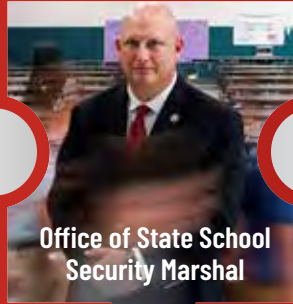


School Safety Connections in Kentucky



TO ALL KENTUCKY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: **THANK YOU!**



Office of State School Security Marshal

TO ALL KENTUCKY TEACHERS: **THANK YOU!**



OFFICER

Appreciati

KCSS WANTS TO SAY **THANK YOU** TO SCHOOL SECRETARIES!



Expression of Thanks



from our Executive Director

To begin, it is most important to me to express my deepest appreciation to those leading and working in our schools daily to educate Kentucky's children and, most importantly, keep them safe. Superintendents, principals, teachers and support staffs, you are doing an incredible job despite the mounting challenges you face in our ever-changing society, along with the always-evolving educational environment you are charged to navigate throughout the school year.



Secondly, I want to thank so many of you in our school districts for the kind patience you displayed to us (KCSS) over the last couple of years when we sometimes lacked adequate funds to immediately accommodate your safety requests for services. I realize this was quite different from the response you had become accustomed to from us. Expressed simply, we have struggled recently to meet the growing demand from schools and districts for services due to a shortage of funds. And, although beyond our control, I can assure you that each time we had to delay or "modify" a service you requested, we were as unhappy about it as I am sure you were. Perhaps to better illustrate what we faced during the 2023-24 school year, I offer just 2 of multiple examples: We had 118 requests for safe school assessments but could only fund 65 and, after expending the full balance of our budget line for threat assessment training, we could not accommodate 27 additional schools that had submitted requests. The reality is that as state laws and regulations have been created and/or enhanced to harden schools against intrusions/ dangers (particularly since 2019) our school districts have strengthened their commitment to keep abreast of those developments and, rightfully so, have and are reaching out more frequently to KCSS for support. That said, it will always be my goal to be able to offer that support, whenever feasible. Unfortunately, sometimes during the previous couple of years, it was not.

But now for the great news. During the previous session of our state legislature, the ability of KCSS to support your safety requests was substantially improved! Indeed, the General Assembly generously answered our plea for an increase in funding, moving us from (what had been for years) a stationary level of \$1.3 million to \$2 million. With this increase in allotment, we are confident that we will now be able to keep a much more reasonable pace with the increasing demands of our public schools and even respond to some of our private schools' requests to assist in safety matters.

To illuminate, our budget plan for FY25 includes 125 safe school assessments, 55 threat assessment team trainings, adding 50 first-year principals to our mentor program, and increasing the number of trainings we offer on the current, effective practices being used to address bullying and vaping. It will also afford us the ability to offer more trainings on bus driver safety, SRO mentor programming, and to provide Tall Cop updates, just to name a few. Moreover, we will also now be able to continue to support our fellow educators' conferences, while expanding our own Annual Safe Schools and Communities Conference.

Yes, with their passage of SB2 (2024) our ability to grow our many services statewide has improved significantly. I could not be more pleased at this juncture with the support the General Assembly has given to school safety in our state. In my view, their very thoughtful response to what had been our somewhat dismal economic situation demonstrates their firm commitment to keeping Kentucky at the forefront of school safety.

Finally, it is most exciting to look forward to the upcoming school year and the continued opportunity to work with districts and schools throughout our state. For years, KCSS has been the agency my colleagues in other states have turned to when looking to enhance their own safety centers. Many of them have even expressed to me and others that they view KCSS as the model from which they wish to emulate their state's center. I believe we will continue to deserve that praise. Again, my sincere thanks to all personnel on the front lines of Kentucky's schools who work tirelessly to try to keep our kids safe, and to our General Assembly for considerably raising our capacity to support and enhance your many efforts to do so.

