Faculty and staff work to improve students’ ‘last chance’ for success

By Cathy Lindsey
dlindsey@kde.state.ky.us

How do you define success in a school that was once considered a “dumping ground” for students with behavioral problems? At the Martin Luther King Jr. Academy for Excellence (MLK) in Fayette County, success is defined by progress.

In 1999, the three alternative schools in Fayette County were combined to form MLK. Four years ago, MLK graduated only two students. The daily attendance rate was less than 63 percent. Seventy-two percent of the student body was suspended at least once.

Now, in its fourth year under the direction of Mark Sellers, the school boasts higher attendance rates, fewer suspensions and rising test scores. Last year, MLK helped 139 students to graduate, and this year is on track to improve on that mark.

“Every day was a battle zone that first year,” said Sellers, “but by streamlining the process and getting back to the basics, we have managed to create a supportive environment that teaches kids to look beyond their grasp.”

Encouragement is evident from the time visitors arrive on campus. The sign near the school entrance reads, “Dream high, ask goals and take it one step at a time.”

The walls of the school are filled with inspirational posters. Faculty members wear shirts that read, “No excuses, find a way.”

It’s all about improvement

Title I schools and their districts get extra help to meet NCLB goals

By Fawn S. Fishback
ffishback@kde.state.ky.us

This school year, the Kentucky Department of Education has increased the assistance it offers to districts with Title I schools that have been identified for improvement for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act purposes. Eight District Support Facilitators (DSF) are working to help these districts improve and meet their NCLB goals of providing high-quality educational services to all students.

Each DSF serves districts in a designated part of the state:

Mitch Bailey is a former Highly Skilled Educator and a former special education teacher in Bell County. He is assigned to districts in southcentral and southeastern Kentucky.

Debbie Campbell is a former Highly Skilled Educator and served as an administrator with Jenkins Independent Schools and teacher in Letcher County. She works with eastern Kentucky districts.

Carol Christian is a former Highly Skilled Educator and has served as a school administrator and teacher in Bourbon County. She works with Jerry Meade in northern Kentucky districts and is assigned to Fayette County and Jefferson County districts.

Darlene Gee is a former Highly Skilled Educator and has worked as a school administrator and teacher in Bourbon County. She works with Jerry Meade in northern Kentucky districts.

Ann French, a former district administrator for Logan County Schools, is assigned to districts in western Kentucky.

Ruth Hatterick is a former Highly Skilled Educator and served as an administrator with Jenkins Independent Schools and teacher in Letcher County. She works with eastern Kentucky districts.

France and Kentucky schools forge culture and language exchange

By Joy Barr
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

Did you ever have a pen pal with whom you corresponded by letter? And, did you wonder if you would ever meet that person?

In Jefferson County schools, pen pal relationships have definitely moved up a notch. Through international collaboration and technology, teachers and students in this district are developing lifelong relationships with teachers and students in France.

This summer, several Jefferson County educators will travel to Dijon, France, to participate in a continuing collaboration between Kentucky schools and schools in that country’s Burgundy region. As part of an Improving Teacher Quality grant, Western Kentucky University also will be sending seven teachers from across the state. Gregory Fulkerson, world language specialist with Jefferson County Schools, See FACULTY on Page 10
KYSPPRA
The Kentucky School Public Relations Association (KYSPPRA) will hold its spring conference May 5-6 at Barren River State Park.
Contact: Don Sargent at (270) 781-5150, dsargent@kde.state.ky.us

Kentucky Child Now!
Kentucky Child Now! is holding its second annual conference July 13-15 at the Galt House in Louisville. The Great Kids Summit is designed to promote the health, safety and well-being of children and youth.
www.kychildnow.org

Folkliife Festival
The 2005 Kentucky FolkFestival is set for Sept. 15-17 in Frankfort. This event includes music, crafts, food and other traditions from across the state. Students can talk with artists and demonstrators, taste regional cuisine, try traditional dances and listen to musical performances. Admission is $2 per person. Scheduling for school groups is on a first-come, first-served basis.
http://history.ky.gov/Teachers/Scheduling_School_Tours.htm

PD opportunity
The Kentucky School Public Relations Association for Educational Enhancement will host a professional development workshop, Gardening in the Minefield, on June 17 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Byrnes Auditorium in Madisonville. Author Laurel Schmidt will share time management and stress helps for educators. The workshop cost is $150 and includes a book.
www.budgetcooper.org/

Celebrate Earth Day
The All Wild About Kentucky’s Environment (AWAKE) partners are encouraging Kentuckians to read nature writing throughout the year, but especially to celebrate Earth Day, which is marked during Earth Week, April 18-24.
Go to www.kentuckyawake.org and click on “Wild About Reading and Writing” at the top of the page or on the Earth Day icon. Students and adults can select a book from the drop-down menu and after reading it, submit a book review for posting on the AWAKE Web site.
Also during Earth Week, the Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort has scheduled programs that include readings related to conservation heroes and heroines.
Contact: Carol Hanley at chanley@uky.edu or Venita Bright at venita.bright@ky.gov

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Child abuse prevention
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. For statewide resources and information promoting child abuse awareness, visit www.prky.org.

Frontier Tales
Students in grades 3 through 5 can participate in Frontier Tales at Old Fort Harrod State Park in Harrodsburg. The interactive performance is based on original narrations, folk tales and songs that depict the early history of the Kentucky frontier. The Monday through Friday performances are set from April 11-May 27. Cost is $7 per student and includes admission to the performance, the park and museum. To schedule, call Goldsmith Vigneri Productions at (859) 734-4105.

