

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

June 21, 2013

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## **Dollarway School District taking steps toward redemption (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

Just over one year has elapsed since the State Board of Education took over the Dollarway School District. An assessment of the district's progress in remedying the violations that led to that drastic action reveals that much has been accomplished but much also remains to be done.

Frank Anthony, who was appointed Dollarway superintendent by Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell one year ago, will be stepping down from the post June 30.

Anthony will be succeeded by former North Little Rock School District assistant superintendent Bobby Acklin, who will begin his new job July 1.

Phyllis Stewart, Kimbrell's chief of staff, praised Anthony's accomplishments.

"Over the past year Mr. Anthony addressed and resolved the standards violations at Dollarway High School that led to its loss of accreditation last year," Stewart said. "He filled personnel vacancies and set a standard for principals to follow as instructional leaders in their schools. In order to address the ongoing decline in student enrollment in the district and the consequent loss of revenue, Mr. Anthony took a lead role in closing Altheimer-Martin Elementary School. That school was a fiscal challenge and he took care of the situation before the next superintendent came in."

Stewart said Acklin will have a full plate of tasks waiting for him.

"Dollarway has several priority schools and that has to be the primary target for him," Stewart said. "To get those schools achieving better and closing those achievement gaps. Mr. Acklin's strength is in building strong coalitions in the community. The community has to own their schools and he is the right person for that job."

The year that was

Anthony laid out his assessment of how far the district has traveled on the road to redemption.

"When we came in last June the state had been empowered to take control of the Dollarway School District after Dollarway High School was found to be on probationary status for two consecutive years," Anthony said. "We have corrected the issues with seals on transcripts and certified staff. For the first year in a long while the Arkansas Department of Education fully accredited all five schools in the Dollarway School District for the 2012-2013 school year. This is a foundation for future success. It is

confirmation that the district is taking the right first steps but there is still much to be done in the district.”

Anthony said ways to stem the tide of students leaving the district have been studied.

“When we came in last June the district had 1,450 kids and by the first day of school on August 19 we were down to about 1,300 kids,” Anthony said. “So we lost around 125 kids over the summer last year. This is a critical issue for the school district moving forward. These numbers need to be stabilized. The loss of students triggers financial issues for the district with each student representing \$6,267 in funding.”

Anthony said the district is vying against private schools, charter schools and school choice in the fight to stop the enrollment slide.

“We can’t do anything about the private schools and charter schools but the district opted out of school choice for one year,” Anthony said. “This means that no student can transfer out of this district to another district and no students from another district can transfer in. This will hopefully help.”

Anthony said the closure of Alzheimer-Martin Elementary was necessary to address the continued loss of funding to the district resulting from the loss of students.

“The savings in operational expenses of closing the school is \$500,000,” Anthony said.

Anthony said he worked with officials in the ADE to implement the district’s reduction-in-force plan for the purpose of adjusting the teacher-to-student ratio to acknowledge the continuing drop in overall enrollment.

“With the triggering of the reduction-in-force plan we eliminated eight certified positions with a savings of between \$400,000 and \$500,000,” Anthony said. “The elimination of eight classified positions will save the district another \$150,000.”

Caution ahead

Anthony laid out what he considers to be the primary challenges that await Acklin come July 1.

“He must continue to manage district finances in a prudent way and this is driven by keeping staff numbers in line with student enrollment numbers,” Anthony said.

“Personnel recruitment and employment is also critical to keeping district accreditation and producing academic results,” Anthony said. “Equally the existing staff must be managed successfully. Mr. Acklin will need to provide leadership for the district administrators. These include the central office staff and building principals. They must be given guidance and opportunities for growth.”

Anthony said critical current staff vacancies include a counselor, mathematics teacher, library media specialist, business education teacher, English teacher and art teacher.

“Most of those positions are in the state shortage category which means that the demand for these teachers exceeds the supply,” Anthony said. “A failure to secure a licensed person in those areas will jeopardize accreditation.”

## New leadership

Acklin has been meeting with Anthony in the runup to their leadership handoff in an effort to get up to speed with where the district was, where it is now and where it needs to be.

“I have several firsts that I need to accomplish,” Acklin said. “At the top is student achievement and safety. Safety is number one. Community involvement is also a biggie. I will be developing activities to get the community engaged with the school district.”

