

Commissioner's Report
Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.
Kentucky Board of Education Meeting
June 7, 2017

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

KDE staff continue to streamline approval and hiring processes to help both schools function more similarly to those in districts. The KDE Division of Resource Management continues to work with Secretary Stephens of the Personnel Cabinet to raise salaries. Improvements with both food service departments are also continuing, not only in order to be compliant with federal regulations, but also to offer appetizing meals within students' dietary restrictions. Additionally, mental health services are being offered to students, while teachers are receiving trainings through the Center for Trauma and Children (CTAC) and Academic Behavioral Response to Intervention (ABRI).

Capital projects also continue to move forward. Architects have now been hired for both schools. The new KSD Elementary Project is pending final decisions with a target completion date of November 2018. Likewise, the renovations for the Grow Hall cafeteria were completed and the cafeteria is running smoothly. Future projects for KSD include upgrades to the heating, venting and air conditioning (HVAC), electrical, lighting and security systems. Meanwhile, KSB is in the planning phase to renovate Howser Hall and by October 2018, the infirmary and dorm rooms will be completed. Future projects include upgrades to the HVAC systems, brick facing remediation and an emergency asbestos removal. Lots of good work is underway.

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

It's that time of year where there is always something going on at KSB; April and May were no exception. To lead all of this activity, Ms. Jackie Williams was selected as the new principal and began her role on April 16. This decision followed an extensive, nationwide search that included a rigorous screening of applicants and multiple interviews from a ten-member panel of experts that included KSB alumni, KSB charitable foundation, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) staff, members of the blind community and parents.

Ms. Williams joined KSB in August 2016. Prior to teaching at KSB, Ms. Williams served nearly 10 years in the Breckinridge County School District as a teacher and administrator. During the 2014-16 school years, she served as an assistant principal at Hardinsburg Elementary School. Additionally, Ms. Williams served as a Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) coach, evaluator of general and special education teachers, instructional coach and many other leadership roles related to special education.

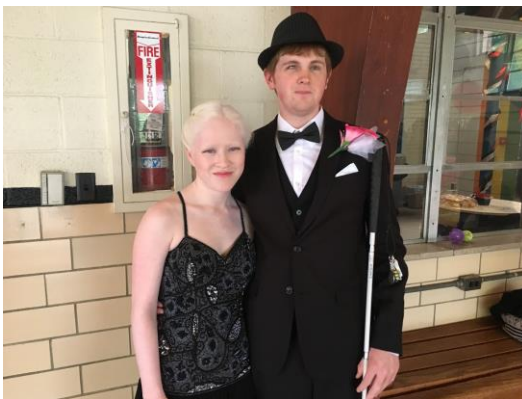
Ms. Williams's viewpoint is "I will advocate and do whatever it takes for students to ensure each receives the best possible education." As soon as Ms. Williams began her

new role, she started implementing changes to improve student outcomes and school climate. Ms. Williams has had to begin the process of making some unpopular, but necessary, decisions to improve instruction for next year. As part of this process, she examined teachers' certifications, evaluations, strengths and tenure to determine appropriate grade level and content area coverage for next year's class placements. She continues to work on building staff capacity and morale through interactive trainings, school pride theme days and being visible in classrooms. Her focus remains on student success and school improvement.



Ms. Williams, KSB Principal

Despite all of the change, traditions have still carried on at KSB. On May 3, residential and day students celebrated in “rock and roll” style as they attended prom. This year’s prom took on special meaning, as prom preparation afforded valuable practice in the Expanded Core Curriculum Skills (ECC) while seniors shopped for decorations with KSB teachers. Students also learned some life skills along the way as teachers and staff assisted students with pre-prom dress and make-up lessons.



KSB Prom

Additionally, KSB celebrated 175 years with a Founder's Day celebration on May 9. The pavilion was completed for this special celebration, where roughly 200 people were in attendance. The celebration included music performed by current and former students and special remarks by Metro Louisville Councilman Bill Hollander. Of special significance, American Printing House Museum Director, Michael Hudson, gave an account of the school's history. In honor of Founder's Day, students, staff and alumni participated in an essay contest; the winners were announced the night of the celebration. The essay topics were "what KSB means to me" and "KSB historical figures." A couple of highlights from the evening included the attendance of Dr. Raymond Randles, the oldest alumni in attendance, and the presentation of the Paul J. Langan Distinguished Service Award, which was presented to Adam C. Ruschival, III.

