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Dear KECSAC Community,

“A budget should reflect our values and priorities”

Just yesterday, the Kentucky legislature passed the biennial budget. It is over 300 pages, and includes detailed spending for the next two years. It outlines where our tax dollars will be spent and it tells all of us where our Commonwealth has placed value. There certainly are many great things included in the budget. The Family Resource and Youth Service Centers received fully restored funding. Transportation funding for school districts was reinstated. Safe schools programs were noted as a top priority. But, even with all the positive news, I am disheartened that the education of state agency children was not included as a priority. As the clock kept chasing the end of the session, our elected leaders made some very difficult choices about how to spend our limited resources and, in the end, state agency children were cut by $631,000 in each of the next two years. That is equivalent to a 6.25% budget reduction.

It’s easy to get caught up in the rhetoric, the negotiating, and the ambiguity of the budget process. To get lost in the debate over values and spending priorities. And while confusion and uncertainty abound, we can all find comfort in the eyes, hearts and stories of the children and youth we serve across the Commonwealth. With emotions high at every front, we focus our work on supporting the children and youth being served in our programs, even now when we have to do that with even less resources than we had before. I think often of a young lady who recently graduated from one of our programs. When I met her years ago, she was a little shy, but confident. She was also, as I later learned, incredibly brave. She was intelligent and determined. A fighter, in every sense of the word. Her journey to that confidence was not an easy one. She had been victimized at the hands of her father and because of the circumstances that brought her into state care, you can imagine that she had many barriers: educationally, socially and emotionally. This, to me, continues to be the beauty of our programs. That amazing space between the world of education and treatment where students can finally find their voice; their passion; their confidence. Where they can find the ability to transform into the people they’ve dreamed of being. Because of the education she received in our programs, she transformed into the amazing woman she is today. She was able to share with me, her teachers, her classmates, and her community the struggles she experienced and the freeing power that education provided for her. She continues to be an inspiration to many.

She wasn’t interested in the state budget process. She certainly wasn’t sitting on the edge of her seat with baited breath as the conference committee discussed a road map for our Commonwealth. She was simply learning to be who she is. To feel comfortable with herself. To learn how to manage her feelings and experiences. She was learning to balance the life she wants with the life she has been given. I know many of you know students just like this. Let us stay focused on the issue at hand; our students, their needs and our ability to bridge the gap between what they have and what they need. If we keep our attention on the important part of why we do the work we do, the rest will come together.

Ronnie Nolan, Ed.D.
Director, KECSAC
As Joel Katte walks down the halls and into the classrooms of the education program at Fayette Regional Juvenile Detention Center, students, teachers, and youth workers alike all greet him warmly, and students are comfortable enough to ask him for help and share their news with him. Katte responds to them with equal enthusiasm and genuine care, and knows them all by name. This could be seen as an impressive feat since he is the administrator of, and splits his time between, three different alternative education programs within Fayette County Public Schools including the Detention Center, Lexington Day Treatment Center and the Family Care Center. However, when you get to know Katte and his driving beliefs and philosophy of education, it’s no wonder that creating these relationships and making personal connections are so important to him.

Teaching wasn’t Katte’s first passion in life though – it was actually baseball. Straight out of high school in Wisconsin where he grew up, he was drafted to play for the California Angels. But after a year in the team’s minor league that was based in Arizona, he was let go. Although he was upset at the time, he can now look back and see the path his life took as a blessing, much like the character Moonlight Graham in his favorite baseball-themed film, “Field of Dreams.”

“I was devastated, that was my dream I was working toward,” Katte explained. “But I think of Kevin Costner’s character in ‘Field of Dreams’ speaking to the doctor ‘Moonlight Graham,’ and he says ‘It would kill some men to get so close to their dream and not touch it. God, they’d consider it a tragedy.’ And ‘Moonlight’ replies, ‘Son, if I’d only gotten to be a doctor for five minutes... now that would have been a tragedy.’”
“That’s how I feel about teaching, this is what I’m destined to do. And it is a blessing because I’ve known some players who played in the minor leagues for eight or nine years and don’t have much to show for it, and I was able to earn my degree and gain teaching experience,” Katte said.

