Maryhurst Academy, recently named an Alternative Program of Distinction by the Kentucky Department of Education, hosted a KECSAC Teaching in Action training on April 29 at their Louisville campus. Fellow educators from around the state and KECSAC staff came together to learn about the innovative strategies being employed at the school. Maryhurst is home to around 80 young ladies who are educated on-site by teachers and administrators skilled at overcoming educational barriers.

On the day of the Teaching in Action training, staff members shared information about the population of students at the school and their individual techniques in the classroom. Associate principal Jill Tabor welcomed the group and described the demographics of the staff and students. Carrie Elzy, the district curriculum coach, shared the structure of the professional learning communities for Jefferson County’s State Agency Schools and how these PLC’s are used to inform curriculum and advance student learning. English teacher Noah Glass highlighted the educational apps that he uses with his students and guided participants through these on iPads. Letisha Broadus, science teacher, described how she is able to differentiate instruction to meet the students where they are and address different learning styles in her classroom.

Each presenter provided resources and tools that attendees could return to their own schools with. The group then took a tour of the facility and the beautiful grounds that Maryhurst occupies. Classroom observations allowed trainees to see those aforementioned strategies in action and gave a true picture of the skills necessary to educate a vulnerable population of students.

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Dear Friends,

Earlier this month I spent a few days with our Interagency Advisory Group board members at Lake Cumberland for a work retreat. For a couple of them this was their first retreat with KECSAC, and I am sure they may have expected to actually see the lake. I’m not sure that ever happened, but we did spend a great deal of time and energy discussing state agency children and their educational needs.

Much of our conversation revolved around a young man who was recently moved from one program to another, one of many stops on his journey in state care. He has been in out of home placement for most of his life, moving from foster home to group home, to DJJ facility and then back with his family before starting the cycle all over again. His story is an exaggerated version of what many of our children face these days. While not all have as many placements as this young man, many of our students are moved too often and have disrupted educational experiences because of it. In fact, this particular young man was moved so often he wasn’t able to be in one place long enough to earn the academic credits he needs to graduate. He did somehow manage to earn some credits as he moved frequently between placements, but not nearly enough and, unfortunately, not the “right” ones.

Our team, from every state agency in Kentucky who has some oversight or authority in serving children, worked together to identify the needs and to develop an action plan for how we can be better advocates for our children. Our partners at DJJ, DCBS and KDE are committed to working together to address these concerns and have helped us develop the framework for an aggressive action agenda for further meeting the educational needs of our state agency children. As part of this action agenda, KECSAC has moved to include additional monitoring of the educational goals of our students. This includes the review of individual student academic records to ensure they are enrolled in the proper classes that will lead to a diploma or the next step in their academic journey.

This level of monitoring is unprecedented in Kentucky and sends a message to all our partners that we recognize the obligation we have to help our students graduate. This move is even more necessary now that the GED is no longer an option for our students. We can no longer enroll a student in our programs with the goal of that student earning a GED. We must help our students earn a diploma. This is no easy task as many of our students are reading significantly below grade level. However, KECSAC, in partnership with our state agencies and our local education agencies, must make new educational pathways for our students. We believe this increased monitoring of our programs will help in that process.

At the end of our retreat we always ask for feedback on how we can improve our services, how we can make our board’s engagement more meaningful. I was extremely happy to see that every member of our board recognized the importance of our shared work and saw themselves as a part of the solution for educational services for state agency children. Working together, with all our partners at the table, is the only way we are going to meet the ever growing needs of our students.
KECSAC Professional Development at Maryhurst

KECSAC would like to thank the staff of Maryhurst home and Jefferson County Public Schools for welcoming us into their facility and providing a phenomenal day of training. We look forward to highlighting other outstanding programs through the Teaching in Action Series in the coming year.

Seven KECSAC Programs Selected as Alternative Programs of Distinction by KDE

In an effort to recognize the work of educators and programs that serve at-risk students, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) named 11 Alternative Programs of Distinction this May, seven of which are KECSAC programs.

School districts nominated their programs for recognition based on criteria developed by KDE and the Innovative Pathways for Success Cadre. A three-member panel screened the applications and the finalists received site visits from a three-member team. Each program selected as an Alternative Program of Distinction received $1,000 for instructional support and was formally recognized at the Kentucky Board of Education’s June 2 meeting.

The seven KECSAC programs named as Alternative Programs of Distinction for 2015 were:

- Ramey-Estep High School, Boyd County
- Bullitt Alternative Center, Bullitt County
- Calloway County Day Treatment, Calloway County
- CIPS Alternative Education Program at the Children’s Home of Northern KY (CHNKY), Covington Independent
- Western Day Treatment, Jefferson County
- Maryhurst, Jefferson County
- The Providence School, Jessamine County

The other alternative programs selected were: Calloway Alternative Education Center, Calloway County; Christian County Alternative Program, Christian County; The Learning Center at Linlee, Fayette County; and The McDaniel Learning Center, Laurel County.

