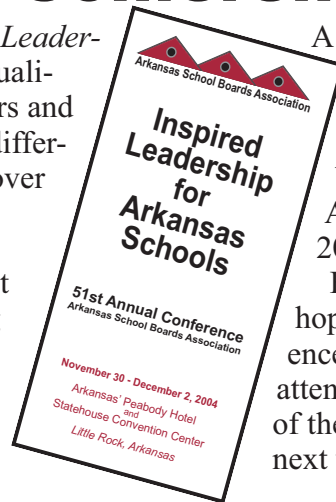


REPORTER

2004 Annual Conference is a Success

ASBA's annual conference, *Inspired Leadership for Arkansas Schools*, was an unqualified success. Nearly 600 board members and administrators attended more than 20 different sessions and conference activities over the three days. Conference evaluations are very positive, with some proclaiming this year's conference to be the best ever. ASBA is committed to providing the very best training and conference opportunities for school board members, so we hope that each successive conference is "the best ever."



A series of articles in this issue of the Reporter highlight the activities of the conference. Inside you'll find special emphasis on the conference's dynamic speakers, informative breakout sessions, actions of the Delegate Assembly, student performances, and ASBA's 2004 Boardmanship awards. For those who attended the conference, we hope this issue reminds you of your good conference experiences. For those who were unable to attend this year, we hope that it will give you a taste of the 2004 conference and whet your appetite for next year.

Delegate Assembly Completes Its Work

Contribution by Phyllis Stewart
Delegates from school boards across the state met on Dec. 1 to consider new Bylaws, elect officers for the upcoming year, and consider ASBA Beliefs and Resolutions intended to outline ASBA's positions on a variety of education issues.

Electing Officers

ASBA's Secretary-treasurer and President-elect left the ASBA Board in recent months. The peculiar circumstance, in which two of ASBA's five offices were vacant, led the Delegate Assem-

See Delegate... page 8

ASBA Scholarship Deadline Nears

Each year ASBA offers five scholarships to children of school board members. The ASBA Educational Foundation will be awarding cash scholarships to students who will begin their post-secondary education in 2005.

To qualify for the scholarship program, applicants must be sons or daughters of Arkansas school board members. The qualifying school board member-parent must be serving on his or her local school board on Sept. 1 of the school year

See Scholarship... page 2

In This Issue:

- Arkansas Schools' Latest Report Card
- New ASBA Officers and Directors
- 2004 ASBA Conference Highlights
- Greenwood School Board in the Limelight
- ASBA Boardmanship Awards
- 2005 Legislative Session Updates Available
- Non-renewals and Reductions in Force for the Coming Year

Dr. Dan Award for Outstanding Service

Announced at the annual convention, the 2004 “Dr. Dan” award was bestowed on Troy Buck of the Centerpoint School District. The Dr. Daniel L. Pilkinton Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education is the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the Arkansas School Boards Association.

Mr. Buck has been a teacher for 45 years, but he has been far more than just a teacher. Ask any of the hundreds of

people who have known his patient guidance inside and outside the classroom. Ask members of the community, where he is a certified first responder, where he took a leadership role in restoring the community center, where he helped to establish a fire department and community water system, where he helped establish and build an ambulance service facility, and where he continues to feed the elderly and visit them in their homes, in the hospital, and in nursing homes.

An agriculture teacher, he has been recognized as sponsor of one of the top FFA programs in the nation and has been twice recognized by his peers as Outstanding Teacher. His is the largest FFA chapter in the State of Arkansas. He is a former president of the Arkansas Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association and has served that organization as Legislative Liaison,

where he helped influence many pieces of legislation. He also has served as a mentor for many young, beginning agri instructors.

Perhaps one of the most interesting of his contributions was establishing a school-supported meat lab, the only one of its kind in the state. Because of that, he



Mr. Troy Buck (l) receives the Dr. Dan Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education

has trained many meat cutters who have gone on to make a living in the trade. The community benefits from that, too, because he often cooks for and his FFA students

serve food at many local and civic banquets and other functions. Board members from Region 10 may remember his outstanding fare at the 2000 regional meeting, held at Centerpoint.

Marion Fletcher, who is the State FFA Advisor at the Department of Workforce Education, said this:

“Mr. Buck is one of the most community-minded individuals I know. I have observed him taking dollars from his own pockets for various functions. He is a true leader and friend of our young people and the people of his community. You can call on him day or night and he will be there to assist. Although he is deserving of many awards, Troy Buck will never toot his own horn.”

So, ASBA is glad to toot the horn for Mr. Buck as the 2004 recipient of the Dr. Dan Award.

Scholarship Deadline Nears

Continued from page 1

in which the grant is awarded. One scholarship will be given in each of the state’s four congressional districts, and one scholarship will be awarded at large.

The \$600 scholarships will be one-time grants to freshmen entering Arkansas two-year or four-year institutions of higher learning in Arkansas. The scholarships will be awarded based on (1) academic performance, (2) demonstrated leadership, and (3) demonstrated need.

To apply for the scholarship, students and school board parents must complete and submit a scholarship application. It consists of a scholarship application form; three letters of recommendation; a counselor-completed form confirming the student’s academic performance; the student’s official transcript; a 500-word essay written by the student; and other pertinent information that demonstrates the student’s academic potential, leadership ability or financial need.

A selection committee composed of ASBA Regional Directors or their designees will review the submissions and select the scholarship winners. Recipients will be announced in May.

The deadline for applying for this year’s scholarships is April 1, 2005. To obtain an application, download the form and directions from the ASBA web site at www.arsba.org, or call the ASBA office at (800) 482-1212.

Greenwood School Board Excels with Training and Experience

“The one thing you need to know about this board is: kids are first,” begins Greenwood board member Floyd Webb when talking about his experiences on the board. “You’ve got to have that commitment, otherwise you won’t be a good board member.” Having served 16 years on the board, Webb would know.

The Greenwood School Board was recognized by ASBA as the State’s only new Master Board in 2004. Although this particular award acknowledged the board’s distinguished training record and service to ASBA, the term “master board” could just as easily apply to the board’s operations and commitment to student achievement.



Greenwood School Board *Front:* Clema Jean Nichols, Mary Ann Sandifer, President Ruth McConnell; *Back:* James Cox, Floyd Webb, Larry Rhodes, Paul McCollum

See *Greenwood...* page 11

School Board Members: Have You Filed Your Annual Statement of Financial Interest?

Elected officials in Arkansas are under more public scrutiny and subject to more requirements than ordinary citizens. Arkansas law and the Arkansas Ethics Commission require elected officials, including school board members and superintendents, to file a Statement of Financial Interest for each calendar year. The Statement is intended to disclose any potential conflicts of interest that public officials may have concerning their official duties.

The Arkansas Ethics Commission provides a form for school officials to complete. School board members and superintendents are

required to complete, notarize, and submit the forms to their local county clerk by Jan. 31 of each year. Once filed with the clerk, the forms become a public record.

The Statement requires school officials to disclose in broad categories their sources of income and business interests. Statement of Financial Interest Forms and instructions are available for downloading from www.arkansasethics.com or from www.arsba.org.

If you have questions about the form or the filing, contact the Arkansas Ethics Commission at (501)324-9600 or (800)422-7773.

School Board BRIEFCASE

- ▲ Jan. 31 deadline for filing Statement of Financial Interest
- ▲ Update your E-mail address to receive ASBA notices (*see page 15*)
- ▲ April 16-19, 2005; NSBA Conference, San Diego, CA
- ▲ March 3-6, 2005; ASBA Board Academy
- ▲ July 24-27, 2005; NSBA Southern Region Conference, Charleston, SC
- ▲ April 1 deadline for ASBA scholarship applications

ASBA Recognizes the Outstanding Among Us

ASBA encourages board members to enhance their personal boardmanship skills and to promote their local boards and ASBA. ASBA certifies the completion of in-service training and recognizes other activities by members that promote good school governance.

