



Kentucky Department of **E D U C A T I O N**

Commissioner's Report June 2023

KSD and KSB Graduations

The last week of May, I had the honor (along with Chair Young) of attending the graduation ceremonies at the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD). These schools are very close to my heart. They serve students from across the Commonwealth, many of whom have faced additional challenges in their school career. They give their students the skills and competencies they will need to navigate and succeed in the world.

On May 23, nine students closed out their high school career at KSB. Among those graduates were Cory Wallace and Alex Hitzelberger, who were saying goodbye to a school they had attended since they started kindergarten in 2009. The mothers of the students said the school was like a family and helped provide their children with the skills they need to be successful in life.

The other graduates included: Caleb Adams of Shelbyville, Faith Cook of Louisville, Eric Echeverria of Louisville, London Henry of Louisville, TaMyah Jordan of Frankfort, Jontae Moore of Louisville and Erin Willoughby of Elizabethtown.

On May 26, I got a first-hand example of the kind of dedication these schools engender at the KSD graduation in Danville.

From 1937 to 1948, 94-year-old Beulah Hester attended KSD, but left before her senior year to start a family. Despite not finishing her coursework, she remained committed to KSD and was employed by the school as a dorm houseparent for 30 years until she retired in 1990. This year, she was finally awarded her honorary diploma. She was one of four students to walk the stage this year as the campus celebrates its 200th anniversary.

The other three graduates included: Micah Tucker of Irvine; Mulumba Asukulu of Lexington; Alex Frahlet of Elizabethtown and Beulah Hester of Danville.

KY Tech District of Area Technology Centers (ATCs)

KDE's fifty (50) state-operated Area Technology Centers (ATCs) have wrapped up a successful school year. The ATCs worked hard to promote career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) which offer students co-curricular resources and opportunities in leadership development through activities, community service, and competitions. ATC students participated in numerous regional and state competitions, and many are heading to nationals.

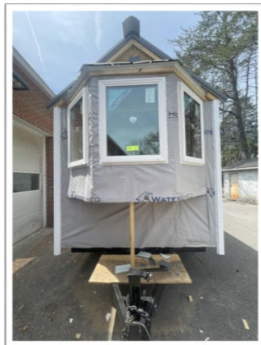
Murray/Calloway Co. ATC

Murray/Calloway Co. ATC and Calloway Co. High School have collaborated to offer a Technical English IV course that provides research, writing, marketing, design, and creativity instruction. Students in the class created items that were displayed at the 2nd Annual Marketplace event.



Lee Co. ATC

Lee Co. ATC students are completing a sixth tiny house which enables collaborative real-life experiences for students.



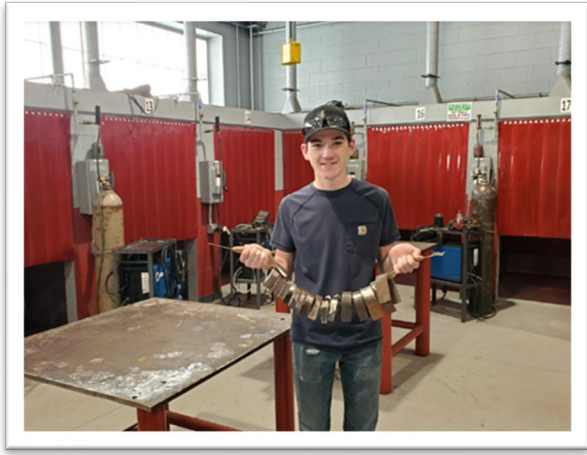
Monroe Co. ATC

Monroe Co. manufacturing and health sciences students recently visited Kingsford Charcoal/Manufacturing. Students received a guided tour of the facility and learned about charcoal manufacturing and job opportunities. Health Sciences students put their training into practice by measuring the vital signs of employees.



Breckinridge Co. ATC

Breckinridge Co. ATC senior, Noah Roberts is graduating with 12 welding certifications and was awarded Most Outstanding Welding Senior.



Letcher Co. ATC

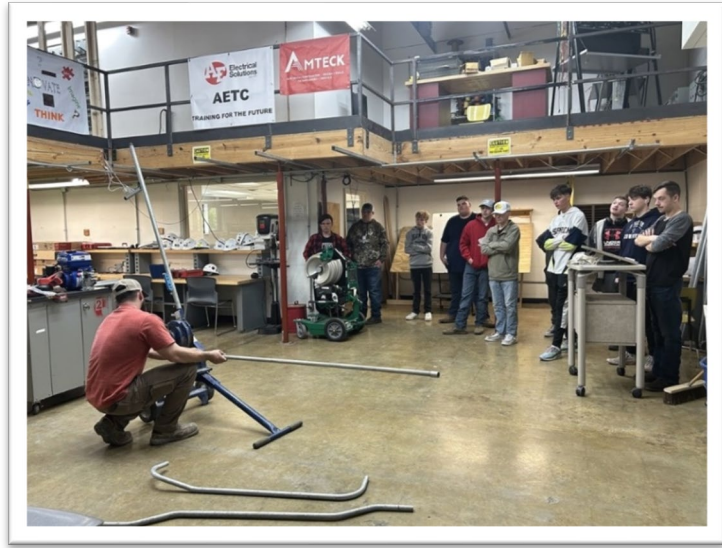
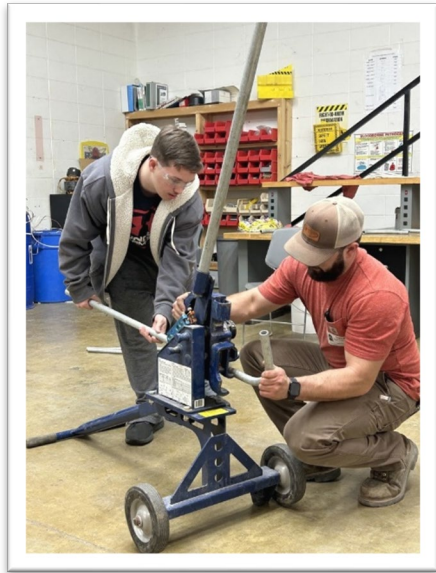
Letcher Co. ATC welding students completed a 7-foot-tall metal fabricated T-Rex as an “end-of-year” project. A CNC plasma table was used to cut out each piece individually. Students then polished the pieces and assembled the T-Rex like a puzzle. Elementary students, who are in the high school due to



flooding, have been able to enjoy the sculpture.