KCSS Staff at EKU



Barbara Gateskill
Associate Director



Tiffany Hardin
Finance & Budget Analyst



Morgan Wilson
Program Coordinator

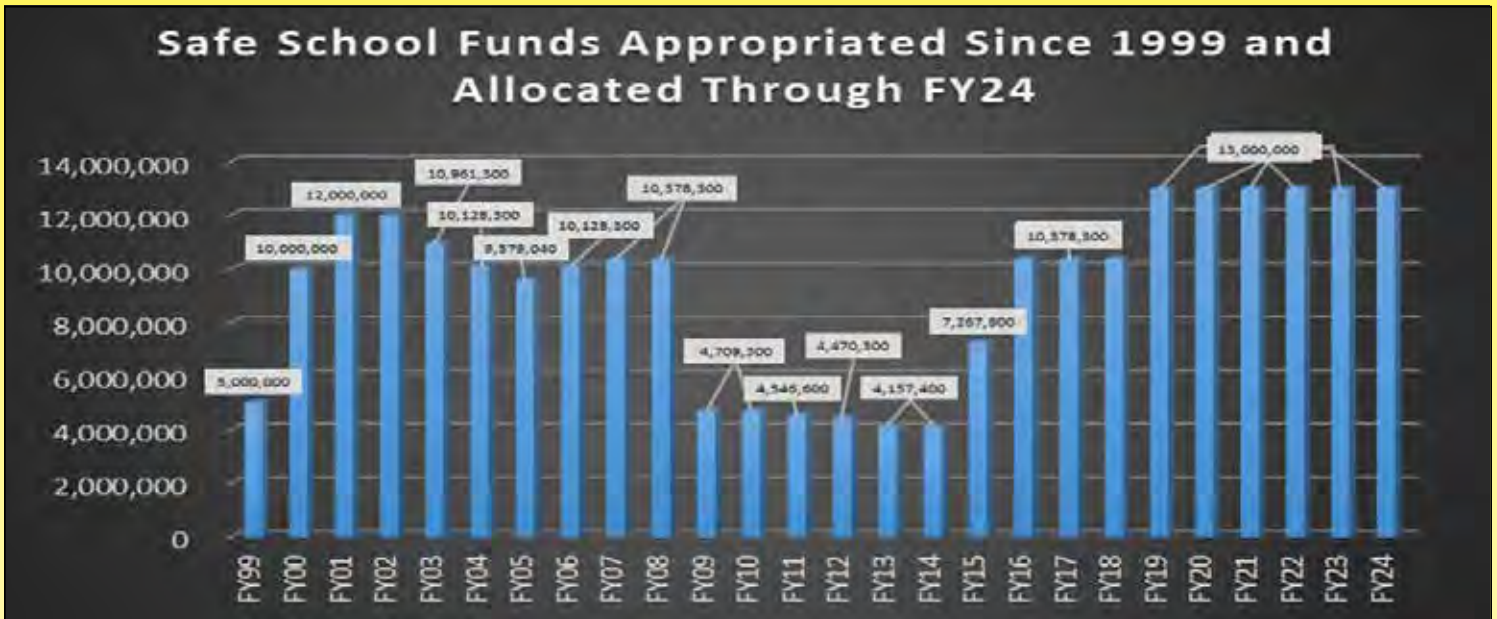
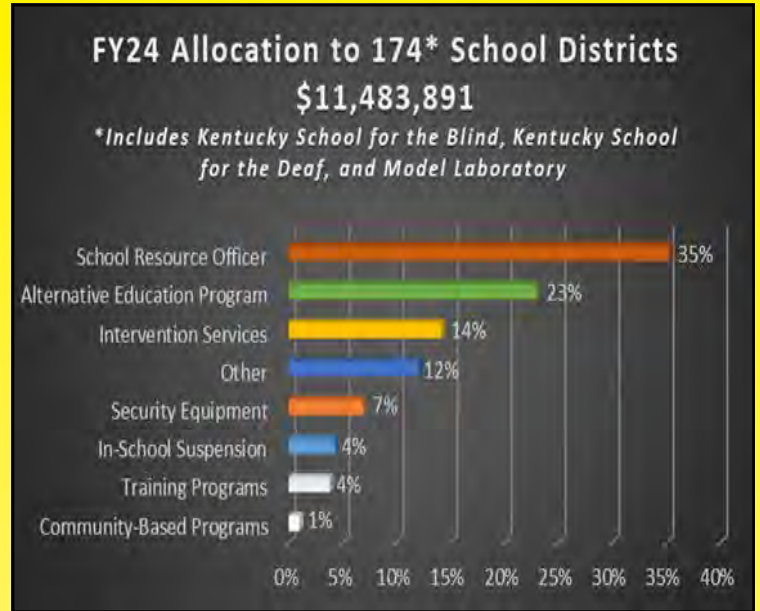
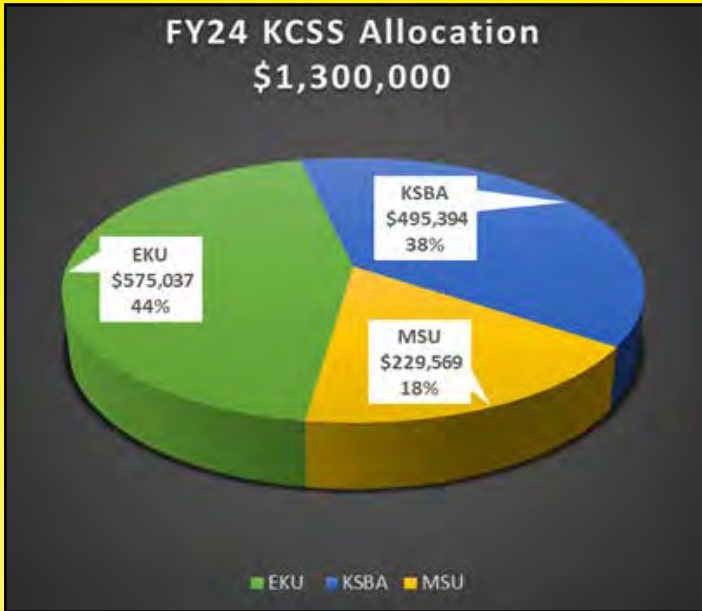


Lee Ann Morrison
Research Analyst

FRANKFORT, Feb. 22
Sen. Max Wise,
R-Campbellsville,
is surrounded by
media Thursday as
he fields questions
on Senate Bill 2,
legislation focused
on school safety.



Safe School Funds



(Although not included on the chart above, Safe School funds were considerably increased for the next biennium, as referenced elsewhere in this report. The Safe School Funding allotment is now \$15 million, of which \$2 million were allocated to KCSS.)

BREAKDOWN OF SAFE SCHOOL FUNDS

The KY General Assembly has appropriated more than \$243 million through the Kentucky Department of Education to support safe school efforts since 1999. In 2022, under House Bill 1, the KY General Assembly passed a two year appropriation of \$13,000,000 for fiscal year 2022-2024. Funding is used by Kentucky school districts for safe school programs and services, and approximately 10% is retained for the Kentucky Center for School Safety operations. Each school district receives a base allotment of \$20,000 in addition to a per pupil amount \$13.11 based on the district's Average Daily Attendance (ADA).

Executive Board of Directors

2023-2027



KCSS is proud to welcome its newly appointed board members whose terms will not expire until 2027. Each has expressed a passion for working with our staff and partners to continue making strides in the improvement of school safety in the state. Several of their statements of commitment are below:

“The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is proud to support the KCSS. Before students can engage in rich learning opportunities, they must first have a safe and secure place to learn and grow. As a member of the KCSS board, the KDE works to ensure alignment between the best practices developed by KCSS and the day-to-day operations of schools across the Commonwealth.” Kelly Foster

“Resilience and safety are a necessary foundation for every student and school staff member to be supported to learn and teach at high levels. This belief fuels our efforts, through work with our partners, to foster a positive school culture and climate that is critical in creating and maintaining safer and more secure schools.” Eric Friedlander

“Dr. Katie Marks (member) and Dr. Vestena Robbins (designee) are delighted to serve on the Board of Directors as representatives of the Department for Behavioral Health, Development and Intellectual Disabilities within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. The Department believes that both physical and psychological safety measures must be undertaken to ensure schools are safe environments in which students learn and thrive. Serving on the Board of Directors for the Kentucky Center for School Safety affords the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of best practices to support the psychological well-being of students and school personnel across Kentucky.”

