and task forces that represent lots of different groups and points of view at work on these issues. The department is facilitating these groups.

And, the commissioner is discussing

all of these issues with every one of his formal advisory groups.

The department plans to post feedback sheets on its Web site to make sure that every public school educator in Kentucky has an opportunity to participate in these discussions before final decisions are made.

These improvements are designed to address concerns that have been expressed by our stakeholders. We are going to engage our constituents fully to make sure we have the information we need to address these issues as well as we possibly can.

And throughout this process, we are going to keep our focus on what is best for students, and for student learning.



Photo by Rick McComb

Travis

Kentucky Board of Education

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 created a new State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education. By authority of executive order from the governor, the board’s name was changed to Kentucky Board of Education, effective Feb. 1, 1995.

The board has 12 members. The governor appoints 11 voting members, seven representing the Supreme Court districts and four representing the state at large. These 11 voting members must be confirmed by the legislature. The additional member, the president of the Council on Postsecondary Education, serves as a non-voting member.

The members serve four-year terms and may be reappointed. At the beginning of each fiscal year the membership elects the board chair and vice chair.

The board appoints the commissioner of education, who serves at the pleasure of the board and receives compensation as set by the board. The commissioner is the board’s execu-

tive secretary and is the chief state school officer in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, in charge of the Kentucky Department of Education.

The state board meets at least six times a year either at the Frankfort offices of the education department or at other locations in the state. The board has five standing committees: management, curriculum, internal audit, assessment, and Kentucky School for the Blind/Kentucky School for the Deaf oversight. Special task forces and work groups are appointed as needed.

Board meetings are open to the public, and agendas are set in advance. The board seeks and encourages the attendance of individuals, representatives of professional organizations, and members of citizen groups.

For more information on the board and to see meeting agendas and minutes, go to www.education.ky.gov. Click on “KDE QuickLinks” in the upper right corner and select “State Board of Education.”

Leadership Letter

Kenton students tell how teachers influence them

Teachers can change lives. However, many teachers may never know the difference they make in a child's life.

Kenton County Superintendent Susan Cook has devised a way for them to find out. Each spring, the superintendent hosts the Champions of Learning reception to recognize the district's top graduating seniors. She asks each senior to write a paragraph about the teacher (elementary, middle or high school) who has had the most influence on his or her academic career.

Last spring, 67 teachers attended the reception and heard the superintendent read tributes written by more than 90 outstanding seniors.

One student wrote, "Ms. Smith is not only a teacher to me but a mentor, confidant and friend. She has taught me many things that I will carry with me all my days. She taught me to be tenacious, independent and has encouraged me to think outside the box. She's a wonderful teacher who treats her students with the respect and compassion you could expect from your own mother. I hope one day I can become for my own art students what she has become for me."

Another student wrote, "What I remember most about Mrs. Cochran is the genuine compassion she showed for her

students. She was truly concerned both about teaching me to the best of her great ability and about me as an individual. This care, commitment and attention had a profound influence upon me."

Comments like these from students indicate they appreciate teachers who expect and demand high academic expectations. "The quotes reflect academic rigor in its truest sense. These teachers asked students to think and reason at deep levels, to ask questions, to solve problems, to pursue excellence," said Cook. "Our teachers repeatedly tell me they are honored to be recognized by a student. I often see the certificates they receive at the reception hanging on the wall in their classrooms."

Perhaps one student summed up how teachers change students' lives best when he wrote, "Mrs. Milner encouraged and developed my academics and talents that define the person I am today. She pushed me to put forth my best effort always, and remains one of the most influential educators and people in my life."

For more information about this program, contact Kenton County Superintendent Susan Cook or Teresa Wilkins, public information officer, at (859) 344-8888, or by e-mail at scook@kenton.k12.ky.us or twilkins@kenton.k12.ky.us.

Minority superintendent interns begin work

Two educators have been selected for the Kentucky Minority Superintendent Intern Program. They are serving as assistants to successful superintendents during the 2004-2005 school year.

Aundrea Locke, assistant principal at Ft. Knox Community Schools, will intern with Nelson County Superintendent Janice Lantz and Oldham County Superintendent Blake Haselton. Diane Woods, middle school director for Fayette County Schools, will intern with Fayette County Superintendent Stu Silberman and Marion County Superintendent Roger Marcum.

