

2005 Closes with ASBA Conference



Rogers School Board members Jerry Carmichael and Kristen Cobbs attending one of the many sessions offered during the 2005 ASBA Conference

Once again, about 600 board members and superintendents closed out 2005 by attending ASBA's annual conference. Despite cancelled speakers and threatening weather, *Leading Education in Times of Change* was an unqualified success. With more than 20 different sessions and conference activities over the three days, there was something for everyone. Conference evaluations were very positive.

A series of articles in this issue of the *Reporter* highlight some of the conference activities. You'll find special emphasis on the conference's dynamic speakers, informative breakout sessions, and 2005 ASBA Boardmanship Awards.

For those who attended the conference, we hope this issue reminds you of your good experiences. For those who were unable to attend, we hope that it will give you a taste of the 2005 conference and whet your appetite for next year.

2006 ASBA Scholarships Available

The ASBA Educational Foundation offers five scholarships to children of school board members each year. The foundation will award cash scholarships to students who will begin their post-secondary education in the fall.

To qualify for a scholarship, the school board member-parent must be serving on his or her local school board on Sept. 1 of the school year in which the grant is awarded.

See Scholarship... page 7

ASBA Board Endorses New Program

The ASBA Board of Directors endorsed a new insurance program for Arkansas school boards. After careful research and recommendations by ASBA staff, the Board endorsed an Errors and Omissions (E & O) policy brokered through Midwest Risk Management Services.

The E & O policy pays for boards' legal expenses associated with defending lawsuits against the board, including employment

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The 2005 “Dr. Dan” Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education

In a rare move, two recipients were named for the 2005 Dr. Daniel L. Pilkinton Award for Outstanding Service to Education at the ASBA Conference. As described by Award Committee Chairperson Kathy McFetridge, “There were many strong nominations, but there were two that just couldn’t be ignored.”

The first award was made posthumously to **Mrs. Peggy Moore Beller** of Batesville, who passed away in 2005. She was respected and admired as a school board leader and a community leader in Independence County, where she served in numerous capacities as a volunteer and community advocate over the years.

She served with distinction

Ms. Beller was one of the community’s and the state’s strongest advocates for supporting public education, improving schools, and improving student achievement.

During her tenure she helped lead the Batesville School District beyond fiscal distress, declining enrollment, and low test scores to fiscal solvency, district growth, dramatically-improved test scores, and strong public support for local schools.

As described by her colleagues, she was always on the “cutting edge,” challenging the community and schools to embrace “outside of the box” solutions, including: site-based school management, block scheduling, pre-school programs, a community kindergarten center, AP and concurrent-enroll-

1993 to recruit a young, energetic school administrator from California to serve successfully as their superintendent. Dr. Ken James now serves as Arkansas’ Commissioner of Education.

As one of her nominators stated, “Ms. Beller demonstrated on a daily basis what servant leadership is all about.” Another noted, “Peggy’s passion and commitment to education has had a positive impact on many lives, inspired others to serve, and will undoubtedly be a legacy for many years to come.”

Her husband, Dr. Bill Beller, her daughter, Karen Beller, and her niece, Debbie King, accepted the award in her memory.

The second award was made to **Dr. Kellar Noggle**, recently retired Executive Director of the Arkansas Association of Education Administrators (AAEA). In the same way that Dr. Pilkinton, for whom the award is named, devoted his life to schools, Dr. Noggle also will be forever known as a man who has devoted his long and productive career to improving Arkansas public schools.

Dr. Noggle was the executive director of the AAEA for the entire 30-year history of the Association. In that capacity he molded AAEA into a network of professional support organizations that help more than 2,700 education professionals in Arkansas that serve schools and students. Under his leadership, AAEA has become one of the most influential education organizations in the state.

It’s interesting to note that Dr. Noggle had a full, more traditional education career before AAEA, in which he taught high school math-



The Beller family accepts the 2005 Dr. Dan Award in memory of Ms. Peggy Moore Beller. (L-R, Debbie King, Dr. Bill Beller, ASBA President Kathy McFetridge, Karen Beller)

on the Batesville school board for nearly two decades. But her service was much more than what might be expected of a school board member.

ment high school classes, and magnet schools before they were “en vogue.”

Ms. Beller also is credited with leading Batesville’s efforts in

Continued, next page

ematics and coached basketball in Eastern Arkansas, became principal of the local high school, and went on to become the youngest-ever superintendent of an Arkansas school district. He moved up to become a professor of education at the University of Central Arkansas and the University of Arkansas, and he even served on his local school board.

Throughout this unbroken 50-year span of service, Dr. Noggle has stayed true to his principles of teaching and service to education. And in the same way he mentored math students decades ago, he has mentored hundreds of school administrators in more recent years. In the same way he promoted school spirit as a basketball coach way back when, he has promoted public support for the state's educational system.

In the same way he served as a public advocate on his local school board, he has been a steadfast education advocate at the State Capitol. In the eyes of many, Dr. Kellar Noggle has been *the* statesman of public education in Arkansas.

ASBA is pleased to acknowledge the service of these two fine people for their untiring, unselfish, efforts to improve education for all Arkansans.



Dr. Kellar Noggle (center) accepts the Dr. Dan Award with support of AAEA staff. (L-R: Al Brown; Dr. Tom Kimbrell, AAEA Executive Director; Dr. Kellar Noggle; Charles Knox; Dr. Ricki Bailey; Ed Love)

Errors and Omissions

Continued from page 1

disputes. Coverage is important to school boards and other entities that stand to be sued for their decisions, according to ASBA attorney Kristen Gould. It protects board members from personal liability and their districts from the financial risks associated with lawsuits. "Really," she adds, "a school board without E & O coverage is taking a big risk. When litigation happens they'll regret not having it."

The insurance coverage is commensurate with and continues E & O policies previously held by many school boards. However, through the new ASBA-endorsed program, school boards will have expanded coverage which now

includes legal representation for administrative hearings and twice the coverage for non-monetary claims. The majority of boards will even have lower premiums than before.

"It's a win-win situation," noted ASBA Executive Director Dan Farley. "We have a company providing services that are up to ASBA standards at a very competitive price for school boards. We're always looking for ways to better serve schools and school boards with services that make a difference." For more information about the program, contact Paulette Walker at ASBA.

School Board BRIEFCASE

- ▲ **NSBA Annual Conference**
April 9-11, Chicago, IL
- ▲ **NSBA Southern Region Conference**
July 23-26, Sandestin, FL
- ▲ **New School Grading System is Coming**
- ▲ **April 1 - Scholarship Application Deadline**
- ▲ **Watch for the Special Legislative Session**

In Memoriam

ASBA fondly remembers one of the state's most dedicated, friendliest, and active school board members.

Doyle McDonald, lifelong resident of Morrilton and President of the South Conway County School Board, passed away unexpectedly on Dec. 20, 2005.



Doyle McDonald

McDonald served his fellow citizens in many ways, and he was recognized repeatedly for unselfish devotion to his community. He was named 2003 Conway County Citizen of the Year.

He brought the same devotion and commitment to his school board service, where he achieved the ASBA Pinnacle Award in only six years.

He has long been known as a man eager to offer a warm smile, a big hug, and a helping hand to anyone in need.

He will be sorely missed by many.

Ready for Chicago? Chicago is Ready for the NSBA Conference

Plans for the 2006 NSBA Conference are settled. The conference, to take place April 9-11 in Chicago, has a full agenda of programs for school board members from around the nation. As in years past, ASBA will host the Arkansas Breakfast for ASBA members. It will take place at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel at 9:00 a.m. on April 9. Sponsored by Midwest Risk Management Services, Inc., the breakfast is a great chance for ASBA members to meet and network during the conference.

If you are going to attend the conference, you should make your lodging and conference reservations as soon as possible. After registering, you'll be entitled to special conference lodging rates from dozens of hotels in the downtown Chicago area.

In addition to the numerous breakout sessions available at every NSBA Conference, this year's event has some very exciting and motivating general session speakers, including: distinguished leader and statesman, **Gen. Colin L. Powell** (ret.); prize-winning author, historian, and PBS host **David McCullough**; world-renowned conservationist **Jane Goodall**; and fitness guru and motivator **Richard Simmons**.

