Strategy Sharing and Student Panels Highlight Teaching in Action Series

Two successful KECSAC programs shared their strategies and the words of their students this fall. Adair Youth Development Center and Phoenix Academy welcomed colleagues from around the state to discuss innovative ways to reach vulnerable youth and promote academic and personal success.

Adair Youth Development Center in Columbia hosted Teaching in Action on November 1. Ten staff from other Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) educational programs and KECSAC were welcomed by Sue Buley, the school administrator, for a day of rich discussion and training. The group was joined by John Shelley, the District Title 1 Coordinator, Ron Long, the DJJ Superintendent of the program and Mike Mangam, the DJJ Assistant Superintendent. These administrators shared how the program is operated, the collaboration between DJJ and the district and the incredible support that the program receives from Adair County Schools.

The DJJ staff commended the teachers at Adair, saying they were some of the best they’d worked with. Following the roundtable discussion, the participants toured the facility and observed classrooms. The teaching staff had lunch with the group and shared stories about everyday experiences at Kentucky’s highest security facility.

Bringing a New Beat to Anti-Drug Education!

On December 12, more than 150 students, teachers and staff from KECSAC programs and Mercer County attended KECSAC’s Innovative Strategies Series training “Stay Tuned” featuring Adam Argullin, an experienced narcotics and DARE officer. The program, held at Mercer County Senior High, highlighted Adam’s musical background to present a drum-infused, motivational, anti-drug experience. Argullin gave students a look at the harmful effects of drugs in a positive and entertaining way, playing pop songs on the drums throughout the training, educating them on the dangers of drugs and how to avoid them. He left the students with a powerful motivational message that anyone can follow their dreams, and the only person standing in your way is yourself. KECSAC wishes to thank Mercer Co. High, Mercer Co. Day Treatment and Mr. Argullin for a successful and exciting training!
Dear friends,

A few weeks ago I found myself traveling with several colleagues from across the Commonwealth to one of our juvenile detention centers. We were participating in a “Teaching In Action” professional development program where teachers and administrators have the opportunity to visit a program and learn first-hand from their staff about how best to serve our particular student population. The school we visited was wonderful. They implement a comprehensive educational program while differentiating each lesson for each individual, a feat none too small. The teachers in the program were engaging and clearly dedicated to helping every single student achieve at his or her highest level.

During our visit we also had an opportunity to meet with a group of students and to hear from them, in their own words, how the program has impacted them. This conversation is where the real learning took place for me. It’s where the rubber hit the road; where we knew that our mission was important and that our work was never finished.

A young man sat in front of us, talking about his life; about what brought him to this particular point and about what he has learned so far in his educational journey. One of our colleagues asked him what he had learned that would help him be successful when he transitioned back to his home. It’s a question we think of often while we work to help our students prepare to lead meaningful lives. The student, in a humble, solemn voice, began telling us about his perceptions and how they have changed.

He recounted a story of his life before he came to the program, skipping school and doing drugs, when a friend of his from back home, said to him, “man, if my mom knew I was doing this she’d kill me.” To our student, having a parent concerned about his drug use was so foreign to him that he actually felt sorry for his friend. He said he thought his friend must have had a really screwed up home life if his mom would be upset with that. And then he said something that literally brought a tear to my eye. He said, “I thought what I had was normal.” Normal. I suppose it was normal to him, he did drugs with his mom at home, his father was in jail and when he wasn’t in jail, he wasn’t ever really around. He didn’t go to school much because he didn’t have to. There were no rules and very little expectation that he do anything…it was his normal.