“I’m honored to have been appointed by Governor Andy Beshear to the Kentucky Center for School Safety Board of Directors and to have been elected by my peers to chair the board. As chair of the Woodford County Schools Board of Education, I organized the first joint session of fiscal court, the councils of both Woodford County cities, and the board of education – along with all of the local law enforcement agencies. That September 2022 meeting gave elected officials, the general public and parents the opportunity to discuss safety issues with school district staff, law enforcement and elected officials. I’m also very proud that during my school board service I voted to allocate funding to provide a School Resource Officer for every school in our county, even before it became a state mandate. As a former school board member, a mother of public-school students and a school safety advocate, I know nothing is more important than the safety of Kentucky’s students. I am honored to work with KCSS to make sure we do all

we can to protect students. I am committed to advocating for the same safety standards in all Kentucky schools that I would want for my children’s schools.” Dani Bradley

“My passion and commitment to school safety started many years ago. As the child of an assistant superintendent who always put school safety above everything else, I learned from the best. I saw the countless hours that were put into building walk throughs and safety assessments (before that was even a service offered) to ensure that school campuses were as physically safe as possible. But equal emphasis was put on making sure that psychological safety was at the forefront as well. Having a district plan along with supports and services in place to support the mental health of students and staff were all things that were never optional. My dad not only preached these components but practiced them and it has forever impacted my vision of school safety. As I graduated and moved on in my career as a school psychologist, I never lost sight of these priorities and adopted them as my own. “Safety doesn’t happen by accident” was a quote I heard early in my career but one that has always resonated with me. It takes work, passion, creativity and perseverance, but creating safer schools is worth it all. I am proud to be a part of the KCSS board and strive to use all of my skills, connections, talents and resources to move the work of this organization forward for Kentucky students and staff!” Michelle Antle

- **Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner**
Department of Education
- **Kelly Foster (Designee)**
Department of Education
- **Eric Friedlander, Secretary**
Cabinet for Health & Family Services
- **Melissa Goins (Designee)**
Cabinet for Health & Family Services
- **Katie Marks**
Department for Behavioral Health
- **Vestena (Tena) Robbins (Designee)**
Department for Behavioral Health
- **Robert Purdy**
Department of KY State Police
- **Nicolai Jilek, Commissioner**
Department of Criminal Justice Training
- **Josiah Keats, Executive Director**
KY Office of Homeland Security
- **Art Ealum**
KY League of Cities
- **Dani Bradley**
KY School Board Association
- **Jeremy Roach**
KY Association of School Superintendents
- **William Rudie**
KY Association of School Resource Officers
- **Patricia Ann Glass**
KY School Nurses Association
- **Michelle Lynne Antle**
KY Association for Psychology in Schools
- **Kyle Thomas**
KY School Counselor Association
- **Stephanie Ives**
KY Education Association
- **KY Parent Teacher Association**
TBA



Gatekeepers in our Schools

(Front Line of Defense)

The School Safety and Resiliency Act, commonly known as SB1 (2019), directly impacted multiple statutes regarding school safety, one of which specifically addresses access control in all P-12 public schools. Under KRS 158.162 (8), each is required to: Develop and adhere to practices to control the access to each public school building, which includes to control outside access to exterior doors during the school day, controlling the front entrance of the school electronically or with a greeter, requiring that all visitors report to the front office of the building and provide valid identification, state the purpose of the visit; and provide a visitor's badge to be visibly displayed on a visitor's outer garment.

While it is the responsibility of school administrations and their staffs to develop the protocols for a safe front entrance, in the vast majority of schools it is the front office staff who serve in the role of gatekeepers after the protocol has been established. That means that in addition to the many other responsibilities they are given, most have the critical job of screening anyone wishing to gain entrance to the school during the school day. This is an enormous job and make these gatekeepers critical to the school's overall safety plan.



Jessie Clark Middle School
Fayette County

Many schools have a buzz-in system that requires visitors to depress a button on the exterior of the school in order to be permitted entrance (by the gatekeeper) into a security vestibule located inside the school entrance.



Eastside MS - Bullitt Co.



Ludlow High School



Lafayette High School - Fayette Co.



Newport Primary

Access control systems can be one layer of a multi-disciplinary approach to improving school security. These systems are designed to keep out people who have no business on school property. A well-designed system should make it difficult to enter without authorization.

For example, all schools are required to have visitors to sign in on a visitor log, present valid identification, state their reason for visiting, and wear a visitor's badge. This vetting is most often processed by the front office staff, or gatekeepers.

In addition to requirements delineated under 158.162., --Other Practices to Consider for Controlling & Enhancing School Access During the School Day

- Post a highly visible sign by the buzz-in station listing questions that will be asked of ALL visitors.
- Require staff and substitute teachers to wear staff ID badges.
- Require visitors to wear an ID badge on their outermost clothing.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures to allow first responders to gain school building access.
- Leave classroom door open/unlocked if only one adult and one child are present (KRS 158.62 (3)(d)(5)(a)).
- Assure that all exterior doors are locked and checked hourly.
- Limit the number of primary entrances.
- Develop a monitoring protocol for all exterior doors during the school day.
- Develop systems for assuring visitors check out (i.e., hold visitor keys during visit).

Safe School

Carlisle County



The demand by Kentucky school districts to have safe school assessments conducted for their schools continues at an extremely high rate. During the 2023-2024 school year, KCSS received 118 school requests within 3 hours of opening the invitation to all Kentucky public-school districts. Despite closing down the online offer after that short window of time, we still had to place 53 of those schools on our ongoing waiting list due to budget constraints. The demand for the service had simply outgrown our fiscal ability to adequately respond to it.