Each intern will develop an individual growth plan and have regular meetings and networking sessions with their mentor superintendents, board of education members and search firms. They also will gain practical experience in curriculum, assessment and instructional issues, labor relations, human resources, facility management, finance, budgeting and public relations.

Elaine Farris, one of the three educators participating in the program last year, became the state's first minority superintendent July 1 after being selected superintendent of Shelby County.

For details about the intern program, contact Robby Morton, Division of Educator Recruitment and Retention, at (502) 564-1479, rmorton@kde.state.ky.us.

FEA state conference

The Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Educator Recruitment and Retention will host the Future Educators of America (FEA) conference Nov. 4-5 at the Executive Inn Rivermont in Owensboro. Between 1,200 and 1,500 students aspiring to become teachers and educators are expected to attend this second statewide conference.

For more information about the conference or to start an FEA chapter, contact Jennifer Miller at (502) 564-1479, jmiller@kde.state.ky.us.

How-to book discusses community involvement

"Mobilizing Citizens for Better Schools" is a new book offering practical insights for policy makers, school administrators, parents and concerned citizens. Written by Robert F. Sexton of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, this book is a blueprint for community mobilization.

Sexton writes about real public engagement, how difficult it is, how powerful it can be and how indispensable it is to making real changes in public schools. To order the book, call (800) 928-2111 or go to www.prichardcommittee.org/mobilizingcitizensforbetterschools.htm on the Web.