Each year at the annual conference, ASBA recognizes members for their boardmanship achievements. Boards are recognized for collectively receiving training and serving ASBA and their communities. Individual ASBA members are recognized for their training and other service activities.

The following boards and individuals deserve special commendation for their efforts:

2004 Pinnacle Award Recipients

The Pinnacle Award is reserved for the highest achievement among individual board members. Congratulations to the following members who were recognized during the annual conference with an attractive award and an ovation from the entire membership for having accrued at least 200 hours of boardmanship credit and having served ASBA in other ways.



Melvin Case,
Stuttgart



Joyce Holloway,
Pine Bluff



Katherine Mitchell, Little Rock, receives the Pinnacle Award from ASBA President-elect Kathy McFetridge



Ruthie Johnson,
Star City



Johnnie Lockley,
DeWitt



Rev. Jerry Bishop,
Nevada



Donna Braymer,
Harrison



Doyle McDonald,
South Conway County



John Young,
Two Rivers

2004 Master Board Members

The Master Board Award recognizes those members who have earned 50 hours in ASBA's Boardmanship Program. Congratulations to these individuals who have worked hard to achieve this level of recognition.



Back (L to R):
Randy Sellers, Van-Cove;
Bill Barrett, Van-Cove;
Doug Efurd, Mansfield;
William Watson, Magnolia;
Curtis Shandle, Pottsville

Front (L to R):
Debbie Moore, Dover;
Sandra Boone, Watson Chapel;
Sheila Worthington, Jackson Co.;
Bob Byrd, Mountain Home

Back (L to R):
James McMahan, Blytheville;
Tommy Bennett, Jr., Blytheville;
Mike Holder, Mena;
Joe Beene, Centerpoint;
Damon Daniels, Centerpoint

Front (L to R):
Charles Daniel, Watson Chapel;
Rosezeata Kittrell, McCrory;
Clema Jean Nichols, Greenwood;
Gary Masner, West Memphis



Back (L to R):
James Sorrells, Russellville;
Ed Lacy, Heber Springs;
Beverly Golden, Wonderview;
Chuck Browder, Valley Springs

Front (L to R):
Lawrence Hudson, Dumas;
Fred Avery, Valley Springs;
Robert Boxley, Marked Tree;
Elaine Sullivan, S. Conway County



ASBA Conference Speakers Shared a Wealth of Insights

ASBA was fortunate to feature several nationally-known speakers during the conference sessions and luncheon.

In the first general session Jamie Vollmer, education advocate, businessman and director of the Iowa Business and Education Roundtable, shared how he overcame his early beliefs that schools and school boards were impediments to education reform and that schools should be run like businesses.

After much study and several years of experience among educators, he recognized that society has put ever-increasing expectations on the education system—in effect, society is expecting schools to rear America's children. Data and observations indicate that schools are actually doing a better job than at any time in our history.

Vollmer cautioned, however,



Jamie Vollmer

that the education system is flawed because it holds all students to tight timelines—50-minute classes, six-hour school days, nine-month school years—that allow fast learners to achieve, while unfairly penalizing slower learners. He en-



Jim Kern

couraged boards to be mindful of this inherent unfairness and to try to adjust school calendars and schedules to be fairer to all learners.

Inspirational speaker Jim Kern delighted and entertained at the ASBA Luncheon with his anecdotes and stories about his children and others he has met through the years. His stories reminded everyone in the room that meeting others' emotional and social needs is paramount to keeping ourselves, our families, and our society healthy.

There were times when all 600 people in the ballroom laughed and giggled about the funny moments in life that touch everyone; and there were times when there wasn't a dry eye in the room as we contemplated the poignant reminders of how much love and caring mean

to us all. Everyone was touched by Jim's message that our most important connections to kids are "heart to heart."

In the third general session, NSBA President George McShan shared his personal story about how the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision of 1954 affected his life as a young man in a segregated school system. And while new opportunities enabled him to receive an education and become successful, he cautioned that we have not yet met the full promise of the Brown decision.

McShan proposed that one way to fully realize the potential is for schools and communities to collaborate more effectively, to understand the legacy of racism in our schools and society, and to work together to ensure that every student takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Brown decision.



George McShan

The Latest Report Card on Arkansas Schools

Whether it's Arkansas' economic environment, health, social standing, or schools, the state is regularly being scrutinized and graded by various organizations. *Education Week* recently commissioned a study of states' efforts to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law and to improve the quality of education. The study is a well-designed snapshot of states' education positions worthy of a close look by any public policymaker or school leader. The entire study and report, *Quality Counts 2005: No Small Change – Targeting Money Toward Student Performance*, is available at: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2005/01/06/index.html>.

Following is an excerpt: Arkansas' Report Card.

Standards and Accountability

The state has clear and specific standards in English, mathematics, and science, although the English and math standards are not clear and specific at the high school level. The standards in social studies/history are not clear and specific at the elementary, middle, or high school level.

Moreover, the state often lacks tests to match its standards. That gap contributes to the state's merely average grade. For example, Arkansas has no standards-based science or social studies tests in any grade.

On the plus side, Arkansas uses a variety of test items at all grade levels. Assessments measure student knowledge with multiple-choice and short-answer items. The state also uses extended-response questions on English exams.

Arkansas uses its testing data to track school performance and hold schools accountable for student achievement. The state publishes report cards with test data and assigns school ratings based, in part, on test results. Low-performing and failing schools receive technical assistance and also are subject to sanctions.

The state does not have cash rewards for high-performing or improving schools.

Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality

Arkansas has established a comprehensive system of teacher testing that continues after teachers enter the classroom. The state requires its prospective teachers to pass basic-skills, subject-knowledge, and subject-specific-pedagogy tests to earn their beginning licenses. When those teachers pass the tests and take over their own classrooms, they enter an induction phase that can last from one to three years and is financed by the state at \$2,000 per teacher per year.

During induction, each new teacher is assigned a mentor. Induction culminates with a Praxis III performance assessment that measures the classroom skills of novice teachers through direct observations by trained assessors, interviews, and examples of classroom work. Once teachers pass the performance assessment, they exchange their initial teaching certificates for more advanced licenses.

In emergencies, Arkansas issues waivers that allow districts to assign teachers to subjects or grade

levels for which they are not qualified.

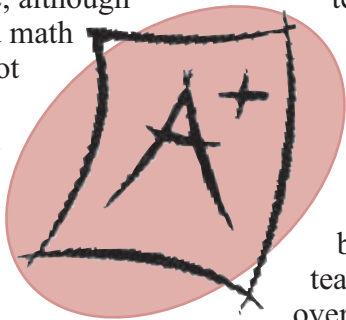
The state is one of only three, however, that require schools to notify all parents when unlicensed or out-of-field teachers are assigned to their children's classrooms. Most states have such a requirement in place only for schools receiving federal Title I money for disadvantaged students.

In addition, the state has established an alternative path to teaching called the Non-Traditional Licensure Program. Participants complete a two-year program that begins two weeks before they start teaching. They are supported by mentors throughout the program.

School Climate Background data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress place Arkansas near the bottom in several categories. A relatively low percentage of students attend schools where officials report that absenteeism, tardiness, and lack of parent involvement are

not problems at all or are minor problems. That result lowers the state's grade.

Arkansas gains points for having a statewide system of open enrollment and a charter school law, al-



Vital Statistics	
Public schools	1,129
Public school teachers	30,330
Pre-K-12 students	450,985
Annual pre-K-12 expenditures	\$2.8 billion
Minority students	29.5%
Children in poverty	22%
Students with disabilities	12.7%
English-language learners	3.4%

Delegate Assembly Completes Its Work

Continued from page 1

bly to approve a special, one-year-only election of officers in which 2004 Past-president Leland Wells (Bradford) and 2004 President Jack Gardner (Centerpoint) will serve in the same offices for 2005. Kathy McFetridge (Springdale) became President-elect for 2005. The Delegate Assembly then elected Amy Daniel (Benton) as Vice-president and Perry Newman (Lavaca) as Secretary-treasurer for 2005.