We are now, however, thrilled to report that our capacity to provide this valuable assistance to our schools has substantially increased. For the upcoming school year (2024-2025), we have been financially equipped to schedule 125 safe school assessments! This is, as mentioned earlier in this report, thanks to the generous increase in KCSS funding from the Kentucky General Assembly during their most recent session. Our appreciation to them for taking this step to ensure we can extend this service to more schools cannot be overstated. (We also intend to complete several assessments in private K-12 schools, as we have received many requests from them as well.)

As a brief reminder, the safe school assessment is a cost-free, independent review of a school's climate and culture as it relates to safety, thereby enhancing the whole learning environment. It involves multiple steps over a period of approximately 6 weeks, including administering a perceptual survey to students (4th-12th grades) and all staff (certified and classified). In addition, all parents/guardians of every student enrolled in the school are given the opportunity to take the survey. Following the survey process, KCSS sends a 6-member team to visit the school for one full school day, during which time many students (grades 4-12), staff members and parents are interviewed about the school's safety, based on their perceptions of school relationships, supervision practices, enforcement of rules and policies, building hardware, etc. During the visit, the team also closely observes any and all practices and physical hardware impacting safety.

Finally, after completion, the superintendent and other school officials are provided with a comprehensive safety assessment report, detailing every aspect examined during the 6-week period. We've learned that most schools assessed rely heavily on the data contained in the report to determine a specific needs assessment based primarily on the "areas of concern" cited and "considerations" made and documented by the visiting team in the document.



KCSS Team Member Patricia Greer interviews students at East Carter HS.



KCSS Building & Grounds Consultant James Hardin speaks with SSC Chad Bryant at Augusta Independent School.



KCSS Consultant Bobby Lewis interviews Murray MS students.



KCSS Consultants Ray Woodyard and Greg Smith confer at Red River Valley Elementary in Wolfe Co.



◀ Magoffin County

Assessment

Bellevue Independent



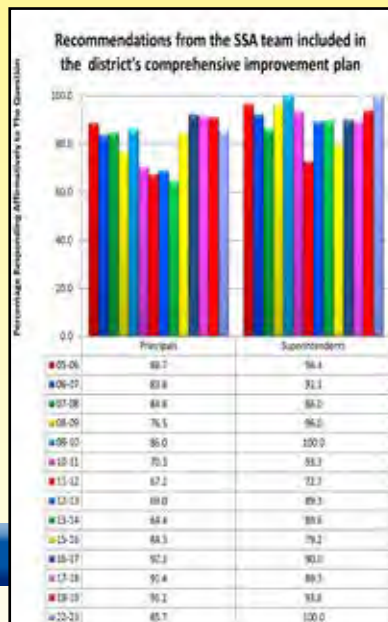
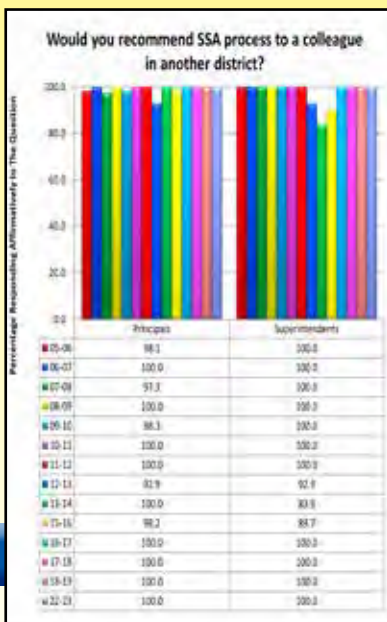
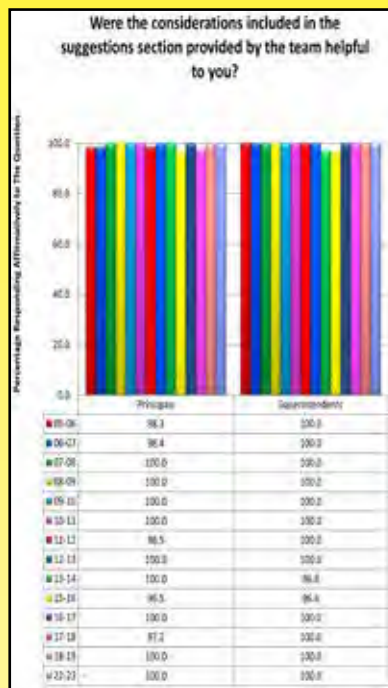
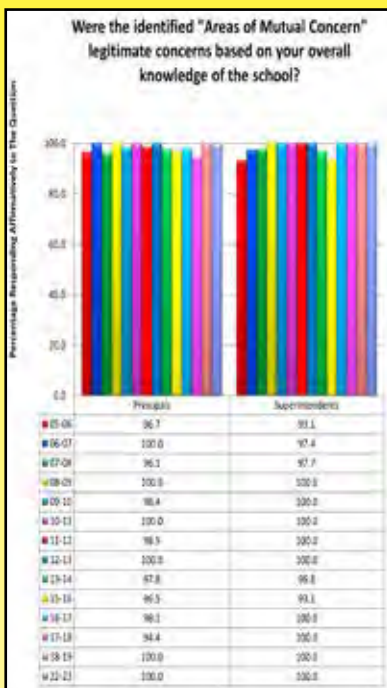
Principal & Superintendent Feedback on Assessment Experience

Each school year, after all assessments have been completed, KCSS surveys the principals and superintendents of the districts and schools where they were conducted for their feedback. The charts illustrate their satisfaction with the process since the 2005–2006 school year. (No survey was conducted for the 2019–2020, 2020–2021, or 2021–2022 school years due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Difference between the Assessment conducted by the Office of the State School Security Marshal (OSSSM) and the KCSS Assessment?

The OSSSM is required by statute to conduct an annual assessment of every public K-12 school in the state. Their assessment is compulsory and unannounced. It is conducted to ensure that schools are adhering to state school safety laws. Their Compliance Officers, using an approved School Safety Risk Assessment tool, conduct these risk assessments and, among other things, focus heavily on access control practices. If there are Non-compliance issues discovered, districts are given an opportunity to correct the non-compliance issue. If not resolved, the school is reported to KDE for appropriate action.

