

N. Ky. Advocate Joins Prichard Staff

Brigitte Blom Ramsey of Falmouth joined the Prichard Committee staff in May as associate executive director. She previously served as director of strategic resources and public policy at the United Way of Greater Cincinnati and co-chaired the Northern Kentucky Education Action Team.



Ramsey

Ramsey is a member of Kentucky's Early Childhood Advisory Council and was appointed in 2008 by Gov. Steve Beshear to the State Board of Education. She resigned that position upon joining the Prichard staff.

"Members of the Prichard Committee believe that engaging, educating and empowering citizens makes a difference, and

See RAMSEY, Page 5

THANKS TO OUR PLATINUM LEVEL SPONSOR

Columbia Gas
of Kentucky
A NiSource Company

**PRICHARD
COMMITTEE**



**FOR ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE**

Perspectives

VOLUME 25 | FALL 2014

Students' Input Elevating Policy Issues

Voice Team Growing, Studying Postsecondary Transitions

The Prichard Committee's Student Voice Team ended its pilot year strong: preparing to call attention to ways state policymakers and education leaders can improve transitions after high school.

Among a spate of activities last year, the group mobilized other students in a statewide social media campaign to push for increased education funding in the state's 2015-16 budget and made the featured presentation at an event in Frankfort to hail Gov. Steve

Beshear for backing of education funding increases.

With no formal recruitment effort, the group expanded beyond its initial central Kentucky membership and now includes 30 middle and high school students with members from Elizabethtown and Jefferson, Green and Knox counties.

One of the most ambitious undertakings, however, is still in the works, as members develop a strategy

See VOICE, Page 8

31 Years of Action, Answers, Progress



Prichard Committee Associate Executive Director Cindy Heine, center, speaks with member Bonnie Freeman of Louisville and Prichard Committee vice-chair Franklin Jelsma, also of Louisville, left, at a reception in her honor in Lexington in July. Heine retired after 25 years on staff. She offers thoughts on her tenure and issues facing Kentucky schools in an interview on Page 4.

who we are

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is an independent, non-profit, nonpartisan group of volunteers who have worked since 1983 to improve education. The group provides information and materials to educators, policymakers and citizens across the state on a variety of student achievement and public school issues. The committee is not affiliated with Kentucky state government. It is named for the late Edward F. Prichard Jr., a lawyer from Paris, who in 1980 led a citizens' committee on improving Kentucky's universities.

**Prichard Committee
for Academic Excellence
271 W. Short St., Suite 202
Lexington, KY 40507**

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 33
Lexington, KY

THANKS TO OUR GOLD LEVEL SPONSOR

LG&E
a PPL company

viewpoint

Staying in Touch Across a Diverse State

Kentucky is a diverse state. Depending on where you are, the prevailing news, excursions, and accents may rest squarely in West Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee or Indiana. Some Kentuckians regularly drive east through the Cumberland Gap to work in Virginia. Others cross bridges over the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers near Cairo, Ill., headed west to a job in Missouri.

The Prichard Committee has always brought together voices of citizens around a common concern, but statewide meetings can work against a strong awareness of

thinking and action across a wide state.

The Prichard Committee staff and board decided to hold seven regional meetings this spring instead of one larger meeting,

giving us a chance to talk with and listen to our members in smaller group settings. It was also a good opportunity for new staff members to meet our members.

We were able to have face-to-face conversations in small groups about the specific needs of each region, and many folks participated who have not been able to do so in the past. We talked about a variety of issues including Common Core standards, charter schools and workforce development.

We found that different parts of our state have different interests and issues but there is striking commonality as well. For

example, most of the state members are not having conversations about charter schools, with the exception of Lexington and Louisville where this is a hot issue, but most of our members are asking for more information about the Common Core, known here as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.

I would like to thank those able to attend and extend a special thanks to those who served as hosts. Overall, we've learned that regional meetings once a year are beneficial to both our members and staff. At this time, we are considering having one big annual meeting and a set of regional meetings each year.