To register and to find more details, follow the NSBA Conference links on the ASBA website, www.arsba.org.

Florida in the Summer: NSBA Southern Region Conference is Coming Up

Though blown off course by Hurricane Katrina, the 2006 NSBA Southern Region Conference, set for July 23-26, will still give attendees the chance to enjoy the warm waters and white sandy beaches of the gulf coast. Although not in Mobile, AL, as had been planned, the Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB) will host the conference at the Sandestin Resort in Sandestin, FL.

The conference will soon be accepting registrations. However, *now* is the time to reserve your accommodations. Many options are available – from hotels to beachside condos – but they will be filling up fast with vacationers. AASB encourages everyone to make hotel reservations now, before it's too late.

Lodging and conference registration information is available by following the Southern Region Conference link on the ASBA website, www.arsba.org.

ASBA Welcomes New Officers, Director

The ASBA Delegate Assembly elected officers for 2006 on Dec. 7. Continuing the tradition of promoting officers through the ranks, representatives of school boards throughout the state elected the following:

President: **Kathy McFetridge** of Springdale

President-elect: **Amy Daniel** of Benton

Vice-president: **Perry Newman** of Lavaca

Secretary-Treasurer: **Cathy Allen** of Rogers

Past President: **Jack Gardner** of Centerpoint

When Cathy Allen ascended to Secretary-Treasurer, the Board of Directors appointed **Earl Hunton** of the Lincoln Consolidated School Board as Region 1 Director to fill her vacated position on the Board.

Hunton, a farmer, lives with his family of six in Prairie Grove. He and wife Angie have four children, ages 4-16, three of whom attend Lincoln schools.

Hunton comes from a family known for public service, and he is completing his seventh year on his local board. Says Hunton, "I'm looking forward to serving on the ASBA Board. I hope to share some of our successes in Lincoln with the rest of the state."



Region 1 Director Earl Hunton

Building Communities Just for the Kids

By Heather Detherow

"For the first time, a public meeting exceeded my expectations. It was a wonderful experience for our community. I believe we have improved our understanding of the many new laws that are now in place regarding curriculum and instruction for all children." This comment is a fine example of the many positive remarks we've heard about the Building Communities Just for the Kids Day, held in over 45 school communities around the state in November.

The two-hour event featured structured discussions about how communities can support their public schools. The event's objectives were to (1) inform parents, the community, and business leaders about current school laws

and regulations so they understand what is required of public schools; (2) present school data so communities can be better informed about their schools' strengths and areas needing improvement; (3) inspire community collaboration that will ultimately support school improvement by clearly defining the roles people can play in supporting schools; and (4) motivate communities all across Arkansas to continue the dialogue.

Staff from the Arkansas School Boards Association trained 150 members of leadership teams in how to organize the event in their town and trained another 145 facilitators to moderate the local meetings. Each leadership team was asked to provide a follow-up report after the event. So far,

72 percent of the participating school communities have reported in, showing that more than 2,800 people came out for the local Building Communities Just for the Kids Day in localities throughout the state.

When asked to describe some of the best things that happened during or as a result of the event, the leadership teams reported some of the following:

- The school district and chamber of commerce formed a closer working relationship.
- The climate allowed everyone to feel safe enough to ask questions and share their feelings, concerns, and ideas.
- It was a great learning experience in terms of hearing voices of so many eager to be involved and just simply needing direction.
- Educators were able to identify a group of concerned people

"For the first time, a public meeting exceeded my expectations..."

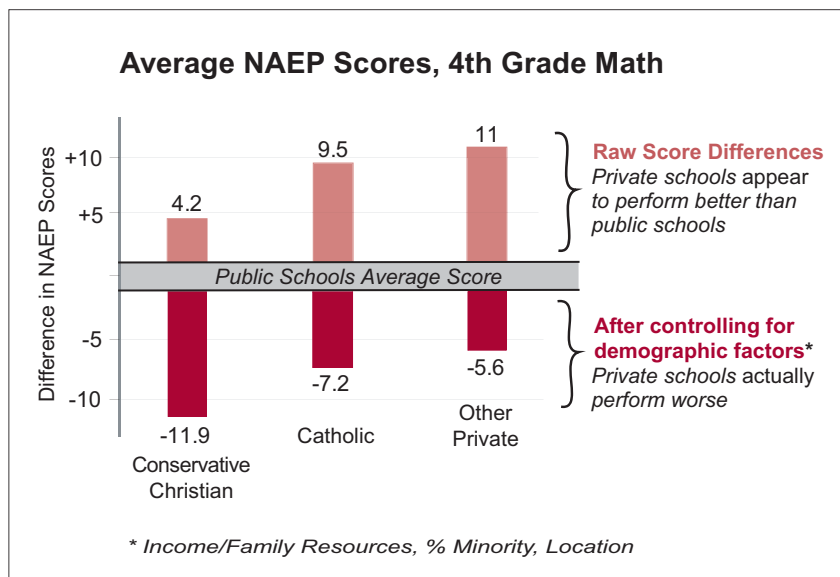
It's No Surprise (For Public School Advocates) Public Schools Out-perform Private Schools in Latest Government Study

A large-scale government-financed study using the largest set of testing data ever has concluded that public school students generally out-perform private school students.

A U.S. Department of Education-commissioned study of the 2003 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) scores, confirms and reinforces what previous studies have concluded: When controlling for social differences like race, income, and location, public school students out-perform private school students. When taken to its logical conclusion, the study indicates that public schools are out-performing private schools.

The new study, published in January, was based on the 2003 NAEP scores. NAEP scores, used to produce the "Nation's Report Card" each year, are the best national comparison data available to make broad comparisons between states and schools. The study focused specifically on math scores because previous research has shown that math scores are mostly influenced by schools; whereas reading scores are more highly influenced by family factors.

Researchers from the University of Illinois, working through the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education (NCSPE), an independent, non-partisan research and public policy group, analyzed what has been described as a "treasure trove" of data. The 2003 NAEP data contained the largest and most reliable testing data set ever available; nationwide, more than 10 times as many students than usual were



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Federal Support for Education is Waning

In the final days of 2005, Congress passed and the president signed into law, the 2005-2006 federal budget for education (for the current school year). Even with the \$250 million addition of special funding to assist hurricane-ravaged schools along the gulf coast, federal support for education is down from 2004-2005. This is the first time in a decade that overall federal support for education has been reduced from the previous year.

Federal spending on elementary and secondary education has been reduced 2.5% this year. Estimates by the U.S. Department of Education indicate that Arkansas will fare better, enduring a 1.7% reduction in funding. Accounting for infla-

tion, this represents a *real* 4.5% decrease in federal support for Arkansas public schools.

This year's budget cuts will really hurt Arkansas' efforts to improve education through the use of technology. The federal Enhancing Education through Technology (EETT) program, the primary source of educational technology funding in Arkansas, was cut by 45%.

The coming year looks even worse. On Feb. 6 the president presented the 2006-07 budget to Congress. The budget proposes to reduce overall education spending by another 5.5%, or about 8% in real purchasing power. The president proposes to eliminate the

EETT program entirely in 2007.

As further evidence of the current government neglect of public education, the administration's education budget proposes to divert \$100 million of public school money to a new voucher program for private schools.

Although the ongoing political rhetoric extolling the need for better public education and the need to use technology to improve education is waxing, financial support for education is waning.

For more detailed information about the federal education budget, follow the "About ED, Budget" links on the U.S. Department of Education website, www.ed.gov.

tested in 2003. It also captured sufficient demographic information about individual students to control for the effects of demographics on the test scores.

While private school raw test scores have historically been higher than public school raw scores, it has long been accepted that this is in large part because private schools draw students from the most advantaged segments of the general population. Consequently, using *raw* scores to compare public and private schools isn't an accurate comparison.