Thoroughbred Center Production
The next production at Thoroughbred Center in Lexington will be a large-scale puppet performance, “Aesop’s Fables,” on May 5 and 6 at 10 a.m. and noon. The production features famous fables such as “The Lion and the Mouse,” “The Tortoise and the Hare” and “The Fox and the Grapes,” as well as the music of Scarlatti, Beethoven and Chopin.
Contact: Box office at (859) 293-1853 www.thethoroughbredcenter.com/theatre/schedule.asp

Math & Science Days
Kings Island Math & Science Days are May 15 and 18 at Paramount’s Kings Island near Cincinnati. The 300-acre theme park is transformed into a learning laboratory exclusively for students and teachers.
www.pki.com

Idea of America essay contest
The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) invites all high school juniors to enter the 2005 Idea of America essay contest. The author of the winning essay will receive $5,000. Five finalists will each receive $1,000. Deadline for entries is April 15.
www.wethepeople.gov/essay

Kind Acts
The Kind Acts Foundation sends a certificate and lapel pin to students nominated by PK-12 teachers for acts of kindness.
Unsung Heroes
The SNG Unsung Heroes program recognizes innovative and progressive thinking in education with up to $25,000 in awards. K-12 educators with effective projects and progressive thinking in education with up to $5,000. Five finalists will each receive $1,000. Deadline for entries is April 15.
wesbadgettcoop.org/unsung_heroes.html

Show me the money
Outside funding in the form of grants allows teachers to provide students with educational experiences that their own districts cannot afford. Tips and Resources for Successful Grant Writing gives helpful information to teachers applying for grants.
www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/profdev039.shtml
Rigor and relevance will prepare our graduates for college or workplace

By Gene Wilhoit

Commissioner's comments

Success for our public school students is the goal of every educator in Kentucky. I know you are working hard to guide students to the proficiency goals set by state and federal lawmakers. We are making steady, measurable progress with every student population in our schools regardless of race, gender, family income or learning need. Kentucky teachers know their students throughout the state are making it happen. We have proof of progress.

But one thing we’ve learned during the 15 years of education reform in Kentucky, it’s that there will always be new challenges in educating students. We can never get comfortable with what we’re doing. “We’re doing all we need to do to ensure student success.”

We have only to look at the elementary, middle and high schools that already have reached or exceeded proficiency on their 2002-2004 combined indices on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). In my visits to these 23 schools over the past few months, teachers and administrators tell me they remain determined to move every single child to even higher levels.

These schools have posted an index of 100 or more on their CATS tests, yet educators continue to look for ways to improve teaching and learning in their schools. They continue to anticipate the skills and knowledge that their students will need as adults in the 21st century. And, they are providing it.

The world in which we live is changing dramatically. If we think about the changes we’ve seen in our professional careers, it’s almost hard to imagine how fast the changes will come for our children during their life’s work.

Our challenge remains to keep students in school and provide them with a firm education foundation on which they can build a love for lifelong learning as working adults.

For much of the 20th century, a high school diploma guaranteed a good job. Those were the days of simple family incomes and opportunities to provide a better lifestyle for future generations. Ninety percent of the work force was unskilled labor. By 1997, only 15 percent of the jobs were open to unskilled labor.

It now takes two incomes for most families just to get by from paycheck to paycheck. Today’s jobs are open to high school graduates often are low paying. Our high school graduates are finding themselves with less income than their parents and poorer prospects for their own children.

We must continue to be persistent about graduation from high school, but we can no longer view high school graduation as “the destination.” Our new benchmark must be to prepare graduates for a next level of learning tied to a career — whether that is a trade, fore-certiﬁcation, two-year associate’s degree or a traditional four-year college education.

We know that one or two years of post-secondary work will add at least $8,000 per year to a person’s income. Don’t we owe it to our students to raise expectations beyond the high school diploma?

Many Kentucky educators already have answered that question with a “Yes.” Over the past two years, the Kentucky Department of Education and the International Center for Leadership in Education through this partnership will help accelerate the pace of improvement in selected secondary schools — high schools and their feeder middle school — through the newly created Kentucky Successful Practices Alliance.

The Alliance offers top-down support for bottom-up reform. Three 21st century ﬂy central to the work — rigor, relevance and relationships.

Those were the days of single family incomes and opportunities to provide a better lifestyle for which they are preparing! They must improve teaching and learning in their schools over the past few months, teachers and administrators tell me they remain determined to move every single child to even higher levels.

We must prepare our students to read technical manuals, possess 21st century technology skills, understand complex information, distinguish between good and bad information, and use critical thinking to solve problems.

We all know how rapidly technology is changing our daily lives and the jobs that are available. Today, skilled trades people at the entry level require higher levels of mathematic and literacy than many of the people who supervise them.

Economists predict that the students who are in mid-career are looking at careers seven to eight times as they adapt to changes in the workplace. We can only imagine the futures for which they are preparing! They must love to learn and learn to love.

For years, schools and districts have called for a way to hold their students accountable for their learning. What better way than to explicitly show them now their high school classes are relevant to their success in college or the workplace?

We must give them opportunities to demonstrate their readiness and to use their skills in interdisciplinary programs, magnet programs, community service and other extracurricular activities. We must tie our assessments of student progress with college admission and job placement.

Advises/advisees built around the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) process provide evidence that teachers and the school are committed to meeting the needs of that individual student. We have exciting work ahead of us. It will be challenging, but also rewarding. The Kentucky Successful Practices Alliance will be a resource for all secondary schools — not just the participating schools to exchange ideas and information, facilitate partnerships among schools and districts with similar demographics, and match schools and students with opportunities for meaningful experiences.

As we work to make secondary education more rigorous and relevant, we must remember that the work is not about reforming schools. Rather it is about helping schools and their communities find ways to assure that every student graduates ready to succeed in college or the workplace.

Kentuckians know that teachers are working harder than they ever have to help students achieve. The department will be working just as hard during these extremely challenging times to provide teachers with the support they need for certification, professional development and work-force certiﬁcation, two-year associate’s degree or a traditional four-year college education.

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By Joy Barr

Two Kentucky educators have been recognized for excellence in teaching within the family literacy field. Vanda Guffey with the Even Start and Adult Education Family Literacy programs in Clinton County and Melcenia Sprowls-Shelton with Adult and Family Education in LaRue County are runners-up in the 2005 Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year program. Each received a $500 prize for their programs.

Both teachers have dedicated their professional careers to helping families in their communities gain the literacy skills they need to be successful. Each is an advocate of literacy, and a believer that by finding the right supports, all children and their families can achieve.

Vanda Guffey

Guffey taught at the high school level for five years and loved teaching, but says she felt she had not found her education niche. She then began coordinating grant programs for Clinton County Schools and has hooked on family literacy.

She compiled and received a Voices of Adults with Expressions of Literacy grant with a Barbara Bush Family Literacy Grant for the district. Under her leadership, innovative instructional techniques, guided reading sessions and a strong community focus on reading have become hallmark practices in the Clinton County program.

Next, the district applied for and received an Even Start Family Literacy Grant. Guffey has been working with parent and children in this endeavor ever since. For the past three years, Adult Education Family Literacy has been blended with the Even Start program, which provides the opportunity to work with more than 60 Clinton County families each year.