KDE began highlighting exemplary practices in public school alternative programs in 2009. Alternative programs include school district-operated and -housed instructional programs that provide services to at-risk students with unique needs. They also can be district-operated instructional programs that are located in non-district facilities or schools and serve youth who are considered state agency children through the Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children (KECSAC), the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department for Community Based Services and/or the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

In order to highlight the strategies and best practices of these programs, KECSAC held a Teaching in Action professional development training at Maryhurst in April and plans to hold further trainings in other programs of distinction this fall. Look for further updates and highlights on these programs in upcoming Collaborative newsletters.
The Corbin Educational Center visited Somerset Community College in London, Kentucky on April 27, 2015. Somerset Community College is part of the Kentucky Community and Technical System.

The program had 25 students attend the trip where they received a tour of both the North and South Campuses. During the three hour-tour, the students visited each program offered through the college.

Some of the programs highlighted were cosmetology, respiratory care, welding, automotive, EMT training, and many more.

The students also got the opportunity to participate in games that tested their knowledge of the admissions process, financial aid, and scholarships. Somerset Community College offers a variety of degree programs including two-year Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, and Associate in Applied Science degrees, as well as work certificates. The students attending the trip ranged from 8th to 12th graders.

Boyle County Day Treatment Volunteers Time to Benefit Community

The Boyle County Day Treatment moved to a new location last fall and is now located in a local church, which hosts a consignment sale for children’s items. Students at the day treatment were happy to volunteer for the sale by helping other volunteers, checking in clothes to sell at Lil Cherubs consignment sale, and sorting toys and other items.

One student made sure toys were approved to sell and then displayed them by category for shoppers. Volunteers were able to shop before the sale was open to the public, so students were able to benefit from that opportunity. Mrs. Miller, the program counselor, also received help from students in picking out essential items for customers who are expecting children. Several adult volunteers complimented the students’ good manners and wonderful help. The students had a fun and rewarding time giving back to the community.

Above: One student helps check in clothes for the consignment sale to benefit children of the community.

Below: Another student makes sure toys are sorted by category before the sale takes place.
On March 25th, Mayfield Youth Development Center held an assembly program that featured the wildlife company “Animal Tales.” The students were able to have hands-on experiences with different exotic wildlife animals and were given a lecture and lesson from the wildlife naturalist/biologist about the different species. The presenter covered three different programs: Reptile Scales & Tales, Creepy Critters, and Animal Science. The core curriculum used in each program focused on science, geography, world culture, and conservation. All the students and staff enjoyed this assembly and look forward to having them again in the future. The program extends its thanks to Graves County School District and Principal Sonny McManus for helping to fund the cost of this program for the youth. If you would like to know more about Animal Tales, you can visit their website at www.animaltalezoocation.com.

Louisville Day Treatment held a Science Fair on March 26th. Each student researched a particular topic and were required to prepare a presentation with text and pictures to best describe their selection (human skeletal system, fungi, AIDS/HIV, cell structure, etc.). At the fair each student stood by their work to present and answer questions from JCPS and DJJ staff who were charged with grading the visual and verbal presentations. The top three winners were treated to lunch at Hometown Buffet the following week.

Left and Right: Students at Louisville Day Treatment proudly display their science fair exhibits and answer questions about their projects for JCPS and DJJ staff who were in charge of grading the entries.
After three years of trying to develop an equine therapy program, Northern Kentucky Youth Development Center (NKYDC) has partnered with Gatewood Arena in Dry Ridge Kentucky and started what is now known as “Reining Hope.” The first class of residents graduated from the therapy program this past semester.

Years ago, NKYDC received a grant to help fund an equine program at the facility, but after numerous attempts to get the program off the ground it became apparent that the obstacles in building such a program were too great and it lost its momentum. But, during the process of trying to develop the program, staff recruited help from Paula Gatewood, owner and manager of Gatewood Arena, to serve on their Advisory Board. From there, the planning continued when Ms. Gatewood offered her site as a possibility for the program.

For the inaugural class staff identified six residents who were less responsive to traditional treatment and offered them the opportunity to enter the therapy program. Superintendent of NKYDC Martin Strouse, says the changes they saw in residents who participated were remarkable.

Clinician Kellie Burke, who now is also certified by Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, describes the program as a way to help youth cope and develop resiliency. “These youth struggle every day with an emotional and psychological burden. They’ve experienced years of disappointment and regret from others and themselves, struggling to find themselves and how they fit into the world, and finding a way to make peace and move on,” Ms. Burke said. “It can take years in a traditional setting, and may not ever come at all. But put yourself in an arena with a 1,200 pound animal who doesn’t care about all of the social expectations, your past, or even your future. They live in the here and now, they don’t judge, and they always listen. That environment allows a young soul to flourish. From there, what they learn can be applied to years of future success.”