New Board Members

Carolyn Lewis (Conway) was appointed to replace Amy Daniel as the ASBA Region 8 representative on the Board of Directors. Ruth McConnell (Greenwood) was appointed to replace Perry Newman as the Region 4 director. They join recently-elected Ron McNair (Region 2, Alpena), Dr. Rick Stripling (Region 3, Nettleton), and Jerry Don Woods (Region 5, Dardanelle) as the newest members of the ASBA board.

New Bylaws

Acknowledging the diligent work of the ASBA Bylaws Committee, led by Region 1 Director Cathy Allen (Rogers), the Delegate Assembly unanimously adopted ASBA's proposed bylaws. The new Bylaws streamline ASBA's governance by combining the Constitution and Bylaws into a single document and by modifying language to be more precise. The new Bylaws are posted on the ASBA website, www.arsba.org, for members' reference. You may request a printed copy of the Bylaws by contacting ASBA at (800)482-1212.



ASBA 2005 Officers Back(L-R): Leland Wells, Past President; Jack Gardner, President; Perry Newman, Secretary-Treasurer. Front(L-R): Amy Daniel, Vice-President; Kathy McFetridge, President-elect.

Beliefs and Resolutions

Each year the delegate assembly outlines ASBA's positions on many education issues. After some discussion regarding charter schools under the governance of local school boards, the assembly approved 64 resolutions that help ASBA communicate our purpose to the state and help guide ASBA's actions in support of public education. A copy of the 2004 Beliefs and Resolutions are included as a tear-out section in this issue.

Welcome ASBA's Newest Directors



Region 2 Director
Ron McNair,
Alpena
Elected



Region 3 Director
Dr. Rick Stripling,
Nettleton
Elected



Region 4 Director
Ruth McConnell,
Greenwood
Appointed



Region 5 Director
Jerry Don Woods,
Dardanelle
Elected



Region 8 Director
Carolyn Lewis,
Conway
Appointed

Thanks to ASBA Conference Speakers

ASBA thanks the many speakers and presenters who volunteered their expertise and ideas with school board members and administrators at the annual conference. They are truly our partners in improving education in Arkansas.



Master Board Members...

Continued from page 5

Master Board Members

Back (L to R):
 Robert Parker, Mountain Pine;
 Brian Proffitt, Marion;
 Steve Dixon, Mineral Springs.

Front (L to R):
 Maurice Porchia, Stephens;
 James Lewis, Sulphur Rock;
 Carl Frank, Glen Rose.



2004 Master Board Members

(not pictured)

Weldon Garrison	Ashdown
William Carlile	Batesville
Phil Jones	Benton
Floyd Parnell	Booneville
Lovie Wofford	Brinkley
Danna Schneider	Clarksville
Sam Counce	DeWitt
Linda Mullins	Emerson-Taylor

Wesley Stevens	Farmington
Chuck Kauffman	Fordyce
Rodney Strickland	Hampton
Danny Watson	Hope
Stephen Ford	Huntsville
Benny Cox	Lakeside - Lake Village
Earl Hunton	Lincoln Consolidated
Don Tackett	Malvern
Gene Bennett	Marmaduke

Mark Bles	Mountain Pine
Doris Chancellor	Ouachita
Lawrence Bearden	Smackover
David Van Bebber	Springdale
Erma Brown	Stephens
Carol Horton	Turrell
Kevin Bell	Van Buren
James R. Scott	Waldron
Marcus Burris	White Hall

2004 Master Board

The Master Board Award recognizes school boards in which every member has earned at least 50 hours in ASBA's Boardmanship Program, have served the association in other ways, and rank among the top 5% of all boards in total training.

Greenwood School Board

James Cox	Mary Ann Sandifer
Paul McCollom	Larry Rhodes
Ruth McConnell	Floyd Webb
Clema Jean Nichols	

(See related article, page 3)

2004 Outstanding Boards

The Outstanding Board Award recognizes those boards in which every member has earned at least 25 hours in ASBA's Boardmanship Program, have served the association in other ways, and are among the top 10% of boards in total training.

Arkadelphia School Board

Karen Arnold	Kenneth Harris, Jr.
Berry Bishop	Tim Knight
Wes Sullivan	Nell Everett
Mary Jane Cooper	

Centerpoint School Board

Joe Beene	Don Lane
Damon Daniels	Julie Owens
Jack Gardner	Jeff Sandage
Nan Kirksey	

Dollarway School Board

Cathy Hunt	Harold Tisdale
Robert Morehead	Carroll Wolfe
George Steps	

Pottsville School Board

Jerry Akin	David Potts
Jerry Clair	Curtis Shankle
Clint Hull	

Turrell School Board

Carol Horton	Brian Rains
Delois Jackson	Bernice White
Chester McGee	

Wynne School Board

Gene Boeckmann	John G. Smith
Carol Brown	Melvin Taylor
Robert A. Hayes, Jr. M.D.	

Greenwood - 2004 Master Board

Continued from page 3

When asked about the accomplishments of the board, Greenwood Superintendent Dr. Kay Johnson, who attended and taught in the Greenwood schools, praised the board and the community. "This is an outstanding board. They understand their role as a board and they take it seriously. They have children and grandchildren in the schools, so they're very connected. They recognize the importance of engaging students, and they make that their focus. The community strongly supports the schools and the board."

When asked about how the board encourages such community support, President Ruth McConnell notes, "Everything we do is 'above board.' Everything is out in the open. We have open meetings with the community." For example, two years ago the board and the superintendent initiated a planning session with the community to expand the schools. "We got business people, parents, and the whole community to discuss the schools' needs. Everyone on the committee marked their highest priorities, and the school board has followed those priorities since then."

When asked about the relationship between the board and the community, 10-year board member Paul McCollum acknowledged that trust between the community and the board is mutual. "Greenwood is a close-knit community with a long history of support for its schools. We don't take it for granted, though. All the board members share the commitment to help kids and keep Greenwood schools the best. That just helps build more community support."

"If you ever give the public a bad taste of things, it will be real hard to get their trust back. We work hard to keep their trust," adds the Board's

junior member, Clema Jean Nichols. "Even the local press supports us," adds McConnell. "I don't remember a negative article in the local paper in my seven years on the board."

Dr. Johnson notes that the district has undertaken a series of new building projects and new programs in recent years. "The board is

conscious of many needs of the children in our community. They see that students need new opportunities, and the board is providing outlets for those students."

The district has built three schools, enlarged their PE facilities, built a new performing arts center for vocal music, drama, and band, and is planning a new high school cafeteria. "Plus we've developed new programs like ROTC, robotics, special education mental health services, a bowling team and a chess club," notes Webb. "We want to provide the best facilities, the best teachers, and the best programs for our kids."

One particular strength noted by Dr. Johnson is the diversity of the board. It includes a retired teacher, a retired business manager who is a wiz with numbers, an attorney, a former engineer and now real estate agent, a former school maintenance worker, a health center supervisor, and a manager for large home and building supply center. According to Webb, the diversity leads to better decisions. "Along with Dr. Johnson, the board members help each other understand issues from all sides.

None of us could understand it all on our own."

"And when we're conducting business," adds Nichols, "we recognize that we're only one vote each. We don't come in with an agenda, we vote—remembering that our bottom line is student achievement." Paul McCollum agreed, "Even

when we disagree, we do what's best for the kids."

When asked if the training that garnered them the 2004 Master Board award plays a role in their district, all agreed that it does. "It absolutely translates to what we do," says McCollum. "We're lay people, and knowledge of the law, and understanding ways to operate as a school board helps us tremendously."

"The training helps everyone keep up with new rules and standards. We take that information and try to stay on the cutting edge," includes Webb.