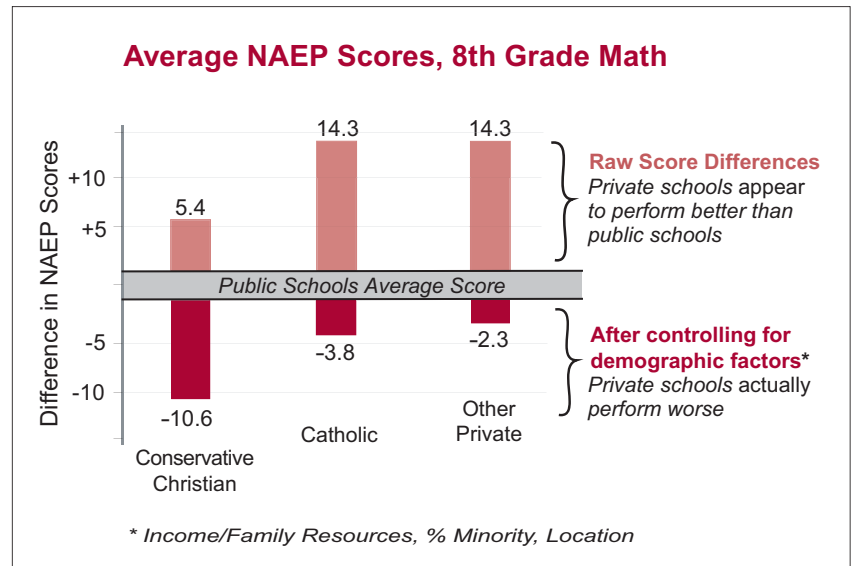
Using the latest mathematical models, the researchers were able to "control" for the demographic advantages of private schools to make accurate comparisons between public and private schools. In essence, the researchers compared the performance of low-income kids in public schools with low-income kids in private schools; white kids in public schools with white kids in private schools; special needs kids in public schools with special needs kids in private schools; and so on.

Although similar studies, including one using 2001 NAEP scores, have drawn the same conclusions on smaller scales, this study is by far the largest and most reliable to date. The conclusions are most clearly demonstrated in the accompanying graphs.

There are many possible reasons that public schools outperform private schools. Public schools must follow an updated and well-defined curriculum, use qualified teachers, follow state and federal rules, publish their results, and be accountable to the public.

As public schools embrace accountability measures and continue to implement new strategies for student achievement, one can expect the differences to be even more dramatically in favor of public schools in the future — especially as public education reforms start having a greater impact on the upper grades.

The study reminds us that parents may have several excuses for putting their children into private schools, but academic achievement shouldn't be one of them.



The U.S. Department of Education is funding further studies of the 2003 NAEP data that will be published in the future. For more information, including a copy of the current research, follow the Research Publications link on the NCSPE website, www.ncspe.org.

Scholarship Deadline...

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The \$600 scholarships will be one-time grants to freshmen entering 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.

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

To apply for the scholarship, students and school board parents must submit a scholarship application. It consists of an 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. The awards will be announced in May.

The deadline for applying for this year's scholarships is April 1. 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.

ASBA Recognizes Boards and Members

Each year at the annual conference, ASBA applauds 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.

2005 Master Boards

The Master Board Award recognizes boards whose members each earned at least 50 hours in ASBA's Boardmanship Program. Congratulations to these boards that have worked hard to achieve this level of recognition.



Lincoln Consolidated School Board (L to R)

Earl Hunton
Richard Watson
Jim Lewis, Superintendent
Gary Morris
Connie Meyer
Not shown: Andrew Swayne



Pottsville School Board (L to R)

Jerry Akin
David Potts
Clint Hull
Curtis Shankle
Jerry Clair



South Conway County School Board (L to R)

Doyle McDonald
Doug Adams, Superintendent
Elaine Sullivan
John Gibson
Stephen Carter
Not shown: Marlin Boyle, David Cawein, Mark Stobaugh



Turrell School Board (L to R)

Alfred Hogan, Superintendent
Carol Horton
Bernice White
Delois Jackson
Bryan Rains
Chester McGee

2005 Pinnacle Award Recipients

The Pinnacle Award is the highest recognition for 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.



Cathy Allen, Rogers



ASBA President Kathy McFetridge presents the Pinnacle Award to Marty Moore of the North Little Rock School Board



Brian Brown, Warren



William Campbell, McGehee



Nell Everett, Arkadelphia



Bill McChristian, Mena



Mike Pennington, Drew Central



Frank Torres, Bauxite

2005 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 recognition.



Back (L to R)
 Boyd Barton, Dover
 Don Lane, Centerpoint
 William Vance, El Dorado
 Denny Stormes, Green County
 Rick Ford, Des Arc
 Jerry Clair, Pottsville

Front (L to R)
 Ralph Pinkerton, Lake Hamilton
 Jane Campbell, Lakeside-H.S.
 John Broadway, Westside Cons.
 Mark Curry, Lake Hamilton
 Brenda Miller, Bryant

Back (L to R)
 Phil Phillips, Marion
 Jefferey Richardson, Marion
 Steve Sutton, Marion
 Gary Young, Southside-Batesville
 Ted Cook, Booneville
 John Gibson, South Conway Co.



Front (L to R)
 Howard Orsburn, Dardanelle
 Christine Bell, Fayetteville
 Shelton Daniels, Camden-Fairview
 David Potts, Pottsville
 Phillip Brick, Marion



Back (L to R)
 Richard Watson, Lincoln
 Connie Meyer, Lincoln
 Gary Morris, Lincoln
 Dale Gathright, Mineral Springs
 Larry Loewer, Brinkley
 Jon Carroll, Brinkley

Front (L to R):
 Earl Hunton, Lincoln
 Bryan Rains, Turrell
 Steve Runge, Mayflower
 Ron Carter, Batesville
 George Latus, Batesville

In addition to the those identified on the previous page, the following members also received the 2005 Master Board Member award:

Chuck Baker, Alma
 Tim Bates, England
 Berry Bishop, Arkadelphia
 Andy Bloxom, Benton
 Jim Boatright, Mansfield
 Annie Booker, Earle
 Billy Burruss, Bradford
 Randy Catt, West Memphis
 Trent Cox, North Little Rock
 Rita Cress, Stuttgart
 James Cross, Stephens
 Hurlen Cross, Stephens
 Dean Dancer, White Hall
 Bonnie Daniels, Lafayette County
 Herbert Dorman, Farmington
 Donell Hill, Cross County
 Danny Holcomb, Watson Chapel
 Cecelia Jackson, Hope
 David Johnson, Quitman
 Marilyn Jones, Parkin
 Mike Luttrell, Springdale
 Wayland Mathias, Greenland
 Willie McKenzie, Earle
 Larry Oaks, Greenbrier
 Julie Owens, Centerpoint
 Jeff Parker, Greenland
 Neal Pendergrass, Mtn. Home
 Brett Peters, Mountainburg
 Bruce Phillips, Clarksville
 Rochelle Redus, North Little Rock
 John Riley, North Little Rock
 Jim Rogers, Stuttgart
 Frank Sanford, Bradford
 Sarah Setzer, Eureka Springs
 Jerry Shue, Quitman
 Gary Simmons, Atkins
 Robert Smith, Osceola
 Andrew Swayne, Lincoln
 Billy Tarpley, Gurdon
 Connie Thomas, West Memphis
 Robert Veach, Manila
 Carroll West, England
 Hoover Williams, Earle

Building Communities...

Continued from page 5

- that were willing to serve on committees to help find solutions to some of the problems that were addressed during the meeting.
- Parents gained a better understanding of the burdens schools currently are under and seemed excited to learn about simple ways they could help.
 - Participants agreed that people should use the term “ownership” instead of “accountability.”
 - The consumer guide was very helpful.
 - Participants were a mix of parents, teachers, administrators, and politicians.
 - The opportunity for dialogue was great.
 - Community members saw data and information they don’t normally see.
 - We developed a curriculum website with local information that will be available to the community.
 - Parents and patrons seemed pleased to gain more information and actually take home the materials that were used.
- In addition, the leadership teams were asked what major themes surfaced during the discussions. Here are some of their thoughts:
- Some things need to be removed from the school day with more time for literacy and math.
 - Communication, communication, communication and how important it is.
 - There really is a lack of awareness of the accountability

placed on students, schools, and parents.

- All the focus on testing (children and parents feel stressed) is frustrating.
- The community wants an improved understanding that today’s schools require more rigor than ever before. Schools need parents and community to work together to achieve set goals.
- Legislative mandates have complicated the mission of public schools.
- We need a holistic approach to accountability – leadership, teachers, parents, students, and community.