Based on the discussions and feedback we received, we sent out follow-up information. We are also in the process of drafting a white paper on charter schools that we will share with members prior to our November annual meeting where it will be a topic for discussion. Student intern Danny Miller researched charters and wrote the paper this summer. Also prior to the November meeting, we will convene a study group of our members that will review our work and provide initial feedback.

We look forward to receiving input and feedback from across Kentucky. As an advocacy group, we exist to build informed support for quality teaching and learning, so please feel free to contact us at any time to let us know how we can be helpful to you in your local communities.

State action rests on local awareness and engagement.

The Prichard Committee has built its reputation and record on work that connects the two. Our regional meetings were a great reminder of that power and potential.

Different parts of our state have different interests and issues, from charter schools to Common Core standards.

Jobs Report Shows Limits Facing Non-College-Bound

Kentucky high school graduates who enter the workforce face limited options and low wages, according to a July report from the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics.

Members of the Class of 2012 who opted for full-time work earned an average of \$7,567 in their first year of employment, only rising to \$11,511 three years after graduation.

"Even after three years, only a little more than one out of three who were employed were earning as much as a person who works full-time at a minimum wage job," the report found. "The idea of leaving high school for a high-paying job in the factory or in Eastern Kentucky in a mine is the exception and not the rule."

The report found that females earn about one-third less than male grads who enter the workforce, and that African-American grads earned about 30 percent less than their white peers.

The report found that recent grads were most likely to land jobs in the state's four lowest-paying industries. Additionally, attendance in high school also showed a connection with later income — graduates with 20 or more unexcused absences in their senior year earned up to 55 percent less than those with 5 or fewer unexcused absences.

The report "illustrates what we know to be true in the current economy," said a statement from the Prichard Committee. "More than ever, students must be prepared for college and career at high levels."

The report, "No College = Low Wages," is available at kentuckyp20.ky.gov.

reaching us

by mail — 271 W. Short St., Suite 202
Lexington, KY 40507
by phone — (859) 233-9849
online — www.prichardcommittee.org

Perspectives is published regularly throughout the year as both a printed and an e-mail newsletter. Contact us to be added to our mailing lists or to suggest others we might add.



By Stu Silberman
Executive Director

Prichard Member Hinkle Appointed to State Board

Gov. Steve Beshear appointed Samuel D. Hinkle, IV, of Shelbyville to the State Board of Education in July. A lawyer, Hinkle is a member of the Prichard Committee.

Hinkle is a past four-term member and chair of the Shelby County school board.

Beshear also appointed retired administrative judge Debra L. Cook of Corbin to the state board. She served on the Corbin school board for 16 years.

The two join nine other members appointed by the governor. Two other state board members, Mary Gwen Wheeler of Louisville and Roger L. Marcum of Bardstown, the state board's chairman, are also members of the Prichard Committee. Marcum and Wheeler were re-appointed to new four-year terms by Beshear this summer. Hinkle, Marcum and Wheeler were appointed to seats on the board that represent geographic areas of the state. They each now fill terms that extend to 2018.

The state board oversees action by the state education department. It develops and adopts regulations that govern 173 school districts across Kentucky.

Teachers Network at Let'sTALK Conference



About 300 educators attended the second Let's TALK: Conversations About Effective Teaching and Learning conference in Louisville in June. Sessions focused on a range of teaching, assessment and evaluation issues. The meeting was sponsored by the Kentucky Education Association, the state education department, the Prichard Committee and the Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky. Keynote speakers included Sharon Porter Robinson, above right, president of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and Holly Bloodworth of Murray, bottom right, 2014 Kentucky Teacher of the Year.