Acklin said he intends to make sure that standard operating procedures are in place and known by employees on a districtwide level.

“We need to make sure that we have systems districtwide where everyone knows what to do, whether it is regarding staff attendance or student attendance or anything else,” Acklin said. “I am going to meet with staff and start developing those. I am going to get the administrators in there and make sure that everybody knows about them.”

Acklin said that this will help to ensure that the district does not backslide on the progress it has already made.

“I also want to tap into the various strengths of the individuals already employed by the district,” Acklin said. “I want to find out the different strengths that are out there and get the staff involved in developing those.”

Acklin said everything will begin with the acknowledgement that it is all student-focused.

“It’s about the children of Dollarway and we will preach that every day,” Acklin said. “We want to emphasize the staff that is caring for these kids. We want parents to know who it is that is educating their children and that they can depend upon them to do that. We want people to buy back into this school district. We want people to know that we are up for the challenge.”

Acklin said he will begin to assess student test data.

“We are going to look at the student achievement data and make sure that each student is assisted in improving their test scores,” Acklin said. “Maybe there is one kid who just needs to see his or her score moved up one percentage point. We will help them to do that. The only way to find out what the kids need is to go through all of the data. The excitement will come when the kids do better on their tests.”

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## **Drew Central track funding in question (Advance-Monticellonian)**

A group of Drew Central parents addressed the board Thursday night during the Drew Central School Board's regular monthly meeting about the district supporting a track and field program with enough funding for the students to participate in more track meets during the 2013-14 school year.

Paige Caldwell, parent of a track student, asked the board to pay the necessary entry fees so that students could attend more track meets next year.

The last two years the track team were only permitted to compete in track meets hosted by Monticello High School because the track program has not been funded by the district.

Caldwell told the board that her son was one of the 29 track and field athletes who have found their place in the sport.

"A lot kids who can't participate in other sports can take part in track," Caldwell said. "When school ends each year, (track athletes) keep training."

She said the program has many benefits for athletes, and also teaches discipline, respect and a good work ethic.

"This is something (my son) enjoys," Caldwell said. "He's never found anything he loves. He loves running."

Caldwell also informed the board in 2012 and 2013 Drew Central had two district champions and two students to place first runner up. One DC track student placed first at the state competition, almost breaking the state record.

"I hope you work with us this year and we can (continue to) have a track program this year," Caldwell said.

She presented a budget to the board. The budget included a few minor pieces of equipment such as relay batons, training hurdles, and starting blocks. The biggest portion of the proposed budget is the fees for the track meets.

The track team wants to participate in two meets at Hamburg, one at Crossett and three at Monticello.

Based on the last two years' performances, the track team expects to qualify for the state meet next spring. They are also asking for the district to cover the cost of the entry fees and travel to the state meet.

The total proposed budget is \$2,468.50, which does not include a stipend for Coach Shawn Curtis.

The board voted to table the matter until next month as recommended by Superintendent Mike Johnston.

Johnston told the board he wasn't sure the proposed budget was "an accurate amount." He said Curtis and Athletic Director Michael Goad need to sit down to come up with a true estimate of the cost so the board can make an informed decision.

"If it's just three or four thousand dollars, I feel it's a good thing," Johnston said. "But, if it's going to cost more than that, we need to think about the football stadium's needs."

Johnston said the board needs to think about the football program that has already been approved and started. He said the football field needs restrooms, bleachers, and sidewalks.

"Anything more (than \$3,000 or \$4,000), you need to think about it," Johnston said. "Do you want to start two sports programs at once or do you want to wait until one is more established before beginning another?"

Drew Central began the football program just six years ago.

Caldwell said they aren't asking the district to create a new program. They are asking it to support the one it already has.

"We aren't asking for a new program," Caldwell said. "We have a track program. We are asking for a little support for our kids to do what they love, to give them an opportunity to thrive in something."

Caldwell said she plans to attend the next meeting.

"I hope to bring more parents and more students in to show how important this program is to us," she said.

Caldwell said she's asked to be placed on the agenda numerous times.

"I wanted to come talk to the board in January before track got started," she said. "But I wasn't placed on the agenda until now."

Caldwell said she feels like she wasn't given the opportunity to speak until now because the school choice deadline has passed.