The young man then told us how the program has helped him understand what he had wasn’t really normal, and it wasn’t something he wanted for his life. He talked about how hard it will be when he gets to go home, but the program has given him the strength and skills to stay focused on his new goal. A goal, by the way, that includes going to college, something he never considered before. And that, my friends, is why our programs are so important. They don’t just provide effective learning strategies developed around the core content; they in fact create a new normal for our kids. In my opinion, that is the most important service we can do for our children.
Adair YDC and Phoenix Academy Host Teaching In Action Series

juvenile facility. The student panel really touched and inspired everyone present with their honesty and desire to build a better life for themselves. The young men and women expressed that they weren’t thinking about college until they came to the YDC where they are able to work at their own pace, receive individualized attention and do not have the distraction of substance abuse. Now they no longer plan to drop out and are preparing to deal with the challenges of returning to their previous communities. One student even pointed out that he appreciates being at Adair YDC because gifted students are able to move at their own pace and he is being challenged in school.

The Phoenix Academy in Clark County opened its doors to 17 teachers, administrators and KECSAC staff from all over the state on November 11. Dustin Howard, the school administrator, let the group dig right in to the school day by observing the mentoring groups that occur every “Mentoring Monday.” Community members work with students to provide career counseling and a focus on education. The Teaching in Action participants spent the day talking to students, observing classrooms, attending promotion meetings and learning about the employability culture in place at Phoenix. As students led the tour and staff discussed their model, a common language was clearly evident. The students discussed their behavior in terms of what would make them employable and what would be acceptable in the workplace. The level system used in the program is based on employability and students are promoted to higher levels, just as they will be in their future jobs.

Positivity and realistic preparation for the future are the attitudes of Mr. Howard and the enthusiastic staff at the day treatment. By getting important community members involved in the lives of the students, such as District Judge Earl Ray Neal, the youth are able to see the types of careers they are working toward. They are also given projects that teach skills and empower them to impact their own lives and each other’s for the better. Students recently drafted and submitted proposals to the Clark County Board of Education for changes they would like to see implemented in their school day. The board accepted some of those proposals and has provided new materials and learning systems based on the students’ recommendations. Students were clearly proud of these accomplishments, as well as the many chess tournament victories they have accumulated over the last few years.

Educational staff who participated in these Teaching in Action trainings left both facilities with great ideas to implement and a renewed sense of the shared work of all state agency programs. Teachers recognized students they had taught in their own programs, highlighting the fact that KECSAC programs act as a continuum of care as youth transition to different locations throughout the Commonwealth.

KECSAC would like to thank the generous staff of Adair Youth Development Center and the Phoenix Academy for sharing their mission and strategies. We look forward to visiting many more outstanding educational programs in the coming years.

Students at Adair YDC learn important skills during a “life skills” class, such as how to write a check and personal financial responsibility.

A student at Phoenix Academy builds a robot during exploratory time during the school day.
Honoring Veterans

Ramey-Estep Holds Assembly Honoring Teachers and Staff Who Have Served

In honor of Veteran’s Day, Ramey-Estep High School’s (REHS) English and history teacher, Ms. Heather Thomas, and the arts and humanities teacher, Mrs. Robin Crum, helped organize an assembly for the students and other staff to show appreciation for the military members of the REHS family. The school honored 17 Ramey-Estep Home staff members and teachers, who have served in various branches of the military. Student representatives respectfully read the poems of various patriotic writers to express their appreciation and the choir, led by Mrs. Crum performed “God Bless America” and “America the Beautiful.”

Wounded Vietnam veteran and local pastor, Mr. Thomas Keelin, served as a guest speaker during the assembly. He shared his remarkable story and military experiences with the students and delivered a stirring testimonial on the importance of being a soldier. REHS students were happy to express their gratitude for all of those who have served their country with distinction and dignity. The students were left with a strong sense of patriotism and the feeling that they too could make a difference toward the betterment of U.S. society.