Many organizations at the state level partnered to make the Building Communities Just for the Kids Day a reality. The partners include the Arkansas State

Parents gained a better understanding of the burdens schools are under

Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas (the Just for the Kids affiliate in Arkansas), Arkansas PTA, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas School Boards Association, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, Arkansas Rural Education Association, Arkansas Education Association, and Arkansans for Education Reform Foundation.

The last objective for the event, to create motivation for continued dialogue in communities all across Arkansas, is the critical next step. Research repeatedly shows that change can’t take place without commitment and ongoing communication.

See Building... page 18

Do We Really Want to Abandon Ship?

Editor's note: Due to the push to abandon Arkansas' present testing system, we offer the following article in an effort to examine why the issue needs more deliberate consideration before rushing to a decision. We know of no state that has changed from a CRT to an augmented NRT for the purpose of meeting NCLB's testing requirement.

By Ron Harder

Recent interest in moving the state to administer augmented tests — tests that combine elements of both criterion-referenced tests (CRT) and norm-referenced tests (NRT) — warrants an examination of the present testing landscape. Why do we give the tests we give?

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires states to use a CRT to establish proficiency levels for the purpose of determining adequate yearly progress (AYP).

In other words, a CRT measures the extent to which children have mastered specific academic material or content. A weekly spelling test is an example of a CRT, because it measures how well students have learned to correctly spell a specific list of words. NCLB does allow the use of augmented tests, but the NCLB's preference is a CRT and there is a good reason for this. While NCLB has established federal requirements governing education in return for federal aid, it has left it up to the states to establish their own standards of what students must know and be able to do.

Our CRTs are aligned to Arkansas' academic content standards (what students are expected to know and be able to do) and are designed to test how well our students have met the standards we have established. NRTs have a lower level of correlation to Arkansas' academic content standards than our CRTs, because they are not based on Arkansas' specific curriculum content requirements. Rather, NRTs are based on average or typical re-

quirements that are designed to be used by students in several states. For this reason, they less accurately test how well Arkansas students have mastered Arkansas' academic content standards.

The Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks provide teachers the elements they are required to cover

The debate over whether to throw out our criterion-referenced tests in favor of an augmented test is unnecessary

during the school year. Teachers must teach all of their course's curriculum frameworks in their instruction. Arkansas' CRTs test the content standards that Arkansas has established as what we believe students are supposed to know and be able to do. If we mix an NRT and a CRT into an augmented test, it will result in testing more than teachers will be able to teach in the amount of time available during the school year. This puts teachers in the untenable position of trying to decide which master to serve, because the present school calendar (teaching all of the Frameworks) is too full to serve both masters.

The debate over whether to throw out our criterion-referenced tests in favor of an augmented test is unnecessary. If, and I stress if, there needs to be a debate, it should be about whether our Academic Content Standards and Curriculum Frameworks are what we believe they should be. The tests should be an evaluation of how well students are learning what teachers are required to teach in Arkansas.

All tests serve two functions. They are used both to assess education (measuring current student achievement) and to improve education (how we can raise student achievement in the future). Tests that are given throughout the year (such as NRTs or other off-the-shelf tests, teacher written, etc.)

are not designed to be a final exam, but serve instead to aid schools and teachers in diagnosing how well students understand what is being taught.

Using data from the tests can help teachers know which students need additional help and where they need the help. Using tests periodically throughout the year for such diagnostic purposes is one facet of how teachers strive to get their students to academic proficiency. These tests are returned quickly and available for the teacher to use in the same classroom in which the tests were administered. No test given at the end of the school year will have results available soon enough to affect teaching in the classroom in which they were administered.

Arkansas' Benchmark and End-of-Course Tests are meant to be final exams used to determine how well students have met the desired learning goals established in the content standards. They test what is supposed to have been taught in the classroom as required by the Curriculum Frameworks. This allows teachers to focus on meeting Arkansas' standards, while not being held at the same time to "national"

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standards which may or may not be part of the Frameworks.

One component of the testing debate centers on the timing of the tests. The time at which students take the tests is, indeed, a crucial issue, but the proposal of an augmented test as the solution is flawed. There is an unjustified push for an early return of test results. There are multiple reasons why the Benchmark and End-of-Course exams need to be given at the end of the year, but these tests do not require immediate return of the results. To restate, no test administered at the end of the school year will have results available soon enough to affect teaching in the classroom in which they were administered. Schools can use the data

gleaned from these exams to improve their delivery of the content standards and curriculum frameworks for the

coming school year. Improvement is accomplished through professional development, curriculum alignment, and academic improvement plans.

Theoretically, the return time of test results can be shortened in two ways. One is to pay substantially more to the company scoring the test. To date, there has been no indication that the state is willing to go this route. The other way is to lessen the number of written-response items. It is important to point out that in the pilot augmented tests given in the spring of 2005, no written-response items were included in the test. This explains the short turnaround time for the test's results. The open-response questions in criterion-referenced tests

are designed to test higher-order thinking skills. Writing is thinking. Arkansas made the decision several years ago to emphasize writing because of its importance in giving students the skills they need to succeed in life. The rise in last year's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam scores seems to indicate that it was a wise decision.

If we choose to go to an augmented test, it would have to be aligned to our current tests in order for our AYP timetable under NCLB to be valid. In other words, we're considering changing tests, but we would have to make the new tests correlate with what we already have approved under NCLB. It simply doesn't make sense. Ar-

of our present testing system. The public has had a hard enough time understanding the recent realignment of our test scores due to the vertical scaling of our new tests for grades 3, 5, and 7. We don't need to turn right around and do it again due to a change to augmented tests.

The point has been raised that the criterion-referenced tests as originally written could not be vertically scaled (aligned such that a student's score in one grade is a reliable predictor of their score in the following grade if other factors remained constant). This is historically correct, but is now moot. The tests have been modified and are now vertically scaled. Why choose to go to augmented tests (which are vertically scaled) to fix a problem that no longer exists?

It is a valid complaint that excessive testing results when norm-referenced tests and the state-required criterion-referenced tests are given back to back. Moving the CRT to the end of the year

eliminates this burden on students and schools alike. In the past,

NRTs were given in the fall, which makes sense when considering the diagnostic value of such tests and short turnaround time. An NRT can be given at any time of year and the results are still valid due to the nature of the scoring of the test.

Rearranging the times tests are given makes sense, but augmenting them does not. Success in life requires much more than being able to answer multiple choice questions. The CRTs are designed to make sure graduates have the skills they need to be thinking, contributing members of society. We need to stay the course with the CRTs because they are working.

Arkansas' CRTs test the content standards that Arkansas has established as what we believe students are supposed to know and be able to do

kansas already has an assessment plan in place that meets the requirements of NCLB, Omnibus, and Act 35. Why would we want to put that plan in jeopardy?

A move to an augmented test requires approval from the U.S. Department of Education. This would likely require double testing (new and old) while the augmented test established its baseline for AYP purposes. Once that was done, the proficiency levels of our present system would not align with the proficiency levels for the new test because they are based on different tests.

This would make fertile ground for criticism that the new proficiency levels were faulty, whether they were higher or lower than those

KATHY McFETRIDGE, ASBA PRESIDENT

Now's the Time for "Fresh Eyes"



January ushers in many things... a new year, a new school semester, and for ASBA, a new president. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to serve school boards and the cause of education as the latest in the long line of ASBA presidents. After years on my local school board and years on the ASBA Board of Directors, I know I'm ready for the task at hand. Thanks to you for entrusting me with this responsibility.

As I contemplate the year ahead I realize the importance of changing perspectives as we pass the president's responsibilities from one person to the next. Although ASBA is stable and trustworthy from year to year, it is also constantly improving, consistently innovating, and offering more and better service. I think this is in some measure due to the new perspective of each succeeding president.

Like myself, I'm sure our long line of ASBA presidents has en-

tered this position committed to improving education, committed to serving school boards, and committed to improving ASBA. We enter free from perceived limitations imposed by previous circumstances. We are free from the self-imposed blind spots that others have convinced us are there. It's what I call "fresh eyes."

