



Board Approves Policy to Allow Students to Checkout Laptops



The Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education voted at their meeting Tuesday night to approve a change in Board policy that will allow high school students to checkout the new laptop computers which are being leased for each high school student. This will allow students to use their laptop computers 24/7, and extend their learning. The checkout policy that the Board approved is similar to existing policies for checking out musical instruments and athletic equipment.

This Board vote culminates a months-long planning process that has involved numerous instructional, technology and administrative staff, along with members of the Board. With this historic vote, KCK Public Schools becomes the first school district in the Kansas City metropolitan area to acquire laptop computers for all of its high school students, and the first to allow students to use those laptops at home.

According to the Board agenda item information that accompanied the policy, "With the ability to check out laptops, students will engage in higher levels of critical thinking, work to close their own learning gaps, and become productive and creative students ready to exit high school college- and career-ready."

Beginning next week, parent information meetings will be held at each high school. During these meet-

ings, parents will learn about the results from the pilot project that was completed this summer, receive an overview of how the laptops fit into the district's vision for educating 21st century learners, review the rules and regulations contained in the Acceptable Use Policy that all parents and students must agree to, and learn about the care and use of the machines. Finally, parents will have an opportunity to pay the mandatory \$50 per year insurance fee that will cover loss or damage to the machines. (Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch will pay a reduced fee of \$25, and for families who cannot afford the reduced fee, students will be able to do community service in order to pay off the fee.)

In addition, parents will receive information at the meeting about the new School Loop program, which has been adopted across the District, and will enable direct on-line communication with parents and families. School Loop will allow parents to communicate directly with teachers via e-mail, review class and homework assignments, and view student grades.

The rollout of the laptops to each high school will begin at the end of October, and continue into early November. Additional information about the Laptops for Learning program can be found by clicking on the "laptop" icon on the home page of the district's web site.

Grant to Fund Transportation for Homeless Students

When children move from one school to another, they not only lose their friends and familiar surroundings, but they also lose some of their academic achievement. According to **Staci Pratt**, homeless liaison for the district, one move can sometimes put a child 3 to 6 months behind in school.

For homeless children, moves are frequent. That's why Pratt and her staff continually monitor the location of homeless students, and work to provide ways to get them to and from their home school each day. And a recent grant from the Kansas Department of Education will help with this effort.

The \$72,045 grant, awarded to the homeless program earlier this month, will help fund the cost of transporting students to their home schools. Some homeless students and their families live in shelters, some with friends or family members. Their
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Gering Announces Resignation From KCKPS

At their meeting last night, the KCK Board of Education accepted the resignation of **Steve Gering**, deputy superintendent of teaching for learning, effective March 3, 2008. Gering will be taking a position with the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE), and will lead their work to replicate *First Things First* across the country.

In his letter of resignation to Superintendent **Dr. Jill Shackelford**, he wrote: "This has been one of the most difficult decisions that I have had to make both personally and professionally. KCKPS is in my blood. I started my teaching career in KCK and the district has welcomed me back when I have wandered from home. I am a part of this district and this community. I am proud of the work we have accomplished and look forward to the continued growth in student achievement as we achieve our 2010 goals and beyond."

In talking with staff about Steve's departure, Dr. Shackelford said: "... As a leader, one of the risks you take when you give talented people the opportunity to step up into a visible leadership position is
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Librarian Authors Handy 5 Book

Shelia K. Blume, library media specialist at F.L. Schlagle High School, has co-authored the second edition of *The Handy 5: Planning and Assessing Integrated Information Skills Instruction*.

The book is based on the original edition, but includes additions that reflect the trends in education that have developed in the last seven years. There is a new chapter on using a pared-down model, called the Handy 3, for teaching problem solving skills to pre-kindergarten through second grade students. There are also new lesson plans using the model included.

Blume, along with several members of the Kansas Association of School Librarians' Research Committee, also helped author the first edition of the problem solving model which is based on the Kansas assessments.