OFFICERS

Harvie Wilkinson, Lexington
CHAIR
Franklin Jelsma, Louisville
VICE-CHAIR
Hilma S. Prather, Somerset
SECRETARY/TREASURER

MEMBERS

Madeline Abramson, Louisville
Shawn T. Allen, Sr., New Castle
Daniel L. Ash, Louisville
Clay A. Barkley, Louisville
Brady Barlow, Lexington
Matthew Barzun, Louisville
Justin Bathon, Lexington
William E. Beasley, Henderson
Jessica Berry, Lexington
Robert Biagi, Shelbyville
David Bolt, Morehead
Candance Castlen Brake, Owensboro
Matthew W. Breetz, Louisville
Andrew Brennen, Lexington
Dale Brown, Bowling Green
Patricia Brundage, Covington
Ron Bunch, Bowling Green
Ellen Call, Louisville
Helen Carroll, Erlanger
Alva Mitchell Clark, Lexington
Martha Layne Collins, Lexington

Nancy M. Collins, Hazard
Sam Corbett, Louisville
Alfonso N. Cornish, Louisville
Brad Cowgill, Lexington
William M. Cox, Jr., Madisonville
Darrell E. Crawford, Auburn
Ben Cundiff, Cadiz
Cory Curl, Versailles
Sim Davenport, Owensboro
Scott P. Davis, Henderson
Jean M. Dorton, Paintsville
Laura M. Douglas, Louisville
W. Clay H. Ford, Owensboro
Bonnie Lash Freeman, Louisville
Bill Garmer, Lexington
Jill L. Giordano, Princeton
Meghan Glynn, Taylor Mill
Rebecca S. Goss, Nicholasville
Jane Graham, Lexington
Stephen Grossman, Lexington
Kevin Hable, Louisville
Jean R. Hale, Pikeville
Donna S. Hall, Lexington
Michael Hammons, Covington
Billy Harper, Paducah
Samuel D. Hinkle, IV, Shelbyville
Larry Holladay, Fort Thomas
Augusta Brown Holland, Louisville
Kerry Holleran, Covington
David Holton, Louisville
Marianne Schmidt Hurtt, Fort Wright

Suzanne K. Hyden, Prestonsburg
Nancy Jarett, Louisville
Doug Jones, Morehead
Cheryl Karp, Louisville
Judy Kasey, Louisville
Joseph W. Kelly, Salvisa
Amelia R. Kiser, M.D., Glasgow
Carol Lamm, Berea
Lonnie Lawson, Somerset
Mary Jane Littleton, Murray
Fannie Louise Maddux, Pembroke
Roger L. Marcum, St. Catharine
Elissa May-Plattner, Melbourne
William McCann, Lexington
Norma M. Meek, Ashland
Lewis N. Melton, P.E., Middlesboro
Ouita P. Michel, Midway
Herb A. Miller, Lexington
Pam Miller, Lexington
Karen Monday, Walton
Helen W. Mountjoy, Utica
Wade Mountz, Louisville
David R. O'Bryan, Lexington
Patrick W. O'Leary, Louisville
Charlie Owen, Louisville
M. Lynn Parrish, Pikeville
Paul E. Patton, Pikeville
Dennis Pearce, Lexington
Laura A. Pitman, Murray
Hiram C. Polk Jr., M.D., Louisville
Margaret G. Pope, Paducah

Cindy Price, Somerset
Julie Howard Price, Paducah
Louis Prichard, Paris
Kathy Reed, Bardstown
Al Rider, Upton
Dorothy S. Ridings, Louisville
Jill E. Robinson, Frankfort
Jean Rosenberg, Prestonsburg
Linda Rumpke, Lexington
Becky Sagan, Lexington
Keith Sanders, Owensboro
Joshua Santana, Lexington
Julie Schmidt, Louisville
Ben Self, Lexington
Jon L. Sights, Henderson
Albert P. Smith, Jr., Lexington
Alice Sparks, Fort Mitchell
Susan Spurlock, Prestonsburg
David Tachau, Louisville
Adrienne Godfrey Thakur, Lexington
Lynda M. Thomas, Lexington
James C. Votruba, Highland Heights
Lois C. Weinberg, Hindman
Mary Gwen Wheeler, Louisville
Gene Wilhoit, Lawrenceburg
William H. Wilson, Lexington

Stu Silberman,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

'Change is Difficult; It is Much Easier to Maintain the Status Quo'

Heine Reflects on State's Rising Education Status

In July, Prichard Committee Associate Executive Director Cindy Heine retired after 31 years with the group, including 25 on staff. During her tenure, she led efforts to educate parents and citizens about the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 and subsequent changes in state education policy, to improve teaching quality, and, most recently, its drive to expand quality pre-k and early childhood programs. She was a leading force in the organization's grassroots advocacy efforts, programming, publications and operations. After the death of founding Executive Director Robert F. Sexton, Heine served as interim executive director until Stu Silberman was named to lead the group.