Having fresh eyes is not to be confused with being ignorant

See Fresh Eyes... page 16

DAN FARLEY, ASBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Keeping Local Control Alive and Well



"The actions of a school board are the means by which the community translates its ambitions for its children into decisions about public education. All of these actions, of course, must be consistent with and authorized by state law."

That paragraph, which comes from our *Handbook*, is a good place to start in a discussion of local control, a concept some say can no longer exist.

Granted, since the state has the primary responsibility for public education in Arkansas, and as a result of Supreme Court decisions on

equity and adequacy, local boards in many instances do not have the discretion over some issues they once had. Those boards, however, continue to provide a very important link to the community and to the success of their schools. Earlier this year, a poll revealed that citizens tend to have a greater level of trust in their elected public school officials than in most other elected officials.

Perhaps it's true that all politics are local. If that's the case, then school boards continue to play an important role in public school

governance. Let me again cite a passage from our *Handbook*:

"An Arkansas school district legally is a minor political subdivision of the state. A school board is a local body, also created by state law, which is charged with operating the school district. A school board, therefore, is a legislative—not administrative—body, and its members are state officials who are charged with fulfilling the mandates of the General Assembly.

"A school board has no powers except those specifically given it by

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REPORTER

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

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PAUL BLUME, ASBA GENERAL COUNSEL

Dealing with the Semi-complicated Student Drug Situation

Well, as Mary Margaret the Wonder Pooch pointed out the other day, life can be complicated. "Some days you don't know whether to sleep in the kitchen on the cool floor, sleep in the living room on the soft stuff, or just be anywhere comfortable, working on your chew toy and then go shedding all over the house. Then sleeping wherever you are."

I don't know how she keeps up.

Which brings us to some student drug situations. The (relatively) easy ones happen when a student tells the principal that another student has drugs in her purse. The informant is reliable and credible. You check the purse and find a bag of a green vegetable material, which your Student Resource Officer (SRO) field tests, and it turns out to be marijuana. You suspend the offender, notify mom and dad in writing, and set a hearing before the school board. Game. Set. Match.

Not all of them are so simple, however. For example: You have a student who appears to be under the influence of . . . something. No alcohol smell. No marijuana smell. But he's obviously operating in an alternate universe.

You have a student drug testing policy, but it only permits random drug tests, and then only for the purpose of determining whether a student may participate in extracurricular activities. No provision for suspicion-based testing (that is, you may not do a drug test based on your reasonable suspicion that the student is under the influence of an illicit substance). Do you test, anyway?

No. Pull out your regular student drug policy and see what it provides. Usually, it allows you to make a determination whether the student is under the influence based only on appearance and behavior. Take good notes of his appearance and behavior. Use your SRO for this, also. Many police officers are trained to determine whether a person is under the influence of some substance (and some – a few – can even reliably determine what kind of substance from the person's appearance).

Mom and dad show up at school, understandably concerned. They don't want their little dumpling to

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See Drug Situation... page 16

Fresh Eyes...

Continued from page 14

— it's just the opposite! One is expected to be knowledgeable and experienced. Fresh eyes allows one to be open to new ideas, and capable of offering new solutions.

My immediate predecessor, Jack Gardner, was a master at maintaining fresh eyes. He has helped me appreciate that this is what keeps ASBA actively moving forward, innovating, making a difference, and being relevant year after year and decade after decade. I'm pleased to offer my fresh eyes to help move us forward another step.

Fresh eyes, however, aren't just for ASBA leaders. Anyone who wants to move forward must constantly challenge himself and others to put on fresh eyes. The need

for fresh eyes extends to our family lives, our professional lives, and our public service lives. And now, more than ever, we need fresh eyes in the cause of public education.

In the same way that fresh eyes keep ASBA moving forward, it can keep many aspects of our life and work moving forward – especially our work improving education.

We've observed and been engaged in an ongoing debate over education adequacy for several years now. During that time some have lost their fresh eyes.

The debate has pitted person against person and organization against organization. Feelings have been hurt, walls have been put up, and communications have broken down. Pre-supposed solutions are offered and counter-offered, political rhetoric is tossed like rocks, and an "us versus them" mentality

permeates the debate. Unfortunately, the needs of students and the very real need to improve public education sometimes get lost in the shuffle.

Now, more than ever, as we entertain the prospect of a special legislative session for education and more general assemblies focused on education, we need to break that cycle. Now is the perfect time for all of us – citizens, board members, teachers and administrators, education regulators, and the state's elected officials — to challenge themselves to look at these issues with new eyes.

Now, more than ever, we must overcome our own biases and give up our personal agendas. We must forge "win-win" solutions, and we must listen to one another.

Let's all re-enter the debate with "fresh eyes."

Drug Situation

Continued from page 15

miss school, so they offer to put him in counseling and have him submit to random drug tests, saying that, if he doesn't complete the counseling, or if he fails a drug test, you can then expel him.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Don't do it.

The well-meaning parents are putting you in the position of relying on a drug test or counseling to determine whether the student may stay in school, not for the original offense. We may not drug test for the purpose of determining whether a student may attend school, only for determining whether he may participate in non-credit extracurriculars, and we have no authority to require counseling. Okay, but mom and dad said it was okay. Forget it. When push comes to expulsion, mom and dad will get their nice lawyer (the one with blood

dripping from his newly-sharpened fangs), who will tell you that you can't do that stuff. Oh, and by the way, they agreed to the testing and counseling only because of your insistence and because you said that agreeing to all of that was the only way little dumpling could stay in school. So, you coerced them into that agreement, one which you certainly knew or should have known was improper. You monster.

Even if you don't think mom and dad will do that, you have no way of knowing what the test results will be, and you have no control over them. How reliable are they? Will you get bad results, or just good ones? If a test shows positive for drugs, will you get that one? If you do, what do you do then?

The simplest and safest way to approach this is to do it according to the book — the student discipline policy book, that is. Deal with the fact that the student is under the influence of drugs (or

something) separately from the extracurricular drug-testing policy. If you determine that the student is under the influence based on his appearance and behavior, then deal with that according to your regular drug policy and suspend or expel according to what your drug policy provides. If he's suspended or expelled from school based on that, his participation in extracurriculars will take care of itself: He won't be in school to play basketball or to go to the prom.

Basketball, the prom, and other extracurriculars are privileges, not rights. Going to school is a right, but one which may be taken away for a serious violation of the rules. And don't be seduced by promises from mom and dad. Just deal with it. When they go before the school board in a hearing on expulsion, they can plead their case *then*. The board has the ability – that is, the discretion – to accept an expulsion

Continued, next page

Local Control

Continued from page 14

actions of the General Assembly, or that are reasonably implied by legislative action.”

Other factors also influence the powers of a local school board. Rules, regulations, standards, and policies adopted by the State Board of Education, as well as guidelines and directives issued by the Department of Education, substantially affect the limits of school board decision-making. Even so, having locally elected laypersons acting on behalf of the community is still important.

A good board is one that understands its functions and strives to operate with high standards. It is one that seeks community involvement and works with its citizens to shape a shared vision for its schoolchildren. It is one that helps the public to understand the issues and is accountable to that same public for its actions. It also is the body that must secure local tax efforts sufficient to meet the needs of its school district.

Local boards also can play a major role in helping to raise the achievement levels of its students. Developing and adopting policy

continues to be a primary focus for local boards and through that policymaking role, boards can and should provide leadership to implement the “Key Work of School Boards” to elevate student learning.

One of the key work elements is collaboration, which extends not only to the local community but to policymakers at the local, state, and national levels. Education by its very nature is a collaborative effort and school boards are uniquely positioned to forge partnerships and work to build consensus around sound education practice. They can also help the community understand and support programs and expectations for the continuous improvement of our schools and our students.

It is important to keep a close link between schools and the communities they represent. That helps to achieve and maintain an engaged and supportive community, something we know to be vital for school success. Without that linkage, the parental and community involvement we know to be essential for success is much more difficult to achieve. The more distant decision-making about schools is, the less chance there is to build that important connectedness.