After his stint in the minor leagues, Katte decided to get his English degree from Lakeland University in Wisconsin and later received his Master’s from Aurora University in Illinois in educational leadership. While working on his college education, it wasn’t until he read the book “Tuesdays with Morrie” that he realized he wanted to be a teacher.

“There is a quote from Henry Adams in that book that says ‘A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops,’” Katte explained. “And I remember reading that and thinking that’s what I feel compelled to do – to make a difference. That book is about teaching and how there are so many life lessons along the way, which is a key part of everything I’ve done as an educator and an administrator. If we’re not connecting students learning to their lives and their futures then we’re not doing what we really need to be doing.”

Katte’s first teaching assignment was at a middle school Alternative Tracks program which served kids in grades 6 through 8 who were not being successful in regular classes. The regular teacher had gone on medical leave and the experience really helped shape who he would become as an educator.

“I’ll never forget sitting on the floor helping a kid and he sort of leaned over and plunked his head on my shoulder and he said, ‘you know you’re kinda like the big brother I always wished I had,’” Katte said. “That was such an impactful moment when I knew I was filling a need or moving him forward in a profound way. For me, that was when I recognized how important relationships were, and really are at the foundation of what we do. I also learned from that experience you have to meet students where they are in order to build a little bit of success on top of a little bit of success and work from there.”

Eventually Katte became an elementary principal in Wisconsin in 2006, and during this time he had an hour-long commute and was thinking...

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KECSAC Teacher Spotlight

Mr. Scott Ferguson is one of the teachers at Fayette Regional Juvenile Detention Center who is dedicated to serving at-risk youth in his school and community, and who sets high expectations for their learning and futures. We held a Q&A with him to get to know him and his teaching acumen better.

Mr. Scott Ferguson is an integral member of the educational staff at the Fayette County Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Lexington, KY where he teaches math and special education. He holds an Associate’s and Bachelor’s in Sociology, a Master’s in Education, and his Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP) is in Mathematics. Mr. Ferguson also holds a Master of Public Administration, a Director of Special Education Certification, and his Doctorate in Education Policy and Analysis. During his first two years as a teacher, he taught at several schools within the Fayette County Public School system and then he requested to teach in an alternative setting. Since then he has taught at the Lexington Day Treatment Center and currently the Detention Center which he has been at for 11 years.

Mr. Ferguson also served in the United States Army for 22 years as both an active and reserve member. As a result he has lived many different places and acquired many military occupational specialties (MOS) that allowed him...

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to serve in several types of military units. Mr. Ferguson rose to the senior NCO rank of First Sergeant, which is the rank at which he retired. If he were not teaching, he would still be proudly wearing the military uniform. Mr. Ferguson also has three grown children, two sons and a daughter, who live in the Lexington area as well.

**Do you have any other work or hobbies that you are interested in?**

I have a passion for working with the youth in my community. I also serve as the Director of a statewide youth group called the Knights of Pythagoras. I tutor in my community in mathematics. My hobbies are traveling, and my volunteer work with the youth in my community.

**Where is your happy place?**

I have three happy places: 1) My home watching Jeopardy or KET programming; 2) In my classroom serving my students and teaching math; 3) On the beach in Pensacola or Ft. Lauderdale, Florida reading and listening to the water.

**Have you always wanted to be a teacher?**

No, I originally wanted to be a Physician and Scientist. My goal was to enter UK school of medicine MD/Ph.D. program. My second goal was to stay in the military until they forced me to retire (Mandatory Removal Date) at age 60-62.

**If you weren't doing your job what would you be doing?**

I'd be in the military or working on another doctorate. If I were younger by about 10 years I'd be trying medical school.

