

## Commissioner's Report February 2025

We continue our “All In” approach toward education in the Commonwealth with a deliberate focus on community and stakeholder engagement. As part of efforts to reimagine the future of assessment and accountability in Kentucky, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) staff and I have embarked on a series of nine regional town halls starting in January.



Hosted in collaboration with our educational cooperatives, these town halls are designed to discuss vibrant learning, hear from local school districts about local accountability and to review the Kentucky United We Learn Council’s proposed assessment and accountability framework. Kentucky has numerous examples of districts embodying the Kentucky United We Learn Council’s vision—creating a more vibrant learning experience for every student; encouraging innovation in our schools, particularly around assessment; and a bold new future Kentucky’s schools through collaboration with our communities. I am encouraged by the productive conversations so far, and I look forward to continuing conversations at more town halls this month. I thank town hall attendees, which have included legislators, superintendents, educators and other community members.

In a similar outreach and listening model, KDE staff has engaged in a series of town halls dedicated to discussing the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding program. This funding program is a formula-driven allocation of state-provided funds to local school districts. KDE’s “SEEK Roadshow,” scheduled through February, has been an opportunity for superintendents, district finance officers and stakeholders to discuss issues related to school funding with KDE staff. As I shared with superintendents, board members and others last month, KDE is currently tracking an estimated SEEK shortfall of \$14 million for funding to public school districts provided in Kentucky statutes. KDE estimates an additional shortfall of \$28 million for funding to public school districts that is specifically conditioned on the availability of funds. We continue to work closely with the Office of State Budget Director and chairs of the Appropriations and Revenue committees in the House and Senate to explore funding options that may address this estimated shortfall and minimize impacts to Kentucky’s public schools.

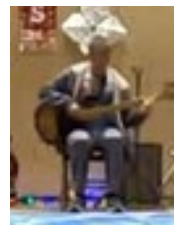
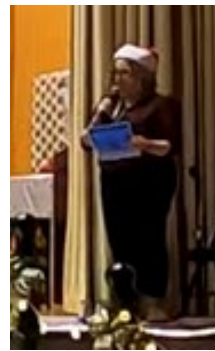
Lastly, I commend KDE staff for their continued commitment to delivering high-quality service and professionalism to Kentuckians. Late last year a footer was added to emails sent by KDE staff that quickly gauged external customer satisfaction with the support they received from KDE staff. The recent pulse checks are overwhelmingly positive and illustrate an “all in,” professional approach to our efforts at the department.

**Office of Special Education and Early Learning  
Division of State Schools Update – February 2025**

**KY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND (KSB)**

**Campus Happenings**

- i. The KSB staff and students attended the 25th Annual EnVISIONing the Future Day in Ashland on Dec. 4. This event brought students with blindness/visual impairments from our regional school districts together to meet peers with the same type of visual impairment, gain new concrete learning experiences and learn from each other.
- ii. The KSB Christmas Program was held on Dec. 20. It brought families and students together to celebrate the holidays by showcasing performances by the elementary students, 11th- and 12th-graders and the Arts and Humanities class. Santa stopped by to visit following the program.



- iii. KSB was selected to represent Kentucky in creating an ornament for the National Christmas tree. The ornament created by the students at KSB represents the heart and culture of the Commonwealth. The National Christmas tree's design incorporates elements from past years, while also striking a balance between tradition and innovation.



### **New Staff**

- i. N/A

### **Upcoming Events**

- i. The 2025 Kentucky Regional Braille Challenge will take place on Feb. 27 at KSB. This competition is open to all students who are braille readers in the state of Kentucky.
- ii. The National Abacus Bee will be held in March where several KSB students advanced from the regional competition in 2024.



## KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (KSD)

### Campus Happenings

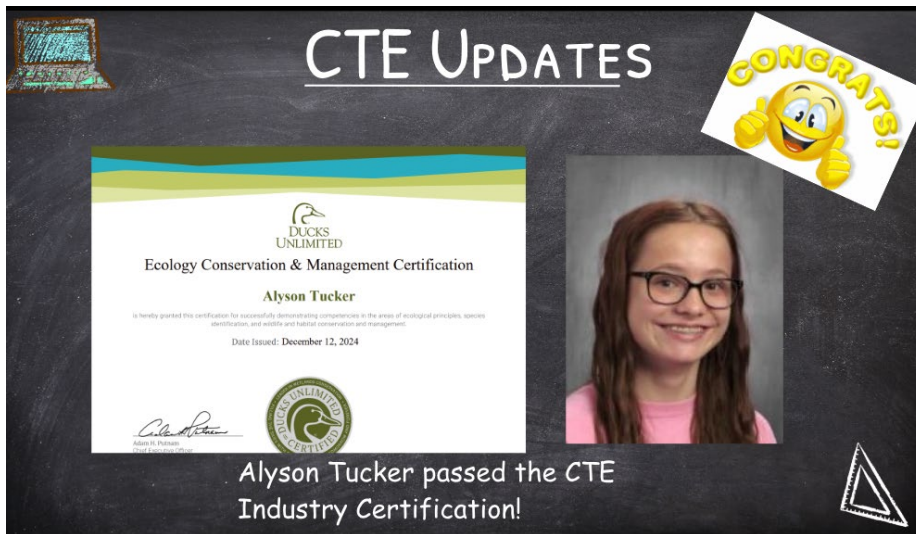
- i. KSD hosted the 50th Gallaudet & Clerc Banquet on Dec. 12 to celebrate the birthdays of Laurent Clerc and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and their contributions to Deaf education and culture in the U.S.