The Kentucky Center for School Safety's assessment is pre-arranged, non-mandatory and advisory. It must be requested by a school district's superintendent or designee and the school principal chooses the best date for the assessment team site visit. This assessment's primary objective is to examine the school's overall climate and culture and its impact on school safety although it also includes a physical plant walkthrough. To mitigate each area of concern observed, a list of considerations is offered on the 6-member team's report.



McCreary County

KCSS Principal Ment

Recognizing that Kentucky is experiencing an increasingly high turnover of K-12 principals, as well as the enormous task of being a building principal while also keeping abreast of the critical changes in school safety, KCSS started this cost-free program to assist them during their 1st year in the role. To effectively launch this effort, a cadre of 15 successful, experienced principals were trained to provide support for each principal enrolled in the program as they embark on what is often one of the most challenging school years of an administrative career.

Given the myriad facets of the position, these 15 mentors and other KCSS staff developed a flipchart called the “K-12 Principals To-Do List.” It is divided into four areas: (1) Tasks required by Kentucky Revised Statutes; (2) Tasks addressing Safety Issues; (3) Tasks associated with Academic Issues; and (4) Tasks associated with Operations. Further, the flipchart is also divided by timelines, i.e., what should be accomplished in the 1st 30 days, 2nd 30 days, etc.

Mentors review the requirements of the School Safety and Resiliency Act, provide insight into developing leadership qualities, assist with the development of school climate/culture strategies, offer examples of effective schools, and assist new principals in problem solving strategies. They also introduce them to the KCSS website which features a plethora of tools that will be invaluable to them as principals on multiple topics and current school trends. The

working relationship that KCSS has with other agencies, such as KDE, KASA, KASS, KSBA and the Office of the State Security Marshal, are explored with each principal mentee.



During the 2023-2024 school year, the KCSS Principal Mentor Program worked with 40 new principals. Many have expressed how much they appreciated having a mentor, some going so far as to say that they do not know how they would have navigated all the challenges they faced without their mentor to provide immediate assistance. Offering multiple opportunities to each mentee to connect in person and virtually with their mentor during the school year, the PMP enables new principals to refine their leadership skills and become better school leaders.



Principal Mentors (2023-24)	Formerly Held School Leadership Positions
Michelle Cassidy	Principal (Woodford Co.) Director of K-12 Instruction/Title 1 (Woodford Co.) Educational Recovery Leader (KDE)
Wes Cornett	Principal: Lincoln County High School, Somerset High School
Kem Cothran	Principal: Caldwell County Elementary, Benton MS (Marshall Co.) Secondary Schools Supervisor (Marshall Co.) Director of Teacher Quality Institute (MuSU)
John Crawford	Principal: Corbin HS
Pat Downey	Principal: Adair/Russell Counties Alternative, Knifley Grade Center (Adair Co.) Campbellsville Elementary (Taylor Co.) Branch Manager - Office of Leadership and School Improvement (KDE.)
Jane Dreidame	Principal: Southern MS (Fayette Co.) Elementary Leadership Support Specialist (Fayette Co.)
Kim Dublin	Elementary Principal (Graves Co.) Elementary Instructional Supervisor (Graves Co.) Assistant Superintendent (Graves Co.) Superintendent (Graves Co.)
Jon Farley	Principal: Union County MS, Sacramento Elementary (McLean Co.)
Kate McAnelly	Principal: Beaumont MS (Fayette Co.) Chief Academic Officer (Fayette Co.)
Dan Orman	Principal: Buckner Alternative HS (Oldham Co.) Assistant Superintendent (Oldham Co.)
Kimberly Parker-Brown	Principal: (Woodford Co.) Highly Skilled Educator (KDE) Chair of Education Department (Midway College)
Greg Smith	Principal: Sublimity Elementary, North Laurel HS Deputy Superintendent (Laurel Co.)
Denny R. Vincent	Principal: Muhlenberg North HS Interim Superintendent (Union Co.)
Diane Woods	Principal: Henry Clay HS (Fayette Co.) Director of Middle Schools (Fayette Co.) Superintendent of Campbellsville Independent
Ray Woodyard	Principal: Paul Laurence Dunbar HS (Fayette Co.), Anderson County HS

Mentorship Program (PMP)

Empowering Principals



Michelle Cassady (right) with Mentee Leah Renfrow, Principal of Allen Co. Primary School



Wes Cornett



Diane Woods



Kim Parker-Brown



Kem Cothran



Pat Downey



Greg Smith



Ray Woodyard



Jon Farley



Kate McAnelly



Denny Vincent



John Crawford with Mentee Andrew Roark, AP at Barbourville City School



Dan Orman

The Principal Mentor Program is free to the school district, but those participating must have the recommendation of their school superintendent.

The form to recommend a new principal can be found on the KCSS website at

www.kcss.org/announcing-kcss-principal-mentor-program ▶

or by calling the KCSS office at (877) 805-4277.



The Valuable Role

While visiting over 1,300 K-12 schools throughout Kentucky during the previous 2 decades to provide a wide variety of technical services and to conduct requested safe school assessments as well as multiple mentorships, KCSS staff and consultants have repeatedly heard overwhelming praise for school nurses from school communities statewide. Students, staff, and parents are not shy about expressing how much they value the individuals who are their school nurses. They view them as fulfilling a critical need in every school fortunate enough to have their services. Moreover, when surveyed and interviewed, many students and staff members cite having a school nurse as a contributor to their overall feeling of safety while at school. Parents repeatedly echo the same sentiments, many going as far as to add that some students view the school nurse as their “trusted adult in the building.”

Conversely, in schools where there is not a nurse present in the school during the school day, the same groups (when surveyed and interviewed) cite the lack of having at least one available each day as a perceived “area of concern” in their overall feeling of safety during the school day. KCSS assessment teams have consistently advised schools without nurses to strongly consider adding one as soon as fiscally possible.