Adds Nichols, "We try to apply the training to our work as a board. For example, we brought back new information from the bus safety breakout at the annual conference, and we've already made changes to our out-of-state insurance coverage." McCollum, concluded "If it wasn't for the training and educational programs from the ASBA, we wouldn't be the board we are."

It's easy to understand how and why the Greenwood School Board earned the Master Board distinction for 2004 according to board president McConnell. "We all share the same attitude—that's *our* school."

Does your board have a story to tell? Contact James Gilson at jgilson@arsba.org or (800)482-1212 to share your story in the Reporter.



Greenwood Superintendent,
Dr. Kay Johnson

JACK GARDNER, ASBA PRESIDENT**What's Old is New Again...
and
Thoughts for the Moment**

It's a bit of a surprise to be writing this column. I thought I had written my last column back in November, near the end of my term as Arkansas School Boards Association President. However, as many of you are aware, two of the ASBA officers' positions became unexpectedly vacant near the end of the year, and at the annual conference the Delegate Assembly asked me and Past-President Leland Wells to retain our positions for one more year to help

maintain the stability of the board. I am honored to be asked, and I'm honored to serve. I intend to use my experience as a board member and officer to its full effect in the upcoming year.

More than ever I believe in and am committed to the work of the Arkansas School Boards Association. In these trying times in which schools and school boards are the subject of ever-increasing rules, requirements, and accountability, it's more important than

ever that school boards and advocates for students stand together to have a strong voice as American education evolves at the fastest pace ever.

Our two new officers and five new board members are all up to the task of leading ASBA in these changing times. And with the other ASBA board members, I thank you for your unselfish service to the cause of public educa-

See New Again... page 14

DAN FARLEY, ASBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**Financing Education in Arkansas:
Let's Look at the Big Picture**

A new year, a new legislative session. This one, however, has a new dilemma to address: facilities. The cost figures are huge and the solution is yet to be decided. For sure, that will be a primary focus of this legislative session. The Governor's agenda has been referred to as the Three Hs—health, highways, and higher education. Facilities are noticeably absent from the priority list.

Everyone says there is no appetite for a tax increase. I'm sure that's true. No one wants to pay higher taxes, but everyone expects his or her needs to be met. We

want a more educated citizenry and we want to promote economic development, but we seem stuck. The former could help beget the latter. When our education level rises as a state, we will see more interest from economic developers. We could also see smaller numbers in our jails and prisons. The money saved from that alone could bolster education significantly.

While lawmakers aren't interested in creating any new taxes, it might not be a bad idea to examine how we might shore up the present system. We are at about

the mid-range among states in our income tax, which is probably about right. We are fourth or sixth, depending on which statistics you use, in sales tax—and that's a regressive tax that hits hardest those least able to afford it. Finally, we are 48th in property tax. And that's where, as a state, we need to take a serious look. Of course, that would require a constitutional amendment put forth to a vote of the people.

Now I realize that there are lots of folks who think we shouldn't

See Financing... page 14

REPORTER

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Championing excellence in public education through training, advocacy, and service for local school boards.

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President

Jack Gardner, Centerpoint

President-elect

Kathy McFetridge, Springdale

Vice President

Amy Daniel, Benton

Secretary-Treasurer

Perry Newman, Lavaca

Past President

Leland Wells, Bradford

Region 1

Cathy Allen, Rogers

Region 2

Ron McNair, Alpena

Region 3

Rick Stripling, Nettleton

Region 4

Ruth McConnell, Greenwood

Region 5

Jerry Don Woods, Dardanelle

Region 6

Ray Edwards, White County

Region 7

Gene Boeckmann, Wynne

Region 8

Carolyn Lewis, Conway

Region 9

Johnny Lockley, DeWitt

Region 10

Vonda West Cranford, Malvern

Region 11

Dr. Chuck Kauffman, Fordyce

Region 12

Jerry Bishop, Nevada County

Region 13

Wayne Gibson, El Dorado

Region 14

Brian Brown, Warren

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Carol Brown, Wynne

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Jason Sylvester

Krista Glover

Angela Ellis

Amanda Mahar

PAUL BLUME, ASBA GENERAL COUNSEL

Personnel Stuff for the Coming Season

Aside from all of the other stuff you have to deal with this winter/spring, you will be facing gobs of personnel issues, from the superintendent on down. Let's take a look at that, including the mostly-consolidation-related problem of (creepy organ music here) reduction-in-force (RIF).

First, I don't know when you will be reading this. James Gilson, the Reporter editor/writer/nag-for-people-who-don't-get-their-columns-written-on-time-guy, is trying to get this issue out, despite my best efforts. So, the superintendent stuff might be irrelevant for this year by the time you read this. Save it in your wallet or purse for next January.

Most schools deal with their superintendent's contract in January. There's nothing in the law that requires this, although some schools have a policy that requires that it be "considered," or some such, in January. Regardless, it's sort of traditional in Arkansas to deal with it then. You may do so, but you don't have to. If you are concerned about your CEO's performance, put it off until you have a better idea of how he will perform after you have told him what the concerns are. That gives him—and you—more time to see what can be done to correct any deficiencies.

Of course, if his contract will expire in June, your superintendent will be looking for a new job if he doesn't have the security of a contract extension. If he has another year or two on his contract, the insecurity won't be as acute. Use your best judgment here. However, if your policies require that the board consider the superintendent's contract in January, at least put something in the minutes, such as tabling consideration for later, so that the policy provision will have been observed.

As we've mentioned before, the board does not have to renew teachers' or full-time non-certified employees' contracts. That's done automatically, by operation of law. The exceptions are probationary (that is, first-year) non-certified folks and part-time non-certified (that is, non-certified employees who work less than 20 hours per week). Regardless, most of your employees want that vote to renew their contracts, just to make them feel more secure and to let them know that they'll have a job to pay for that new

Contact ASBA

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www.arsba.org

See *Personnel Stuff...* page 15

Financing Education...

Continued from page 12

pay any property tax, but historically, it is the property tax that has provided a large chunk of the funds needed for public schools—not just in Arkansas, but throughout the United States. If the property tax situation could be successfully addressed, perhaps it would enable a reduction in the sales tax, particularly on food.

The objective would be to more nearly balance the three principle legs of the tax stool. The burden would then be shared more equitably and it might actually result in less financial crises for the state.

I'm not advocating for higher taxes, but the fact is we live in a society that has come to take for granted what tax dollars support. If we value our schools, our highways and streets, our libraries and parks, water and sewer systems, and a host of other services, we need to realize that it is through taxes that we got them. Living in a democracy brings a wealth of privileges, but it also requires some responsibility on all of us—the consumers of all those tax-supported things.

Convincing Arkansans to support changes in property tax laws will be a tall order, but it is an effort that can only benefit the public school students in our state. If the legislature proposes a constitutional amendment for the 2006 election, it will be up to all of us (who work for and care deeply about public schools) to help educate our friends and neighbors about the issue. Without seriously looking at the property tax, I fear a continuing series of financial crises will continue to plague us from one session to the next.

New Again...

Continued from page 12

tion. I encourage each of you to take the time to meet and know your regional director, so that he or she may truly understand and represent your interests.

While reflecting on the recent Martin Luther King holiday and the impact of Dr. King's legacy on the world, I was reminded again of the nobility of our cause: excellent public education for all children.

Dr. King's life was devoted to ensuring equal opportunity for everyone in America. In his lifetime there were many obstacles to overcome, including unfair social attitudes, unfair educational opportunities, and unfair laws. We are all proud that our nation has made much progress on these fronts. Many doors have been opened. Many more opportunities are available.

We all acknowledge that we have not yet fulfilled the promise of Dr. King's dream as our own collective dream of equal opportunities for everyone. The best way to continue expanding opportunities for everyone is through public education.

Public education is the great equalizer. Public education is a racial and social equalizer in that it brings diverse parents, communities, and students together for a common cause; it is the great economic equalizer in that it gives all willing students the foundation for a better, more productive life.