Local governance of schools in Arkansas is an issue that almost certainly will face us in the near future. A plan to create county-wide administrative units continues to be an issue discussed by policymakers. If indeed that comes to pass, the number of school boards in our state will decrease significantly and many communities will unavoidably find little or no voice in the decisions that will be made for their children.

It’s an issue that you must address as school board members. It is incumbent upon you to perform thoughtfully and well and to inform your communities thoroughly about issues that have implications for your students and your fellow citizens.

Your actions, your professionalism, and the transparency of your operations are critical factors. Efficiency is very important, particularly in a state where there are limited financial resources. There is little credible evidence that the dissolution of school districts and school boards will net huge savings. There is much to suggest that it will diminish the kind of public support schools must have to achieve the kinds of successes we all want.

Continued from previous page

recommendation or to shorten the time of expulsion. For that matter, the board can reject the expulsion recommendation altogether. The board hearing is where that decision should be made. On the other hand, an administrator has the ob-

ligation to make a recommendation consistent with the policy the board already has enacted. If the punishment is to be less than that in the policy, the board should make that decision. Only the board.

Mary Margaret (who pays attention when I’m dictating this stuff) says that withholding Milk Bones

for a week should be punishment enough for anyone, but it would constitute cruel and unusual punishment for a pooch. At least for her. I doubt that there’s anything in your policies about Milk Bones. She says that you might want to look it up, though. Just in case.

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? Please contact James Gilson with your ideas and requests at (800)482-1212, or e-mail jgilson@arsba.org.

Job Bulletin

A service of ASBA

Superintendent, Alpena School District

Qualifications: Certification

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Send Resume' to Ron McNair, Board President; P.O. Box 17; Alpena, AR 72611

Superintendent, Atkins School District

Qualifications: Certification, strong leadership skills

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Dain Duvall, Interim Superintendent; 302 Avenue Two NW; Atkins, AR 72823

Superintendent, Bismark School District

Qualifications: Certification, experience, PhD preferred

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Negotiable, competitive

Contact: Dr. Ernest Huff, Supt.; 11636 Hwy 84; Bismarck, AR 71929

Superintendent, Cedarville School District

Qualifications: Certification & strong leadership skills

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Cedarville School Board President; P.O. Box 97; Cedarville, AR 72932

Superintendent, Cross County School District

Qualifications: Certification

Appl. Deadline: March 10, 2006

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: \$85,000 - \$100,000

Contact: McPherson & Jacobson L.L.C.; website application at www.macnjack.com; P.O. Box 7346; Omaha, NE 68107

Superintendent, Hartford School District

Qualifications: Certification, leadership, vision, motivator

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Eddie Huber, Board President; P.O. Box 489; Hartford, AR 72938

Superintendent, Lafayette County School District

Qualifications: Certification

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Negotiable

Contact: Superintendent's Office; P.O. Box 950; Lewisville, AR 71845

Superintendent, West Fork School District

Qualifications: Certification, experience preferred

Appl. Deadline: Until filled

Commences: July 1, 2006

Salary: Salary Schedule

Contact: Dr. Joey Walters; 359 School Avenue; West Fork, AR 72774

Building Communities...

Continued from page 11

Many of the event sites reported plans to continue this kind of dialogue within their communities so that everyone is on the same page about educational accountability and the roles we all play within it. Some sites have formed committees to look at broad issues confronting their schools and have charged other committees with addressing specifics, such as planning a kick-off meeting to start a local PTA. Some communities want to repeat the event at a later date to bring more people to the table.

Whatever the plan or reason, we heard over and over throughout the planning that the leadership teams wanted to be sure that this process wasn't a one-time occurrence, but a beginning to continued partnerships. With ongoing communication and dialogue among all stakeholders, knowledge and ownership of the issues will increase, and only success can come from that. Roger Wilkins, a Pulitzer Prize winning author once said, "The best hope of solving all our problems lies in harnessing the diversity, the energy, and the creativity of all our people."

The staff at the Arkansas School Boards Association truly enjoyed the opportunity to meet and work with so many dedicated individuals throughout the state. To all of you who organized, facilitated, and participated in your local community event, we thank you for your commitment to making Building Communities Just for the Kids Day a success.

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

ASBA Conference Summary

The following pages contain summaries of sessions presented during the 2005 ASBA Conference

Financial Communications for School Boards

By Janet Wilson

School administrators, Dr. Belinda Shook and former superintendent Dr. Kieth Williams of the Beebe School District, shared their knowledge of school budgeting with board members from throughout the state.

According to Williams, every school district must use a state-mandated budgeting system that divides districts' receipts and expenditures into eight basic "funds." Understanding the funds that comprise a school district's budget is the first step for school board members who must be knowledgeable about their district's financial health.

The eight funds include:

1. Teacher Salary
2. Operating
3. Building
4. Debt Service
5. Capital Outlay
6. Federal
7. Activity
8. Food Service

Of the funds, teacher salary accounts for approximately 80 percent of a district's budget. This fund is used to record receipts and expenditures for payment of salaries for certified personnel, certified substitutes, stipends, and certain fringe benefits.

The operating fund is sometimes also referred to as the "pass-through fund." This is because all money coming into the district, except federal funding, will first be receipted into the operating fund before being transferred to other areas. Classified salaries and all benefits such as Teacher Retirement and Social Security contribu-



Dr. Belinda Shook

tions also are expedited through the operating fund.

The building and construction fund is used to record the receipts and expenditures of specific building projects. The debt service fund is used for the retirement of bonded debt. The capital outlay fund is used to record receipts and expenditures of building projects funded by millages voted on and passed specifically for capital outlay and dedicated Maintenance and Operation (M&O) purposes.

Title I (instructional), Title IIA (highly qualified professionals), Title IID (technology), Title IVA (safe and drug free schools), Title V (innovative projects), Title VIB (special education), and grants are all expedited through the federal fund. It is important that all monies within this fund align with the budget and be coded appropriately.

The activity fund is used to record the receipts and expenditures for student organizations and club activities. Auditors tend to scrutinize this fund very closely.

The food services fund is used to record receipts and expenditures for food service operations.

According to Shook, a good way to develop a sound budget each year is to begin with an analysis of the previous year's expenditures and revenues, to project higher than expected expenditures for the coming year, and to remain conservative with expected revenue for the upcoming year.

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 directors from school districts throughout the state have contributed articles for this issue of the Reporter.

Jean Ann Bell, Searcy S.D.

Shara Brazear, North Little Rock S.D.

Richard Carvell, Nettleton School Board; ASU Communications

Julie Davis, Little Rock S.D.

Ann Marshall, ASBA

Phyllis Stewart, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators

Suellen Vann, Little Rock S.D.

Janet Wilson, Bald Knob S.D.

No One Rises to Meet Low Expectations

By Richard Carvell

Students rise or sink to our expectations. That was the message for school board members and administrators at the first General Session from Carl Boyd, inspirational speaker and former teacher. Boyd substituted for the scheduled speaker, Pedro Noguera, who could not attend because of a family emergency.



Carl Boyd shares his insights.

Boyd grew up in a high rise project in Chicago in the 1940s and '50s and got good grades, he said, because that was expected. "Our parents never allowed us to use socio-economic standing as an excuse for failure," Boyd said. For his family, he said, "it was a *reason* to succeed." It was expected, and Carl and his friends met those expectations.

Boyd entertained the audience with humorous stories but questioned the priorities of today's youth and society at large. He expressed concern about the undue influence of media and athletics on today's youth. He lamented the media's portrayal of and society's acceptance of bad behavior among youth role models like athletes and entertainers, and he warned the audience that it's up to *us* to direct youth to more realistic and appropriate role models. He also chastised the mass media and society at large for constantly communicating that amassing wealth is the sign of success, instead of demonstrating that success should be measured by how much one contributes to the world around them.

Youth — especially African American males, according to Boyd — identify with the "tough" image portrayed in the media, instead of more socially redeeming self images. Boyd calls this the African-American Male Image Syndrome (AAMIS), which he blames on the media and on lack of proper role models for African-American males. Successful black males who promote what Boyd refers to as the "thug lifestyle" share the blame, according to Boyd. Peer pressure, he said, makes intelligence unacceptable and hip-hop, baggy pants, and the askew ball cap cool.