Lexington Day Treatment Serves A Breakfast for Champions

The Lexington Day Treatment Center honored their teachers and staff who served in the military on Veteran’s Day with a homemade breakfast. Social worker Robin Taylor and two students helped prepare a delicious breakfast for science teacher Mr. Floyd Broughton and bus driver Mr. Edward Hale. The two veterans were escorted to breakfast by two other students and they enjoyed omelets, bacon, biscuits, and juice. The staff and students at Lexington Day Treatment Center thank Mr. Broughton, Mr. Hale and all Veterans for their service to the U.S.!
A new program implemented at Morehead Youth Development Center (MYDC) this fall that helps students gain valuable life skills beyond the classroom is called Mad City Money. Commonwealth Credit Union (CCU) representatives Bryan Douglas and Cindy Block worked with Mrs. Valerie Kazee, Office Technology instructor, to present this unique activity. Mad City Money is a new program developed by CCU based on the “reality store” project to help students set goals and get a dose of reality when it comes to monthly expenses and daily living needs. Mr. Douglas provided the activity materials as well as descriptions and duties of each of the ten merchants (Credit Union, Big Wheels New & Used, Fun Stuff, Gotta Eat! Food and Dining, Home Stuff, Kid Care, Mad City Mall, My Closet, Really Realty & Utilities, and Fickle Finger of Fate). Along with CCU representatives, MYDC teachers and staff served as merchants.

Before “shopping,” students randomly chose a career with a specified income, and most are assigned a spouse (with additional family income) and a child with age-level childcare expenses. College graduates also have education loans to consider and many had credit card debt to budget for. One sophomore student commented that she learned to, “use your money wisely because if you don’t, you’ll be broke.”

Mrs. Kazee worked with the students prior to the event to discuss budgeting and calculating percentages of income. Merchants were urged to encourage students to select top dollar options. When going over budget or running out of money, students were to return to the bank (CCU) for other options. They often had to return to a merchant to see if they could make an exchange for a more affordable option. After completing Mad City Money, a senior student pointed out one important tip she learned: “Don’t always feed in to peer pressure of buying name brands or be led by high pressure sales pitches,” she said. Students used “debit” cards to pay bills at each of the merchant booths and were challenged to have no more than $100 remaining at the end of the activity. They were then encouraged to place any extra money in a savings or a 401K retirement account. Students followed up the activity with a formal personal business letter to Mr. Douglas about their experience.

### Students Attend Leadership Conference

Five MYDC students were able to attend the fall Young Women LEAD Conference at Northern Kentucky University on October 15, accompanied by Mrs. Kazee. Young Women LEAD is an all-day leadership conference for high school girls focusing on Leadership, Education and Development to empower them to embrace their strengths and to reach their full potential. The students also participated in breakout sessions in which participants were encouraged to bring their skills into the community and to develop a community cause of action. In another session girls were reminded of true beauty and the importance of taking time to discover the things they like about themselves.

Keynote speaker Debra Gano, CEO, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of BYOU (Be Your Own You) magazine, a self-esteem publication for girls, and author of the best-selling “Heartlight Girls” series also talked with the attendees. Her mission is to build self-esteem in fun ways in girls around the world. She led the students in the Be Extraordinary Pledge developed by BYOU magazine. The girls were treated to lunch, received a gift bag and experienced an empowering leadership opportunity.

Young girls at MYDC were able to attend the Young Women LEAD Conference on Oct. 15.

### The Morehead YDC 2014 Greyhound Calendar, Christmas cards and Greyhound Note cards are once again available!

Please contact Valerie Kazee at (606) 783-8565 Ext 127, or email valeried.kazee@ky.gov to purchase your items today.

Calendars are $10 and card packages are $8 each plus S & H costs. Proceeds benefit the MYDC Office Technology class and their activities with FBLA.

Young girls at MYDC were able to attend the Young Women LEAD Conference on Oct. 15.
For the second year, students from the Phoenix Academy paid a visit to Strode Station in Clark County to talk about the transition from elementary school to middle school. The students took time to talk to the younger children about how decisions now can affect their lives.

“I like doing things like this because I feel like I’m making a change in someone’s life that could be for the better,” Phoenix Academy junior Cassidy Lamb said.

But why talk to fifth graders? Why is middle school such an important transition? Strode Station teacher Marty Frazer said it’s freedom.