This spring and summer, she was recognized by several organizations: the Kentucky PTA gave her its Paul Mason Legislative Advocate for Children Award; the Kentucky Association of School Administrators presented its William T. Nallia Educational Leadership Award; the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents gave her its Distinguished Service Award, and Children Inc., of Covington, honored Heine and the Prichard Committee's Brigitte Blom Ramsey with its Imagine Tomorrow Award for leadership on behalf of young children.

Heine recently reflected on key issues in Kentucky education since the 1980s and the challenge of keeping education excellence a priority locally and at the state level.

Q: What got you interested in education and involved as a parent?

A: When our children entered public schools in Lexington, I became engaged as a homeroom mother and PTA volunteer, but engagement became more intense with the arrival of a new principal, who was too strong in maintaining discipline and very weak on instructional leadership. We joined a small group of other parents and took ac-



Left, Cindy Heine, Bob Sexton and moderator George Zack prepare for a televised 1989 education forum. In 2012, Heine testified in Frankfort on the state's HANDS home-visitation program to assist first-time parents. Parents pictured who also testified are Monique Lewis holding Jayla and Edwina Hazel holding Ellison.



tion. My good friend, Pam Sexton, introduced me to Ed Prichard, who offered advice; and, after a year of stressful advocacy, we managed to get the principal removed from school leadership. In that one year we lost about 10 of our better teachers, a devastating blow to that school and its students. That was the year the Committee on the Future of Higher Education in Kentucky was wrapping up its first report. Pam was a member of this group, chaired by Mr. Prichard. When they decided to incorporate in 1983 as the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and undertake a study of elementary/secondary education, they expanded their membership. I was invited to join and served on a subcommittee on children and youth, looking at factors that interfere with students' learning. One recommendation was quality preschool for any child ages three and four whose parents wanted it.

In early 1989, Bob Sexton, the director, offered me a job as associate executive director of the Committee. He had a secretary at the time and no other staff. I had been working as a nurse at the University of Kentucky Medical Center, our youngest child was about to graduate from high school, and I was ready for a new challenge.

Over your tenure, what were the key challenges in activating citizens to support public education?

Helping the public and policymakers understand legislation to give it a chance to work is extraordinarily challenging. Bob thought of efforts like this as a campaign. After the 1990 reforms, large foundations took an interest in Kentucky to see if a comprehensive

set of reforms like ours could make a difference. With Bob's leadership, we raised funds to develop a public-information campaign, serve as a watchdog and support strong implementation of this new system.

What were the toughest obstacles?

Change is difficult. It is much easier to maintain the status quo than to rethink and change long-held practices. The 1990 reforms brought momentous change, turning Kentucky's education system upside down. For the first time, educators would be held accountable for student learning and they had to focus on ALL students, not just those who were easy to teach and who had strong family support.

The second big obstacle is turning well-intentioned policy into reality. That takes a massive education and professional development effort.

One factor that seems to be unique in Kentucky is the strong working relationship among state-level advocates. Understanding the challenges of the various constituents has been extraordinarily helpful. In addition, our state Department of Education, Council on Postsecondary Education and Education Professional Standards Board are working hand-in-hand. These efforts to work together are an important factor in the progress Kentucky has made.

What are the next big steps needed?

Kentucky has made good progress since the 1990 reforms. A 2011 University of Kentucky Center for Business and Economic Research report shows us moving from 48th among the states in 1990 to 33rd in 2009 on an index of education indicators. Of the bottom 10 states in 1990, Kentucky made the strong-

'The most important thing we can do to improve education and our economy is provide young children with a strong start.'

est gains, remarkable for a poverty-ridden state like ours. I think we can attribute that to teachers and school leaders who have worked extraordinarily hard.