Working as a Task Force for the KY Nurses Association (KNA) for over a decade, a small group of nurses have been dedicated to achieving the goal of placing: A Nurse in Every Kentucky School All Day, Every Day. The Task Force recognizes that having a full-time school nurse yields enormous benefits to students and the entire school community.

DATA OBTAINED BY THE TASKFORCE DURING THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR INDICATED:

- 59% of Kentucky’s K-12 schools had a full-time nurse (101 of 171 school districts);
- 38 districts had a part-time nurse in 118 of their schools;
- 25 districts had NO nurse in 52 of their schools;
- 7 districts had a part-time nurse in 23 schools and NO nurse in 17 schools.

Our data support the KNA Task Force’s goal. To avail each K-12 school’s students and staff with full access to a school nurse during the school day should be a high priority. There is no question that school nurses contribute most favorably to a safe and healthy school population. They also improve the entire school community’s perception of a school’s safety level, which tends to enhance the climate and culture of any school.



Research Has Shown Schools With Nurses Have

- Improved attendance rates with lower absenteeism
- Higher high school graduation rates
- Higher standardized test scores
- Decreased use of local emergency department services
- Reduced transmission of infectious diseases
- Earlier diagnosis and treatment of problems—physical, psychosocial, mental and academic
- Management of chronic childhood conditions—e.g., asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, seizures
- Assessment and referral of students with substance use
- Screening, individual assessment and referral of students with poor physical or mental health



of School Nurses

Testimony from School Staff, Parents and School Nurses...

"My child had an incident requiring medical attention at school during a time of day when our usual nurse goes to share her time with another school. I wasn't called by the staff member and it delayed necessary reporting of the incident. Her school nurse has called me for less serious things. I believe, had she been there, the proper steps would have been taken because her sole responsibility is the safety and health of the children, whereas other staff aren't trained to adequately treat and report incidents."

"As a school nurse I feel my greatest impact is with children with anxiety disorders. They come to the office with complaints of headaches, belly aches, etc. They need to be assessed then they have my "ear" which they have learned to trust. Their demeanor turns to "happy" and they return to class. I have had 4-5 children with anxiety issues in every school."

"Last year, after listening to one of our custodians describe the symptoms he was having, I insisted he go to the ER. He had open heart surgery that day because he was having a heart attack."

"The school nurse allows the administrative staff and teachers to do their jobs while the nurse cares for healthcare needs of the students. Two staff are pulled away in order to have a double check with the student having a problem. With special education teachers this is a frequent problem. When our nurse is not here for some reason she is greatly missed."

"My daughter was diagnosed with diabetes in 3rd grade. I was very anxious about her returning to school but felt a sense of trust in knowing the school nurse had the knowledge to keep my daughter safe."

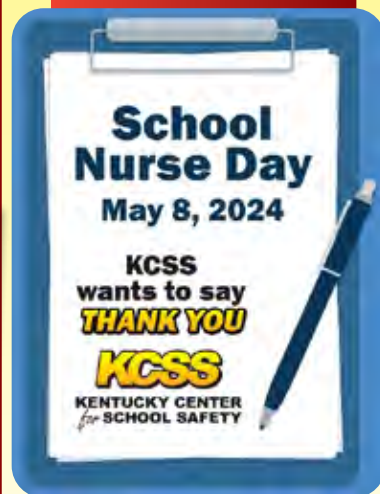
"The nurse at my child's school was not only a protector and nurturer of her all year, but also opened up a line of professional communication between the school and me. The nurse understood and followed HIPAA restrictions while also following thru with and alerting me of any incidents at school, such as my child being hurt at school whether it was able to be resolved by the nurse or not."

"Lots of times children go to school with a physical, emotional and/or mental health ailment. These children find comfort in having a nurse that they have some relationship with thus giving the child confidence that the nurse will call home and is ultimately the eyes and ears of the child's well-being while at school. The school nurse is a medical professional to provide reassurances such as "I believe we can wait and reassess," which gives the child more accountability that they can complete the day, ultimately having more valuable class time or "I think she isn't her best and could use a trip to her doctor and rest." This reassures the parent that it's okay to come and remove them from regular class time to go to the doctor or go home."

"A teacher at my school had what appeared to be an anxiety attack. I was called upon to assess her and identified symptoms of a stroke. 911 was called and she was taken to the hospital where it was confirmed she had a stroke."



Submitted for School Nurse Project by primary students in Fayette County



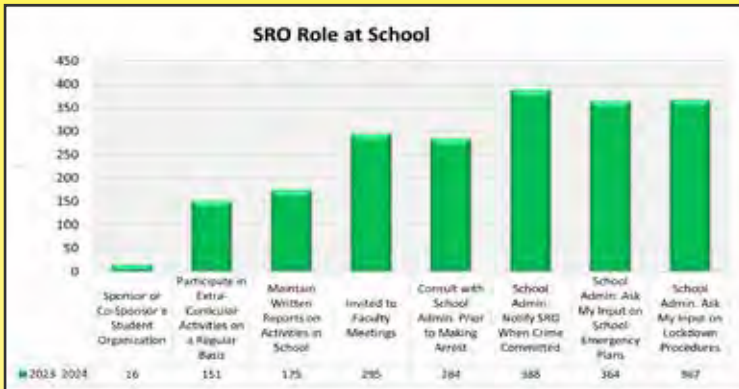
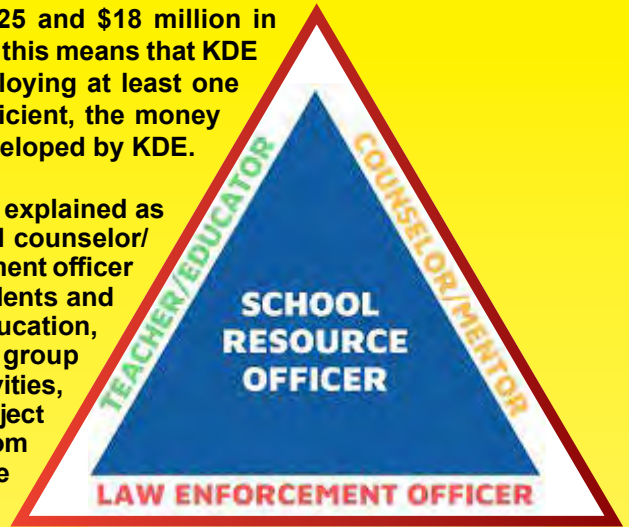
"This is a gift from one of my student's grandparents. They sent it to me, along with a handwritten letter saying thank you for helping the student with not only her health condition but being a safe space to help her and her classmates. I simply treasure it."