One resident named Andrew, who came to the facility approximately a year ago, had suffered from a troubled past and lacked social skills, but began making noticeable changes due to the Equine Therapy program. He refers to the program as his “breakthrough” in a paper he wrote about his experience: “The purpose of me going to the equine program was to help with my past. I have learned not only how to think about how others behave a certain way, but how to be patient. Learning how to overcome obstacles is challenging if you don’t know how to do the activity. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. The instructors tell us not to let our past define us, if we work hard we can make a change. Knowing that horses work different than we do, we have to think about their perspective and how to work with them,” Andrew said. “The equine program has helped me and my treatment TREMENDOUSLY and the way I interact with my fellow peers. I have been more understanding and take time to work an issue out while working with the horses. Before, I would push the issue away and not work on it, and I used to judge people before I even knew them. I think the Equine program will help everybody one way or another. This is the best thing I have done!”

Mr. Strouse applauds the program and says, “In my 40 years in this business I have never seen a program have such an impact on youth. Every youth who is completing this program has had a life changing experience. We are in the process of developing outcome measures to help us track the results of this program. As we move toward a trauma informed care approach this type of creative programming is going to enhance the work we are doing with the youth.”
LIFE

I came into this world with 3 sisters and a brother
A crack head daddy and a pothead mother
It was messed up sometimes how we treated one another
But we were always united when we needed each other
See that’s what family’s for, the good times and the bad
And when I look at the past, it really makes me sad
That I had to grow up without a dad
Cause instead of raising me, he was chasin crack
But I can’t let it hold me back
Got to keep on movin
People look at how I live
Then they start assuming
The worst, they don’t know that inside I hurt
Or the image I portray is all rehearsed
I can’t let anyone see who I really am
And even if I did you wouldn’t understand
That’s the only thing I know.
But the Lord is in my heart,
And I’ll be ready when I go.

UNTITLED

Momma never home, I swear to God I felt neglected
Sometimes I went days without dinner, lunch, and breakfast.
Hopped in the streets, 9 years old and I was reckless.
Momma I’m sorry for the times I had you stressin
Teachers on my ass I dint get me pay attention
Always high in school, couldn’t even make it through a lesson
Momma told me chill out and stop being so selfish
Momma told me life’s short, but I didn’t get the message
Still stuck in camp, and it’s been over a year
I’m sorry for the pain, and I’m sorry for the tears
You gotta be brave, and you can’t live in fear
You can’t believe what you always gain hear
Runnin out of money; lookin for the next victim
Get it how I live just so I won’t get evicted
Look over my shoulder; consequence of my decision
Sometimes I ask God why he put me in this position
Used to pray to God, but that sh*t wasn’t effective
Uncle got indicted; wish someone had objection
Gotta get rich, that’s my number one objective
Walk in my shoes, see life in my perspective
Watch who you trust, they might be writin statements
They givin information, quickly turn them a patient
I ain’t got no patience; I’m sick and tired of waitin
You gotta work hard out here just to make it
I don’t want to change, just for the record
I’m sick and tired of treatment and all the lectures
I’m stayin the same, always be a gangsta
My only goal in life is to get my bankroll

AIRPLANE

I fly high as an airplane
That’s what my picture framed
My life is messed up
I have no one else to blame
Hurt my family in the past
Teardrops hit me just like rain
I always dreamed of money and fame
Traveling the world with big diamonds and gold chain
My four year old step brother in heaven
Way past airplanes
He lived four years before the bullet took his brain
RIP fat fat
I say his name up in vein
My words are spittin fast
Just like cars in one way lanes
I wanted an airplane
Just like the one off soul plane
I’m done with my poetry
My life’s a da** shame

MY TESTIMONY

I swear some people hate me;
They don’t wanna see me make it.
They wanna see me broken;
They don’t wanna see me stable.
People wanna see me quit;
But me I ain’t gon do it.
I told my mama I be trippin;
She said, “Ba I already knew it.”
Told her I was ashamed;
Cause of everything I’ve done.
And she told me keep my head up;
Said, “I’m proud to call you my son.”
See I’ve stolen, I’ve cheated, I’ve sinned, and I’ve lied;
I’ve loved, I’ve lived, I’ve repented, and I’ve cried.
The Lord, he saved my soul
And showed me how to do right.
So I thank him every morning
For letting me make it through the night.
Cause tomorrow’s never promised
That’s the only thing I know.
But the Lord is in my heart,
So I’ll be ready when I go.

Teacher Renea Hunt at Green River Youth Development Center worked with students this past semester to help them create poetry through a resource called “Words Unlocked.” This curriculum is provided by the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS) in an effort to encourage literary exploration by young people held in locked juvenile facilities, and done so in the spirit of National Poetry Month. Ms. Hunt said she used the film “Dead Poets Society” to introduce the unit and to emphasize how important it is for students to think for themselves, then tied that into some lessons from “Words Unlocked.” During the lessons, literary devices were used as vocabulary and the unit served as a great lead-in to Shakespeare plays and language. Even after the students finished the poetry unit, they continued working on reading and deconstructing poetry. The lessons were a hit with students and below are some work examples from a “Hip Hop Poetry” lesson the students wanted to showcase.

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The Collaborative

Save the Date

14th Annual Alternative Strategies For Educating Students At-Risk
A Conference for Educators in Alternative Settings

July 29-30, 2015
Perkins Conference Center
Eastern Kentucky University