One issue on the Prichard Committee agenda since our earliest reports is teaching. The next most important step is adopting and implementing the new evaluation system called PGES — the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System. As envisioned, it will give classroom teachers more specific and helpful feedback to improve their practice. It should help administrators more thoughtfully grant tenure to young teachers and make a difference in outcomes for our students.

The second effort currently underway in Kentucky — the Vanguard Project — will change the face of teacher preparation and subsequent employment if adopted as intended.

What have you learned about Kentuckians' interest in education from working with people from all parts of the state?

The public is vocal about providing a high-quality education in Kentucky. Business leaders talk about the need for an educated workforce to maintain their competitive edge. Colleges and universities want students capable of doing and completing postsecondary level work. Policymakers, including legislators and governors, want to improve the economy with strong elementary, secondary and postsecondary programs, yet Kentucky spends about \$2,000 less per pupil than the national average, and our state investment in postsecondary education has declined dramatically.

William Fox, professor of economics at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, correctly predicted in a 2002 report to the Kentucky legislature that without tax reform, revenue would not grow to meet the state's needs. As I've talked with individual legislators, almost every one is sincere in their desire to do what's best for Kentucky, including providing a good, solid education. Since 1990, however, as a whole, the legislature hasn't been willing to make the tough decisions to ensure adequate resources to educate our children. This year, the governor and legislature restored

elementary/secondary funding to 2008 levels — a good step for which we are grateful, but that did not address inflation, leaving us six years behind. Higher education has been cut \$168 million — 15.5 percent — between fiscal 2008 and 2014. So, as much as I hear that the public supports education, I don't see it in public policy providing resources to make it happen.

You've become a leading proponent for expanding quality early childhood education. What kind of system should state leaders be working to create?

The most important thing we can do to improve education and our economy is provide young children with a strong start. Research shows stronger outcomes when mothers have good prenatal care and deliver babies at term. Brain development in the last two to three weeks of pregnancy and in the first few years of life is critical in establishing the foundation for learning and socio-emotional development.

Every child needs adults who care about them, talk with them, read to them and provide a secure, loving and nurturing environment. We need a system of care that assures quality prenatal care for all women, supportive programs like the Health Access Nurturing and Development (HANDS) home-visiting program for vulnerable families, quality child care and preschool for all children whose families want it and support for parents in these early years.

What are you looking forward to most about retirement?

At the top of my list is spending more time with our children and grandchildren. Following that, I'm looking forward to more time for reading, gardening and travel and having time with friends.

I have been privileged to work in a job that I have loved. It has been my honor to work for and with colleagues, members and friends who are passionate about Kentucky and give so much of themselves. Working with our executive directors, Bob Sexton and Stu Silberman, kept me on the path of 'lifelong learning.' Some of those folks, like Pam and Bob Sexton, who are no longer with us, have left something of themselves in us — the desire to make a difference, to be smart and strategic as we move forward, to listen to those who struggle with the system and to raise hell when needed. I can't imagine a better opportunity; and, for that, I will be forever grateful.

MORE: *The full text of this Q&A is online at www.prichardcommittee.org.*

Ramsey

Continued from Page 1

that the biggest impact we can have is in the education of the next generation," Ramsey said. "The commitment to this vision attracted me to the Prichard Committee."

Ramsey holds a degree in economics and international studies from Northern Kentucky University and a master of public policy from the University of Kentucky Martin School of Public Policy and Administration. She has worked as director of tax and budget for Kentucky Youth Advocates and as a researcher for the University of Cincinnati, the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and Northern Kentucky University. She also served as a member of the Pendleton County school board.

"It goes without saying that education is empowerment — it's empowering for a kindergartener who has that first sweet taste of learning success, for third and fourth graders proficiently making the leap from learning to read to reading to learn, for middle schoolers beginning to learn about the world outside of their own community and the rich opportunities that await them, and it's empowering for high schoolers who begin to envision their potential as full contributors to a larger society," Ramsey said.

"It is my hope that, somewhere along the way, all young people realize that education is their 'golden ticket' and that we, the adults, do everything in our power to ensure a system that fully prepares them for a future we cannot even imagine," she added.