Guffey also is a Reading First district coach. This allows her to focus on reading with the teachers and students at Albany Elementary.

“It is a privilege not only to teach adults and children to read, but also to train child care providers, elementary teachers, family literacy staff and parents on the latest scientifically based reading research,” said Guffey. “My philosophy of teaching is to prevent and, if necessary, catch those falling through the cracks and propel them to success.”

Paula Little, adult education program director for Clinton County, nominated Guffey for the Toyota recognition program. “She is a champion of literacy, whose organizational and instructional abilities are matched only by the size of her heart,” said Little. “Vanda has helped infuse the joy of reading into a community that has for generations suffered from low literacy rates.”

Several times each week, Guffey conducts adult education classes that focus on reading and writing skills. She uses research-based techniques and materials to evoke greater responsiveness from adult learners.

During her lessons, she uses real-world examples and includes workplace and citizenship skills when possible. From reading campaign materials to preparing a job application, Guffey makes the learning relevant and immediately applicable to her adult students.

Lisa Molten, an adult student in the Clinton County program has nothing but praise for Guffey. “Mrs. Guffey introduced me to the importance of family communication and togetherness. Being a student created a family and community focus on reading, as well as an opportunity to teach, improve my communication skills and togetherness. Being a student is a healthy home.”

Melcenia Sprowls-Shelton

Sprowls-Shelton strives to use an integrated curriculum that is both individualized for the student and appropriate for group learning sessions. All aspects of the program are integrated to maximize learning. For example, when students create a family educational plan, they also study academic, parenting and job skills in relation to the students’ individualized plans.

According to Hornback, 100 percent of primary children and 75 percent of older children enrolled in the LaRue County Even Start/Family Literacy program demonstrated continuous progress in school for the 2003-2004 school year.

“This is a tremendous testimony to the impact that family literacy, in partnership with schools and teachers, has in helping families change their perceptions about literacy, the academic success and the importance of family literacy in changing the future,” said Hornback.

Sprowls-Shelton is an avid quilter and often plans lessons for her students that incorporate the practical skills of quilting with the symbolic representation of families’ many dimensions. One unit on quilts included lessons on goal setting, incremental progress, geometry, teamwork, family traditions, storytelling and problem solving. Students take great pride in having their handmade quilts displayed on the walls of the classroom.

“Melcenia literally and figuratively helps students transform ‘nothing’ into something beautiful and unique as she helps students understand the value of planning, hard work, pride and integration both in their lives and in thequilts they design, piece by piece, squares by squares,” said Hornback. “She is flexible and creative when it comes to helping students learn. By making learning fun, with meaningful connections to real life, students remain in the program and make progress toward their goals.”

Robin Bilyeu, an adult student in the LaRue County program, knew how Sprowls-Shelton helps families. “When I started taking the classes, I had no confidence in myself at all, she encouraged me each and every day. She had confidence in the fact that I could go my GED and that I was a good parent,” said Bilyeu. “Well, thanks to Melcenia, I do have my GED. Not only did she help me improve communica- tion with my sons but she encouraged me to continue my education to set a good example for my kids.”

For more information about these district programs, contact Vanda Guffey at (606) 387-9772, vguffey@clinton.k12.ky.us, or Melcenia Sprowls-Shelton at (270) 358-8334, msprowls@larue.k12.ky.us.
Three middle schools named Schools to Watch for 2005

F.T. Burns Middle School (Daviess County), Northern Pulaski Middle School (Pulaski County) and Olmstead School (Logan County) have been selected 2005 Kentucky Schools to Watch. They are among 15 exemplary middle-schools throughout the country to receive the designation as part of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform’s Schools to Watch State Program.

Other recognized schools are located in California, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia. Teams of education leaders in each state selected schools for this recognition because of their academic excellence, responsiveness to the developmental needs and interests of young adolescents, and commitment to helping all students achieve at high levels.

During site visits, the teams observed strong leadership, teachers working together to improve curricular content and instruction, a positive learning environment for all students, and a commitment to accountability to bring about continuous improvement. Teams interviewed school staff, students and parents, looked at lesson plans and student work, observed classrooms and examined numerous school documents.

In Kentucky, the Schools to Watch program is coordinated by the Center for Middle School Academic Achievement at Eastern Kentucky University in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education, Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Middle School Association and The Kentucky Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.

In 1999, the National Forum began a national program to identify outstanding middle-schools through a state program. Barren County Middle School was named a National School to Watch in 2000. In 2002, the National Forum launched its Schools to Watch State Program. Kentucky is one of 11 states that now identify high-performing middle schools through a state program. Three schools were named Kentucky Schools to Watch in this year.

The partners ensure a wide variety of high-quality, standards-based, discipline-specific classroom resources for K-12 teachers such as:

- lesson plans
- lesson extensions
- assessments similar to open-response questions
- downloadable workbooks
- links to panel-reviewed Web sites
- student interactive content
- safe portal for searching

In addition, MarcoPolo offers a variety of online and Web-based professional development.

**MarcoPolo 2004 Field Trainer of the Year helps teachers learn to use online resources**

Susan Lancaster is an educator with a mission: She wants every Kentucky teacher to be aware of the quality, Kentucky-aligned free lessons available on the MarcoPolo Web site. Lancaster teaches at a school as a MarcoPolo Certified Field Trainer to make sure that shows how to use the site to enrich their instruction.

In recognition of her efforts, Lancaster was named 2004 MarcoPolo Field Trainer of the Year from among trainers throughout the United States. Last year, she trained 165 teachers and received a satisfaction rating from those teachers of 4.7 out of 5.0 for the quality of her training sessions. She previously has been recognized as a Field Trainer of the Month several times between 2000 and 2004.

Lancaster and Kentucky’s three other MarcoPolo certified Field Trainers — Bev Paeth and Lois Mullins (Covington Independent) and Torri Stice (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative) — help teachers and MarcoPolo field trainers integrate the Web site’s content into the classroom.

A former classroom teacher and instructional technology consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education, Lancaster now teaches at Bellarmine University School of Education in Louisville. Whether working with preschool teachers or training classroom veterans, she stresses the value of using MarcoPolo to avoid “reinventing the wheel” when they plan lessons, design curriculum and instruction, and develop appropriate assessments. The MarcoPolo Web site is located at www.marcopolo-education.org on the Internet and can be reached from the Kentucky Department of Education Web site by entering “MarcoPolo” in the keyword/search box on any page.