Applause

...to **Justin Cervantes**, custodian at the Frances Willard Early Childhood Center. He came to Frances Willard to help the staff in their transition to support two preschools and one full-day kindergarten class. The nomination said, "Justin works tirelessly to ensure that students have a positive, clean and safe environment to learn and grow. . .He never waits to be asked to do something – if he sees a problem, he gets it fixed or finds the resources to help get the job done."
* * *

Do you know someone who deserves "applause" for going above and beyond the call of duty? Send an e-mail with your nominee's name and the reason for the nomination to **Gerri Skaggs** in the Communications Office, geskagg@kckps.org.



Board of Education Highlights

At their meeting Tuesday, members of the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education . . .

- After a spirited and passionate discussion, approved the adoption of a new board policy which will allow the checkout and loan of laptop computers to all high school students;
- Recognized September Students of the

Month: Lesslie Martinez, of Frank Rushton Elementary School; and Amalia Lainez, of Sumner Academy of Arts and Science;

- Accepted a report on Kansas Assessment Results and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP);
- Approved the acceptance of a Reading is Fundamental grant.

———— Gering

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that others will notice them, and work to lure them away. *First Things First*, the work we have been at for the last 10 years, has received a national attention, largely because we have been able to do something that many people did not think was possible: significantly raise student achievement in a large, mostly poor, mostly minority urban district.

"As most of you know, KCK is *First Things First*. Yes, I know that there are some other schools that are doing this work, and other districts that have implemented pieces of it,

but I don't believe there is any other place in the country that IRRE can point to as a mature example of the work of *First Things First*. The fact that they are asking Steve to lead their work to replicate *First Things First* around the country is a huge compliment to Steve, and a huge compliment to us. I think that Steve is THE person with the knowledge and experience to get that work done, and I am not surprised they went after him.

"I also believe that this transition offers opportunities for us in KCK. Yes, Steve will leave a big hole. But we are full of leaders here in KCK, and this is a time when that leader-

ship is going to have to step up. We have set for ourselves some pretty audacious goals for the year 2010. We have almost 20,000 kids, and a community of nearly 150,000 people, who are depending on us to reach our 2010 goals. We HAVE to continue to move forward. Does this make it more challenging? Of course it does, at least in the short run. But even with Steve leaving, I know that this district has the talent and passion and drive to get us to our 2010 goals. And Steve, while I know that IRRE is going to take good care of you, I am sorry that you will not be here to reach our 2010 goals with us."

———— Homeless Grant

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current residences are not always within district boundaries so transportation needs to be coordinated for them.

"Our homeless children's lives are so chaotic – moving from place to place. The one constant that they have is school," Pratt said. "At school they have a consistent presence with peers and teachers. This is the place that they know, so we're committed to having them stay in the same school throughout their academic year."

Pratt contracts with a transportation service to provide small buses, taxi cabs and other vehicles to transport students on a daily basis.

"Transportation is a core element in my program, and I'm grateful to have this grant to cover the cost," Pratt said.

While it can be time-consuming to schedule transportation for each child, it pales in comparison to keeping up with where the children are living at any given time. Pratt said she and her staff work to build relationships with the families of the more than 500 homeless children in the district so that they can track their current residences. She also appreciates the support she receives from teachers and principals in this effort.

For more information on the homeless program, or to report a homeless student, contact Pratt at (913) 621-4690.

Staff Notebook Surveys Due Sept. 17

Evaluations are still being collected for *Staff Notebook*. Last week, the Communications Office announced a new *Staff Notebook* Readership Survey open to all staff. The survey was created to solicit employees' feedback on the publication's value, content, etc.

Staff who complete the survey, and provide their names and e-mail addresses, could win a KCKPS t-shirt. Ten t-shirts will be given away. Winning employees will be notified and their names will be published in *Staff Notebook*.

To complete the survey, go to: <http://www.kckps.org/notebook/survey.php>. The deadline for submitting surveys is Monday, Sept. 17. Staff who would like a hard copy of the survey should contact **Gerri Skaggs**, 279-2242.



STAFF NOTEBOOK

is a weekly publication for employees of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. Submissions are welcome and should be directed to:

Susan Enloe
Communications Office
625 Minnesota Ave
Kansas City, KS 66101
Fax (913) 279-2085
suenloe@kckps.org