Ramsey succeeds Cindy Heine who retired as associate executive director in July after joining the Prichard staff since 1989 and serving as a member of the group beginning in 1983. (*See related story, Page 4.*)

"Cindy has been such a great advocate and champion for kids during her 31 years, and she will be missed by all," said Stu Silberman, the Prichard Committee's executive director. "We are so fortunate to be able to have someone with Brigitte's quality and experiences join us as we move forward."

parent leadership

Program Grows to 5 Institutes for 2014-15

*Partnerships Help
Adults Boost Schools*

The Governor's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership will hold five regional sessions across Kentucky in 2014-15, reaching an expected 150 parents with training designed to boost their effectiveness and team-building ability to support stronger schools.

The institutes will reach parents in the counties surrounding Berea, in far eastern Kentucky, northern Kentucky and Louisville. Institute director Cindy Baumert said the upcoming sessions are a sign of increasing interest in parent leadership training.

"Our team is excited about our growing partnerships with organizations across the state who value engaging parents and other community members in meaningful ways to improve our public schools," Baumert said. "There is a real synergy happening in communities to do this work, and one that is involving all stakeholders."

Participants for the sessions include parents, guardians, mentors and community members.

SESSIONS OPEN IN MOREHEAD

The 2014 sessions began Aug. 15 with the Eastern Kentucky institute sponsored by Morehead State University. Sessions will continue in September and November.

Applications were accepted from the 32 county service region of Morehead and the University of Pikeville, made up of Bath, Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Carter, Clay, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Greenup, Harlan, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lewis, Magoffin, Martin, Mason, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Rowan and Wolfe counties. As in all of the institutes, applicants selected to attend participate in five days of free training where they learn about aspects of Kentucky's education system and

how schools and districts operate. They also learn about ways to engage school leaders and fellow parents to develop a project to increase achievement and expand parent involvement in their child's school.

N. KY. REGION TARGETED

The Northern Kentucky session kicked-off on Aug. 22 in Hebron. It is sponsored by Toyota Kentucky, State Farm and Duke Energy. Applications were accepted from the following independent school districts: Augusta, Beechwood, Bellevue, Covington, Dayton, Erlanger-Elsmere, Fort Thomas, Ludlow, Newport, Silver Grove, Southgate, Walton-Verona and Williamstown. Participants were also chosen from Bracken, Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Mason, Owen, Pendleton and Robertson counties.

LOUISVILLE DOUBLES UP

The first Louisville institute is set to begin on Sept. 5. Primary sponsors are the James Graham Brown Foundation, The C.E. and S. Foundation, The Gheens Foundation and Toyota Kentucky. Applications were accepted from parents, caregivers, mentors and other adults who work with students at all Jefferson County Public Schools, with preference given to applicants affiliated with the 18 Priority Schools in Jefferson County and their feeder middle and elementary schools, including the following high schools: Doss, Fairdale, Fern Creek, Iroquois, Seneca, Shawnee, Southern, Waggener, Valley and Western; and the following middle schools: Frost, Knight, Myers, Olmsted North, Stuart, Thomas Jefferson, Western and Westport.

Due to the overwhelming interest, a second institute will be held in Louisville targeting the same

schools and with the same sponsors. It will begin Jan. 30 and conclude on March 21, 2015.

BEREA GROUP BACKS TRAINING

The Partners for Education at Berea College Institute begins Sept. 12 at Natural Bridge State Resort Park and conclude in November. Applications were accepted from the service region of the Partners for Education at Berea College, which includes the following counties and communities: Bell, Breathitt, Clay, Estill, Garrard, Jackson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lee, Leslie, Madison, McCreary, Owsley, Perry, Powell, Pulaski and Rockcastle, as well as the independent school districts in Berea and Jackson.

Baumert said the team planning the 2014-15 sessions is pleased with the expanded sessions and the possibilities in the near future.

"The 17-year reputation of our program, as a major initiative of the Prichard Committee, to build capacity in communities to support public schools has made it possible to attract financial support from local funders," she said. "Our ability to be flexible to meet the ever changing needs of our partners in education has driven new opportunities for us. We are looking at new business opportunities with an entrepreneurial approach. The ability to stay true to your mission yet continually look at new ways of doing things is always the challenge."