- ii. The Kentucky Center for School Safety Assessment took place on Dec. 16.
- iii. The KSD Middle School Colonels did an amazing job on the Christmas Around the World presentation on Dec. 18.



- iv. Senior Alyson Tucker passed her ecology conservation and management certification in Career and Technical Education.



- v. Junior Madison Adkins is this year's Youth Salute representative for KSD. This program honors high school juniors who have strong academic skills and demonstrate leadership abilities. The awards ceremony will be held at Eastern Kentucky University on May 4.

### **New Staff**

- i. Emily Cardis, School Psychologist
- ii. Rachel Followell, Senior Administrative Assistant
- iii. Kristy Daugherty, Senior Administrative Assistant
- iv. Sidnee Slone, Instructional Assistant

### **Recent/Upcoming Events**

- i. Special guests from KSD shared insights on how to be intentionally inclusive with the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing community at KDE's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Meeting on Friday, Jan. 17.
- ii. The boys and girls basketball teams represented KSD at this year's Mason Dixon tournament held in Baton Rouge Louisiana Jan 22-25.
- iii. KSD had two teams that qualified for the 2025 Middle School Robotics National Tournament: The VEX Challenge High School and Middle School Tournament for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, in Lagrange, Georgia! The event is being held Feb. 3-6.

## **KY Tech District of Area Technology Centers (ATCs) Commissioner Updates – February 2025**

The 50-state operated Area Technology Centers (ATCs) are *All In* to provide relevant and rigorous career and technical instruction to over 20,000 students from 120 of Kentucky's local school districts plus provide parent school choice to home and private schooled students.

The ATCs provide a holistic approach to education by working to promote the development of technical, academic and employability skills, postsecondary readiness, industry-recognized credential attainment, career and technical education (CTE) dual credit opportunities, work-based learning opportunities, and career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) that offer co-curricular resources and opportunities for students in the form of leadership development through activities, community service and competitions.

### Harrison County ATC

Three students from Harrison County Area Technology Center have been accepted to the prestigious Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education: Advanced Manufacturing Technician (FAMEAMT) program. The FAMEAMT offers a unique and valuable pathway for students to gain in-demand skills and real-world experience in the thriving field of advanced manufacturing. This program combines on-the-job training with rigorous academic coursework, allowing participants to earn an associate's degree while contributing to the success of local industries. We are confident that these young men will excel in this program and embark on fulfilling careers in this vital sector. We eagerly anticipate hearing about their future successes in this highly skilled, in-demand field!



### Letcher County ATC – Local District Work Based Learning Partnership

#### *Letcher County ATC Business Co-op Students Shine in Real-World Roles*

Letcher County ATC is thrilled to announce a new partnership between Letcher County Area Technology Center and Letcher County Public Schools. Four talented Business Program co-op students have been placed in the front offices of various grade schools across the Letcher County Public school district. These students are not only gaining invaluable real-world work experience but also apply their administrative knowledge and soft skills in a professional setting. From assisting with daily office operations to providing friendly, efficient service to students, parents, and staff, they are showcasing their training and adaptability in meaningful ways. We look forward to seeing how this partnership grows and how it will continue to benefit both students and the community!




## COMMUNITY PARTNER

We are thrilled to announce our partnership with Letcher County Public Schools, providing CO-OP students from the Letcher County Area Technology Center the opportunity to apply their skills in real-world settings within our school system. Keyara, McKenzie, Taya, and Kayla, students in our Office Technology program, are supporting our school secretaries by handling tasks like managing phone communications, organizing records, processing paperwork, and assisting with daily administrative needs. This hands-on experience allows them to strengthen essential business skills while making valuable contributions to our schools. We're excited to see these students grow through practical experience and positively impact their school communities!



### Breckinridge County ATC

Breckinridge County ATC is expanding immersive virtual reality (VR) technology to enhance their Business, Health Science and Law and Public Safety programs and pathways. In addition to new VR headsets, a new Law and Public Safety VR simulator is preparing both students and local law enforcement agencies. The VR simulator is a two-operator virtual reality de-escalation trainer. Students wear goggles and play the role of police officers responding to various law enforcement scenarios. The system allows trainers to change scenarios in real time based on



decisions and actions of role players. The system also maps locations and can be used to recreate actual locations.

#### Butler County ATC

Butler County Area Technology Center is proud to announce a remarkable achievement – the Health Science pre-nursing students have achieved a 100% pass rate of the State Registered Nursing Assistant (SRNA) industry certification exam. This accomplishment demonstrates the hard work, dedication, and exceptional skill development fostered through CTE programs.



#### Meade County College and Career Center (Meade Co. ATC)

Carpentry students at Meade County College and Career Center recently demonstrated exceptional teamwork by assisting a fellow student who had been injured in a car accident. Recognizing the need for home accessibility, the students took the initiative to design and construct a custom-built ramp for their classmate.

#### Wayne County ATC

The Wayne County ATC Industrial Maintenance Program recently received the opportunity to travel to Cooper Power plant and see how the hard-working crew of the Eastern Kentucky Power CO-OP keeps the lights on. Forty students were introduced to the power plant and its many processes including coal yard, electrical maintenance, instrument control and lab technician. In the tour students had the opportunity to experience coal pulverizers, burners, boilers and turbines in action. They were educated in the many careers it takes to keep a facility of this magnitude running at peak performance.