So, as I go through the upcoming months considering how to improve public education and raise student achievement in my own community, I'll remind myself that it all plays a part in a much bigger dream – the dream of equal opportunity for all. I hope you will too.

Job Bulletin

A service of ASBA

Superintendent, Dierks

Qualifications: State Certification, and experience desired

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2005

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Gordon Allen, Supt.; P.O. Box 124; Dierks, AR 71833
Tel: (870)286-2191

Superintendent, Clinton

Qualifications: Certification

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2005

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Randy McCaslin, Board President; 851 Yellowjacket Lane; Clinton, AR 72031
Tel: (501)745-6000, ext #4

Superintendent, Sheridan

Qualifications: State Certification, and experience preferred

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2005

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: David Robinson; 400 N. Rock St.; Sheridan, AR 72150
Tel: (870)942-3135

Superintendent, Gravette

Qualifications: Minimum Master's Degree, eligible for certification

Appl. Deadline: Feb. 28, 2005

Commences: July 1, 2005

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Carla Hubanks, Board Secretary; 609 Birmingham St. SE; Gravette, AR 72736
Tel:(479)787-4107

Application: www.lions.k12.ar.us

Send advertising requests to jgilson@arsba.org, or (800)482-1212

Keeping Up with the Legislature

It promises to be another busy legislative session for education and for schools. The Facilities Study must be addressed, and there are already a stream of education bills being introduced in the General Assembly.

ASBA staff monitor legislation and advocate for students, schools, and school boards on your behalf.

The ASBA webpage will be updated daily throughout the legislative session to keep ASBA members apprised of important education-related legislation. ASBA members can follow links to receive special, timely E-mail notices from ASBA throughout the session.

Keep up with the latest goings-on by consulting ASBA's "Legislative Update" at www.arsba.org

Personnel...

Continued from page 13

car they just bought. It doesn't hurt anything.

HOWEVER, be sure that, if you have some problems with one of your employees, that you DO NOT vote not to renew his contract. You can't do that; and, if the superintendent wants to recommend dismissal, wait for him to do that. If he wants to consider non-renewal of an employee's contract after the meeting where employees are renewed, he can leave that person off of the list for renewal. Never, ever, vote not to renew an employee's contract without all of the procedural niceties having been observed; and, if you don't have a formal recommendation before you, you don't have the power to dismiss an employee. If you vote not to renew anyway, you're making it much more difficult to dismiss that employee at some later time.

O. . . kay. Now for RIFs:

Superintendent, W. Yell County

Qualifications: Certification

Appl. Deadline: Resume accepted until Feb. 10, 2005

Commences: July 1, 2005

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Hoover Willard, Board President; P.O. Box 186; Belleville, AR 72824

Tel: (479)493-2471

RIFs are procedurally no different than any other non-renewal. The superintendent and the board have to go through the steps set out in the applicable law and your policies (if any). The only difference is that, in a RIF, the reason for the proposed dismissal has nothing to do with the employee's performance. Instead, the dismissal is based on the fact that, for whatever reason, you have too many employees for too few jobs.

For heaven's sake, do not vote to eliminate positions before you have dismissed the employee through the RIF. That is, don't let your superintendent or principal recommend that a position be eliminated if the employee in that position has not gone through the dismissal process. If the position is eliminated before the employee has a chance for a hearing, there won't be much to talk about when he does get his hearing: his job will be gone already. Makes for a tough argument that you're giving the guy a fair and impartial hearing. You owe him that.

When you're having a non-renewal hearing on a RIF, the basis for the recommendation from your superintendent has to be "just and reasonable," just as it does for a dismissal recommendation based on the employee's performance. In most cases, the superintendent will set the criteria for his recommendations, unless your policies set those out for him. Be sure to apply those criteria in making your decision.

And, for our superintendents, if you have (documented) reasons for dismissal other than simply a RIF, include those in the notice letter to the employee. He's entitled to notice of all of the reasons for his proposed dismissal, and he's entitled to an opportunity for a hearing on them, too.

Depending on how many RIFs you have to consider, you could be looking at a lot of hearings. Sometimes, employees with similar reasons for their proposed dismissals will agree to combine their hearings, and that saves just about everyone time. If that's done, however, you still must consider each employee individually.

Remember: the non-renewal notice deadline for teachers (a term which includes all certified employees, except for superintendents and assistant superintendents) is May 1. For non-certified employees, the notice deadline is 30 days before the next contract would start, whenever that is.

That's about it for this time. Except that Mary Margaret—helpful pooch that she is—wants to pass this along: whenever you are going into the house, give yourself a good, hard "water shake." That way, a lot of your fur that would be shed in the house is left outside, causing the fur balls in the corners of the kitchen to take longer to form. That makes your mommie happy.

That's good advice for anyone.

Conference Breakout Summaries

As promised, the annual ASBA Conference provided school board members with a wide range of learning opportunities—most notably through the 15 different breakout sessions offered on Dec. 1, 2004. The remaining articles in this issue of the Reporter briefly summarize some of those breakout sessions. We hope these will be helpful reminders of the issues facing schools throughout the state. And just as the conference was interspersed with student performances, the following pages are interspersed with pictures of those student performers.

Building Community Partnerships Through Study Circles

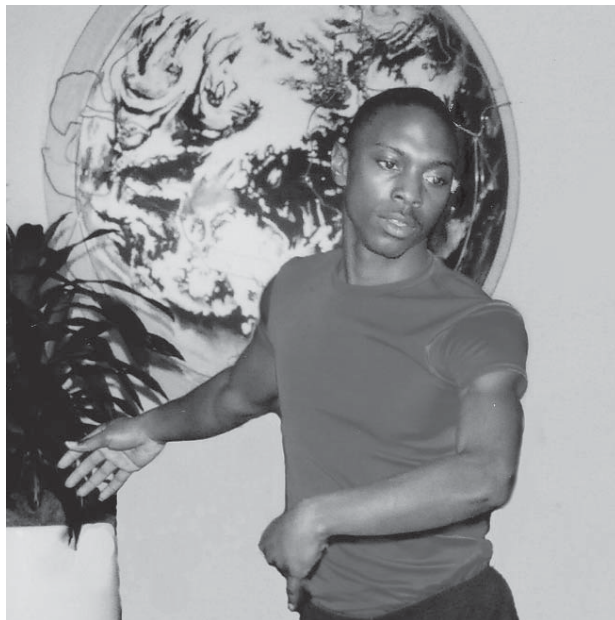
By Julie Davis

Initiating change in a school or school district can be a daunting task; that could be why real change seldom takes place. Heather Detherow, Director of the Arkansas Study Circles Project (ASCP), along with State Coordinators Diane Vibhakar and Connie Whitfield, presented “Building Community Partnerships through Study Circles” at the ASBA Conference. The ASCP has worked with school districts throughout the state since its inception in 1998 on issues such as student achievement, high school reform, and family involvement.

Study Circles are used to help engage people of all ages and from all walks of life in meaning-

ful dialogue and problem solving on critical issues. In Study Circles diverse groups of 8 to 12 people meet several times to share their knowledge and discuss a single issue of importance to their community, school, or school district. Guided by a neutral facilitator, everyone in the study circle has a chance to voice his or her point of view. Several study circles may discuss the same issue at the same time and then meet in an Action Forum to share and discuss their ideas and possible solutions.

Study circles can help make a difference in your school district. For more information, contact ASCP at 1-800-482-1212, 501-372-1415, or studycircles@arsba.org.



North Little Rock High School Dance Troupe

Spotlight on Students' Grace and Gusto

By Ann Marshall

Enlivening the conference were the energetic performances of youngsters from three central Arkansas school districts.

With professionalism and contagious enthusiasm, North Little Rock middle schoolers raised spirited voices in melodious ensemble, and a vivacious readers' theater troupe brought *A Charlie Brown Christmas* to life; graceful high school dancers floated to gentle rhythms in colorfully coordinated

costumes.