"If we don't get what we want, we won't have the opportunity to move to Monticello this year because of the school choice law," Caldwell said. "So we have to be here for another year unless we move."

Caldwell said she doesn't see why the board won't fund the small amount they are requesting because they have a lot more to lose should students choose another school that does offer track.

“Changing schools is not an option for us this year because of school choice, but it might be next year,” Caldwell said.

Caldwell said she hopes it doesn’t come to that.

Drew Central, and all other public schools, receive state funding based on the student population.

Phyllis Stewart, state board/commissioner’s liaison with the Arkansas Department of Education said each school will receive \$5,267 for each student during fiscal year 2013; \$6,393 for fiscal year 2014; and \$6,621 for fiscal year 2015.

Curtis, who also attended the meeting, said he hopes the board will give the track program support because it’s already doing well.

“We have a program,” Curtis said. “We have some talented athletes already participating at this school.”

Curtis said these athletes could have a track scholarship in their future because of their success.

“I have one student who almost broke the state record this year,” Curtis said. “And, he will break the record next year. It’s going to happen.”

Curtis said he just wants to give his students the best possible chance because track can open doors to the future.

“I went to college on a track (and field) scholarship,” Curtis said. “I would have never gotten anyone’s attention playing any other sport at my high school, but I still got a track scholarship.”

He said all he wants is objectivity so the track students can have the same opportunity he had as a student.

Curtis said he also wants to thank Coach Danny Chisom at Monticello High School for allowing the Drew Central students to use their track to train.

Chisom and other Monticello coaches attended the meeting in support of the Curtis, the parents, and the students.

“This school has a lot of talent,” Chisom said. “We love having (Drew Central) practice with us because it gives us another coach out there.”

Chisom said he fully supports the effort of Curtis, and the track parents and students.

“We’ve got everything you need just down the road,” Chisom said to Curtis after Thursday night’s meeting.

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## **A New Path to Learning Integrated arts program gets Arts Council grant (Lovely County Citizen)**

A program that integrates the arts into the Eureka Springs Elementary school curriculum has received a grant from The Arkansas Arts Council.

The grant, for more than \$8,000, was matched by the Eureka Springs School District, according to Rebecca Hahn, a Eureka Springs performance artist. Hahn received a \$2,000 mini-residency grant from the Arkansas Arts Council and the school district last fall to lead a 10-day program with teachers and students at Eureka Springs Elementary. Integrating arts into the curriculum gives students a new path to learning by using activities that deepen understanding and increase retention.

"We're going to do a whole year of in-depth work," Hahn said.

Hahn said the idea of learning through doing comes naturally to pre-schoolers, but by the time students are in grade school, teaching styles switch from kinesthetic and tactile to verbal. Hahn, who has a master's degree in clinical dance and movement therapy from UCLA, re-introduces the idea of using the whole body as part of the learning process by having students, working in small groups, create ways to illustrate the lesson.

Mandy Elsey, who teaches kindergarden at Eureka Springs Elementary, was impressed by the way her students responded.

"It benefits the whole class, especially in the aspect of teamwork, group work and cooperation," Elsey said. "They learn to cooperate and use a lot of thinking skills. They're using so many different learning styles."

How it works: students, in small groups, are challenged to act out the lesson, which not only reinforces what was learned, but also develops teamwork and leadership skills. The rules: Work silently, although words may be added later. Everybody must be connected, and the result, a multi-figure sculpture come to life, must fill the space like a picture fills a frame.

"It's kinetic and dramatic," Hahn said. "They use their bodies, use their voices and work together."

Hahn also teaches students ways to calm the body and focus the mind through physical movement. Elsey said she has seen the difference the approach makes in her kindergardeners in behavior modification. Having to work as a team develops empathy among the students, Hahn said, and creates an environment where students model behavior for one another.

"The beauty of this is that everybody has leadership skills in different areas," Hahn said. "Some are strong readers. Some have social skills. When students work in small groups, everybody gets a chance to exhibit leadership."

Before introducing the concept to students last fall, Hahn gave the teachers a hands-on introduction to kinesthetic learning, asking them to make human collages of a science lesson on the states of water. It was an 'out-of-the-box' experience for some of the teachers, Lesieur said, and took a while for them to get onboard with it, but they did.

