Another Successful At-Risk Conference Ushers In the New School Year!

The 14th Annual Alternative Strategies for Educating Students At-Risk Conference returned home to Eastern Kentucky University this year on July 29-30. Educators from all over the Commonwealth engaged in learning and networking while attending keynote addresses and breakout sessions presented by their colleagues and other experts in the field of educating at-risk students. The young men of Cadet Leadership Education Program started off the conference with their Presentation of Colors during the National Anthem. Dr. Diane Heacox, noted differentiation expert, kicked off the two days of training with her opening keynote address and training session by sharing crucial strategies for differentiating instruction, a key skill for KECSAC and traditional classroom teachers. Breakout sessions throughout the conference focused on a wide range of topics, from classroom management and behavioral health challenges to technology use and core content curriculum.

Highlights included a presentation by Animal Tales, LLC., an educational organization that brings science lessons to life for students using reptiles and other exotic animals. Conference goers got to meet a large tortoise, snakes, lizards and other exciting creatures as they learned about how they can bring Animal Tales to their students.

Those participants wishing to enjoy some fresh air could go outside and visit the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) College Info Road Show Bus. This mobile classroom is a fantastic resource available to Kentucky teachers and can aid in some of the vital steps of preparing their students to continue their education after graduation.

A featured session at the end of day one allowed everyone in attendance to take part in Current Drug Trends with Officer Adam Cont. on page 3...
Dear Friends,

The Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children (KECSAC) was founded on the principle of collaboration. It’s so much a part of who we are that it’s prominently included in the name of our organization. It is part of our core belief system and it is essential in meeting our mission of providing quality educational services to children and youth in the care or custody of the Commonwealth. From a theoretical standpoint, the collaboration, or partnerships, seem organic. But from a practical perspective they are much more difficult and take much more work than I think most people imagine. Our administrative team works very hard to nurture our partnerships so that our students have their needs met, but it isn’t always easy.

Recently we have been faced with some very difficult decisions that have really forced us to look internally as an organization, to think more widely than we have before, to hone our mission and our purpose so we serve those who need us most. With the passing of Senate Bill 200, day treatment programs across the Commonwealth have seen decreases in the number of traditional state agency children who qualify for their services. The creation of FAIR teams has resulted in alternative pathways for restorative justice, often outside the juvenile justice system. In addition, the effectiveness of the Bill is becoming increasingly evident as residential juvenile justice programs serve fewer students each day. So, while we rally around the move to overhaul the juvenile justice system, we also know what that means for teachers and administrators in our education programs. Some districts are faced with nearly empty classrooms and they are being forced to make some tough decisions about staffing.

Meanwhile, our DCBS partner programs have seen a steady increase in their enrollments and in the severity of needs of students being placed in residential treatment programs. In these situations, our school districts are feeling the stretch of meeting the intense educational needs of more state agency youth in their classrooms without having the financial resources for more staff.

In the middle of these two very different issues is where KECSAC sits...sometimes uncomfortably. As a fiscal resource for our school districts, we know very well the financial impact these changes are having on our districts and we see firsthand how difficult it is to maintain quality programming when faced with either a rapidly growing or rapidly shrinking student population. And, we know the financial decisions we make moving forward will impact real people, many of whom we know personally.

This situation, one where our partnerships are being tested, is the precise reason KECSAC is so critical to meeting the educational needs of our students. It’s our responsibility to ensure every state agency child has the resources they need and, while it may sometimes be uncomfortable to make tough calls, we know it is what we are called to do. Over the next few months we will be working with our legislators to find common sense solutions to these issues and we hope that the partnerships we have forged with KDE, DCBS, DJJ and BHDID will expedite a solution to a growing crisis for educators and the students they serve. After all, we know “you cannot produce results without effective partnerships.”
Argullin. Officer Argullin is a very popular trainer and his sessions in the past have been standing room only. This full group featured session ensured that all of the participants could gain valuable information about an issue that can affect all of Kentucky’s at-risk students.

Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice Bob Hayter shared remarks and awarded winners during the Annual State Agency Children School Administrator Association (SACSAA) Awards Luncheon. SACSAA awards deserving teachers, support personnel, administrators, students, and community members each year for their dedication to serving this special population of students. Several award winners were on hand to receive their awards from Commissioner Hayter and celebrate the day with their colleagues and families.

The conference ended on a particularly high note with the closing keynote address by Dr. Debra Peppers. Dr. Peppers is a former at-risk student who, through the hard work of some dedicated teachers, found education to be the way to a better life. She became a National Teachers Hall of Fame inductee and has spent her career teaching, speaking, training, and giving back to the profession that became her calling.

KECSAC would like to thank the generous sponsors and planning committee members who helped to make this conference a success. We look forward to working with all those agencies again to make the next conference even better!

**Congratulations to our 2015 SACSAA Award Winners!**

Our Annual SACSAA Awards were presented to the deserving 2015 winners during our 14th Annual Educating Students At-Risk Conference. From left to right: Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice Bob Hayter presented the awards; Kristin Humphrey, a science instructor at Bullitt Alternative Center in the Bullitt County School District was awarded Teacher of the Year; Reverend Damon Horton was one of the Community Members of the Year for his services to Fayette Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Fayette County; Suzan Jones, an instructional aide at Morehead Youth Development Center in the Rowan County School District was recognized as Staff Person of the Year; Michael Little was another Community Member of the Year for his services to Ramey-Estep High School in Boyd County; Sonny McManus of Mayfield Youth Development Center in the Graves County School District was awarded School Administrator of the Year (accepted by Justin Hubbard); and KECSAC Director Dr. Ronnie Nolan recognized these outstanding educators, staff and community members!
Starting this school year Safe Harbor Academy is proud to offer in addition to a direct instruction classroom, a computer-based environment, a blended environment (highly-structured classroom), and a flex environment (READ 180 lab). They accomplished this with some exciting new computer facilitated courses offered through APEX and A+ software curriculum and instruction and by hosting math RTI through IXL and reading and language RTI through the Read 180/Systems 44, which are both data-driven software programs. The program also supports a one to one Google School initiative where each student has access to a Google Chromebook or Google platform device.

Faculty at Safe Harbor have also embraced the mindset to improve and grow for better student outcomes. They are participating in The Liaison Program where they collaborate with content-specific cohorts at the middle and high school to ensure access to content, rigor of instruction, and consistently high expectations of student products. Through collaboration with Woodford County High School they are also narrowing the focus of conversations in PLC meetings to the quality of student evidence.

School Principal Logan Culbertson says they are also working to increase community involvement to change the perspective they might have of the program. “Our Community Action Partners committee is planning fundraiser events and other public relations communication plans in an effort to continue to grow the village around our young adults. We are further changing our image from being a traditional alternative school to an alternative learning environment that provides exceptional learning experiences,” Culbertson said. “Changing our community’s perspective and our kids’ perspectives (self-image) is key to involving as many community stakeholders as possible to come in and connect with our young adults. We are excited and working hard to ensure all of our kids will be college, career, and life ready citizens.”

Another project they continue to integrate is the Nelson and Pade F5 aquaponics unit in a multi-discipline approach to support content standards. Students at the program are also still active in the school garden where they recently planted cole crops (which refers to any of various plants belonging to the Cruciferae or mustard family) for the season. They are still in the phases of constructing the outdoor classroom with the support of their KECSAC mini grant awarded in the spring.
Hope Hill Students Learn Useful Quilting Skills

Hope Hill decided to use their 2015 KECSAC mini grant to purchase a sewing machine and sewing supplies. Under the instruction of teacher Loretta Gannon, students learned how use the tools and ended up crafting a king-size, nine-patch quilt. Each girl, along with Hope Hill staff, chose coordinating fabric to make their own nine-patch quilt square. Then Ms. Gannon’s mother, as a community volunteer, set the quilt up and had it quilted for the students. The quilt was raffled at their annual fundraising event Hopefest 2015, held on September 12th. Total revenue for the quilt raffle was $695. The money will be used to purchase additional supplies for the students to continue their sewing projects. Plans are already in place to make a quilt for next year’s Hopefest.
Owensboro Treatment Center Creates Award Winning Scarecrows

Eight students from Owensboro Treatment Center participated in the annual Western Kentucky Botanical Garden’s Scarecrow Festival. Vocational and educational staff collaborated on this project and helped students design and construct the scarecrows based on this year’s patriotic theme. Donated items were used to create the scarecrows.