From the Conway school district, formal evening attire clad the high school madrigal singers, who were impressively poised and polished in sight, sound, and scope of repertoire.

The Pulaski County Special School District sent its own high school chamber chorale, whose Renaissance representation was complete with period garb and intricate contrapuntal airs performed to perfection. Three classes of

adorable first graders were a mass choir in miniature, wowing their audience with broad smiles and bouncy tunes that had every toe tapping and every heart aglow.

We're never more inspired to keep children at the center of what we do than when we witness their talent and exuberance firsthand.

Many thanks to the students and teachers who punctuated the conference with delightful reminders that kids are what we're all about.

Implementing a RIF in Schools

By Richard Carvell

The key to a legally justifiable reduction in force (RIF) is that the action by the school board is “just and reasonable,” recommended ASBA General Counsel Paul Blume to school board members. Further, he encouraged boards to adopt the ASBA model RIF policy that allows the superintendent to set the criteria to be used if a RIF is needed.

Blume noted that some districts may have to terminate or non-renew teachers because of consolidation or merger. But one of the problems, he acknowledged, is that the courts have not defined what is “just and reasonable.” “Just,” he said, “is what’s fair; ‘reasonable’ is what makes sense” in the particular situation of the district. Courts, he said, are disinclined to set aside school board decisions that are just and reasonable.

A show of hands indicated that several school districts represented at the session already have a RIF policy in effect. In that case, Blume said, the board is obligated to follow that policy. If the board has adopted the ASBA model policy that leaves the criteria to the superintendent, then the superintendent may want to use objective criteria, such as certification areas, seniority, and degree level.

State law does not recognize seniority, according to Blume, so school



Jacksonville High School Madrigal Choir

boards are not required to use that as a criterion, but they may if they so choose. However, the legislature did complicate the seniority issue by merging seniority lists for schools where forced consolidation took place.

Blume advised any board considering a reduction in force to consult with the board’s local attorney or to talk with Blume or Kristen Gould, ASBA Staff Attorney.



North Little Rock Middle School Readers' Theatre

Thanks to our Conference Reporters

ASBA sincerely thanks members of the Arkansas Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (ArkNSPRA) who graciously volunteered their time to report on many of the conference breakout sessions. These communications specialists and communications directors from schools and districts throughout the state have contributed articles for this issue of the Reporter.

Jean Ann Bell, Searcy S.D.
Richard Carvell, Nettleton S.D.; ASU Communications
Julie Davis, Little Rock S.D.
Zena Featherston, Ft. Smith S.D.

Phyllis Stewart, Pulaski County Special S.D.
Suellen Vann, Little Rock S.D.
Janet Wilson, Bald Knob S.D.

Master Principal: A Rigorous new Program

By *Suellen Vann*

What happens when legislators, business leaders, professional organizations, and educators put their heads together? In recent months the result of this collaboration has been the new Master Principal Program (MPP), according to MPP Leader Kathy Morledge. "This is a systems approach to leadership development," Morledge said. "If we're really going to see educational change, it's going to happen at the building level."

The curriculum of Phase I of the Master Principal Program mirrors that of the former Principals Institute. The newly introduced Phase II curriculum focuses on building and maintaining accountability systems; deep knowledge about teaching and learning; leading and managing

change; living the vision and mission; and building and maintaining collaborative relationships. A performance coach will be assigned



Conway High School Madrigal Singers

to provide significant feedback to each of the fourteen principals who have recently begun the first MPP Phase II class.

The Phase III curriculum is even more rigorous, and candidates have to apply Phase II learning before moving to Phase III. After completing Phase III, a principal earns the Master Principal designation.

The state will provide significant financial rewards to Master Principals. Each will receive an additional \$9,000 per year for five years, and if a Master

Principal accepts a principalship in a "high needs" school, he or she will receive an additional \$25,000 per year.

Dr. James Speaks Up

By *Richard Carvell*

Arkansas Director of Education Dr. Ken James urged school board members at the first general session to get familiar with the sweeping new requirements of Act 35. The law requires the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) to develop a comprehensive assessment program for Arkansas education and to implement it by July 1, 2006.

James said Arkansas has a tremendous opportunity through this law to develop a student-focused system of education for its students. He asked school board members to lobby legislators in the current General Assembly so that additional education measures will not be imposed, "so we can

implement what we already have."

Acknowledging a recent report that criticized the ADE, James called the department inefficient. He said the report will give him the leverage he needs to do things—"significant things"—that need to be done in the Department. As head of the ADE, James said he is committed to providing the kind of service that schools need so that "when you call six people (in the department), you don't get six different answers." His statement drew applause and a few "amens" from the appreciative audience.

James said that Arkansas is putting more money into K-12 education than at any time in its history.

But, he added, with the new resources comes more accountability than has ever been expected of schools. Arkansas schools have to show benefits, use money wisely, and demonstrate student improvement. Boards, he said, should

ask themselves, "How will the use of these resources improve student achievement over a continuing period of time?"

James concluded his remarks by saying Arkansas needs strong leaders at the

school board level and by reminding school board members and superintendents of the enormous opportunity they have for improving Arkansas education.



Dr. Ken James

After-School Programs and Their Value for Education

By Janet Wilson

Many Arkansas school districts, as well as certain faith-based and community-based organizations, will have the opportunity in March 2005 to apply for a five-year grant to help develop after-school programs. The grants will be facilitated through the Arkansas Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) and may be used

for a wide variety of services that meet students' social, educational, and recreational needs.

However, Dee Cox, program manager for 21st CCLC, told those who

attended the annual ASBA Conference that competition for funding is extremely competitive. "We funded 27 requests last June out of 85 re-



North Little Rock Middle School Readers' Theatre

quests," Cox said. She said that the "six P's"—programming, practices, policies, procedures, partnerships, and persistence—were the key components to a successful after-school

program.

"After-school programs are not easy," Cox said. "Strong programs are the result of hard work and clear focus." Strong leadership is a key component. Other critical factors outlined by Cox included an effective 'hook' that makes the program attractive to students; offering a range of interesting, engaging activities to keep students coming back; and programs that attract and keep low-achieving students by offering fun academic and non-academic learning opportunities.

"Your program might be the last opportunity for that student," Cox said.

Grants will be available for P-12 with a \$150,000 maximum. The agency will consider grant requests per school; therefore, large school districts will be able to apply for more than one grant.

More information regarding funding criteria and guidelines is available at <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/21stCCLC/Pages/guidelines.htm>.

Starting from Scratch A Beginners Guide to Legislative Advocacy

By Richard Carvell

"The key to effective communication with legislators comes from building relationships," Kristen Gould, ASBA Staff Attorney, told school board members learning about being educational advocates. "Relationships are everything."

School board members should establish themselves as local "experts" in the field of education, Gould advised. Board members gain information through their routine service on their boards and by studying education issues. They can use that information to become an adviser to state legislators on such matters. Through those contacts, Gould said, school board members can create goodwill for

themselves and for the school district.

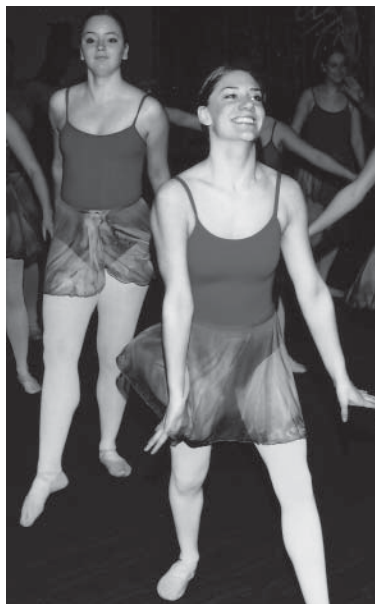
Regular contact with members of the legislature is an important situation for board members to curry, and Gould said, it is something that must be developed over time. School board members can interpret and explain educa-

tion issues. Opinion leaders who understand education can influence people at the grass roots level and convey those connections to mem-

bers of the legislature, according to Gould.