Developing partnerships that allow the institutes to continue and expand into central and western Kentucky is a goal, Baumert added. Since the program began in 1997, more than 1,800 parents and community members have become fellows of the program, and several states and school districts across the country have developed their own institutes from the GCIPL model.

For information about future institutes or to be notified about upcoming GCIPL opportunities, visit www.gcipl.org, and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kygcipl.

INSTITUTES FOR 2014-15

The Governor's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership will be spread among five locations in the months ahead. A quick look at the sites and dates:

MOREHEAD & CARTER CAVES STATE PARK: Aug. 15-16, Sept. 12-13, Nov. 21-22

HEBRON & NORTHERN KY: Aug. 22-23, Sept. 26-27, Oct. 18

LOUISVILLE: Sept. 5-6, Oct. 10-11, Nov. 8

NATURAL BRIDGE STATE PARK: Sept. 12-13, Oct. 10-11, Nov. 7-8

LOUISVILLE: Jan. 23-24, 2015, Feb. 20-21, March 21

State Allocating \$1.2 Million Locally to Advance School Readiness

Community Early Childhood Councils covering 88 Kentucky counties will share more than \$1 million in grants announced in June by Gov. Steve Beshear. He added that councils in 27 more counties have been invited to apply for an additional \$200,000, all to boost school readiness.

The grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per county, are intended to support work by the councils to mobilize communities around local strategies to improve school readiness skills.

In January, the state released results of the first statewide kindergarten screenings which showed that

slightly fewer than half of the Kentucky pupils who started public school kindergarten in 2013-14 met readiness benchmarks. The screening measure asks students their name and age and whether they can recite the alphabet or count to 30, among other skills.

"It is imperative to the future of Kentucky that our children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and succeed," Gov. Beshear said in announcing the first wave of grants. "That is why we must engage everyone, from lawmakers to families, in making sure all children in the Commonwealth get the best possible start in life."

The councils, often organized as a multi-county group, work to develop community-level strategies for improving readiness and early childhood outcomes. They are comprised of community volunteers from local school districts, public health departments, child care providers, Head Start, local libraries, parents and interest groups. The Governor's Office of

Early Childhood and the state Early Childhood Advisory Council will work with the local councils in implementing the grants.

The local councils utilize the state's Early Childhood Profile, a county-by-county report that combines kindergarten readiness data, participation in publicly funded preschool, Head Start and child care information with other factors, like the quality and availability of child care and the education of the early childhood workforce. The report also presents demographic data that underscores the depth of challenges facing young children and their families in reaching school readiness targets.

Beyond the grants announced in June, 19 councils covering 27 counties were invited to apply for the remaining funds — more than \$200,000.

Toyota, Beshear Support New bornlearning Sites

The state is funding 25 new bornlearning academies this fall, the first step in using part of a massive federal grant to create 150 new academies across the state over four years. The state's plan to spend \$1.4 million on the program complements a \$1 million multi-year investment in the academies by Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky.

The bornlearning academies are school-based workshops. Across six sessions, parents of young children up to age five engage in hands-on activities and discussion about what it means to be ready for kindergarten and learning strategies they can use to maximize their child's early learning and development.

The academies started in the Kenton County schools with assistance from the United Way of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky University. The program has been expanded by a partnership between Toyota, the Prichard Committee, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and the United Way of Kentucky. In June, Toyota named 14 new academies being funded in the coming school year.

The state's expansion of the program is funded under Kentucky's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge federal grant awarded in December. Kentucky was one of six states to win a grant in the third round of the federal competition, which has awarded over \$1 billion to 20 grantees.

More information is available at bornlearning.org.

Conference Promotes Pre-k Quality



More than 1,000 providers of child care, pre-k and other services to young children attended the inaugural Ready Kids Conference in June organized by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood. The conference offered professional training and a range of sessions, including one by Brigitte Ramsey, associate executive director of the Prichard Committee. Right, keynote speaker Mark Shriver, senior vice president for strategic initiatives at Save the Children, discussed key moments in the work of his father, Sargent Shriver, to found Head Start and other anti-poverty programs. Above, sessions included informational presentations as well as team-building and activities to build the skills of young children.