"You could see the shift," she said.

Hahn creates a lesson plan for each class based on the focus the teacher chooses-- language arts, history, or other area of the state curriculum. Last fall, Hahn helped students explore the meaning of a poem about the moon and learn about the storm cycle. Kindergardeners acted out "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." Having a story that requires students to go from loud voices to soft teaches students to modulate their behavior and control impulses, Hahn said. Acting out a story also teaches sequencing, expands vocabulary and improves retention, Hahn said, along with teaching a character lesson.

"It's a wholistic model of education,"said Clare Lesieur, E.S.Elementary School principal. "It lends itself to the 21st century skills the school is working on. We try to teach the whole child-- that's our mission."

While behavior modification is a benefit with the younger students, improved group dynamics and creative thinking are the byproducts in the upper classrooms. Because students create their own learning experience, there is no right or wrong answer, Hahn said. But she does require students to explain their approach, and each group answers questions from other students.

"They are challenged to understand their own thinking on a behavior level as well as an academic level," Hahn said.

According to Hahn, the program adds a dimension to arts education beyond the traditional meanings -- teaching students to paint, draw or sculpt, or showing teachers how to present classroom art projects that complement the subject or the season.

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## **AD search continues at North Little Rock (North Little Rock Times)**

The North Little Rock School district has been busy. Not only in putting a new superintendent and assistant superintendent in place, but they are also in the process of hiring a new athletic director, and the process is moving along smoothly according to Gregg Thompson, Administrative Director of Human Resources.

"We've got a good group of applicants," Thompson said. "We are finishing interviews now and we will meet [Wednesday] with the interview team and go over anyone else they may want to interview."

One interview happening Wednesday will be in house when the team talks with Gary Davis, who is currently the Assistant Principal at West Campus.

Thompson said hiring criteria includes a valid Arkansas teaching certificate as well as a preference of experience in coaching and administration.

“We list that as preferences to leave us with some flexibility,” Thompson said.

The new leader will inherit a school that is coming off one of its most successful athletic years in its history with state titles in basketball and softball as well as conference championships in baseball and football.

“We’ve got the best group of coaches ever assembled here,” Thompson said. “We want an athletic director to go along with them.”

Incoming superintendent Kelly Rogers has been working tirelessly according to Thompson even before his contract takes effect.

Thompson said the athletic director’s position would be very demanding on the candidate selected with the overseeing of the construction of new facilities to go along with the Wildcat Foundation and the day to day operations of the department.

“He will wear many hats,” Thompson said. “We are looking for someone who will take this department to the next level.”

The “next level” is defined as being consistently competitive as they were in the 2012-13 academic year.

“We want this success every year,” Thompson said. “Not just every 10-15 years.”

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## **First Gaylon Lawrence Memorial Scholarships Awarded (Clay County Times)**

During commencement exercises for Piggott High School Friday, May 17, the first Gaylon Lawrence Memorial Scholarships were awarded to two graduating seniors of the class of 2013. This year's recipients are Lakyn Fry and Collin Benbrook.

The scholarships were established in memory of the Pollard native, and longtime owner of Piggott State Bank, following his death last year. Through donations in Lawrence's memory, and an endowment from Piggott State Bank, the scholarships are financed through the non-profit organization Piggott Community Sharing Hearts, Inc. The organization's board of director's also oversees selection of the scholarship winners each spring.

Piggott Community Sharing Hearts, Inc. was established as a non-profit organization late last year with the sole purpose of assisting students at all levels within the Piggott School District. The board of directors meets periodically in an effort to identify the needs of students, and to work diligently to meet those needs. Board officers include President Barbara Batey, Vice President Gerald Morris and Secretary-Treasurer Mona Scott. The remaining members include Paula O. Blackwell, Gary Howell, Faith Conley, Paula Benbrook, Kelli Scott-Malin, Jim Poole and Cary Wilson.

The organization was established by way of a \$25,000 donation by Piggott State Bank, and has benefited from various donations in the months since. These funds, although separate from the memorial scholarship, are also dispersed by the board on an as-needed basis.