The "big, fat, hairy mistakes" that advocates sometimes make, adds Gould, are threats, anger, and wrong information. Threats don't work, showing anger is counter-productive, and passing along wrong information destroys the "trust bank" deposits a board member has established.

"Take it (working with the legislature) seriously," Gould said.



No. Little Rock H.S. Dance Troupe

Bus Safety: Lessons Learned the Hard Way

By Zena Featherston

The day, May 19, 2003, began in Siloam Springs Public Schools with only cursory thought to the possibility of tragedy during the school day. Children arrived at school, teachers followed lesson plans, principals praised and disciplined, custodians cared for the school buildings and habitants, and bus drivers prepared to pick up their young charges for an unremarkable ride home.

The bus accident that occurred at approximately 3:40 p.m. that afternoon reminded all just how quickly the routine changes. The bus driver was driving a normal route and traveling the recommended speed

shoulder. The bus traveled down the embankment, falling to its side as it reached the bottom. One child died, a few others sustained life-threatening injuries. No person riding the bus left unharmed. No person working the accident left unchanged.

In a breakout session at the ASBA conference, Siloam Springs School District personnel cited a list of lessons that were learned as a result of the May bus accident.

Lesson One: Communication is essential. When the call came, Kent Raymick, Siloam Springs assistant superintendent, remembered picking up his radio and grabbing extra

These issues led to their second and third lessons.

Lesson Two: Emergency personnel were not necessarily concerned with identifying who the children were. They were concerned with getting them appropriate care. District staff members worked furiously trying to keep up with the identities of the students as the emergency workers triaged and transported injured from the scene. Which led to the next lesson.

Lesson Three: Passenger manifests and or seating charts are important and necessary when a crisis occurs. Informing parents and tracking students that were treated by medical personnel would have been much easier with a manifest.

Lesson Four: Insurance is essential. As a result of the accident, the district increased the liability limits for both in-state and out-of-state travel. Although the district and its personnel were covered by tort immunity for accidents in Arkansas, this would have been different had the accident occurred in nearby Oklahoma. The district added out-of-state liability coverage to four buses. These are the only buses allowed to leave the state.

Lesson Five: Students' misbehavior can and will cause accidents. The catalyst for this accident was identified as student misbehavior. Districts should develop and adhere to strict discipline policies that address misbehavior on buses and include loss of riding privileges.

Lesson Six: It is imperative to have a second "set of eyes" watching activity on buses. Noting the possibility of a second adult on the bus, the Siloam Springs School District determined that this was unrealistic for the size of its district. The transportation team,



North Little Rock Middle School Ensemble

when he left the road. This was verified by Arkansas State Police calculations in the accident report. A couple of youngsters in the front seats of the bus were goading each other. One was slapping at the other with a rolled up piece of paper. As the driver approached the curve, he turned briefly to retrieve the offending paper. It was here that the tire of the bus left the pavement. The driver could not adequately compensate in the soft

batteries. When Raymick saw the wreck, he knew that it was going to take several hours, possibly days, to sort the details. Other district personnel were also equipped with cell phones, radios, extra batteries, and car chargers. These were critical as the staff worked to identify students and set-up a triage area and a central pick-up point. Parents were not allowed at the scene and were told that they could pick up their children at the high school.

Continued, Next Page...

district administration and the school board exercised the option of purchasing and installing high quality digital cameras on each bus. The initial cost was approximately \$38,000. Buses subsequently purchased come with the camera systems installed. These additions assist the drivers in focusing com-

to be the spokesperson and make it clear to the reporters what behavior you will and will not tolerate.

Ramick commended the Arkansas State Police for their work and support when the accident occurred and in the months that followed. He noted that while there didn't appear to be a support structure from

Act 1220 Strikes a Chord

By Suellen Vann

School board members showed a great deal of interest in Act 1220 and its impact on schools. Presenter Joy Rockenbach, Program Director at the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, responded to numerous questions before she could complete her presentation—especially concerns over the implementation of students' Body Mass Index (BMI) required under the act. An earlier delivery of the same session generated similar board member discussion, she said. Rockenbach assured ASBA members that the Arkansas Child Health Advisory Committee (ACHAC) would like to have involved school board members and school nurses to a greater degree early in the process.

Act 1220 was passed to address the increase in Type II diabetes and high blood pressure among children, as well as the rise in obesity among young people. ACHAC hopes to change the school environment so children will learn good health habits; engage the community to build a system that encourages health; and increase awareness of child and adolescent obesity to mobilize resources and to establish support systems.

The legislation has already resulted in the elimination of vending machines at elementary schools; professional development for cafeteria employees; public disclosure of "pouring" or soft drink contracts; formation of a parent advisory committee; and the annual body mass index assessment for all public school children.

Considering that the federal government has new rules that require schools to develop and implement School Wellness Policies that are very similar to the provisions of Act 1220, the early consternation may be due to the fact that Arkansas is "ahead of the curve" on these issues.



Little Rock First Grade Choir Ensemble

pletely on traffic laws, posted speed limits, and what is occurring on the road ahead—not the students. "It is critical for bus drivers to follow the traffic laws and recommended speeds," said Raymick.

Shortly after the accident occurred, the school district sent information regarding the accident and post-traumatic stress disorder home with students. Months after the accident occurred one student was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. The student's parents had seen the information and realized what they were observing shared many similarities. Again, communication proved to be critical.

One of the final pieces of advice offered by the Siloam Springs School District regarded the media. Be prepared. Identify one person

outside agencies, the encouragement and assistance they received from the surrounding Northwest Arkansas school districts, "were what kept us going."

Other changes resulting from the bus accident were the addition of two people in the transportation department, and all bus records are maintained in an automated system. Previously, bus reports and maintenance records were handwritten. Additionally, the district upgraded the existing radio system to ensure smooth communications.

For more information about Siloam Springs' experiences, contact Steve Avery, Director of Transportation, (479) 524-8568, or Kent Raymick, Assistant Superintendent, (479) 524-3362.

School Purchasing

Getting the Best Value with TAPS

By Julie Davis

Looking for a new way to coordinate purchasing activities in your school district? Try TAPS! Otherwise known as the Texas Arkansas Purchasing System, TAPS is a cooperative purchasing network for government agencies (including public school districts, junior colleges and universities) that solicits competitive proposals in compliance with government agency bid laws in the states of Arkansas and Texas. TAPS awards contracts to primary and secondary vendors by commodity categories, makes more than 70 competitively bid contracts available to participating agencies, and establishes annual renewable contracts that can be used as needed. Some vendors on the TAPS contract list include Xerox, Office Depot, Hewlett-Packard, USA Office Supply, Carrier Corp., MICO Industrial Corp., Unisource, Softmart and Virco. Approximately 650 government agencies in Texas and Arkansas are active in this purchasing system at this time.

TAPS does not charge membership or participation fees to participating agencies, does not award all bidders with a contract and does not make sales calls on behalf of vendors. Joining TAPS does not obligate you to make use of its services. "We are like one more tool in your purchasing tool chest—you can use us or not," explains TAPS Administrator Jay Bauman, "but we are there when you need us."

The TAPS website, www.taps-arkansas.com, also contains detailed information about the TAPS program and its current vendors.

For more information, contact ASBA TAPS Coordinator, Mickey McFatrige, at 1-800-482-1212.

Benefiting from ASBA's On-Line Policy Service

By Jean Ann Bell

Consider this scenario: an administrator is dealing with a student problem, it's time for bus duty, a fire drill report is due, and a parent calls wanting to know the school's policy on cell phones. What is a busy principal to do?

At least one issue could be settled by subscribing to ASBA's On-line Policy Service. With a school district's board policies on line, the principal can merely refer the parent to a website so he can read the policy for himself.