“MarcoPolo provides teachers with so much richness to share with their students!” she said. The MCI Foundation sponsors the MarcoPolo site. Seven content partners — national and international education organizations — support the Web site and offer resources for arts, mathematics, economics, humanities, reading and English, science and geography.

The partners ensure a wide variety of high-quality, standards-based, discipline-specific classroom resources for K-12 teachers such as:

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- downloadable workbooks
- links to panel-reviewed Web sites
- student interactive content
- safe portal for searching

In addition, MarcoPolo offers a variety of online and Web-based professional development.

**“Research shows that successful technology integration can change the way students learn and teachers teach,” Lancaster said. “MarcoPolo provides a compelling way to engage teachers — even those still working on their technology skills — with Internet-based content resources. Each resource is designed to move students to higher levels of learning.”**

Since last February, Kentucky content teachers have been recommending lessons to the MarcoPolo site that are aligned to Kentucky’s Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment. Those lessons can be accessed on the MarcoPolo Web site and the Kentucky Department of Education’s MarcoPolo Web page at the Web addresses listed above.

Lancaster encourages teachers to participate in MarcoPolo training and to consider the possibility of becoming trainers for the Web site. “MarcoPolo provides so much wonderful information and so many terrific resources and activities,” she said. “Each training session rejuvenates me, and increases my enthusiasm for the MarcoPolo online environment.”

To register for MarcoPolo training and professional development, go to http://marcopolo.education.ky.gov.

**KET education programs win national awards**

Two education projects produced by KET (Kentucky Educational Television) recently received top awards from the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). KET brought home a total of five awards.

The Drama Arts Toolkit received the “Best of the Best” award and an award in the Instructional Media-Instructional Media Product category. Teachers throughout the state use the toolkit as a resource for teaching drama in the classroom.

The toolkit includes videos, video excerpts, and accompanying teaching and informational materials to help teachers address Kentucky academic standards for drama as well as to build their own knowledge of drama.

Partners for the project include the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Center, the Kentucky Arts Council, Stage One, and other Kentucky arts and education organizations.

“Promise Not to Tell: A Teacher’s Guide to Recognizing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse” won in the category of Instructional Media-Inservice/Staff Development. The professional development program features mental health and law enforcement professionals, teachers and adult abuse survivors. The program is designed to give teachers insight and advice on dealing with child sexual abuses.

“Promise Not to Tell” is a collaborative effort of the Kentucky Department of Education, Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky, Child Victims Trust Fund of Kentucky, KET, Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

NETA awards provide annual recognition to stations throughout the country for excellence in public broadcasting.
Carroll County students turn cash into compassion

By Jeffery M. Fremin
Carroll County Schools

The waves of the tsunami that devastated parts of Asia and India and swept away more than a quarter of a million people last December are still spreading. They have reached a rural Kentucky classroom, like those in rural Carroll County, where students are raising funds for survivors of the disaster while learning about economics, geography, history and mathematics.

About half of 285 fourth- and fifth-graders attending Cartmell Elementary qualify for the free- or reduced-price lunch program. Yet, they raised $2,131 in eight days to help tsunami survivors.

“The students used different economic principles to try and create the most profit so that they could donate that money to the victims,” said Cartmell Principal Bonnie Northcutt.

Students made and sold products such as hats, bracelets and snacks. Some classrooms, she said, also sold services for 50 cents, such as the privilege of wearing hats or pajamas to school. Northcutt said she charged teachers a dollar a day to wear blue jeans to school.

“I paid my $8 and wore jeans every day,” said instructional coach Judy Leep, who organized the activity.

Vickie Meister’s fourth-grade class used an assembly line to prepare a snack for sale. Meister even used economic terms to remind students of proper workplace behavior.

“If you’re talking, you might get fired,” Meister said, with a wink and a smile. “I had to lay off some students this morning.”

To purchase supplies for the project, Meister’s class borrowed money from the school’s bookstore at 1 percent interest. After expenses, the class earned a profit of $59.75.

Jonica Ray’s fourth-grade class quickly learned about supply and demand when the 100 neon bracelets they made sold out in 15 minutes.

“Students decided to sell their own bracelets back to the class to satisfy their customers who didn’t get one,” said Ray.

Besides the mathematics involved in figuring interest, subtracting costs and adding profits, students also learned about probability. Fourth-grade teacher Megan Broyles’ class sold chances to sit at the teacher’s desk and use her supplies to do their assignments.

“I explained to students that those who bought more chances had a greater probability of winning,” said Broyles. The class raised $84.10 for the tsunami relief project.

Amanda McCoy’s fifth-graders received the award for raising the most money. Her students attributed their success to spending their money on their own projects.

“People who work for you shouldn’t buy the stuff from the other factories,” said fifth-grader Jacob Biscraft when discussing what students had learned from the project.

Although McCoy said she hadn’t formally covered the concept of “protectionism” in the curriculum, she introduced the idea when the class was creating its business plan.

“I didn’t tell the students not to spend their money on the other classes’ projects,” said McCoy. “I just asked them how spending their money would affect them reaching their goal.”

McCoy said her students decided to boycott the other classes’ projects. As a result, they surpassed their goal of $250 and raised $298.70.

McCoy said her class did not ask for outside donations. However, when families and friends of class members learned about the project, they donated $100 toward the class total.

Northeast, the school principal, said the competitive capitalism was all in fun and for a worthy cause. “We had fun while learning about economics, mathematics and geography — many kids had never heard of a tsunami or Sri Lanka.”

Fifth-grade teacher Maria Hill’s class was second in sales. Students sold Mardi Gras beads for 25 cents each. Hill said the fifth-graders learned about more than just money; they learned about “philanthropy.”

In answering an open-response item about the project, Melody Hawkins, one of Hill’s students, wrote, “We sold over 1,200 beads, raised more than $300 and still came in second place. But, you know what? That was OK because it was all for a good cause. Our school raised over $2,000 and now those people will have a better life!”

To learn more about this schoolwide, multi-disciplinary unit, contact Cartmell Principal Bonnie Northcutt, (502) 732-7085, bnorthcu@carroll.k12.ky.us.

Jeffery M. Fremin is public relations director for Carroll County Schools.

2005 Critical Technologies Research Symposium in July

By Anna Goodman

Read Across Magoffin County

To help science educators put the world of tomorrow into their students’ hands today, the University of Kentucky’s (UK) College of Agriculture and Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment are holding the 2005 Critical Technologies Research Symposium July 12 - 14 on the UK campus. Sessions will provide opportunities for educators to work directly with research scientists on the cutting edge of technologies that will fuel tomorrow’s economy.

