

Planning Strengthens Instruction

Rockcastle County Schools has been a partner with the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) for approximately seven years. SREB was created in 1948 when a group of southern governors made an agreement to work cooperatively for the advancement of education, and in doing so, improve the regions' social and economic life.

For several years SREB concentrated on improving education at the high school level. In 2000, SREB decided to pilot an initiative that would include middle schools partnering with high school. Six school districts in Kentucky were selected to be a part of this pilot project. Rockcastle County Schools was one of the districts selected by the department of education to participate in this new initiative that would be called Making Schools Work (MSW).

Consequently, Rockcastle County's Middle School and High School have found themselves participating in an initiative whose main goal is improving student achievement. One of the services provided to MSW schools is that of an on-site technical assistance visit. In October 2000, a technical assistance team from SREB and local colleges, consisting of teachers and school board members visited Rockcastle County for three days.

The team toured the schools and talked to teachers, students and parents. They looked at test data, attendance figures, dropout rates and additional data of support. The staff at SREB took all this information and developed a "Technical Assistance Visit Report" for Rockcastle County Schools. This report contained a list of outstanding practices that were found in the district and a list of challenges the district needed to focus on to improve student achievement. The district received this report in February. Now, the big question: What should the district do with this report? After thought and discussion, the administrators elected to create a five-year strategic plan incorporating the SREB report with existing district data.

In order to begin the process of developing a five-year strategic plan, it was necessary for stakeholders to be involved in the creation of the plan. On April 18 and 19, 2001, a group of twenty-five (25) people representing the district, each of the five district schools and various partners, met in Berea to begin the work of planning for instructional improvement for the next five years.

The first task for the group was to revisit the districts' vision statement. The question being, "If we could have the school district of our dreams, what would it look like?" The collective answers supported the refinement of the districts' vision statement. The second question being, "What do we need to do as a district to realize our vision?" Again, the collective answers supported the refinement of the districts mission statement.

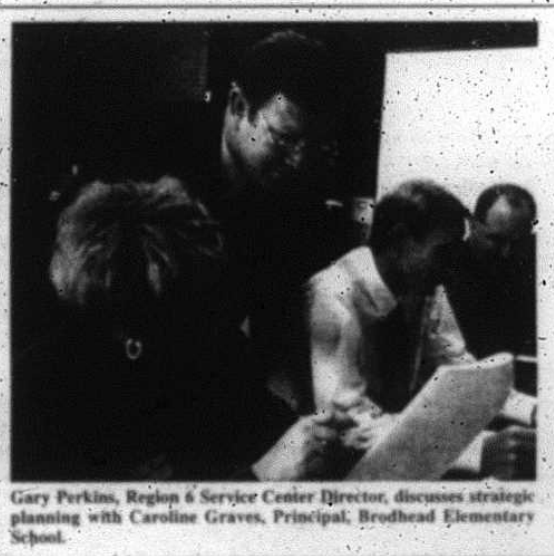


The next step in the process was identifying areas of concern. The whole group was divided into small groups and given the task of analyzing the "mounds" of data as it is related to their content area. For example, one group was given the task of discovering the areas of concern related to math, science and technology. Each of the three working groups discovered areas of concern for their respective areas.

The meeting came to a close after "next steps" had been established. The "next steps" include the sharing of this information with the staff in each school. The district planning team will then develop an action plan to address the areas of concern.

It is the districts hope that a five-year strategic plan will be developed and will provide a catalyst for leaders and teachers to advance student achievement in Rockcastle County.

This plan will be a tremendous asset for the district. The plan will serve as a guide for yearly planning and budgeting. It will enable the district to remain focused on improving the educational program for every child in Rockcastle County.



Gary Perkins, Region 6 Service Center Director, discusses strategic planning with Caroline Graves, Principal, Brodhead Elementary School.