The celebration continued on May 24 with KSB's graduation ceremony. This year there were five graduates; all of whom have post-secondary work plans. One graduate will work with the Louisville Bats through the Office for the Blind (OFB) work program as a junior equipment manager. Another senior will be working towards attaining employment as a Braille proofreader through the American Printing House. The remaining graduates are working in various capacities such as in a family restaurant, daycare and volunteering in an elementary school.



KSB Class of 2017

On other news, KSB will offer a two-week summer program in June for students. The elementary program will focus on academics, socialization and daily living skills. The middle and high school program will focus on academics and independent living skills. Additionally, students who are 16 years of age may attend the work program. Students also have the opportunity to apply and interview to work for the Louisville Zoo or Kentucky Kingdom while receiving minimum wage through the Office for the Blind.

In relation to personnel, KSB positions for high school math and science teachers were recently posted. Other postings include three elementary teacher positions, a Functional Mental Disabilities/Moderate to Severe Disabilities (FMD-MSD) teacher and a short term program teacher (this program allows students across the state to attend KSB for two

weeks at a time, up to 12 weeks per year). A chief academic officer has been selected, and will be publicly announced in the near future; this position will serve to improve instruction through standards-based curriculum alignment.

Looking to the fall, KSB is growing and will have 16 new students from across the state. Six of these students will be in kindergarten transitioning from the Visually Impaired Preschool (VIPS) in Louisville.

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

May has also been an exciting time for KSD. After eight years of anticipation, the pool opened on May 9 and students have enjoyed the therapeutic benefits of swimming. It really has been a great addition to the services available on campus.



KSD Pool Opening

Other excitement included prom on May 13. Both residential and day students attended this year's "Mardi Gras" themed prom. Staff and community generously helped students to make this a memorable evening by providing tuxes and formal dresses for all those who attended.

On May 24, 2017, KSD's #DEFCHEFS earned a first-place finish in a regional culinary event. This regional event, part of the Kentucky Farm to School Junior Chef competition, is a statewide high school cooking competition designed to offer youth the opportunity to learn valuable skills in recipe development, food preparation, marketing, public presentation, organization, teamwork and community involvement. During the regional event, KSD students earned high praise from judges with special mention of their exceptional teamwork and technical skills. The judges stated that students had the best recipe among the 13 regions. The students will go on to compete at the Kentucky State Fair in August to compete with peers from across the state where they will create their dish, grilled garden penne pasta with chicken, on stage in a live event.



KSD #DEFCHEFS

KSD's graduation ceremony took place on the afternoon of May 25. This year there were 13 graduates and 12 have post-secondary plans. On May 11, staff and students conducted a special ceremony for a senior who was returning home to Russia, where she plans to complete her general education diploma (GED) and then attend college. The plans for the other twelve are as follows: two will attend Gallaudet, three will attend Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC), one will attend Gateway Community College, one will attend beauty school, five will be entering the workforce and one is currently undecided.



KSD Class of 2017

Other student successes included a four-day senior trip to Gatlinburg where chaperones reported all twelve students were well-behaved and had a great time. KSD also had a career and technical education (CTE) student pass the KOSSA assessment for the first time this year! Additionally, the Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) team finished in the top ten. There were also several top finishes in the Agriculture Field Day

competition at the University of Kentucky (UK). Also, a student's art work was recently selected to hang in Congressman Guthrie's office in Washington, DC. This really has been a successful year for KSD students.

The summer also holds lots of activity for KSD. A summer school program for students will focus on academics and social skills. Similarly, professional learning is scheduled for teachers with topics specific to teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Meanwhile, the strategic plan continues to move forward. The communication team has also developed procedures to increase the use of American Sign Language (ASL) on campus. A draft policy has been written to present at the next board meeting for consideration of adoption.