Justice and Law Enforcement

As of June 2024, there are 790 SROs assigned to Kentucky's K-12 schools.

House Bill 6 (2024) included \$16.5 million for SROs in 2024-2025 and \$18 million in 2025-2026. According to KDE's Office of Finance and Operations, this means that KDE will reimburse school districts up to \$20,000 for each campus employing at least one on-site full-time certified school resource officer. If funds are insufficient, the money will be divided proportionally through a system that is still being developed by KDE.

The composite of a School Resource Officer (SRO) role is frequently explained as a "triad" in that it is generally three-fold: law enforcement, informal counselor/mentor, and law-related educator. First, each of them is a law enforcement officer whose job is to provide safety and security expertise to protect students and staff daily. Secondly, they also are often called upon to use their education, training, and experience to help supplement classroom and large group instruction, sometimes as speakers and participants in classroom activities, or to expand student understanding of various criminal justice subject matter. And thirdly, SROs become an invaluable, trusted adult with whom students build rapport, seek out advice, and talk to when they perceive they need help and guidance. Each role in this triad is vitally important to each school's ongoing objective to creating and maintaining a safe learning environment. It is no question that SROs in our schools are highly valued by students, staff, and school communities across the state.



Parent Testimony on Value of SRO

"My son is in 2nd grade at Garret Morgan elementary school. We moved here from Florida last year. He grew up surrounded by the aftermath of Parkland. He was born about a week after Pulse, where his dad lost a dear friend at the hospital where victims were being treated. Just last week we received word that one of his best friends was killed by a stray bullet going through the bedroom wall. (There is a point to me telling you all this I promise).

We were on the way to school and passed the officer for Garret Morgan directing traffic. My son looked at me and said "Mom, you know he said hi to me. He's not just here for the bad kids he's here for me too. I don't worry with him here mom. I am safe at school." Tears streamed down my face because that is the first time my second grader has ever told me he feels safe at school. Something in your officer brought comfort to my son who has seen so much. My son who unfortunately understands that gun violence happens feels safe. That is a gift I cannot thank the officer enough for. So please know and let your officer know they mean so much to those children and they are appreciated. The kids see that you care, and you give them the gift of safety."



Trainings and Technical Assistance

Seeking Commitment over Compliance

KCSS and the Kentucky School Board Association (KSBA) have been in partnership since 1988 to provide training and technical service to each of Kentucky's 171 school districts. Coordinated by Dan Orman, this vital service includes informational and update training for hundreds of participants on multiple subjects trending in school safety each school year. Many of the key sessions are driven by the School Safety and Resiliency Act, passed in 2019, and Senate Bill 2, enacted in April of 2024.

Threat Assessment Team Implementation

Threat assessment teams are required in every public school in Kentucky. Each year since 2020-21, we have increased the number of trainings as well as individual districts that want to be introduced to the model/protocol KCSS utilizes. Essentially, this approach allows Kentucky educators to assist Kentucky educators and provide an essential service in the arena of school safety and security.

2023-24 School Year:

- ✓ 63 – Threat Assessment Team Implementation Sessions
- ✓ 59 – Public Schools/School Districts
- ✓ 4 – Private Schools/Organizations
- ✓ 3 – State Conference Presentations
- ✓ 1215 – Total Participants in Threat Assessment Training

Since July 2020:

- ✓ 60 of 120 – County Districts Trained
- ✓ 27 of 51 – Independent Districts
- ✓ 9 – Private Schools/Organizations

Safety/Security-Related Sessions/Technical Assistance (in addition to threat assessment)

These conversations/activities allow KCSS personnel to continuously revisit the major points of the School Safety and Resiliency Act and its impact on everyone working in schools and serving as a first line of defense against those who, for many reasons, might threaten safety and security in a school. We talk not only about what the law requires, but why it is required. Vigilant adults, locked doors and focusing on relationship building are keys to keeping a school community safe. Following the guidelines and helping each other to do so requires “commitment over compliance”, a key concept in school safety and security for everyone, particularly school principals and School Safety Coordinators.

2023-24 School Year:

- ✓ 142 – Sessions
 - o 105 – Public Schools/Districts
 - o 37 – Private Schools
- ✓ 3208 – Total Participants in other Technical Assistance
- ✓ 10 – State Conference Presentations



KSBA Partner Organization

The Kentucky School Boards Association is to be commended as a partner to KCSS. Under Kerri Schelling's leadership, the entire organization continues to play a vital role in assisting school district boards of education as they continue to search for ways to keep everyone safe and secure.

Alicia Lombardi (Administrative Assistant), Dan Orman (Training Coordinator), and KSBA Executive Director Kerri Schelling.