Voice

Continued from Page 1

to draw attention to ways students and families can better plan for college and life beyond high school.

Starting this summer, an investigative team interviewed students, parents, teachers, researchers and policymakers to identify key issues and consulted with journalists and technology experts on dissemination strategies. The team is creating content such as op-eds, video clips and a policy brief and will release materials later this fall through traditional and social media outlets.

The Student Voice Team is collaborating with Ali Wright, a Lexington teacher who works with the Center for Teaching Quality in North Carolina, to enhance the scope and impact of the Postsecondary Project. Rachel Belin, the Prichard Committee development director who is coordinating the Student Voice Team, said the groups joined to “amplify the

Members of the Student Voice Team joined a Capitol press conference on increased education funding. The group included, from left, Ashton Bishop of Green County Middle, Meghana Kudrimoti of Dunbar High, Jamie Smith of Henry Clay High, Mahika Gupta of Dunbar High, Rep. Kelly Flood, D-Lexington, Jane Beshear and Gov. Steve Beshear, Hiatt Allen, a Tate Creek High graduate, Reilly Voit of Dunbar High, Bharath Chithrala of Dunbar High, Sahar Mohammadzadeh of Dunbar High, Gentry Fitch of West Jessamine High, Ben Kincaid of Dunbar High, and Andrew Brennen, a Dunbar High graduate.

voices of our schools’ most critical stakeholders and to showcase a student and teacher dynamic that generates value beyond the classroom walls.”

Belin said interest in the group has been steadily growing, and she regularly fields requests from professional conferences to share the story behind their work.

She added that the Student Voice Team is meeting its goal of demonstrating how informed students can serve as valuable partners in improving schools.

“We see this as a model for collaborating with young people that can be replicated in a variety of contexts,” Belin said, adding that she aims for the team to prove “how much having student perspectives can enhance education policymaking.”

Gentry Fitch, a senior at West Jessamine High School helping to spearhead the Postsecondary Project, underscores the point: “Students are not just the future. Involving us in such high-level, solution-oriented work shows that we have a lot to contribute and are very much a part of the present.”

Congress Extends Home-Visiting Funding

Kentucky’s home visiting program to support first-time parents got a boost in March when Congress extended the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program, which supports HANDS (the Health Access Nurturing Development System) in Kentucky.

Funding was set to expire after September but was extended through March 2015.

In Kentucky, HANDS offers coaching and support for vulnerable young families, giving them the information needed to make better choices for their children. The program has demonstrated results including: fewer premature births, a decreased infant-

mortality rate, fewer non-emergency visits to emergency rooms, reduced incidence of child neglect, an increase in parents reading to their children, and an increase in parents returning to school or work.

The Prichard Committee rallied members and friends along with its Business Leaders for a Strong Start members to contact Kentucky’s Congressional delegation in support of the extension.

Attention to the federal home visiting program’s funding is also a continuing priority as its funding is in question again in March.

More information on the federal program is available at mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/.

Pamela Papka Sexton 1946-2014



Pamela Papka Sexton, a founding member of the Prichard Committee, died June 12, 2014 in Lexington after a year-long battle with cancer. She was 68.

A poet, artist, and activist, Sexton was the widow of Robert F. Sexton, the founding executive director of the Prichard Committee. In addition to her passionate advocacy for education, Sexton served as chair of the board of the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning in Lexington and as vice-president of the Kentucky Folk Art Center in Morehead. She also served on the boards of the Lexington Children’s Theatre, the Lexington Arts and Cultural Council, and the Lexington Philharmonic.

Pam Sexton is pictured above, top, with her late husband and Lois Combs Weinberg of Hindman at a Prichard Committee meeting. Below left, at a meeting with Wade Mountz of Louisville, and, below right, speaking with University of Kentucky President Eli Capilouto in 2013 when the university announced it would archive the papers of Bob Sexton in its library system’s Special Collections.

“For many, many years, she dedicated her life to doing what was best for kids in Kentucky and beyond,” said Stu Silberman, the Prichard Committee executive director.