One scarecrow the students created was a replica of the Lincoln Memorial, they made a Yankee Doodle scarecrow to depict a revolutionary war soldier, and the students dedicated their depiction of a modern day soldier scarecrow, to one of the youth workers on campus, Sergeant Cole. After judging for the festival took place, the students’ Yankee Doodle scarecrow placed third in the judging. Mrs. Miller, one of the OTC teachers accepted the award on the students’ behalf. Their Sergeant Cole scarecrow was also featured on the front page of the local Messenger-Inquirer newspaper on Saturday, September 28th. Through this activity the students further developed skills in teamwork, as well as hands-on construction. The teachers and staff said it was rewarding to see their plans come together for a unique finished product that gained community recognition.

Students at Owensboro Treatment Center created a Lincoln Memorial scarecrow (top left) a Yankee Doodle scarecrow (left) and a modern day soldier inspired by youth worker Sgt. Cole (above).

Air Evac Lifeteam Visits Calloway County Day Treatment Students

The crew from Air Evac Lifeteam 108 based in Mayfield, Ky. visited Calloway County Day Treatment Center to discuss what each member of the crew does. Air Evac Lifeteam is the largest independently owned and operated membership-supported air medical service in the United States, conducting its operations through 118 mutually supporting air medical bases across 15 states. Pilot George James, Flight Nurse Crystal Peck, and Flight Medic Josh Goldstein talked with the students and teachers about air medical operations, how they interact with other local resources, discussed the path each took to get where they are in their career, and answered questions from students and staff. The program would like to thank Nurse Peck and Base Manager Mark Harrison for coordinating this visit.

Photo Courtesy of Air Evac Lifeteam 108 Facebook Page
Upon entering this facility, I had already acquired my G.E.D. while I was at WoodsBend YDC. My teachers gave me the opportunity to do correspondence classes through WKU. At first I was hesitant about taking the classes; Mr. Downing “persuaded” me to give it a try. The first class I took was sociology. After the first lesson, I got the hang of it. I finished my sociology class with an A! I was proud of myself because I never imagined myself finishing high school much less going to college.

After I got my grades from my first class, I was ready to take another one and Mr. Downing told me I could take psychology. When I started the psychology class I knew from the beginning, I wasn’t going to like it too much. I worked hard at it even though I wanted to give up at times. When it came to my last couple of lessons I felt like I was going to fail the class. It took me a little while to finish them because I wanted to make sure everything was right. When I finished my lessons and had to take the final, I just knew I was going to mess up; but Mr. Downing told me I would do fine.

When I got my final grade back and it was a B, I was shocked I had done so well. The third class I took was a health class that covered relationships, the human body, and issues regarding different social views about these topics. I knew it was the last college course I would be able to take here due to my age. I kept myself focus and worked on the class daily. Upon completion, I received an A in this class.

I used this opportunity so I could continue my college career later. I want to do something with my life besides getting into trouble. I would like to thank the teachers here at Warren Regional Juvenile Detention Center for helping me and pushing me at times when I wanted to give up. Mostly I would like to thank Mr. Downing because he not only helped me with school; but he helped me when I was angry and feeling down with my situation. If it wasn’t for me coming to WRJDC I more than likely wouldn’t have finished high school and I know I wouldn’t have attended college. I sincerely appreciate the WRJDC’s Citizen’s Advisory Committee for establishing and funding the College Heights scholarship fund that allowed me to take these correspondence classes.

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**If you have a story you’d like to see in the next Collaborative contact editor Cindy Held at cynthia.held@eku.edu or 859-622-6552**