KSD also has several personnel updates. Will Begley, KSD's principal, recently accepted a superintendent position. The job posting for the principal position has been sent to universities with deaf programs, schools for the deaf, teaching websites and other sites around the country. An interim will be placed at KSD until a permanent administrator is hired. The hiring process will mirror the process recently used for KSB and will include a paperwork screening, a large interview committee and recommendations sent for consideration of a final decision. Additionally, dorm positions continue to be difficult to fill. KDE staff continue to explore avenues that could potentially raise pay for these positions, in an effort to attract qualified candidates. Other current postings for KSD include a high school English teacher, an outreach consultant and a psychologist.

Revision Process for Kentucky Academic Standards

On May 15, the KDE moved forward with the review and revision process for academic standards in English/language arts and mathematics. Senate Bill 1 (2017) calls for the Kentucky Department of Education to implement a process for reviewing all academic standards and aligned assessments beginning in the 2017-18 school year. The current schedule calls for one or two content areas to be reviewed each year and every six years thereafter on a rotating basis. The KDE will collect input on all of the draft standards in English/language arts and mathematics until September 15.

Nearly 4,000 people – about half of them educators – provided input during a public review on the English/language arts and mathematics standards in the 2014-15 school year. Overall, 88 percent of the respondents indicated no changes were needed. The rest indicated they would like to see some sort of change in one or more of the standards. Since then, an extensive process involving elementary, middle, high school and postsecondary educators in both content areas, has resulted in revisions to the standards, and new standards to address cursive writing and advanced coursework in mathematics, specifically calculus, were added.

The English/language arts standards, as revised, are now available for public feedback online at this ELA survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KY2017ELA>. The revised mathematics standards are available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KY2017MATH>. All Kentuckians are invited to provide comment on the revised standards, which are highlighted in the online tool along with the rationale for the change, as well as those that were not changed.

Recent Visit with Georgia Department of Education

On May 18 and 19, KDE/KBE General Counsel Kevin Brown and I visited the Georgia Department of Education. The purpose of the visit was to learn more about the state's implementation and oversight of charter schools, specifically focused on the role of state leadership and staff.

While visiting the state, site visits were also conducted at two local charter schools, Drew Charter School and Ivy Prep Charter School. Valuable insight was gained that will influence KDE's strategies for creating a KDE charter school division, as well as effectively supporting the implementation of HB 520 and the promulgation of administrative regulations.

Recognition of Commissioner's Student Council Members

The Commissioner's Student Council is a tremendous asset to the work of the agency. It provides an opportunity for our most important shareholders - our students - to provide insight and feedback on the state's K-12 strategic goals and initiatives. This year's student council met three times throughout the academic year and student members offered exceptional input on a variety of current work, including the proposed accountability model and the New Skills for Youth (NSFY) grant.

I want to publicly thank the students who have served in this capacity for the past year.

| Member | Representation |
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| Amrit Avula | Bowling Green High School (Bowling Green Independent) |
| Ethan Coleman | The Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics/Phelps High School (Pike County) |
| Eli Cooper | Daviess County High School |
| Devin Davis | Scott County High School |
| Laura Duke | iLEAD Academy/Owen County High School |
| Grayson Ford | Trigg County High School |
| Matthew Hylton | The Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics/Morgan County High School |
| Lillian Lester | Frederick Fraize High School (Cloverport Independent) |
| Shane Lowe | Kentucky School for the Blind/Central High School (Jefferson County) |
| Katie Mitchell | Madison Central High School/Madison County Area Technology Center (Madison County) |
| Sahar Mohammadzadeh | Paul Laurence Dunbar High School (Fayette County) |
| Roop Patel | Beechwood High School (Beechwood Independent) |
| Thomas Patrick | Magoffin County High School |
| Brenden Quirk | Eastern High School (Jefferson County) |

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| Nia Ralston | Kentucky School for the Deaf |
| Katherine Renick | Murray High School (Murray Independent) |
| Kaeli Riggs | Seneca High School (Jefferson County) |
| Carson Sims | Graves County High School |
| Heyna Suit | Fleming County High School |
| Allison Tu | duPont Manual High School (Jefferson County) |
| Joselin Cruz | Nelson County High School |
| Wesley Wei | Boyle County High School |
| Lauren Williams | Taylor County High School |