Carroll Co. ATC

Carroll Co. ATC electrical students recently learned about pipe bending from Synergy Electrical Services employees. The employees explained the types of bends, the appropriate materials for each, and when to use each bend.



The Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) is working to support ATCs as they provide engaging learning opportunities leading to increased achievement. They look forward to a restful summer and the beginning of a new school year.

Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD)

On April 28, following the news of Toyah Robey's retirement as principal of KSD, we immediately began the search for a new principal. I want to thank Toyah for her leadership the past six years. She has been a steady influence on KSD and I appreciate the service she has provided to the school and I know we all wish her well in this next phase of her life.

KDE and I are fully committed to the success of the KSD. It is very important to us that we incorporate student, staff, family and community voices throughout this process so that we can make informed decisions as we proceed with the search for our next principal.

This has truly been a team effort, as several KDE offices and divisions have been involved with this process, including the Division of Communications, and the Division of Strategic Planning & Research (Office of Commissioner); the Division of Resource Management (Office of Finance and Operations); the Office of Education Technology and the Office of Special Education and Early Learning.

Our process started with the posting of the job on April 28 and concluding with two community forums and the closure of a month-long community feedback survey.

We had two dozen people participate in the virtual forum on May 24 and 75 people participate in the May 31 forum at KSD. The information we gathered at these two forums and in the survey (75 responses) are now being condensed into major themes and used by the interview committee when considering candidates.

Videos from each of the forums have been posted on the KDE Media Portal. We plan to hold interviews the week of June 19, with a target start date of July 1.

KSD was officially recognized as receiving full [CEASD Accreditation](#) at the CEASD National Conference on April 20 in Riverside California. The accreditation is for 5 years and KSD received accreditation in all 12 CEASD standards. We are awaiting our final report, which will be shared with Commissioner Glass and Associate Commissioner Hylton prior to it being shared publicly.



KSD has been honoring our 200th year throughout the school year and the week of April 10th – 15th was filled with activities. KSD students performed plays and shared stories about the history of KSD, spent time listening to a panel of former KSD students about their life experiences at KSD and life experiences as a Deaf adult. We had visits from a four-time Deaf Olympic gold medalist, an analyst for the Department of Transportation in Washington D.C., an architect, a retired CIA agent, and Academy Award winner and Deaf actor, Troy Kotsur and his wife. Dr. Harvey Corson, former Deaf Superintendent from KSD, along with 7 other superintendents traveled to Kentucky to honor KSD and attend our Gala. The Art Center of the Bluegrass hosted a KSD student and alumni art exhibit that was open to the public.





KSD junior, Bentley White, has been accepted into this year's Governor's Scholars Program at Centre College. Junior, Shonda Barker, has been practicing administering shots as part of her nursing program through Trailblazers Academy.



Our students attended prom this year on campus with dinner prior at the Beaumont Inn. Alex Frailer, and Shonda Barker were named prom king and queen.



Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB)

Varsity forensics and swim teams competed at the North Central Association of Schools for the Blind Conference Championships at the Ohio State School for the Blind. The Varsity girls swim team placed 3rd.

At the end of April, Juniors and Seniors traveled to Washington, D.C. and Cincinnati for the Junior/Senior trips. In D.C., students toured the White House, several Smithsonian Museums and the National Mall. While in Cincinnati, students stayed at Great Wolf Lodge and visited the Cincinnati Zoo and the Underground Railroad Museum.



On May 3rd, the Kentucky Derby Festival Princesses visited students in classrooms.



Senior, TaMyah Jordan received the Unsung Hero Award from the Rotary Club.

Seniors, TaMyah Jordan and Eric Echeverria, were awarded Powered by Inclusion Scholarships.

On May 12th and 13th, ten students from across Kentucky were seen at the KSB Low Vision Clinic on KSB's campus.

KSB students completed Kentucky State Assessment testing by May 18th.

KSB's prom was held on May 18th.

Commissioner's Student Advisory Council

On May 22, we had the pleasure of announcing 25 new members for the 2023-2024 Commissioner's Student Advisory Council. The group meets regularly with KDE Leadership Staff and me, both in person and virtually, to discuss how decisions made at the state level are affecting students throughout Kentucky.

Members of the student advisory council offer valuable insights to us here at KDE and it is essential that students continue to have a meaningful and purposeful voice in decision making. Last year's council offered a list of key recommendations regarding school safety, and we look forward to hearing from and working with these exceptional student leaders in the year ahead as they work on another project – this one centering on student voice.

More than 100 students applied for a spot on the advisory council this year.

Membership consists of four positions from each of the Kentucky Supreme Court Districts; one student from the Kentucky School for the Blind; one student from the Kentucky School for the Deaf; and student members enrolled in career and technical education pathways. Additional information about the council is available on the KDE website.

These students join 12 returning members.