The Gaylon Lawrence Memorial Scholarship is a four-year renewable scholarship of \$1,000 per semester, given to a PHS senior who "exhibits excellence in academics, leadership and character" according to the criteria. The scholarship is renewable with a requirement of a minimum 2.5 grade point average for freshmen and 3.0 thereafter, and the student must maintain at least 12 hours per semester.

The scholarship application also outlines the student's educational goals, career interests, professional aspirations and how they expect to meet those goals. The applicants are also required to provide a 300 word essay explaining why they feel they should receive the scholarship.

Lakyn Danielle Fry is the daughter of Benny and Susan Fry of Piggott She will be attending the University of Central Arkansas in the fall as she plans to major in pharmacy.

She was very active at PHS, serving as secretary, reporter and vice president of the FBLA chapter, and as District II reporter. She was also a member of Beta Club, and was in FCCLA where she served as chapter vice president and president and was a candidate for national office. Laykin was also active in Art Club, Spanish Club, Relay For Life and in her church youth group and other community efforts. She was also a Hall of Merit scholar and recognized on the A Honor Roll, earned the English award, Science award, sociology/psychology award, CCGMS award and competed at the state level in both FBLA and FCCLA. Along the way she earned a state championship in business presentation with the FBLA and is going to nationals.

Collin Benbrook is the son of Jeff and Paula Benbrook of Piggott. He will be attending the St. Louis College of Pharmacy and will also be majoring in pharmacy.

He enjoyed a substantial and successful career at Piggott High School and was the co-valedictorian of the class of 2013. Collin was also a member of the Beta Club, was a member of the FFA where he served as vice president, was a member of the Art Club, where he served as president, and he was recognized as a Hall of Merit scholar. Collin was also a standout athlete and was named All-Conference as a member of the Mohawk football team. He also received of the St. Louis College of Pharmacy's President's Scholarship.

Applications for the 2014 Gaylon Lawrence Memorial Scholarships will be available to seniors at PHS during the upcoming school year. The deadline for application will be in mid-April of 2014.

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## **Jasper district enacts drug test**

Jasper School District will implement a new drug-testing policy when students return for the 2013-14 school year.

Superintendent Kerry Saylor said he plans to wait until September to begin monthly random drug-testing of seventh through 12th graders involved in extra-curricular activities, such as basketball, Future Farmers of America or Student Council. Students who park vehicles on the district's campuses also will be subject to drug-testing.

About 325 students attending school in Jasper, Kingston and Oark will be affected by the policy, Saylor said. Between 2 percent and 15 percent of those students will be tested each month; Saylor plans to start on the lower end of that range.

"This year we're probably just going to tiptoe into this," he said.

The Jasper School Board and administration spent a year researching drug-testing for students, Saylor said. The School Board voted 4-3 in May to adopt the policy. Those who supported the policy hoped it would act as a deterrent, he said.

"It's there to hopefully help a few children say, 'No, I don't want to go down that road,' and also to help some get back on the best path if they are going down that road," Saylor said.

Board members who voted against the policy worried about infringing on the rights of students and about the district taking on a parental role, Saylor said.

School Board member Todd Scarborough spent weeks on the Internet reading about drug-testing from experts on children and law enforcement. He could not find any evidence to show whether random drug-testing is an effective deterrent.

"I just felt it was not the right thing to do," Scarborough said.

His reasons for voting against the policy include the expense, placing another burden on school staff without additional pay and discouraging participation in extra-curricular activities. If a student uses a substance on a Saturday night and is among those chosen for random drug-testing the next week, the student can quit basketball to avoid being tested, Scarborough said. The test doesn't make a distinction between students who used a substance once or multiple times, he said.

Even though district administrators aim for confidentiality, students will know a teammate tested positive when they are suspended from playing, Scarborough said.

"I think there's going to be inherent flaws," he said.

The School Board will review the policy again in a year, Saylor said.

Saylor anticipates that the School Board will decide on a company to conduct drug-testing in July, he said. He anticipates spending \$1,500 on drug-testing in 2013-14.

If a student tests positive for illegal drugs, the superintendent or his designee will notify a parent or guardian and schedule a meeting with the student, parent, head coach or sponsor and principal.

The penalty for the first positive test is a 20-day suspension from school activities or parking on campus, unless the student participates in counseling. The superintendent can reduce the suspension to 10 days with participation in counseling, but the student would be subject to mandatory drug tests for the rest of the school year.

