

***Commissioner's Report***  
***Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.***  
***Kentucky Board of Education Meeting***  
***April 12, 2017***

**Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Updates**

Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) staff have been diligent in their quest to better the experiences of students and staff at both schools. To alleviate some of the challenges these schools face, staff invited Thomas B. Stephens, the Secretary of the Personnel Cabinet, to tour both schools. Stephens recognized the importance of the positions at these schools and agreed to partner with KDE to consider ways to approach the development of salary increases.

Another bit of good news is that planning meetings for capital projects are underway. The architect has been selected and individuals representing the populations served by the schools will be involved in every step of the process. Finally, the Academic Behavioral Response to Intervention (ABRI) project, with the help of the University of Louisville, continues to work successfully at both schools. Tier I procedures have now been developed, and Tier II and III procedures are planned for the 2017-18 school year.

- **Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB)**

KSB students have been busy inside and outside of the classroom. During the day, students are learning many valuable lessons. In particular, Jackie Williams' class gained a first-hand view on compassion as they worked hard to create care packages for the homeless. Additionally, the Short Course program has been a success this year and served 31 students. Students from around the state can attend short-course for two week sessions (up to twelve weeks) at KSB. This program, Knowledge to Empower You to Succeed (KEYS) Short Course, provides targeted instructional services to blind and visually impaired students attending local school districts. At no cost to the parents or district, students come to Louisville to attend KSB from one to twelve weeks of specialized instruction in such areas as study skills, computer and assistive technology, orientation and mobility services (O&M), Braille, and low vision skills. While a student is participating in the KEYS Short Course, he is still enrolled in his local public school, and his schoolwork is sent from his district to KSB to allow him to maintain his regular class work while attending the short course. A student's participation in the KEYS Short Course is determined by his Individual Education Plan (IEP) and does not influence his placement because the student continues to be enrolled in his district.

Outside of school, KSB students have had a wide array of options to help keep them active and engaged. Recently, KSB hosted the Braille Challenge where children as young as six competed in reading and writing in Braille. KSB also hosted a wrestling and cheerleading competition that entailed the participation of ten schools from around the

country. Coming up in the near future, KSB Outreach is hosting the third annual accessible egg hunt in Ashland on April 22. Students are also looking forward to a unique opportunity this summer through a partnership with Morehead University, the INSIGHT Post-Secondary Preparation Program. Nine students are already signed up for this program that will afford blind/visually impaired students to have an opportunity to experience (ahead of time some) of the challenges of college life and develop some of the skills they need to conquer those challenges.

Operationally, KSB also continues to make progress. The interview panel for the principal position completed two rounds of interviews with six candidates. The panel came to a consensus for the top three recommendations and a decision has been reached. This person will serve the KSB community well in this role. An announcement will be made once the approval process is complete.

In addition, the following positions are posted at KSB: a social studies teacher and a chief academic officer. Interviews are currently underway for dormitory staff. There are currently three openings; however, few applications have been received.

In terms of furthering opportunities for professional learning, KDE provided two math coaches to work with the elementary teachers for the purpose of improving mathematics instruction. Staff also received training in other instructional strategies: Opportunities to Respond through the University of Louisville and Bellarmine University, and Google Classroom. This summer, two elementary teachers will attend Orton Gillingham training classes.

- **Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD)**

KSD students have also been busy. Six students of the signing choir had the distinguished opportunity to perform the National Anthem at the 100<sup>th</sup> Whitaker Bank/KHSAA Boy's Sweet 16 Boys Basketball Tournament on Wednesday, March 15. Other news worthy events include Abriana Norris, a gifted artist, who was chosen for an interview with for the Governor's School for the Arts Application and Zoe Andrews was named to the Girls All American Basketball Team by the Deaf Digest Sports. Other students are working hard too! The culinary arts class has been getting lots of hands-on experience as they continue to cater events at the school. The preschool at KSD also continues to grow. There are now five students in the program with six families expressing an interest in sending their children in the fall.

KSD staff are no exception; they too have been busy. One special recognition is Byron Wilson, an elementary teacher, who was named a national teacher of the year by Sorenson Video Relay Service (SVRS). Furthermore, the staff continues to meet the goals of the strategic plan. They are excited about being involved in the decision-making process and as a result, have excelled at taking ownership. The strategic plan can be seen across the campus as making positive impacts to the climate of the school. As part of this process, Will Begley shares the "dashboard" of information weekly with Linda Funke,

the KDE state schools administrator, so she can use the information to identify areas where KDE may be able to provide assistance.

There are currently several positions open at KSD: director of outreach services, interpreter supervisor, school psychologist and eight dormitory positions. The Sign Language Proficiency Interview: American Sign Language (SLPI:ASL) requirement, which rates how well people are able to use sign language for communication, has had a limiting effect on the number of qualified applicants expressing an interest in an opening. To address this challenge, the Secretary of Personnel, Thomas Stephens, is working on a plan for compensatory measures related to the development of candidates' sign language communication skills. In conjunction with this effort, KDE and KSD have been collaborating to provide a proficiency level for each position. Moreover, in an effort to further develop sign language proficiency, KDE partners with Eastern Kentucky University's interpreter program to provide additional training.