It's all about expectations, according to Boyd. "We won't fully reach these kids until we have better expectations for their behavior and for their success."

Luncheon Dessert: Lots of Laughs

The 2005 conference luncheon was capped off by a rousing presentation by Dr. Ann White, a former teacher, librarian, and school administrator from North Carolina. Now a grandmother and motivational speaker, White shared insightful and funny stories that entertained and amused all. But most importantly her stories reminded us all that we share the same human needs of the children we serve — a need to belong, a desire to be appreciated and loved, and the ever-necessary support and encouragement from those around us.

Her levity had everyone laughing, and as one conference attendee noted, Dr. White is probably the first ASBA speaker to use pantyhose as a visual aid in her presentation.



Dr. Ann White makes a point with a most interesting prop.

“They vote with their feet”

A Practical Perspective on After-school Programs

By Julie Davis

Implementing and maintaining a successful after-school program can be a daunting task. Many programs will fail because children lose interest after a few weeks or months, according to Principal Janice Wilson and Carletta Burchett, 21st Century Community Learning Center Coordinator, at Woodruff Elementary in Little Rock.

Wilson and Burchett shared examples of their successful after-school program, which has approximately 100 students enrolled and a list of children waiting to get in. Woodruff Elementary, an extended-year school, has a 92% free/reduced lunch eligible population, and 82% of the student body is African American. The after-school program operates four days each week (Monday through Thursday) and all day during intersessions (one-week breaks between each nine-week period).

Wilson explained that the best way to make children interested in the program was to include the arts, but the activities are tied seamlessly with the school’s regular curriculum to reinforce learning. Art not only encourages student creativity, but it encourages parental support, it helps bring in business partners from the community, and it keeps the children interested and brings them back time and time again. “The only way to know if a program is successful is if the children come back,” said Wilson. “They vote with their feet.”



Woodruff Elementary School Principal Janice Wilson shares her insights about after-school programs.

The second half of the session featured Dee Cox, Director of Special Programs at the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), and Dr. Reginald Wilson, Supplemental Service Provider (21st Century Community Learning Center grants) at the ADE, who spoke about the need for more after-school programs for elementary and middle school students.

According to Cox, only 50% of the students who need or want an after-school program have one available to them. The hours after school are important because as many as 1.5 million children go to an empty house after school and that is the peak time for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and sex.

ADE is helping meet after-school needs by providing five-year 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) grants for programs serving grades pre-k through 12. More information about these grants can be found

online at <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/21stCCLC/Pages>.

According to Cox, successful after-school programs need to provide services that are tailored to the needs of their students and the surrounding community—what works in one community may not be successful in another. They also should provide services that enhance the regular academic curriculum and offer educational services to students’ families.

Cox emphasized the “daily practices” of quality after-school programs:

- Not only is what is done important, but also how it is done.
- Offer a range of interesting and engaging activities.
- Pull low-achieving students in the door and keep them with fun academic and non-academic learning.
- Create a supportive but challenging environment.



ADE Director of Special Programs Dee Cox discusses After-school grants.

And, Wilson adds, good after-school staffing is essential. “Enthusiasm is contagious. If the teachers are happy to be there, the students will be as well.”

Changes Leave No Place for Complacency

By Ann Marshall

Dr. Ken James, the state's Commissioner of Education, closed the conference with his message that the velocity of national and international change is requiring education to take a direction that is decisive, creative, and collaborative.

Briefly tracing the course of schooling in our state from simpler times to present-day complexities, James pointed out that, while the number of Arkansas school districts continues to shrink, the overall number of students is growing and reflecting dramatically different

population patterns. The state's minority citizenry, historically predominantly African-American, is diversifying to include many Asians and many more Latinos, especially in Northwest Arkansas.

But such demographic differences at home are only part of the broader landscape, James reminded. The shifting international scene is profoundly affecting life in the United States as we know it and as we foresee it. Increasingly, American jobs are exported to nations that compete with our expertise and

ingenuity, and China's burgeoning economy will soon rival our superpower status.

"To keep our place," James urged that "we must pick up the pace," and come to terms with the competitive reality. "The ever-accelerating rate of change means that we must not only think differently, but act differently as we prepare students for jobs that don't exist yet," he said. "It's not where we are, but the direction in which we choose to move that will make the difference as we create plans to thrive, not just survive."

James displayed data from NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress, the "nation's report card") that showed encouraging trends in Arkansas students' test performance. Some gaps have narrowed, putting Arkansas at the national average in certain categories for the first time. But the data also reveal that 8th grade reading scores lag, a discouraging trend nationwide. Thus, while the increased emphasis on elementary math and literary in our schools is paying off

for many young students, secondary school reform is a pressing need.

To that end, James touched on the state's new grant for high school redesign, a major resource for restructuring Arkansas high schools into more effective pathways to student success in higher education and the workplace. He cited research verifying the link between a more rigorous high school curriculum and a higher college completion rate for all students, particularly minorities. He said we can be proud that Arkansas, along with Texas and Indiana, is one of only three states that have raised the mathematics bar in high school by requiring a second year of algebra beyond the customary algebra I and geometry.

"What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child must be what every community wants for all its children," encouraged James, as he emphasized that simultaneously preparing students for college and the workplace are inseparable goals. "Getting better at getting better" leaves no room for complacency or working against one another.

The Commissioner concluded with thanks to school board members for "what is too often a thankless job," reminding us that, "We must come together to solve issues. Collectively we can do it."



Dr. Ken James

Redesigning America's High Schools

By Jean Ann Bell

According to Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education, it's time to redesign America's high schools. When asked why, James says, "It is now necessary to prepare kids for jobs that we don't even know about or understand. Also, students will change jobs seven to nine times in their lifetimes."

The world that high school graduates enter today is very different from the one their parents faced de-

ades ago. The economy has changed, as have the skills that are needed to be successful.

The expectations for high school graduates have not kept pace with the expectations for the future. James provided support for this statement by quoting Bill Gates of Microsoft who said that high schools, as we know them, are not fully preparing students for the jobs

See Redesigning..... page 24

Improving Literacy for At-Risk 5th Graders

By Richard Carvell

The problem: Bring behind-the-curve fifth graders up to par in reading and math. The solution: A charter school that provides a no excuses, no shortcuts learning environment and helps students who are behind grade level — if they want to be helped. The location: Raider Open Door Academy (RODA), a charter school, in the Nettleton School District in Jonesboro.

Master teacher Nicole Covey told an ASBA Conference breakout session in December about the success Nettleton has had with the educational experiment it began as a pilot project in 1999. Results, Covey said, have been good, and the effort continues in an attempt to catch up even more of those students who previously fell through the cracks.

Covey said school district research showed that 10 percent of Nettleton students reaching the fifth grade had serious deficiencies in reading and math. So, the district started a small pilot program to see what effect, if any, that placing some of those students with one teacher all day long might have. Nettleton teacher Cindy Barnhardt volunteered, students improved significantly in the pilot program, and the idea of a district charter school for these at risk students was born.

Nettleton teachers, administrators, and board members visited a number of locations, including the New York City KIPP School before settling on a modified KIPP (Knowledge is Power Pro-

gram) model for their new school. Covey joined the Nettleton School District's charter school project, and the Arkansas Department of Education granted a charter to the district.



Master Teacher Nicole Covey of the Nettleton School District's Raider Open Door Academy

To participate in RODA, students, teachers, and parents sign a contract, Covey said, the initial step in developing a “change in culture” for the three groups. The academy requires an extended day and an extended year, a strong school-home connection (teachers carry cell phones and can be reached 24 hours a day), collaborative teaching techniques, a commitment to regular daily attendance, strong discipline, and a series of positive reinforcements, including end-of year trips for the approximately 50 students in grades 5 through 8 who participate in the program.

But students earn the right to take those trips by accumulating enough “RODA bucks” rewards throughout the school year. A student's weekly “paycheck” is docked for discipline problems,

failure to do homework, or for other violations of RODA Rules. And at the end of the year, Covey said, not all students earn enough to go on the trips. “It's difficult,” she said, “to leave students at

home, but everyone knows from the beginning what they have to do to earn the right to take the trip.”