**Considering your other interests why did you choose this work? Why this population of kids?**

When I retired from the military a couple familiar with my work with youth and my passion for it told me to try teaching. They told me that I would be good at it because I love kids. I said, “I am a disciplinarian and it won't work.” They continued to encourage me and said it will work because you love them and most of the kids need the classroom sprinkled with some discipline. I tried it and love it. I feel these kids need someone that wants to be here and that believes in what they do for them. Why not me? I bring a background of being honest and direct with the youth, while holding them to high expectations academically and socially and they seem to appreciate that.

**What would you say your personal mission as an educator is?**

To provide these youth a reason to do something different in their lives and to teach them the blessing of giving back to others and the benefit derived from that effort. If I can help one my mission is accomplished. So far there have been several I’ve been able to reach. I have also developed a few connections and supports in the community to hire many of these youth in well-paying jobs. The employers know the population that I deal with and support my passion knowing that I will not recommend anyone not ready for their work environment.

**What do you hope for your students to accomplish while here? When they leave?**

While at our facility I would like students to develop the discipline to set a goal and complete the goal. Also, to set their priorities straight by understanding their self-worth, and to help them understand the impact of their behavior on those people that love them and support them.

**What are your dreams and aspirations as an educator?**

I want to be an example of self-honesty and appreciation for who I am, and teaching my students to do the same. I hope to head some type of program before I leave the profession to help develop other teachers to be better than I am. I want a program that young men want to come to as an alternative to having contact with the court system.

**What brings you the most joy from your job?**

Seeing a student smile about their progress in my classroom. This is a realization that they have the ability to do the work assigned. Additionally, when they choose to speak to me about things that truly concern them and those things allow them to open up to me.
about looking for new jobs. He decided to look in Kentucky where his wife was from and his in-laws lived, and eventually ended up in Lexington by 2010. He became a principal for five years at Meadowthorpe Elementary in Lexington and during his time there they became a top 5 Niche ranking Kentucky school, and he also worked to make the school the first “The Leader In Me” lighthouse school in central Kentucky, which is a whole school transformation program by Franklin Covey to teach 21st Century leadership and life skills to students. He also received his Rank 1 License from Morehead University and his Superintendent’s License from the University of Kentucky during this time.

Then in 2015 when the administrator role for alternative programs position was open, Katte wanted to go back to his alternative roots.

“This position came up that uniquely blended my high school teaching and administrative experience, and I just loved this opportunity,” Katte said. “I still love it. Every day I am so grateful to serve in this capacity. As our education commissioner Dr. Pruitt said not long ago, it’s a really important time in our state and nation that we have to step up to the plate and put social-emotional learning at the forefront of everything we do or we’re going to miss kids. That was one of the biggest appeals to this work and why I’ve fully immersed myself into it. I feel like at all my programs our amazing staffs recognize that social-emotional learning has to happen. We make it a priority. It can be difficult and challenging but it is really rewarding.”

Katte credits this important work being accomplished at the Detention Center educational program to the outstanding staff there and their ability to connect with students. “The FRJDC staff is truly one of the best teams I have ever been a part of,” Katte said.

The staff includes Mr. Broughton who teaches science and math, Mr. Shannon who teaches language arts, Mr. Ferguson who teaches math and special education, Mr. Denton who teaches science and credit recovery, Mr. Swart who teaches social studies, and Ms. Johnson, who is the registrar and instructional assistant.

Beyond changing kids’ lives through supporting them to envision a better future, Katte also believes in building relationships and differentiating with his teachers as well.

“Just like students, educators all need different things. I’m not sure how they perceive this but sometimes I like to say, ‘I want to be like your golf caddy, I want to walk side by side with you and get you the best resources you need, the best training, or encouragement that works for you.’” Katte said.

“Each of us is in a partnership and I want to be there to make a difference with my teachers too because this is a challenging profession and one of the things I’m tuned into with our program staff is secondary stress. We deal with some tough situations, so that work life balance is really important to us.”