Parents are responsible for the costs of counseling and additional drug tests.

The suspensions from extra-curricular activities and parking increase with subsequent positive drug tests.

The policy also states that students will not be penalized academically for testing positive for illegal drugs and that information from drug tests will not be reported to criminal or juvenile authorities unless required under a subpoena or other legal process.

Newton County Sheriff Keith Slape was not aware of the new drug-testing policy. In Newton County, the sheriff's office combats prescription drug abuse and marijuana use, he said.

Slape said he believes in education to help teenagers avoid using drugs. When he goes to schools, he encourages younger children to say no if they are asked to try drugs, he said. He shows older students pictures and videos to educate them about the dangers of drug use.

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## **School board picks Kellogg to be new superintendent (Lovely County Citizen)**

Following the executive session of a special meeting Monday, Eureka Springs School Board President Al Larson said the board had verbally agreed with to superintendent candidate David Kellogg to offer him a contract to become the next school district superintendent.

The board will review the conditions of the contract and vote on it at its next regular meeting, which has been rescheduled for Wednesday evening, Larson said.

Kellogg is one of four final candidates selected for the job recently vacated by H. Curtis Turner. Kellogg has been superintendent at the Cossatot River School District in Wickes, Ark., since 2011. Between 2010 and 2011, he served as a School Improvement consultant to the Southern Regional Education Board. School Improvement assists schools to improve student achievement.

Before his work as a consultant, Kellogg served as high school principal in several districts: from 2001 to 2010 at Springdale High School, from 1993 to 2001 at El Dorado High School and from 1991 to 1993 at Oak Grove High School in Pulaski County. He also served as principal from 1987 to 1991 at Barton Junior High School in El Dorado.

At Cossatot, Kellogg has been overseeing the construction of a \$15 million high school and the recent consolidation of Van-Cove and Wickes school districts. His resumé states he also implemented the High Schools That Work "Literacy Across the Curriculum" program and has been a national conference presenter in the High Schools That Work program.

He was involved in the development of the Law and Public Safety Academy and Engineering Academy, led a team to apply for and implement a \$500,000 21st Century after-school program grant and led other efforts to improve tutoring, reading, college credit in high school, teacher-led professional development and initiated a career and planning parent/teacher conference program.

He has served as president of the Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals and two terms as president of the state principals' association.

He received a Pioneer Award from the Arkansas Work Force Education Division and an award for Outstanding Leadership in Administration in Arkansas from the Arkansas Activities Association.

The school board has moved its regular meeting time to this Wednesday, June 19, at 5:30 p.m. at the administration building due to scheduling conflicts. The meeting will take place at 147 Greenwood Hollow Rd., and the public is welcome.

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### **School Polling Sites In Limbo ([nwaonline.com](http://nwaonline.com))**

BENTONVILLE — Benton County's Election Commission put off a decision Thursday on using schools as polling places for the Sept. 17 millage election in Bentonville.

"I have some concerns," John Brown Jr., commission chairman, said after the meeting.

The Bentonville School District will ask voters to approve a 2.9-mill increase. The tax increase, if approved, would pay for a second high school. One seat on the Bentonville School Board also is up for election.

School District representatives briefed the commission on locations the district would offer as polling places. Mary Ley, district communications director, said the administration building is one potential polling place, along with Barker Middle School, Ardis Ann Middle School and Cooper Elementary School.

The School Board on Monday approved a recommendation to use the four district buildings as polling places for the election. The district wants to make voting more convenient for parents of children, Ley told the commission. The sites were chosen with safety in mind, Ley said, and the district has arranged to have police officers and deputies work at the sites on election day.

The school gymnasiums where voting will be held are accessible without voters having to go through the hall, thus minimizing encounters with students, Ley said. Parking is available at all three school locations and employees at the administration building will be instructed to park across the street election day.

No schools were used as polling places during last year's millage election. Voters in the district would have to be notified of any changes and that could create confusion election day, Commissioner Robbyn Tummey said.

“The County Clerk will have to send out a notice telling people for this election you’re voting here, then in the next election they’ll have to send out another notice saying you’re voting somewhere else,” Tummey said. “It’s a problem.”