Participants will attend lectures supplemented by lab experiences and one-on-one discussions with UK faculty. Educators will receive the tools to bring these essential technologies in bioeconomics, energy and the environment, human health, informatics and materials science into their own classrooms.

The symposium offers four tracks: Information Technology and Communications; Materials Science and Advanced Manufacturing; Bioeconomics, Health and Human Development, and Environmental and Energy Technologies. The sessions will demonstrate the relationship between the critical technologies and revised core content.

Schools are encouraged to send teams of teachers and have participants in as many tracks as possible. Professional development credit is available.

The $150 registration fee is due from all applicants by June 10. For more information, contact Anna Goodman Hoover at the Tracy Farmer Center for the Environment, (859) 257-1299 or e-mail Anna.Hoover@uky.edu.

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Frankfort, KY 40601

Talk to Us!
Behind the glamour of this year’s hit movie, “The Aviator,” is the story of a man determined to succeed. The same can be said for a group of students in Frankfort.

Eighth-grade students at Second Street School (Frankfort Independent) may not yet have had the Howard Hughes experience of becoming aviation magnates, but they have had a real-life experience of what pilots need to know to take an airplane into flight.

Tim Smith’s mathematics class put the principles of linear algebra and geometry and the science of flight to the test during a unit of study that allowed them to spread their wings and become junior aviators.

A pilot himself, Smith recognizes the value of mathematics in the principles of flight.

“I think it’s important for students to take on the role of a mathematician such as aviator, engineer and scientist,” said Smith. “Students should have more than a basic knowledge of content. Students need to apply, analyze and synthesize content in order to understand its relevance in their world.”

Students studied the art of flight and crafted a wind tunnel lab to determine what kind of wing creates better lift. The students then had to complete ground school. This included passing a written test covering the basic mathematical principles needed for flight.

The next step was flight planning. The young aviators were required to plan a flight to two locations and back to the Capital City Airport in Frankfort. Students had to map a course by using angle rulers and find the distance by using the map scale.

Students used linear algebra to ascertain the rate of ascent and descent. They then had to determine the time the flight would take and the fuel consumption for the length of that flight.

The junior pilots were then ready to take flight. With flight plan in hand, each student clocked time on a flight simulator. Using flight simulator software on a computer in Smith’s classroom, the students had to fly their flight plans without getting lost.

Students took turns on the simulator and even came after class to practice their flights. Smith was pleased with the students’ enthusiasm for this project.

“Students take much more interest in a subject when they take an active role in completing a task that requires a bundle of standards,” said Smith.

To learn more about the history of aviation, the group visited the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. Students toured hangars that illustrate the technology of flight from the early inventions of the Wright Brothers to modern airplanes.

Air Force Academy Cadet Jeremiah Carlson visited the class and shared a slide show of his experiences. He answered questions about what a good aviator needs to know.

“It’s important for me to share with students what they are learning now will be useful in their future,” said Cadet Carlson.

To end the unit, interested students who had parental permission took a real flight with Eagle Wings Air from the Frankfort airport.

Smith used this unit to show the value of mathematical principles in real-world applications and careers. He also has taught a unit on civil engineering. During that unit, students surveyed the property of the school and drafted their own blueprints.

“We’re preparing these students for the workplace,” said Smith. “We need to show them the future possibilities when you achieve at higher levels.”

For more information about the aviator unit, contact Tim Smith at (502) 875-8658 or timsmith5@frankfort.k12.ky.us. For more aviation resources in Kentucky, visit the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet’s Aviation Education Web site at http://transportation.ky.gov/Aviation/education.htm.
Reaching out to families is a strategy for student success

By Diane W. Kyle and Ellen Mcelroy

University of Louisville

We all know that students whose families are involved in school do better academically, and state and national research confirms this view. However, studies also show that while parents care about their children’s education and want them to be successful, some are unsure how they can become involved in school or feel misunderstood when they visit.

Often poor or working-class families are the least involved in their children’s education. Parents may feel intimidated, especially if school was not a good place for them.

Experts on family involvement offer alternative, state-of-the-art ways of connecting with families, such as creating more “family-like schools.” They attempt to make each student feel included through work with families. This is a particular challenge with migrant children or others whose cultural backgrounds are different from the school community.

Yet, knowing that families play a key role in developing students’ educational and career goals gives educators an important reason to connect with and involve all families.

Our experience in working with families has shown that when educators help students feel known, cared about and expected to achieve, they do achieve. We have worked with teachers in several Kentucky counties to show them how to learn about students’ outside-of-school interests and their families’ cultural backgrounds, hobbies, jobs, home routines, and literacy practices. Luis Moll and Norma González refer to this as families’ “funds of knowledge.” It relates to the various social and linguistic practices and knowledge essential in students’ homes and communities.

In our work with Kentucky teachers, we used family information to connect to the ongoing classroom instruction. As a result, teachers worked to help more students feel better about their schooling experiences and positive about themselves as learners.

How can this be done? Begin by finding out the talents, hobbies, skills and professions of the families. Surveys, interviews, and home or community visits provide useful ways of discovery. Teachers also can gather student information by attending students’ out-of-school events or simply asking students about those experiences.

Below are several ideas that have been used successfully by Kentucky teachers as ways of learning from and with families. Many of these strategies are working in high-poverty schools, where teachers previously struggled to get families involved.

• Establish trust. Everything builds from this. How does it happen? Sometimes just small acts of kindness and interest help. But, more explicit attempts are needed with some families. Starting the year by communicating that parents are the experts about their children, and seeking to learn from them will go a long way! A family that feels as if the teacher makes a sincere and obvious effort to know about their child is more likely to stay involved. The Kentucky Early Learning Profile (KELP) is a wonderful tool for this purpose. It can be used with parents to show them how to learn about their children, and seeking to learn from them will go a long way. A family that feels as if the teacher makes a sincere and obvious effort to know about their child is more likely to stay involved. The Kentucky Early Learning Profile (KELP) is a wonderful tool for this purpose. It can be used with families of students of all ages.

