

Kentucky Board of Education
June 3, 2015
Report from the Secretary
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

1. The second SOAR (Shaping Our Appalachian Region) conference was held in Pikeville on Monday May 11 and attended by approximately 1200 people along with conference founders, Governor Steve Beshear, and Rep. Hal Rogers. U.S. Secretary of Labor, Tom Perez, spoke on the need for destroying silo mentality and cooperation among agencies when developing regional economic and workforce development initiatives. Presentations during the day included topics such as economic diversification, business recruiting, enhancing the education and training opportunities for displaced workers, and presentations on Youngstown, Ohio's devastation when their steel industry collapsed. There were a number of similarities between Youngstown and Eastern Kentucky regarding workforce and economic development issues.
2. The General Assembly provided \$1,000,000 for the Public Library Facilities Construction Fund in the 2015 Fiscal year. Memoranda of agreement have been executed with 10 public libraries to assist with debt service incurred in constructing or renovating public libraries. While construction documents are still being prepared for these projects, we anticipate that state dollars will be matched locally to enable more than \$36 million in public library construction. In addition to continuing educational benefits, these projects will create jobs and bring economic development benefits to each community where the new facility is built or renovated.
3. The Perkins Vocational Training Center in Eastern Kentucky will hold its 2015 commencement on June 12. 125 students will graduate with skills that will allow them to be gainfully employed and become more self-sufficient.

4. The Kentucky Workforce Development Board which was re-energized by Governor Beshear in 2009, conducted its final meeting on May 14, 2015 under the old Workforce Development Act of 1998. The board's initial charge was to modernize the commonwealth's workforce development system. 26 initiatives were created over the past several years to better meet the needs of the workforce and employers. A new board will be created by Governor Beshear under the new federal law (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 or WIOA) signed by the president last July. The new KWIB will have its first meeting on August 20. Its mission will be to continue to develop strategies and programs to meet the direction of the Governor in workforce development aligning with the education and economic development systems, streamlining workforce development tools, and providing increased customer focus for employees and employers.

5. WIOA also required each state study current workforce investment areas and create workforce regions that will recognize demographic shifts that have occurred since the original designations were established in 1998. A special Designation Sub-Committee was formed with individuals from a diverse cross-section representing geographic areas, businesses, state and local government representatives, local stakeholders and other factors. The committee made its recommendations to the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board at its May 14 meeting. The recommendations were approved by KWIB and sent to the Governor for his final approval.