The trips to Washington, New York City, Chicago, and points within the state of Arkansas have been paid for with grants, and with those grants running out, Nettleton is working to raise other private funds to finance those end-of-year rewards.

Having run the program for several years now, Covey says that they have learned a number of important lessons that can be applied by any school district:

- Extended learning time is necessary to help these students.
- Intervention must be individualized for each student, not provided as remediation for a group of students as a whole.
- A non-traditional and fluid structure is needed for success.
- Culture is everything.
- Success is based upon research and the use of proper resources, not traditional textbooks.
- Expectations must be consistent, fair and firm.
- Parental involvement is necessary.

If you want a copy of the PowerPoint presentation Nicole Covey made at the ASBA conference, e-mail her at ncovey@nettleton.crsc.k12.ar.us.

Redesigning...

Continued from page 22

of the future; therefore, it is time to make changes.

James bolstered his argument with pertinent statistics. In Arkansas, 74% of students graduate from high school and 42% of graduates go on to college. But few students are truly college-ready, and only 15% of Arkansas students eventually receive a college degree.

Although there are many specific ways to address this apparent shortcoming in schools, one of the ways Arkansas is addressing it is by requiring a rigorous curriculum in every high school. As in many education areas, Arkansas is leading the nation by being one of only three states to make a rigorous,

college-preparatory curriculum the norm for high school students.

James cautions that setting the curriculum is not enough, however, to re-design high schools. He notes that it will be necessary to:

- Pay attention to content, not just course titles;
- Align academic standards in high school with the knowledge and skills required for college and workplace success;
- Provide clear guidance on essential courses and allow flexibility for instructional approaches;
- Encourage students to go beyond the core courses; and
- Monitor results to truly make high schools the learning place that prepares students for their working future.

He adds that part of the re-design

process should develop and incorporate college-ready workplace standards in mathematics and English. Also, there is great need to expand and develop the end-of-course tests or augment those tests to assess those standards.

According to James, employers and colleges say they are looking for the same basic skills. They want graduates who are able to read, write, and speak clearly, analyze information, conduct research, and solve difficult math problems. In this regard, says James, "High school diplomas have lost their currency. But with the collaboration of high schools, colleges and universities, and business partners, the value of a diploma has a greater chance of being restored by redesigning high schools."

A New Tool for School Improvement: The Scholastic Audit

By Shara Brazear

Getting objective feedback about how schools are performing is extremely difficult. Parents say one thing, administrators say another, teachers say something else, and students have their own perspectives. How is a board to really know?

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA) have partnered to pilot a new Scholastic Audit (SA) process in Arkansas. During a SA, a team of experienced professionals spends an entire week on-site, analyzing all aspects of a school's performance. The team then prepares an extensive report that evaluates 88 separate indicators relating to the school's performance. Best of all, the audit team makes specific recommendations for areas that need improvement



Kathy Morledge

and makes commendations for areas that are exceptional.

Based on a model being used in Kentucky, the Arkansas SA evaluates schools' academic performance, learning environment, and educational efficiency using nine standards:

Academic Performance

1. Curriculum – The school develops and implements a curriculum that is rigorous, intentional, and aligned to state and local standards.

2. Assessment – The school uses multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction accordingly.

3. Instruction – The school's instructional program actively engages all students by using effective, varied, and research-based practices.

Learning Environment

4. Culture – The school functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to excellence.

5. Student, Family, and Community Support – The school works with families and community

See Audit... page 25

School Rating System is Coming Soon

By *Suellen Vann*

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) officials have been gathering public input regarding the method the state will use to annually rate schools on their performance. Dr. Charity Smith outlined the provision of Act 35 of 2003 that requires ADE to develop a two-tiered school rating system that will rate schools' performance and schools' growth. The performance measure, used to rate a school's overall performance on benchmark exams will be developed first.

Dr. Smith said that even though the state is not required to implement the school ratings system until the 2009-10 school year, any school district may request its rating for its schools now. Board members, superintendents, and principals need to know that all school ratings could be released by ADE upon request by an individual or the media.

Dr. Smith said the performance measure must be one that will be easily understood by parents and educators. The method being used is described as the "Weighted Average" approach.

Under the weighted average approach, each school will be assigned a performance score calculated from the number of students



Dr. Charity Smith

who scored Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic on their latest benchmark exams. Numerical

values will be assigned for each performance level (for example, Advanced = 4 points, Proficient = 3 points, Basic = 2 points, Below Basic = 1 point). A weighted average of students' benchmark performance level will be calculated for each school. In short, schools with large numbers of Advanced and Proficient students would receive high school performance scores; schools with large numbers of Basic and Below Basic students would receive low school performance scores.

The ADE would set a series of school "cut scores" to rank schools into 5 performance categories:

- Schools of Excellence
- Schools Exceeding Standards
- Schools Meeting Standards
- Schools on Alert
- Schools in Need of Immediate Improvement.

The legislature has proposed an incentive program that, if funded, would provide financial rewards to schools that rank in the top categories. Schools in the lowest category may be eligible for special ADE assistance, if resources are available.

Audit...

Continued from previous page

groups to remove barriers to learning.

6. Professional Growth, Development, and Evaluation – The school provides appropriate professional development opportunities for staff and uses performance evaluation procedures to improve teaching and learning.

Educational Efficiency

7. Leadership – School instructional decisions focus on support

for teaching and learning.

8. Organizational Structure and Resources – The school's organization maximizes use of time and other resources to maximize teaching and learning.

9. Comprehensive and Effective Planning – The school uses a comprehensive school improvement plan and action plan focused on teaching and learning.

The ADE will be developing rules about how and when Scholastic Audits will be used by the Department. SA's may be required for

some schools classified by ADE as needing improvement. In such situations the recommendations made by the audit team may be binding. Like Kentucky, other schools may be able to request a SA, but the recommendations wouldn't be binding.

The cost of an SA is substantial, so expect that to be a factor as ADE and ALA consider how best to use this new tool to improve Arkansas education. For more information, follow the "Scholastic Audits" link on the ASBA website, www.arsba.org.

Investing in HR Expertise Makes Dollars and Sense

By Ann Marshall

Human Resources for Boards may not sound like an alluring topic, but the matter of personnel management was brought to life and relevance by businessman and school board president, Bryan Brown from Lamar.

Brown explained that a human resources (HR) department is the division of an organization responsible for employment functions. It oversees hiring and terminating workers, establishing policy, tracking applicants, administering benefits, ensuring that laws are followed, and promoting good employee relations.

As a seasoned HR manager in the manufacturing world and a long-time school board member, Brown contrasted some of the key differences between business and school districts. The corporate world hires at-will (non-contracted) workers, pays for skill and performance, makes decisions and changeovers quickly, competes on a broad scale, and values HR leadership. On the other hand, school districts contract with employees, pay for knowledge and tenure, make decisions and turnarounds slowly, take a narrow view of competition, and seldom employ HR professionals.

Despite such differences, Brown urged school district leaders to believe what business has learned: professional personnel management can significantly reduce problems and improve efficiency throughout the organization.

With informative slides and handouts, Brown showed that any organization runs more effectively and economically when a trained HR professional

oversees personnel matters. Focused on employee rights and responsibilities and versed in personnel law, the vigilance of the HR department can prevent missteps that are costly in terms of time, money, and morale.

Knowledgeable and watchful, HR specialists work in prevention mode, which is the key to their effectiveness, Brown said. For example, HR professionals are well versed in the lawful aspects of interviews, employee evaluation, and termination proceedings, thus minimizing legal challenges to hiring and firing decisions.

Too often, he warned, those who handle HR in school districts, such as administrators who have come up through the school ranks, are educators who lack proper training and guidance in human resource matters. Moreover, their time needs to be invested in their area of expertise, which is education rather than employment.

Quoting Will Rogers, "Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects," Brown urged school boards to take advantage of the expertise that businesses have to share. "Boards and administrators are obligated to find the best way to manage their schools," he said, and business is willing to help school districts learn how to do it.

Brown is convinced that a well-trained human resources professional can save school districts countless consternation and significant money. Is HR an investment that could pay your district dividends it's now missing? Bryan Brown says, Yes!



HR Professional and board member Bryan Brown

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