• Work on two-way communication. So often, communication occurs only when there’s a problem, and it tends to be from the schools to the families. There often is little opportunity for the reverse. You might try such two-way ideas as: Suggestion and compliment boxes, comment sheets for homework or on students’ planners, and family response journals. What is sent home also can communicate an interest in establishing connections. Welcoming postcards at the beginning of the year, quick “How are things going?” notes throughout the year, and a brief phone call to say something positive about a student can reap many benefits.

• Hold Family Nights. One effective way to involve families in school is to hold an event they can attend with their child. Family Nights offer a wonderful opportunity to get to know families in a more informal setting. Promoting these events in the classroom, making sure they are on topics of interest (and academically meaningful), providing activities that engage all family members, asking for feedback, and making sure to follow up in the classroom can help these events be successful. We have found that families begin to ask, “When’s the next Family Night?”

• Rethink homework ideals. We all know that often homework can be less meaningful. However, by designing some new approaches, homework can be a helpful way to get to know families better and involve them. Some teachers have done this through “Me” boxes or “shoebox biographies.” Some families have invited students to prepare and present “Expert Projects” or “Invention Projects.” Others have planned activities focused on interviewing and involving grandparents. Do your homework assignments tap into families’ funds of knowledge? With some redesigning, could they?

• Make family visits. This can be one of the most powerful ways of getting to know families. You can learn from them and build connections to involve them in your classroom. However, family visits are time-consuming and must be approached with careful planning and the right purpose in mind. We have worked with many teachers who are strong advocates of family visits. However, they agree about precautions. In no way do we want teachers to come away from family visits with new, lower expectations. We must train ourselves to see strengths in students and families, especially those whose cultures differ from our own. We must not allow ourselves to expect less of students because of what we might find, such as low-literacy parents or high poverty. Also, we strongly believe teachers should do family visits only if they want to and feel comfortable. We don’t recommend family visits for teachers who truly do not want to do this because families might misinterpret their stress or anxiety in a negative way. (There are other ways of involving families.)

Finally, we want to emphasize that getting involved with families is not just a “feel-good” idea. Family involvement is not the goal. Student success is the goal.

Getting to know families in more meaningful ways can help educators begin to understand the barriers to school success some students face. It’s then that educators can begin working to remove those barriers.

Above all else, we just need to get started in trying out some new approaches.

(Diane W. Kyle and Ellen Mcelroy are professors at the University of Louisville Department of Teaching and Learning. They have authored numerous publications on education, including family involvement. They co-authored a book on their work in Kentucky, “Reaching Out: A K-8 Resource for Connecting Families and Schools,” with Karen B. Miller and Gayle H. Moore. The pair are awaiting printing of their latest book, “Bridging Schools and Homes through Family Nights.” Contact: Ellen Mcelroy at ellen@louisville.edu and Diane W. Kyle at diane@louisville.edu.)

Larry Lagay of Frankfort helps his fourth-grade son Jean-Luc with mathematics homework that uses multiplication and division skills. Studies show that students perform better academically when their families are involved in what they do at school.

Larry Lagay of Frankfort helps his fourth-grade son Jean-Luc with mathematics homework that uses multiplication and division skills. Studies show that students perform better academically when their families are involved in what they do at school.
The Year of Languages

Gov. Ernie Fletcher proclaimed 2005 as “The Year of Languages. Citizens are urged to become familiar with the services and benefits offered by education programs in Kentucky and to support and participate in these programs to gain proficiency not only in English, but in other languages as well.”

FRANCE from Page 1

and Jacques Van Houten, world language specialist with the Kentucky Department of Education, will accompany the group. They will be instructors at the summer professional development workshop there.

This professional development initiative is just one of the many ongoing activities with the Kentucky-France collaborative. The collaborative began in 2001 when a delegation from France came to Kentucky to meet with then-Gov. Paul Patton, Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit and representatives from the University of Louisville, the University of Kentucky and Northern Kentucky University. The meeting formalized a collaboration between Kentucky schools and the Académie de Dijon and created a partnership between the two countries to share resources and to provide professional development and classroom collaboration opportunities.

The collaboration created a means for middle and high school French teachers to develop units of study that connect to other content areas and allow students opportunities to reinforce their learning and skills in other disciplines.

“This collaborative effort is an opportunity for teachers to take their skills out of the classroom, out of the textbooks and into the real-world,” said Van Houten.

“Students can make that real-life connection as they engage with students from another country,” said Rabia Buridi, a French teacher at Atherton High. “They collabo-

ration opportunities.

Teachers who have participated in the professional development workshop in Dijon have injected new energy and a variety of new lessons in their French language instruction.

Students at Meyzeek Middle are developing 21st century pen pal relationships with middle school students in Dijon. The classes have been communicating via computers and recently had an online chat. The Meyzeek students chatted in French and the students from France in English. At some point, the students plan to participate in a videocconference where they can actually “see” their new friends.

“It has been fun talking with people from other countries,” said Rabia Buridi, an eighth-grader at Meyzeek. “They are usually much better at speaking English than we are at speaking French. But it is still a really great learning experience.”

Michèle Randolph, a French teacher at Meyzeek, has designed a unit of study with her counterpart in France. The unit concerns physical fitness for her students and their French friends. Both groups will learn about each other’s nutritional habits, diet and exercise.

Meyzeek Principal Keith Look has been very supportive of the collaborative effort. “Our world languages program here at Meyzeek is excellent. With our diverse social science curricula, our students can really enjoy learning about other cultures and about the real world.”

The students from France are typically more interested in sports and American popular culture, said Buridi. “They also make a point to be helpful to their Kentucky hosts and to meet new people.”

One student’s experience of the Meyzeek-France collaboration is that he was able to learn about French culture and language and make new friends. “It has been a lot of fun,” said Filip Gorton, an eighth-grader at Meyzeek. “I have made some really great friends and have learned so much.”

Meyzeek students also spend time with their French counterparts in Dijon. “It has been fun talking with people from another country,” said Fulkerson. “It has been fun talking with people from another country,” said Fulkerson. “Realia are a tremendous experience that helped me to learn about French culture. The program has opened my eyes to a different way of life.”

The students from France have also gained new insights about Kentucky culture. “It has been fun talking with people from another country,” said Fulkerson. “They have much in common and begin the development of a lifelong relationship with their French friends. Both groups will

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process. Students are no longer sent to MLK at the first signs of behavior trouble. Other schools in Fayette County must now document attempts to address behavior issues for students for at least six weeks before sending them to MLK.

“Behavior is like an iceberg,” Sellers said. “There’s a lot going on underneath the surface. Schools need to determine the cause of the troubling behavior and have a plan to deal with it in a timely manner.”