Ron Harder, ASBA Policy Service Director, and Jon Hall, of Content Technology Solutions, opened their discussion by referring to this age of accountability and freedom of information as a good reason to subscribe to the on-line policy service, which will place a school district "ahead of the game" and help board members and school personnel answer questions that arise.

The advantages to the on-line service are numerous. The program is extremely user-friendly, easily accessible, has a very high speed of retrieval, provides instant results, has a simple word search, as well as a more sophisticated and detailed search, conserves paper, and requires no special training. Another distinct advantage is that the user can connect district policies to Arkansas codes through the references in the Table of Contents.

The first year's cost is \$750, with an annual renewal of \$450. The fees include two free updates to the policies each year with additional updates costing \$50. The initial contract is for two years, after which the contract is reviewed annually.

For more information, contact ASBA Policy Service Director Ron Harder, at 1-800-482-1212.

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(501) 955-2577
- Cobb and Suskie, Ltd.**
P.O. Box 21675
Little Rock, AR 72221
(501) 225-2133
- Coca Cola, Inc.**
7000 Interstate 30
Little Rock, AR 72209
(501) 569-2700
- Compass Learning**
5711 Dan Glover Road
Little Rock, AR 72210
(501) 821-5752
- Crafton, Tull & Associates**
901 N. 47th Street, Ste. 200
Rogers, AR 72756
(479) 636-4838
- Crow Burlingame Co.**
P.O. Box 11
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 375-1215
- DEPCO, Inc.**
P.O. Box 174
Pittsburg, KS 66762
(620) 231-0019
- Educational Benefits, Inc.**
320 W. Capitol, # 700
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 378-3337
- Environmental Safety & Compliance**
P.O. Box 326
Dover, AR 72837
(479) 331-3298
- David H. Frieze Associates, Inc.**
P.O. Box 8398
Hot Springs, AR 71910
(501) 922-9704
- Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.**
#1 Riverfront Place, Ste. 707
North Little Rock, AR 72114
(501) 375-1000
- Handwriting Without Tears, Inc.**
8001 MacArthur Boulevard
Cabin John, MD 20818
(301) 263-2700
- Jackson Brown King, Architects**
2228 Cottondale Ln., Ste. 320
Little Rock, AR 72202
(501) 664-8700
- LaBay-USA Office Products**
P. O. Box 5010
Longview, TX 75608
800-503-1023
- Laidlaw Education Services**
TCBY Tower
425 W. Capitol, Suite 1566
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 372-5343
- LifeTrack Services, Inc.**
845 Port Way
Clarkston, WA 99403
1-800-738-6466
- RJ Love Enterprises, Inc.**
P.O. Box 2939
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501)988-5474
- Massey & Wood, CPA's Ltd.**
137 Shadow Oaks Drive
Sherwood, AR 72120
(501) 834-5757
- Merl's Bus Sales Inc.**
P.O. Box 531
Van Buren, AR 72957
(479) 474-2433
- Metro Builders & Restoration Specialists, Inc.**
P.O. Box 959
North Little Rock, AR 72115
(501) 758-2845
- Mico Industrial Corporation**
1750 Millard Drive
Plano, TX 75074
972-422-2001
- Micro System Enterprises**
10430 Shady Trail, #105
Dallas, TX 72220
(972) 239-2174
- Midwest Dairy Council**
P.O. Box 3007
Broken Arrow, OK 74013
(918) 251-8616
- Midwest Risk Management Services, Inc.**
5506 Walsh Lane, Ste. 202
Rogers, AR 72758
(479) 271-7475
- Missco Contract Sales**
1601 Sammy Circle
Hope, AR 71801
(870) 777-3556
- Morgan Keegan & Co., Inc.**
100 Morgan Keegan Drive,
Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 671-1334
- Musco Sports Lighting, LLC**
575 Round Rock W. Drive,
Suite J380
Round Rock, TX 78681
(512) 246-9211
- National Telephone Company**
P.O. Box 2050
Conway, AR 72033
(501) 327-5386
- NEARK Adjustment Company**
P.O. Box 223
Blytheville, AR 72316
(870) 838-0097
- Pace Learning Systems**
3710 Resource Drive
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401
1-800-826-7223
- Pacheco Outdoor Equipment**
11324 Arcade Drive, #3
Little Rock, AR 72212
(501) 225-1218
- Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan**
1112 McCurdy Road
Benton, AR 72015
(501) 779-3149
- Precision Retirement Group**
7065 Brookview Drive
Urbandale, IA 50322
1-800-369-9461
- Resun Leasing**
8200 Warehouse Road
Little Rock, AR 72205
(501) 568-8866
- Risk Management Resources, Div. of Ramsey, King, Ferrell & Lensing**
P.O. Box 251510
Little Rock, AR 72225
(501) 614-1142
- Rostra Precision Controls, Inc.**
2519 Dana Drive
Laurinburg, NC 28352
1-800-782-3379 ext. 2552
- School & Office Products of Arkansas**
P.O. Box 26015
Little Rock, AR 72221
(501) 821-4424
- Service Plus Telecommunications, Inc.**
1001 S. Arkansas Ave.
Russellville, AR 72801
(479) 967-8888
- Southern Bleacher Company**
P.O. Box 1
Graham, TX 76450
(800) 433-0912
- Sport Court**
700 Minton Road
Benton, AR 72015
(501) 316-2255
- Stephens Inc.**
111 Center Street, # 2300
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 377-2306
- Stephens-Dell & Associates**
5312 West Markham
Little Rock, AR 72205
(501)664-6587
- TAPS School Purchasing**
2230 N. Edwards
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75456
1-866-839-8477
- TKI Computer Center**
103 N. East Street
Benton, AR 72015
(501) 778-4869
- Trane Arkansas**
1501 Westpark Drive, Ste. 9
Little Rock, AR 72204
(501) 661-0621
- USable Life**
320 W. Capitol Ave, Ste. 1600
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 378-3362
- Virco, Inc.**
P.O. Box 5000
Conway, AR 72032
(501) 329-2901, Ext. 1298
- Ward Transportation Services Inc.**
P.O. Box 1466
Conway, AR 72033
1-800-364-9001
- Wittenburg, Delony & Davidson Inc. Architects**
400 West Capital, Ste. 1800
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 376-6681

ASBA Reporter - Tell us what you need!

We at ASBA want to serve the needs of school boards and school board members. We want to provide you with information and ideas that you can use to improve education in your community. So, what do you need? Contact James Gilson with your ideas and requests at (800)482-1212, or e-mail jgilson@arsba.org.

Report Card...

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though the law is considered weak by the Center for Education Reform. The state also includes safety information on school report cards and has a law in place intended to reduce school bullying and harassment. But Arkansas has not enacted specific penalties for students who commit acts of violence in school.

Equity Arkansas has a positive wealth-neutrality score, meaning that, on average, property-wealthy districts have slightly more revenue than poor districts do. The state ranks 28th out of the 50 states for that indicator, and its score shows a moderate

link between spending and property wealth. The state does slightly better on the other two equity indicators, the McLoone Index and the coefficient of variation. Arkansas' McLoone Index is above average, and the state's coefficient of

Student Achievement	
4th graders proficient or above in math	26%
8th graders proficient or above in math	19%
4th graders proficient or above in reading	28%
8th graders proficient or above in reading	27%
Standards and Accountability	C
Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality	B+
School Climate	C+
Resources: Equity	C+
Resources: Spending	(ungraded)

variation of 11 percent indicates a moderate amount of disparity in funding across districts.

Spending Arkansas has a below-average expenditure per pupil compared with the other 49 states and the District of Columbia, ranking 37th. That ranking, though, reflects a 12.7 percent increase in the 2001-02 school year over the previous year.

More than 45 percent of students in the state attend schools in districts where spending equals or eclipses the national average. The state ranks 31st on the spending index, a measure of the level of Arkansas' funding relative to that of the other states and the District of Columbia. Arkansas spends 4.2 percent of its total taxable resources on education, which is higher than the U.S. average of 3.8 percent.



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