Compiled by Joy Barr
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

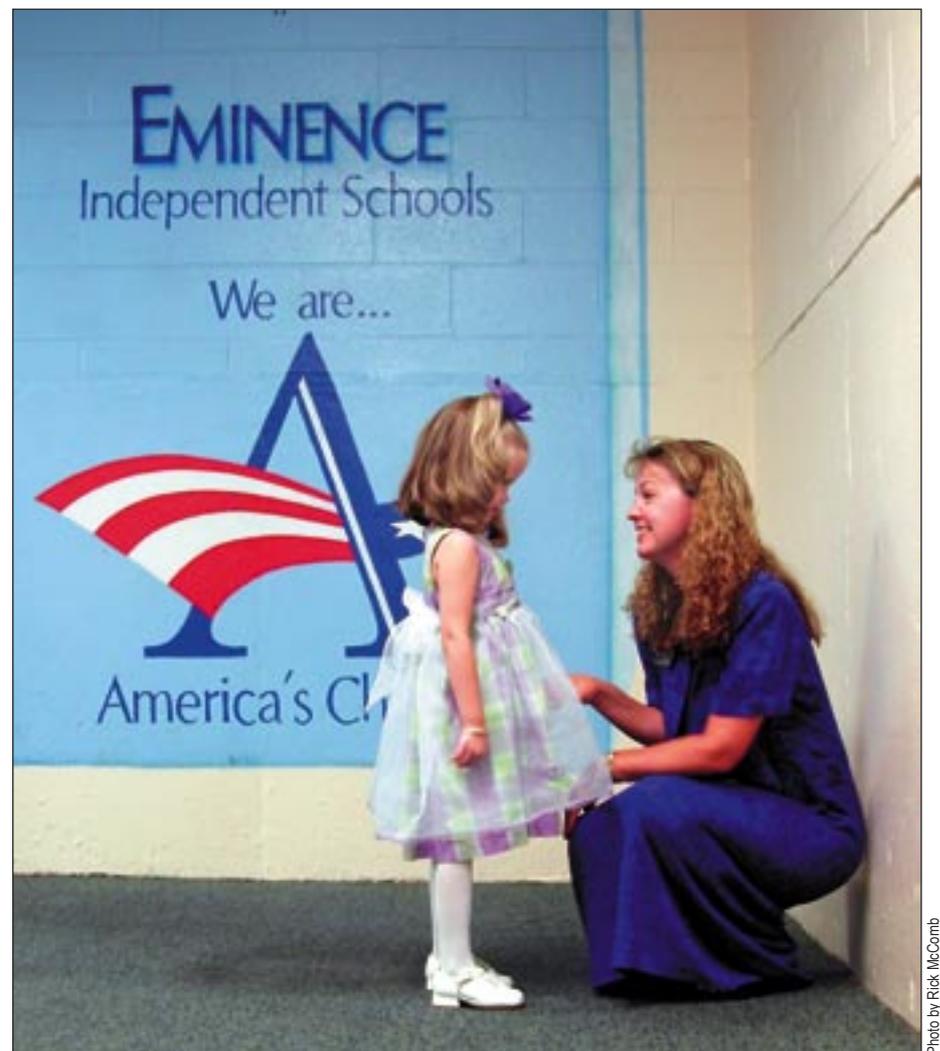


Photo by Rick McComb

Corridor confab

Teacher Phyllis Jamison stops in the hallway to talk with kindergarten student Delaney Scriber on "picture day" at Eminence (Independent) Elementary School. Jamison, a kindergarten teacher, is one of more than 530 Kentucky classroom teachers to complete a rigorous performance-based assessment of their instructional skills and content knowledge to earn certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Education Trust conference in November

The Education Trust's national conference is Nov. 11-13 in Washington, D.C. The conference will focus on closing the achievement gap. Conference sessions will feature representatives from high-performing and fast-improving schools across the country.

www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/conferences+and+meetings/

Choosing Champions

Public Education Network has created a voter's guide that presents a list of questions highlighting the most pressing concerns and issues in public education today. The information in this guide informs voters about important education issues and helps voters determine a candidate's stance on public education.

www.publiceducation.org/voter_guide/home.asp

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Frankfort, KY 40601

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Two school districts join fight against tooth decay

By Cathy Lindsey

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With mouth gaping open, you smell the disinfectant, you see the blur of silver tools and then you hear the buzzing drill. Most of us painstakingly endure this twice a year. But for some Kentucky students, a trip to the dentist is a treat.

Owensboro dentist Mike Johnson counts the hugs he gets from his young patients as a huge benefit of treating students in his Owensboro practice. Johnson has volunteered for more than 10 years in a local program that screens students for dental problems and provides free services to students who do not get regular dental health care.

"Kids give hugs," Johnson said. "Their mouths are numb, but they're happy."

This dental care program began nearly 11 years ago at Foust Elementary School when Owensboro Independent Schools' former district nurse, Kathy Taylor, realized some students had tooth decay and other dental problems that were going untreated and affecting their health.

Dental care is the most common unmet health need in American children today, according to the U.S. Surgeon General. Kentucky ranks second behind West Virginia in the percentage of people who have lost six or more teeth to decay or gum disease, said Scott Higdon, former coordinator of the program at Foust Elementary in Owensboro Independent Schools.

Taylor and Johnson began the dental care program at Foust. Today, with the help of current Owensboro Independent district health nurse Gay Lynn Lile, the program has expanded to nine dentists. They are providing dental services to students in seven schools in that district and Daviess County Schools this year.

"The goal is to get dental care to those who need it most, but can afford it the least," Johnson said.

Two years ago, the Green River Health District partnered

with the two school districts and received a \$25,000 grant from the Oral Health Programs of the Kentucky Department of Public Health. These funds bought toothbrushes, dental floss and mirrors, as well as other supplies and medical services. Local donations of \$12,000 extended the services.

All children in the participating schools receive free dental screenings. The students then are triaged into different levels of needed care. Every child who is eligible gets dental sealants on adult molars, which according to the program is the best decay preventive strategy.

One day each week, Johnson sees five students at his office. Other dentists do the same. The Family Resource Center at each school handles the necessary consent forms, patient registration materials and student transportation to the dentists' offices.

Higdon, formerly at Foust Elementary, has seen how the program benefits the students and the dentists. Students have healthier teeth, and dentists are able to provide better dental care information to more families in the community.

"The free dental screens and preventative washes and treatments are making a significant difference in (reducing) the number of more severe dental problems that used to be seen in older students," Higdon said.

"It is the program goal that no child should miss school because of an untreated dental problem,"

Higdon said. "In fact, they come to school for their dental needs."