“As a middle school teacher, I used to watch sixth graders come in and just have this lost look,” he said. “But they just got a chance to see what is going to happen. They get to see, ‘What is it that I need to look for and what choices do I need to make?’”

Frazer and Phoenix Academy counselor Jason McNiel guided the older students’ conversation in two classrooms on November 12. The Phoenix Academy students covered topics ranging from their own mistakes to making good decisions, not only in the classroom but with what kind of friends you keep.

Scotty Berryman, a senior at the Phoenix Academy, warned the fifth graders about the people they choose to hang out with. Harley Ritchie talked about the value of the school’s staff. “Be nice to your teachers,” he said. “They are the ones there to help you.”

While Frazer was steering the conversation toward staying out of trouble, he also took time to laud the Phoenix Academy.

“The Phoenix Academy really does make a difference,” he said. “I had a lot of these kids when I was an eighth-grade teacher. It was difficult just to make it through the day for those kids. Now they’re preaching about being successful, having a good attitude. It really makes a difference.”

And they were very willing to take part, Phoenix Academy Principal Dustin Howard said. “They were excited about the opportunity to share their story,” he said. “They relish the opportunity to be a mentor.”

When the older students were finished speaking, Frazer warned them about a roomful of younger students that now looked up them. “You’re rock stars to them now,” Frazer said.

“They want to be role models,” Howard said. “It gives them an opportunity to say something then be forced to walk the walk, and not just talk about it but be about it.”

And for those fifth graders who might struggle not just with behavior, but adjusting, Lamb added some more advice. “No matter how hard life seems, you can overcome anything,” she said.

Maryhurst Students Prepare for the Future at College and Career Fair

On November 15, seven students from Maryhurst of Jefferson County got the opportunity to attend a college and career fair at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville. Jefferson County Public Schools and Education First Foundation, Inc. partnered to present this annual showcase of colleges and universities. The conference is sanctioned by the Kentucky Department of Education and provided students with information about college admissions, financial aid, freshman studies and housing. The fair was an excellent opportunity for 2013-2014 graduating students as they plan and prepare for their futures.
Students at Gateway Children’s Services worked hard this year in order to earn “money” or rewards to benefit children around the world. Students accumulated their daily “money” through appropriate classroom behavior and academic progress, and in turn they got to purchase gift items to fill shoe boxes with. This project was in participation with Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box through Samaritan’s Purse, which sends Christmas gifts to impoverished children around the world. The students expressed great joy in shopping for, organizing and wrapping the desired gifts. Altogether, the students sent out six complete boxes to children in need and loved helping these children even though they are thousands of miles apart.

Campbell County DT Gives Back to Community for the Holidays

Information for this article was obtained from a Nov. 9, 2013 article by Chris Mayhew in the Community Press & Recorder

This year, students at Campbell County Day Treatment Center hosted a holiday food and supply drive as part of their Community Service Learning Project. The drive will benefit the soup kitchen Our Daily Bread, a ministry of hospitality dedicated to serving the needs of local residents and those who frequent the area. They collected items such as canned fruits and vegetables, toilet paper, napkins, paper towels, used clothing and money.

“Campbell County Day Treatment is participating because we feel that it is important for our students to learn the value of giving back and feeling like a part of the community,” Principal Alvin Elsbernd said. “It is also valuable for our students to take lessons from the classroom and apply them to ‘real world’ situations.”

Students also volunteered their time and experienced service first hand at the soup kitchen during the holiday season, which serves an average of 450 meals a day. In order to show the importance of service and giving back to the community, English teacher Ms. Theresa Snyder takes several students on trips to serve food to those seeking a meal from the kitchen. Students get to participate as a reward for good behavior and Ms. Snyder says they often leave more thankful for the things they have in their life.

Kathy Schickel, director of operations at Our Daily Bread, says those receiving the meals also appreciate seeing young adults volunteering. “Our guests really enjoy it when we have young people here volunteering,” she said. “I think they find it very refreshing that they find there are some good people willing to give back.”