### **TELL Survey**

The Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Kentucky Survey kicked off on March 1, 2017 and ran through March 31. The survey gives school-based certified educators in the state the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on the working conditions in Kentucky schools, which directly impact the learning conditions of students.

TELL Kentucky is conducted under the leadership of the Kentucky Department of Education and supported by a steering committee of education organizations and partners:

- *Kentucky Board of Education*
- *Kentucky Department of Education*
- *Kentucky Teacher of the Year program*
- *Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board*
- *Kentucky Education Association*
- *Kentucky School Boards Association*
- *Kentucky Association of School Councils*
- *Jefferson County Teachers Association*
- *Kentucky Association of Professional Educators*
- *Kentucky Association of School Administrators*
- *Kentucky Association of School Superintendents*
- *Kentucky Parent Teacher Association*
- *Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education*
- *Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence*

Kentucky educators have set a new record with their response to the 2017 TELL Kentucky Survey. More than 41,400 – nearly 91 percent – of school-based certified educators completed it, surpassing the 2015 response rate of 89.3 percent and setting a new national record among states that administer the working conditions survey.

As an incentive for educators to participate in the TELL Kentucky Survey, the Kentucky Education Association, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, Kentucky Association of School Administrators, the Center for Education Leadership, Jefferson County Teachers Association and the Kentucky School Boards Association contributed prize money for weekly drawings to be held throughout the survey period. No public money was used for the prizes.

School winners received \$500 and were drawn from schools that had at least a 50 percent response rate. Schools that reached a 100 percent response rate were entered into a drawing for a \$500 cash award that went to an individual educator at the school.

Below is a list of winners from each week of the survey:

*Week 1 Educator: Amy Bolar, Flemingsburg Elementary (Fleming County)*

*Week 1 School: Roby Elementary School (Bullitt County)*

*Week 2 Educator: Jaymie Ross, Jennie Rogers Elementary (Danville Independent)*

*Week 2 School: Breathitt County Area Technology Center*

*Week 3 Educator: Carissa Poston, Butler County High School (Butler County)*

*Week 3 Schools: Warren Regional Juvenile Detention Center (Bowling Green Independent)*

*Week 4 Educator: April McNaughton, Franklin Elementary (Simpson County)*

*Week 4 School: Somerset High School (Somerset Independent)*

The overall school winner was Wilmore Elementary School in Jessamine County, and the overall educator winner was Melissa Scott, who teaches at The Stables in Fayette County.

All 173 school districts in the state exceeded the 50 percent threshold for reporting; 51 districts had 100 percent participation. School and district response rates are posted on the TELL Kentucky website at [www.tellkentucky.org](http://www.tellkentucky.org).

### **Science Statewide Summative Field Test**

The science statewide summative field test was completed during the month of March. The purpose of the field test is to allow for psychometric analysis of traditional and new item types, engage students with the new items, observe the administration and prepare for the spring 2018 operational assessment. The test is a cluster format that contains multiple choice and extended responses items.

The KDE Office of Assessment and Accountability (OAA) and Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) staffs observed students taking the test. OAA's research and evaluation partner, HumRRO also did observations. The assessments have been well received. Next steps are developing scoring standards for the new item types and then scoring. We plan to release some level of reporting at the state, district and school level. Because this is a field test, multiple forms of the test were administered and no individual student results are reported.

## **Town Hall Meetings**

The 2017 series of town hall meetings are now underway. Three (3) of the ten (10) meetings have been conducted to date. The sites include Kenton County, Jefferson County, and McCracken County. All have been well-attended and have provided a great opportunity for feedback on the new accountability system proposals. The remaining seven (7) town hall meetings are listed below, by date and location. All will begin at 6:30 p.m. local time.

- **Thursday, April 13**  
Laurel County Schools Center for Innovation  
Main Presentation Room  
1100 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, London
  
- **Monday, April 17**  
Rowan County Senior High School  
Performing Arts Center  
499 Viking Drive, Morehead
  
- **Tuesday, April 18**  
John Hardin High School  
384 W.A. Jenkins Road, Elizabethtown
  
- **Thursday, April 20**  
Glasgow Independent Schools  
Glasgow High School Auditorium  
1601 Columbia Avenue, Glasgow
  
- **Tuesday, April 25**  
Fayette County, Bryan Station High School  
201 Eastin Road, Lexington
  
- **Thursday, April 27**  
Prestonsburg, Mountain Arts Center  
50 Hal Rogers Drive, Prestonsburg
  
- **Monday, May 1**  
Henderson County, Professional Development Center  
631 North Green Street, Henderson

## **Legislative Webinars Related to Outcomes of 2017 Session**

With the 2017 legislative session now concluded, the work for our agency has shifted to ensuring that we are focused on those bills which have education components that we are responsible for implementing. Two of those bills with major implementation implications for KDE are House

Bill 520 (charter schools) and Senate Bill 1 (changes to assessment and accountability, school improvement and standards).

On Tuesday, April 4, KDE provided the first of two superintendent webinars, with the focus being on HB 520 and HB 471 (the bill that addressed the funding mechanism for charter schools). The second webinar, focused on the topic of SB 1, will be hosted on April 13. For those who were unable to watch the webcasts live, the following link provides an archived version of each: <http://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/watch-live/>.