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**Metcalfe County school district wins KSBA PEAK Award**

The Kentucky School Boards Association will recognize Metcalfe County Schools as the Spring 2020 recipient of the Public Education Achieves in Kentucky (PEAK) Award during the district's virtual board meeting Tuesday, May 12.

KSBA will present the award to the district at a ceremony to be held there this fall.

The PEAK Award, given twice yearly, was established in 1997 to focus statewide attention on outstanding public school efforts that enhance student learning skills and promote the positive impact of public elementary and secondary education in Kentucky. Metcalfe County's Old School Café is the 51st program to be recognized with the PEAK Award and the first for Metcalfe County.

For the past four years, Metcalfe County High School students have woken up at 3 a.m. each day to make doughnuts to sell to the community.

The district's Old School Café opened in spring of 2016 after Superintendent Benny Lile and Director of Pupil Personnel Chris Huffman saw the doughnut shop as an opportunity for students to learn valuable work-ready skills and fill a need in the community – the closest doughnut and coffee shop was about 20 miles away. The on-the-job program was part of the district's application to become part of Kentucky Department of Education's District of Innovation program, Lile said.

"We wanted to do three things," Lile said. "We wanted to make it accessible to our community. We wanted to have our students involved in some way and then give our community something they did not have at the time."

The café, where students also serve fresh salads and sandwiches, is housed in the cafeteria of a building the district once used as both an elementary school and a high school. When the district tore down the classroom section in 2013, the gym and cafeteria were preserved as a piece of the community's history.

The success of the café was immediate and, much like the dough they use each day for the doughnuts, the program has risen to the top as it was selected as the KSBA PEAK Award winner.

"The program provides so many real-world life lessons for the students involved and teaches skills these kids can use to be very successful immediately after high school and later in life," said PEAK judge Laura Cole, KSBA's director of Board Team Development. "The fact that they are making money while doing so just adds to the importance of the program."

About 30 students work at the Old School Café each semester, earning minimum wage while gaining invaluable life skills. After their shift in the shop, the students return to the high school for their classes. The café is self-sustaining with all profits going back into the program.

The dough is made from scratch every day requiring students to use mathematics skills to correctly measure ingredients. In addition, math and computer skills are involved with completing sales to customers. Students also gain soft skills by greeting customers, problem-solving and providing professional service.

But the lessons extend beyond math or soft skills.

“The Café has brought about a strong example in the importance of work and a hope for many of these families,” Geneva Scroggy, dual credit & work ready adviser, wrote in a PEAK nomination letter. “This has made a positive, lasting impact on many of our students that we hope lasts a lifetime.”

Metcalf County student Julie Barlow said working at the Old School Café has given her a “much better chance at succeeding in life.”

While school had always come easy for her, Barlow said working at the Café represented a challenge that she needed before going to college.

“They teach you, sometimes the same things multiple times,” Barlow wrote in a PEAK nomination letter. “When I first heard the phrase ‘Learning Lab’ applied to my workplace, I thought it was the most fitting title that I had ever heard for the Old School Café.

“More than teaching me valuable life and job skills, the doughnut shop has given me a better work ethic than I’ve ever had. Now, I can go into college confident that I have at least one advantage: an unwavering ability to work and work and work for what I want; or, work for what must be done.”

Lile said he realizes that some might not think learning to run a cash register is a needed skill in today’s high-tech world, but he thinks the work ethic the students are learning will be beneficial in any future job or while pursuing a post-secondary education.

“We have a sign hanging in there that says you are entering a learning laboratory,” Lile said, noting customers are encouraged to interact with the students and offer suggestions that could help them do a better job. “When you put that whole piece together, I think it makes it a little special and maybe a little unique.”

Metcalf County school board member Robin McMurtrey wrote in a PEAK nomination letter that the district’s Old School Café is one of the most unique and rewarding work-ready programs she has ever seen.

“Over the past three years, our students have taken ownership of this extraordinary opportunity. I can’t imagine as a student at MCHS in the 1980s getting up at 3 a.m. to make doughnuts and then go to class. But these students do just that. Since the Café is essentially their own business, they are motivated to make it a success,” she wrote. “In addition, these students are learning important skills they will need in almost any future job or career path from financial management to customer service.

“Not only is the Old School Café having a great impact on our current students and serving our current community, its ability to sustain itself will no doubt serve future students and future community members,” McMurtrey added.

The next step, Lile said, is to integrate the Old School Café into a career pathway, whether it’s economics, culinary or another pathway.

“We want to give our students options and opportunities,” he said. “That’s what we’re about in anything we do. And obviously I think innovation goes hand in hand with that to bring realistic options and opportunities to work.”

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## Goals of the Old School Café

- ▶ Provide a real-world learning experience
- ▶ Instill a sense of responsibility
- ▶ Teach time and money management skills
- ▶ Learn how to problem solve
- ▶ Learn successful marketing and advertising

## Measurable objectives of the program

- ▶ Increase by 20 percent the average daily attendance of participating students by the end of one semester.
- ▶ Decrease by 10 percent the number of behavior reports among participating students by the end of one year.
- ▶ Increase by 10 percent classroom grades of participating students by the end of one year.
- ▶ Increase student knowledge of business operations and soft skills from beginning of the semester to end of the semester.
- ▶ Increase by 10 percent Café sales from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester.

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*The Kentucky School Boards Association was established in 1936 and represents 862 school board members in 172 districts across Kentucky. As the leading advocate for public school boards, KSBA's mission is to empower local districts through superior support, service and training. For more information, visit [ksba.org](http://ksba.org).*

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