The district would use social media sites, send letters to parents and pay for advertising in more traditional media including newspapers and television, Ley said. Changes in voting locations would contribute to problems, no matter what steps are taken to notify voters, Brown said.

“You’re going to have people who’ll say ‘I don’t take the paper,’” Brown said. “They’ll say ‘I don’t watch TV and I don’t have a computer.’”

Ley and Galen Havner, School District human resources director, both said the district is agreeable to using the buildings as polling places in other elections, although not necessarily all elections. The district received no negative comments about using the schools as polling places, Ley said. Sharon

Rose, on the Election Commission staff, said she answered one call from a woman concerned the use of the schools could favor pro-millage voters.

The Election Commission and County Clerk’s office are working on precinct boundaries to bring precincts into compliance with a new state law limiting voting precincts to 3,000 voters. Until that work is done, Tummey said, she's reluctant to change polling places.

Brown agreed the commission needed to gather more information and discuss the question at some length. Kim Dennison, election coordinator, said she needed to have the information before July 12 to prepare ballots.

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## **Money Pledged For School Safe Routes (nwaonline)**

FAYETTEVILLE — The state Highway Department is handing out federal money to several cities and schools as part of the Safe Routes to School Program.

“This program is specifically directed toward enabling and encouraging students in kindergarten through eighth grade to walk or bicycle to school,” Scott Bennett, director of the Highway Department, said in a news release. “The highway department was able to award approximately \$2 million in funds toward 31 deserving projects.”

The program is 100 percent federal money and a local match isn't required. Areas within two miles of schools are eligible for the grants for planning, design and construction of sidewalks, crossings and bicycle facilities as well as traffic diversion and speed reduction improvements. Money also can be used for public awareness campaigns, traffic education, enforcement and outreach.

Westwood Elementary School in Springdale received \$135,896 for a sidewalk along the north side of the school.

Elmdale Elementary School in Springdale received \$80,000 for a sidewalk along Christian Avenue.

Fayetteville received \$81,200 to build a footbridge over Clabber Creek on the west side of Salem Road. The bridge will connect two sidewalks that end at the creek. It will prevent students from Holcomb Elementary School from having to enter the street to cross the creek. The bridge will be part of the Clabber Creek Trail extension to Holt Middle School.

Northwest Arkansas Resource, Conservation and Development Council, a nonprofit rural development corporation serving nine Northwest Arkansas counties, received \$27,800 for education.

The Prairie Grove School District received \$3,000 for planning.

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## **New Study Ranks Arkansas Second Worst State in America (KARK, Channel 4)**

BROOKLYN, NY - A new study holds some harsh rankings for the Natural State.

A 2013-2014 report from Measure of America, scored America's performance state-by-state on factors like income, health and education.

The results were less than flattering for Arkansas, ranking the state second to last.

The report's interactive map is based on the American Human Development Index which aims to summarize quality of life overall.

Human development is about what people can do and be; it is the process of improving people's well-being and expanding their freedoms and opportunities.

The human development approach emphasizes the everyday experiences of ordinary people, encompassing the range of factors that shape their opportunities and enable them to live freely chosen lives of value. People with high levels of human development can invest in themselves and their families and live to their full potential, while those without find many doors shut, many choices and opportunities out of reach.

And in case you're wondering, Connecticut is king for quality of lifestyle with Massachusetts, New Jersey, the District of Columbia, and Maryland rounding out the Top 5.

Joining Arkansas at the bottom of the pile: Alabama, Kentucky, West Virginia and Mississippi.

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## **UAPB School of Education receives continuing accreditation (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff School of Education has received continuing national accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

This accreditation decision indicates that the unit and its programs meet the standards set forth by the professional education community.

The next accreditation visit will be held in fall 2019 by the new accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.

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### **Former Northwest Arkansas Teacher Found Not Guilty of Sexual Assault Charges (KARK, Channel 4)**

GREENWOOD, AR - A former River Valley school teacher was acquitted Thursday on charges of sexual assault and indecency with a child.

A jury in Greenwood found Jack James, 53, not guilty on seven of eight charges.

According to Greenwood Police, James also faced a harassment charge, but the jury couldn't reach a decision on it.

This isn't his first time in court. Police say James was convicted of sexual indecency with a child last year.

He was once a teacher in the Lavaca School District in Sebastian County.