Katte is also aware that secondary stress from at-risk students can carry over into families, neighborhoods, and school communities. Since the Detention Center is the most restrictive behavioral setting for students, it’s obvious many students are there because they have created a lot of stress, distraction, and hurt. That’s why he is passionate about reaching these students and providing positive experiences, because the impacts can carry over to many others in the community.

“I really believe it could take seven seconds to change a kid’s life. Somewhere you convey something or teach something they feel or believe in themselves, and suddenly they decide to choose differently and live differently,” Katte explained. “And I do think our kids here are sometimes off people’s radars. So I feel if we do it right, and our teams work together like I know we are, we can positively impact all 40,000 kids in the district and community. Because if we can reach them here and equip them with strategies and tools to be more successful then suddenly their family dynamic changes for their siblings and parents, the neighborhood dynamic changes possibly, then if they return
How do you know when a student really “gets” it?

1) From the questions they ask in the classroom; 2) When they volunteer to do a problem on the board in front of their classmates; 3) When they volunteer to “peer” tutor; 4) And of course when they smile and tell me this is easy.

What do you think the future of teaching at-risk students is? How are you trying to get there at your program?

The future is bright and if we can increase teacher efficacy or collective teacher efficacy it can be brighter. My research is on the subject and I truly believe that the higher teacher efficacy, the higher a student achievement will be. We have a great staff here with Mr. Swart, Mr. Shannon, and Mr. Floyd Broughton. We all believe in what we do and what we do for our students. We care about one another as professionals and humans beings not to mention that we are friends and the students see the strength that we find through one another. I hope to be able to share my research and expertise in the areas of teacher efficacy with our school environment and other school districts that are truly interested in improving their teachers’ ability to provide quality instruction daily.

What are your innovative ideas and strategies?

To improve direct teacher instruction and peer tutoring efforts. Additionally to help students improve their thoughts and ideas about their education and show them the importance of their roles as stakeholders.

What is your greatest accomplishment as a teacher?

I would have to say it was convincing Mr. Swart and Mr. Shannon to come to FRJDC to teach and allow the students to benefit from their wonderful skills as teachers and their expertise in the subjects they teach; history and English respectively. These guys are outstanding. We have other teachers here that do a great job but I personally “recruited” and convinced these teachers to come here. Also it was a great accomplishment to complete my Director of Special Education Certification and my internship under Mrs. Godbrey at Danville Independent Schools. The knowledge helps me tremendously at our facility.

What is the best thing a student has ever said to you?

1) They thanked me for caring about them and treating them like human beings even though I was tough on them and for teaching them and having high expectations of them. 2) They have learned more from me than anywhere they have been educated.
to regular schools hopefully they’re performing better and have the skills to be more successful.”

One of his main strategies for facilitating this change in students is helping them envision a future that is beyond their current reality, which is often one that is full of difficult things like grief and abuse.

“I’m just a big believer that if you have a vision and believe it, it is possible,” Katte said. “And even though there will be road blocks and distractions on that path, eventually you’re going to get there.”

“I have a friend who once said, our kids cannot be what they cannot see, so I think part of our work here is helping kids see themselves in different situations. That’s why we do college and career exploration and bring guest speakers and mentors in. Hopefully one of them, if it’s not me or our incredible teachers, can resonate with them.”

Another way Katte has been working hard to provide better pathways for at-risk students during his personal time these past few years is by developing a training called “IGNITE #Loveinschools.” It is geared towards teachers, counselors, and other staff working with students to help build better social-emotional relationships and change the energy and climate in the school setting, which is gaining a lot of positive feedback.

“I know I’m filling a need there that educators have. A lot of professional development is looking at data and curriculum, and yes that’s all very important, but I feel like we are needing more focus on equipping teachers with relationship skills,” Katte said.

“When you look at research on rigor, relevance, and relationships we all agree on they’re so important but there’s very little work spent on how we build relationships with colleagues, really challenging students and families, and how we can carve out time for that. But at the core of my trainings I’m really trying to ignite a passion in teachers again and align some of their personal missions and dreams with their school’s mission.”

