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Barren County Schools

Reaching Higher, Achieving More

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BARREN COUNTY SCHOOLS AND PEARSON VIRTUAL LEARNING POWERED BY FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

(Kentucky Association of School Administrators Summer Institute – Louisville, Kentucky) – July 14, 2011 - A special press conference was held at the annual Kentucky Association of School Administrators' Summer Institute at the Galt House in Louisville today to announce that Barren County Schools has chosen to partner with the Pearson Virtual Learning powered by Florida Virtual School program for virtual services to be utilized by the Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning (BAVEL).

Bo Matthews, the current Director of Pupil Personnel who will become the district's new superintendent, and Phyllis Lentz, the Virtual Learning Manager of the Southeast Area for Pearson Virtual, made the announcement. Andy Ross, the General Manager for Global Services of Florida Virtual School, who participated in the meetings leading to the partnership agreement, was out of the country and unable to attend.

“Because of our continued growth and need to expand our services, such as summer school classes and higher levels of advanced math, science and technology classes, we entered into discussions with Ms. Lentz and Mr. Ross to establish this phenomenal partnership,” said Bo Matthews, the current director of pupil personnel and incoming superintendent for Barren County Schools.

“With this partnership, BAVEL will be using Pearson Virtual Learning because of the engaging, rigorous content and the very proactive teaching model that combine to make for student success,” said Matthews. “Florida Virtual School has exceptional teachers who know their content, care deeply for the students they serve, and are very responsive to individual student needs.”

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to work with the students of Kentucky through BAVEL. Our course catalog offers over 100 course titles that will provide expanded options for students,” stated Lentz. “Students are demanding more options and we know that online courses can provide these options through a 24/7 educational opportunity. We have every confidence that Kentucky’s public school students will find the resources they need through BAVEL.”

According to Benny Lile, the district’s director of instruction and technology, over the last 6 years, the Barren County School District’s highly innovative and successful virtual high school, which has the authority from the Kentucky Department of Education to grant high school diplomas, has provided another option for Kentucky students across the commonwealth to earn a public high school diploma, regardless of where they live in the state.

“In the short time BAVEL has been in existence, over 95 students have graduated from BAVEL with over 100 students enrolled this past school year alone,” offered Lile. “These students have come to us from among more than 20 our Kentucky public school districts, as well as private schools and home schools.”

“It’s important that we take a moment to recognize and thank our colleagues from those 20 public school districts this afternoon because they put the needs of these students first and foremost. Rather than seeing BAVEL as a competitor, they saw us as a partner in order to meet those students’ unique educational needs,” praised Amanda Wright, the BAVEL director. “It demonstrates that those districts share our desire to help Kentucky students achieve at high levels, regardless of their individual circumstances, and it proves that we can work together to achieve Kentucky’s goals for our children.”

BAVEL has been touted as an example of a creative way in which public education in Kentucky can prepare students for college, other post secondary education or careers. So much so that BAVEL was featured as a part of First Lady Jane Beshear’s Graduate Kentucky Summit tour this past year.

“We are fully aware, however, whether students are sitting in a bricks and mortar school taking a social studies class or sitting in the comfort of their home, away from home or in their local café with Wi-Fi, taking a virtual advanced calculus class, two components are still extremely critical in either setting --- the quality of the content and the quality of the instructor,” stated Matthews. “We think these are foundational components for student success and are at the core of every decision we make about BAVEL. It was these non-negotiable critical components that led to the decision to increase our use of Florida Virtual School as our main provider for BAVEL’s virtual services.”

In addition, Lile said that Pearson Virtual Learning powered by Florida Virtual School online courses are available in all subject areas for grades 6-12 including advanced placement and career and technology courses, which will also address our growing middle school population, as well.

According to Lile, another benefit of this partnership is that English/Language Arts and Mathematics courses will be aligned to the new Common Core State Standards as well as individual state standards. This is extremely important in preparing our Kentucky students for the new state assessments that are being developed.

“I might add that, as we move forward, we are also working on another agreement with Pearson Virtual Learning and Florida Virtual School that will launch BAVEL into the international world of virtual public education, as well,” said Matthews. “So, stay tuned; there is more to come.”

Phillip Napier was recently employed to assist Wright in anticipation of the expanded enrollment that will result from the new partnership. Napier, a former business education teacher, also has an extensive background in technology, as well as video production.

“We look forward to working with our friends in the Barren County School District,” said Lentz. “We only see good things happening for everyone as our partnership continues to grow and expand in the future.

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CUTLINE FOR PHOTO:

Attending the special press conference at the annual Kentucky Association of School Administrators’ Summer Institute in Louisville in which Barren County School District announced its new partnership with the Pearson Virtual Learning powered by Florida Virtual School program for virtual services to be utilized by the Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning (BAVEL) were (l-r): Amanda Wright, Barren County Schools BAVEL Director; Phyllis Lentz, Pearson Virtual Learning Manager Southeast Area; Benny Lile, Barren County Schools Director of Instruction and Technology; Bo Matthews, Barren County Schools Director of Pupil Personnel and incoming Superintendent of Schools; Bill Walter, Barren County Schools Associate Superintendent; Phyllis O’Neal, Kentucky Association of School Administrators President; Linda France, Director of the Kentucky P20 Innovation Lab at the University of Kentucky; David Cook, Kentucky Department of Education Director of Innovation; and Wayne Young, Kentucky Association of School Administrators Executive Director.