The new referral process encourages schools to get to the root of behavior and address problems in a less restrictive environment. This makes MLK the absolute last alternative.

“When kids come here, they know it’s their final opportunity to get back on track,” Sellers said. “The skills we teach and instill in them here provide them to be successful in their home school environment.”

Last spring, 37 students from MLK returned to their regular schools.

“The program has done a complete U-turn,” said MLK special education teacher Brian McIntyre. “The kids know what is expected of them, and there is consistency in those expectations.”

Teachers are key to success

Recently, MLK received the nation’s outstanding alternative school honor from the International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention. The award recognized the school for staff empowerment, professional development and cutting-edge leadership.

Working with students in an alternative education setting is no easy task for educators. They are responsible for the continuing education of students, but they also must keep student behaviors in check.

“Somewhere along the way, in some traditional school settings, the concept of ‘somehow-themed’ time has been lost,” Sellers said. “The materials are there, you just have to be creative in how you present them.”

He encourages teachers to “look in the mirror and see how others see you.” At MLK teachers learn not to take inappropriate comments from students personally and get caught up in counter-aggression. Instead, they will analyze the teachable moment and take the opportunity to introduce a replacement behavior, while redirecting the student behavior in a positive and safe manner, Sellers said.

Teachers at MLK use a “With-it-ness Scale” to mentally measure how effectively they use their personality, wit and intervention skills to improve student learning and handle problem situations.

According to Sellers, “While formal training provides a solid foundation, there is no substitute for guided hands-on experience, with support of capable peers, because at MLK time has been lost. Truly believe that successful teachers are successful learners.”

Teachers and support staff – counselors, social workers, behavior management specialists – get specialized professional development to help make them more responsive and attentive to student needs.

Sellers said. He expects adults at the school to learn to receive compliments by offering support and encouragement from “the git-go.”

To support student learning, Sellers and his staff follow Maslow’s hierarchy to meet student needs. While no school is equipped to meet all of the physiological needs of the students, staff at MLK connect and collaborate with outside agencies to provide wrap-around services. In addition, the faculty works to provide a safe, nurturing school environment.

Once students begin to feel a sense of belonging, teachers can build trusting relationships to bolster self-esteem among the students. That’s when students respond with a desire to achieve, he said.

Sellers hopes to continue the progress that is in the works at MLK. He would like to see the school take advantage of programs like OED preparation, online course work and dual credit opportunities in combination with cooperative and career technical studies.

“It is my intent to prepare every student for success in life,” he said.

For more information, contact Mark Sellers at (606) 983-8999 or (859) 381-4040.

The DSFs meet monthly as a team. They also have regular meetings with Highly Skilled Educators assigned to schools in the targeted districts, the assessment gap coordinators, staff from regional cooperatives and special education cooperatives, audit and review teams, and the Instructional Support Network members.

As part of a larger team, these educators work to build leadership capacity at the district level — helping districts develop leadership teams or strengthen existing teams. “Collaboration is the key,” Hatterick said. “We do our work with that in mind.”

For more information about the District Support Facilitators or to request services for your district, contact Roger Cleveland, director of the department’s Division of Federal Programs and Instructional Equity, (502) 564-3793, Ext. 4046, rocelevala@lrc.ky.us.
Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

High school standards to get boost in Kentucky and nationwide

During the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, Kentucky Gov. Ernie Fletcher was one of 13 governors who committed to making high school classes and tests more rigorous in their states. The governors also agreed to match their states' graduation standards with the expectations of employers and colleges.

The undertaking will support the American Diploma Project, an effort launched in 2004 to prepare every high school student for college-level work. High school standards and tests will be aligned with the skills needed in college and the workplace. Every student will be required to take rigorous mathematics and English regardless of career plans.

Students also will take a test of their readiness for college or work to get help where needed while still in high school. (See Page 2 and find out about programs already under way in Kentucky.)

AP online exam review

Students preparing for the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) exams in May now have help from the Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS) through an online exam review. The AP Exam Review is a special online test-prep program that diagnoses students' trouble spots and then prepares personalized study plans and review materials for them.

Available 24 hours a day, the AP Exam Review allows students to begin their exam preparation by completing a diagnostic assessment. Assessment results are used to create an individualized study plan.

Also available online are study materials, previous AP exam questions, sample answers and a discussion center with subject-area experts. The exam review can be accessed now through June 1 from any computer with Internet access.

With the assistance of a federal Advanced Placement Incentive Grant, KVHS is able to offer the online exam review for $15 per student. Students must register through their schools to take advantage of the discounted rate. Schools will be billed $15 per student for each subject.

The local school district policy on whether the school will bear the cost or pass that cost on to the students is not yet set. All students currently enrolled in an online AP course through KVHS will automatically be enrolled in the corresponding online AP exam review at no cost to the school.

KVHS scholarship students receive free access to the review site. Lab. KVHS scholarship students are KVHS is offering free access to any student (not just KVHS students) who agrees to participate in the review for at least five hours and agree to complete a survey after taking the AP exam. Any student who qualifies for free- or reduced-price lunch also can receive fee waivers for AP exams taken.


For additional information, contact the KVHS toll free at (866) 432-0098 or visit online at www.kvhs.org.

Principals leadership institute

The National Principals Leadership Institute is scheduled for July 9-16 at Fordham University’s Lincoln Center Campus in New York City. Creating Great Schools is the theme for the eighth annual conference. It will focus on the redesign of existing schools and design of new schools.

www.fordham.edu/gse/programs/ npil.html

KASA conference is July 13-15

The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) 38th annual conference is set for July 13-15 at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville. Registration for “Courageous Leadership Advances Great Schools” can be made online at www.kasa.org/conf_general_2005.htm.

High Performance Schools workshop offers energy info

The Kentucky Division of Energy and the Kentucky National Energy Education Development (NEED) project will host a High Performance Schools workshop, May 10-11 at the Holiday Inn Capital Plaza in Frankfurt. School board members, superintendents, facilities managers, architects and engineers are invited to learn strategies on implementing energy efficiently. To register, visit www.energy.ky.gov/events/calendar/ download+files+workshops+2005.htm.

Teachers' beliefs indicate success for their students

A study finds that top-scoring Kentucky schools with large numbers of poor children succeed because teachers believe all children can learn and they repeatedly test their students' progress. Completed by The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, the review focused on eight elementary schools that had 50 percent or more low-income students and moderately high state test scores.