Despite his passion for helping teachers and students improve their social-emotional skills, it is still the one-on-one moments with students that are most rewarding to him. Even a moment as small as talking to a student about what he wants to do when he grows up during a walk through the facility, and providing encouragement for those goals, are what he treasures as evidence that he’s making a difference.

“I want students to talk to me about their lives and future goals. They know I believe in them,” Katte explained. “It’s very important to me that the kids understand how much I care about them and how even when the pathway doesn’t quite make sense to them, they know I’m listening and that we’re going to try to figure it out. It’s those one-on-one moments, when I’m able to help them surge forward that bring me the most joy.”

Joel lives with his wife and two daughters in Lexington, and they have a son who is currently serving in the Navy in San Diego. In his free time he plays baseball in the Lexington Adult Baseball League, and enjoys writing trivia books, four of which have already been published.
Last summer, School Administrator Wes Irvin at Adair Learning Center, along with staff members Angela Dean and Angie Neat attended the Continuing Education Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS) conference in Baltimore, MD. This conference focused on implementing more technology opportunities in secured alternative educational settings and staff found it very beneficial. The students at Adair Learning Center also benefited from the conference by receiving a variety of technology tools. They put those tools to use this past Christmas by using green screen to create their own unique Christmas Card backgrounds to send home to family members. They also used their new 3D Pen to make homemade Christmas Ornaments.

**Program News**

**Adair Learning Center Incorporates New Technology**

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**Deadline Extended for KECSAC’s Nellie Lue Cole Outstanding Student Nominations**

Be sure to recognize the students in your program who are deserving of recognition! Students eligible for the Nellie Lue Cole Outstanding Student of the Year are students who were enrolled in a KECSAC program any time during the school year and are high school seniors. The award is in the form of a $500 scholarship to a post-secondary institution the student plans to enroll in. **The completed application deadline has been extended** and is now due to the KECSAC office no later than **April 20, 2018**. The nomination form can be found on the KECSAC website at http://kecsac.eku.edu/documents.

Student Nominations may be mailed to the address below or emailed to kaye.parker@eku.edu:

Kaye Parker  
Martin House  
Eastern Kentucky University  
521 Lancaster Avenue  
Richmond, KY 40475

**SACSAA Award Nominations Now Accepted: Due May 31**

These awards are designed to highlight the dedication and skill that teachers, administrators and support staff in KECSAC programs are bringing to the education of students at-risk. We would also like to recognize a community member or organization that has shown outstanding support to state agency children and programs. Please take a minute and nominate the teacher, staff person, school administrator or community member/organization who exemplifies excellence in education and commitment to student success. For more information and to download the nomination forms visit www.kecsac.eku.edu/documents. Submit SACSAA Nominations to:

Mr. Dan Belding, College Street Campus  
304 East College Street  
Glasgow, KY 42141  
email: dan.belding@barren.kyschools.us

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The staff at Green River Youth Development Center believe it is critical for students in secure facilities to explore the power of reading at every opportunity. They encourage students to read for pleasure, not just for a grade, and to develop the habit of reading. As part of this effort, in February 2018 the students at the YDC participated in a month-long Read-A-Thon and book review project called *Unbound* that was sponsored by the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS). Scholastic, the global children’s publishing, education and media company also agreed to donate a bundle of books through the Scholastic Possible Fund to each of the participating programs in secure care facilities around the country. The *Unbound* program provides a framework and incentives, including contests to increase students’ engagement with books. We are proud to announce that Green River School at the YDC was named 1st place winners in the Read-A-Thon photo contest! Congratulations to Ms. Renea Hunt’s class and all the hard work they accomplished.

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**Green River Wins Read-A-Thon Photo Contest**

**Calloway Day Treatment Students Give Back to Community**

During January of this year students at Calloway County Day Treatment were able to visit Hickory Woods Retirement Home. They visited and talked with the senior residents living there and were able to play bingo with them as well.

Day treatment students also made cookies this past winter for their local sheriff and fire department. They were able to deliver the cookies in person and thank the officers and firemen for their service to the community.