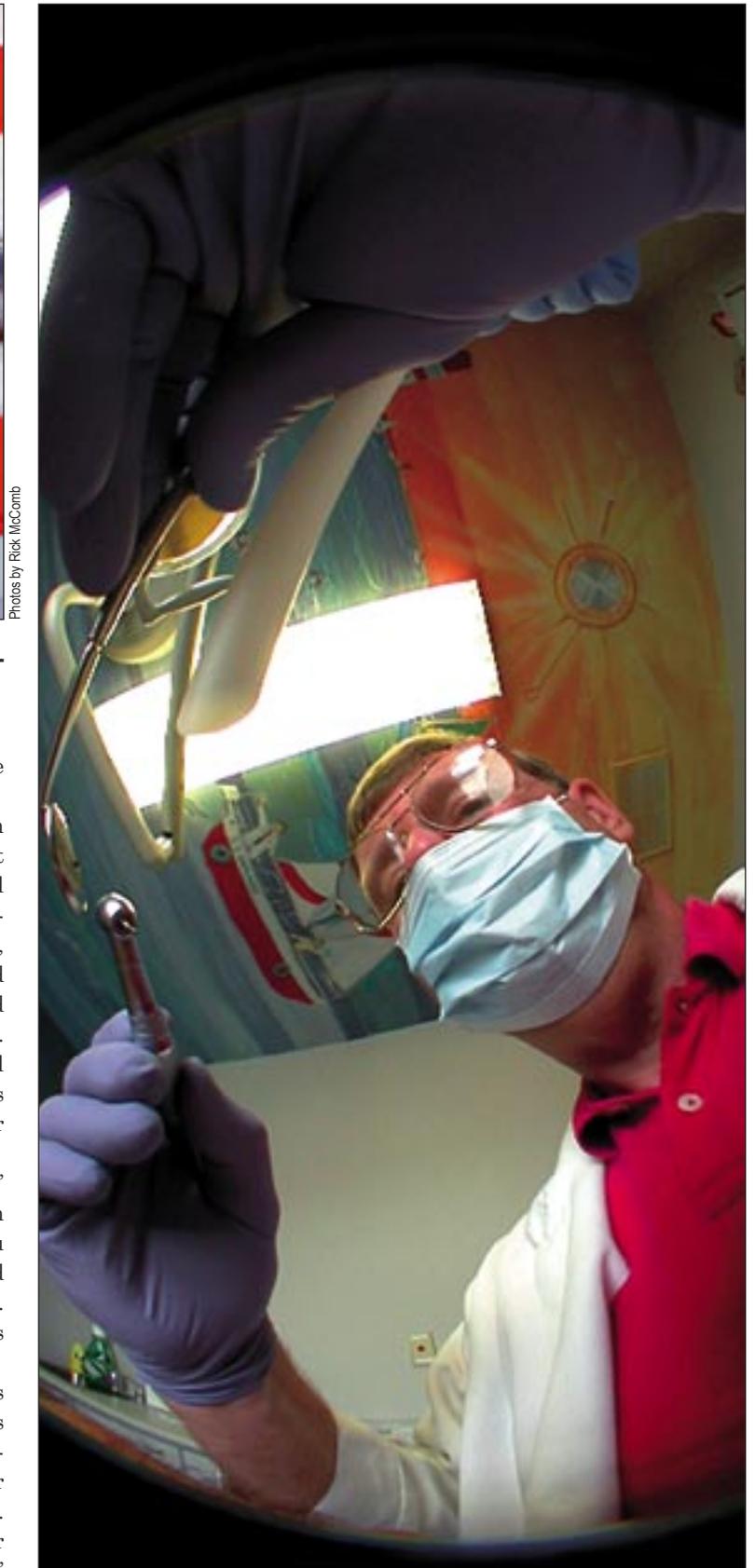
Supporters of the program in Owensboro also believe that dental hygiene is an integral part of a child's physical development. As a result of this program, 2,000 children in Owensboro and Daviess County schools received free dental services last year. Johnson hopes that other school districts will see this program as something they can do for their students in need.

"It's a system that works," Johnson said. "Any district can incorporate this program if you have principals, teachers and dedicated people to make it work. It's simple, it's easy and there's grant money there to do it."

Studies show and educators can affirm that healthy students make optimal learners. "Children with good teeth feel better about themselves," Higdon said. "They behave and perform better in the classroom as a result." Contact: Foust Family Resource Center Director Beth Murphy at bmurphy@owensboro.k12.ky.us or (270) 686-1068.



On the ceiling of "Dr. Mike's" dental office is a drawing of him throwing out a lifeline — a container of dental floss — to a dolphin.



Owensboro dentist James M. Johnson, better known to area students as "Dr. Mike," works in a child-friendly room to help youngsters whose families cannot afford regular dental care. He is one of nine Owensboro area dentists participating in the free dental care program.



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