Resource Center

KY Safe Schools Week

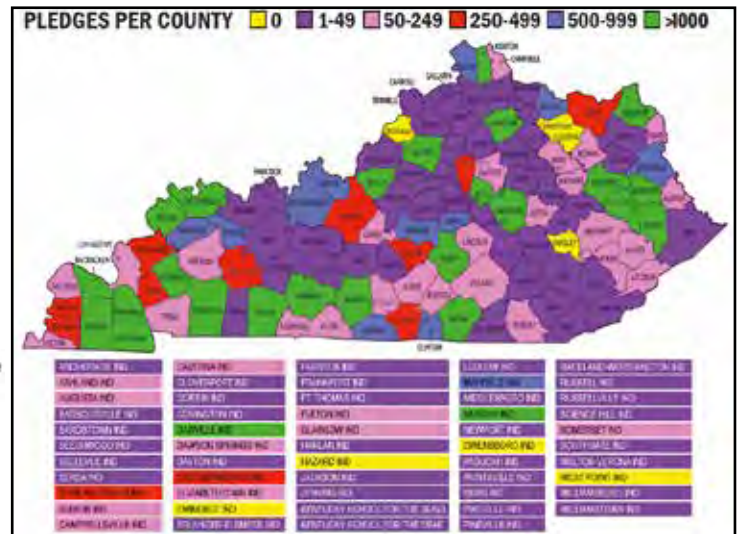
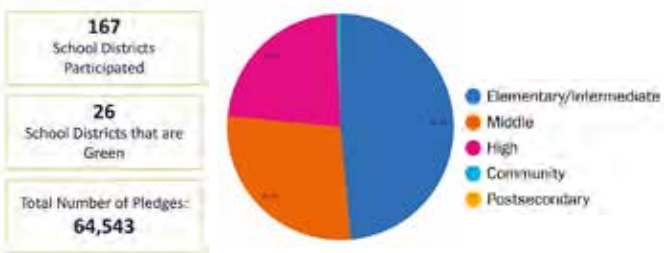
Light the Way: This week aims to “Light the Way.” Schools can promote and enhance school safety through targeted activities and discussions. The goal is to raise awareness about various aspects of school safety and empower students, teachers, parents, and the community to take proactive measures to create a safe learning environment.

I pledge to “Light the Way” by::

- Understanding that school safety starts with Me
- Preparing for emergencies
- Being a good digital citizen
- Showing kindness

“Light the Way” Pledge Map

Over 64,000 students and adults took the online pledge.



Patricia Greer
Director



Elizabeth Abanathy
Program Coordinator

Connected with over 3,000 students, community stakeholders, faculty and staff members of schools across the Commonwealth by presenting on multiple school safety-related topics.

Follow us at:



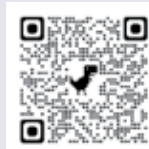
@KCSSnews



@KYSCHOOLSAFETY

- Over 300 Classroom Response Kits distributed to schools across the Commonwealth
- In total, over 40,000 pages of safety resources distributed
- Reached over 70,000 on social media pages

Request KCSS Resources Form
Developed
QR Code Link to Form:



KCSS Website

KCSS Website

The KCSS website provides relevant tools and templates to guide school administrators and teachers in the development of safe school plans. It encompasses a wide range of safety issues from bullying to violence prevention. The website is your one-stop shop for school safety resources and professional development materials.

New Resources for Safe Schools Coordinators

- Google Group for Safe Schools Coordinators
- Project ADAM: Implementing a Heart Safe School Program
- Reunification tools and templates
- Social Emotional Learning tools and curriculum
- S.T.O.P.! Tipline poster



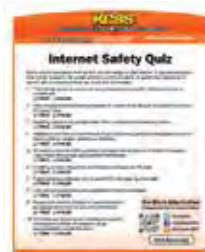
Emergency Management Resource Guide and Flipchart

The Emergency Management Resource Guide and Flipchart were revised and redesigned to provide more updated information for schools and school districts.



KCSS Informational Handouts

KCSS informational handouts were revised and redesigned to provide more updated information for schools and school districts.



RESOURCES BY ROLE

SCHOOL SAFETY ISSUES

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

SAFE SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

TRAINING & COMPLIANCE

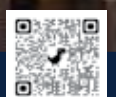
RESOURCES & RESPONDERS

REPORTS

Site Map | About | Calendar | Ask KCSS

Search

Click on Top Navigation to Access KCSS Resources



Visit Kentucky Center for School Safety online: www.kycss.org

Safe Schools and Communities Conference



Hosted by KCSS, KYASRO, and D.A.R.E. the annual Safe Schools and Communities Conference, held on June 10-11 this year at Great Crossing High School, Georgetown KY, was free and open to principals, law enforcement officers, school administrators, safe school coordinators, DPPs, and other school personnel.



For the past 5 years, we have had the distinct pleasure of working closely with Kentucky's first state school security marshal appointed soon after the job's creation in 2019, Ben Wilcox. We'll just suffice it to say that Ben has been a major asset to the important work that KCSS does. Charged with working with all public K-12 school administrators to ensure compliance with safety standards under the School Safety and Resiliency Act, he has worked tirelessly alongside Jon Akers throughout the state to promote high safety standards in every school. (Both were also featured speakers at our annual conference.) Unfortunately, Ben has announced that he will be retiring from his position this summer. We certainly wish him well, but he will be sorely missed. With an enormous knowledge base, extremely diverse work experience, refreshing common sense and a heart of pure gold, he has been ideal for the role of safety marshal and a valued partner to KCSS. Ben, we at KCSS will always love, respect, and desperately miss you!



Jermaine Galloway

The conference was headlined by noted speakers

Jermaine Galloway (Tall Cop) international expert on drug trends, and

Molly Hudgens, school counselor and author of "Saving Sycamore: The School Shooting that Never Happened."



Molly Hudgens

A few of a host of featured speakers and presenters included...



Patricia Greer

"Leadership and Response to a Tragedy"



James Stephens

"Event Security"



Wayne Young

"Hot Topics and Horseshoes"



Sergeant Chris Gatewood

"Gang Update"



Lieutenant Tracy Day

"When a School District Is Your Employer"



Lieutenant Antoine Sims

"Gang Update"

Thank You to all Participants.

Kentucky Center for School Safety, Eastern Kentucky University

105 Stratton Building | 521 Lancaster Avenue | Richmond, KY 40475-3102 | Toll-Free 1-877-805-4277

The Annual Report was written and produced by Kentucky Center for School Safety staff. | For more detailed information, visit www.kysafeschools.org

All school photos in this report, with the exception of those of KCSS staff, are from a Kentucky public school.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and Educational Institution.