The participating elementary schools were: Brookhead in Rockcastle County; Cuba in Graves County; Draughorn Consolidated in Muhlenberg County; Lincoln and Mifflin Preparatory Academy in Jefferson County; Lost River in Warren County; Morgan in Paducah Independent; and Oak Grove in Whitley County.

Common characteristics found in the schools included:

• Belief that all students could succeed academically
• Caring, nurturing atmosphere
• Strong academic, instructional focus
• Regular, frequent student assessment
• Collaborative decision-making process
• Strong faculty work ethic and morale
• Careful and intentional manner in which teachers were recruited, hired and assigned.

To download “Inside the Black Box of High-Performing High-Poverty Schools,” visit www.prichardcommittee.org/.

KCEE to study finance program in grades 3-12

The Kentucky Council on Economic Education (KCEE) at Eastern Kentucky University has received a $23,000 grant to study “Financial Fitness for Life.” The grant will allow teachers in grades 3-12 to teach the curriculum to their students in the eastern Kentucky region. For more information about the study, visit www.econ.org.

High school graduation and college readiness

Kentucky high school graduation rates decreased from 74 percent in 1993 to 68 percent in 2002. Nationally, high school graduation rates and college attendance rates for high school students who remained flat over the last decade, going from 72 percent in 1991 to 71 percent in 2002. Kentucky’s high school students who were college ready increased from 25 percent in 1991 to 34 percent in 2002. Kentucky’s high school students who were college ready increased from 27 percent in 1991 to 37 percent in 2002. The growth is likely the result of the increased standards and accountability programs over the last decade, which have required students to take more challenging courses required for admission to college without pushing those students to drop out of high school.

State board members serve at national level

Three Kentucky Board of Education members will participate in study groups and committees of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Doris Combs of Richmond is a member of the middle and secondary school literacy study group. The group will examine the need for adolescent literacy support, identify items to guide policy formation and decision-making, identify promising ways to address the needs of adolescent readers and discuss emerging trends and focus for current research in the field.

Hilma Peather, Somerset, is a member of the special committee on value-added assessment. This group will examine issues surrounding value-added models for teacher evaluation, which provide comparisons of actual student achievement from year to year and the expected amount of growth expected on value-added assessment as an element of all performance and information systems, a way to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher preparation, and a tool to help schools and districts close achievement gaps.

David Webb of Brownsville is a member of NASBE’s government information systems committee. The committee is designed to help its members understand, inform and advise policy for federal education policies. The committee also provides information about the federal government’s current administration on how federal policies affect the states.

Providing a helping hand

Lost River Elementary Principal Mike Stevenson helps fifth-grader Kara Orange with an open-response question during her mathematics class. Stevenson works alongside the faculty at this Warren County school to let students know that teachers and staff care about them and their successes in school.
Southern Middle emphasizes the sciences in CSI

By Joy Barr

No, this is CSI: Southern, as in Southern Middle School, Lexington, Ky.

Southern Middle, located in Fayette County, is giving its eighth-grade students a unique opportunity to take a fascinating look into how science is used by the criminal justice system to solve crimes.

Donna Ebelhar, an eighth-grade science teacher at Southern, wanted to challenge her students with an innovative way to take science principles and use them in solving crimes. Ebelhar and co-teacher Lexi Sheets previously had designed a simple “Who Dunit?” investigation that used pictures of suspects, hair samples, shoe prints and carbohydrate testing.

Students seemed excited about applying scientific problem-solving techniques, and the teachers wanted to expand the program. Ebelhar shared her idea during a chance meeting with Ray Larson of the Fayette Commonwealth Attorney’s Office and received enthusiastic support for the program. A partnership soon ensued.

Several volunteer groups helped develop a realistic picture of how the criminal justice system works. Southern Middle eighth-grade science teachers, the Fayette Commonwealth Attorney’s Office, detectives from the Lexington-Fayette County Police Department, retired scientists from the Kentucky State Police Crime Lab and representatives from a local television station became partners in the unit of study.

“I was amazed at the amount of time and effort the community volunteered to do this,” said Ebelhar. Larson used many contacts in the community to bring in some of the top people from the community to help with this endeavor.

CSI: Southern is designed for the students to meet as a group once a week for nine weeks. Students also have additional classroom and lab work. The students explore how forensic science is used during criminal investigations, apply the principles of forensic science to actual crimes and use the scientific process to solve a crime.

For this class to happen, other eighth-grade teachers have re-arranged student class schedules on Wednesdays to accommodate the schedules of the volunteer groups that present information to the students. This also keeps students from missing the same class each week.

“A central integral part of teaching science is to have students recognize how science plays a role in everyday life,” said Larson. Janie Dvidame, principal at Southern, said, “CSI: Southern has been a unique opportunity for our students. It has given them an opportunity to see firsthand the connection between what they are doing in the classroom and the real world. It has given them tremendous insight into the great things that can happen when our school and community work together.”

Interest in the forensic sciences has grown dramatically over the last few years largely in part from the many crime scene investigations students have witnessed on television. Even interest in forensic sciences as a career has bloomed.

By 2005, there are many nationally accredited universities offering a course of study in forensic sciences. An instructor in the program at Eastern, Barbara Wheeler, has been working with the Southern science teachers to develop meaningful forensic experiments.

The middle school students, or crime scene investigators, learn to gather and analyze samples of trace evidence. Several classroom investigations will be completed that align with science content standards and safety requirements. Students will analyze hair — distinguishing differences between human and animal hair — by studying samples under a microscope. Another lab activity will allow students to take samples of actual collected evidence — windshields from vehicles — and analyze track patterns to determine the location and order of multiple impacts. Students also will use their knowledge of chemistry to identify unknown powders and liquids.

Students carefully record statistical data and information in their blue CSI: Southern folders. They gather data, think critically and logically about relationships between evidence and explanation, analyze explanations, and communicate scientific arguments.

Although crime scene investigating may seem exciting, the core of the material centers around concepts and skills that are already emphasized in a science classroom. The forensic unit serves as a bridge between science and real-life applications.

“Learning about the crime scene is important, but we also are learning important safety concepts that will help us later in life,” said Logan Sowell, an eighth-grader and CSI: Southern investigator.

For more information about the CSI: Southern program, contact Donna Ebelhar at (859) 381-3582, or send e-mail to debelhar@fayette.k12.ky.us.