



RYAN
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Home Cookin'

We can't let

funding stop education momentum

It has been three years since Kentucky — in a move that was seen as very bold in a state that has not traditionally been the leader in education — adopted the Common Core Standards that significantly raised the bar on what it taught and what is expected of its students.

By default Todd County was thrown into the fray. Three years later and Todd County's school system has seen not only success but a remarkable piece of transition considering that, for each of the past three years, the state and federal governments have cut funding.

For those who don't know, or until now may not have cared, the Common Core Standards is a systematic program that forces students to master less but more deeply. That is especially true in math and English. The thinking behind the change was that raising the bar would be tough — at least at first — but at some point the stricter standards would pay off for Todd County, a county that has seen youth poverty on a rampant rise and

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JOHNSON DISPOSED OF SOME
guns mentioned in the audit.
The auditor's report noted
that Johnson traded the guns
with a gun and knife store for
ammunition to be used for
training and law enforcement
purposes, but he did not prop-
erly follow state statutes when

meaning:
• Todd County Dispatch
Director Karen Stratton said
she has has 13 applicants
interested in working with her
department and plans to inter-
view six of them.
• The judge-executive said
Todd County Emergency

Education

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budget woes for nearly a
decade as the local economy
has struggled.

One of the top stories of
2013 in Todd County was
how good the scores were on
recent tests and the huge
jump Todd County was able to
take in its state rankings. The
high school, which before the
core standards adoption
seemed to struggle as much or
more as any of the local
schools, was in the top 9 per-
cent of all of the schools in the
state on the last series of test-
ing.

That is the best the high
school has ever scored on any
test since standardized testing
was put in place decades ago,
but the new tests are sup-
posed to be considerably hard-
er.

They are supposed to be
difficult to master.

How, in only a couple of
years, has Todd County man-
aged to do better on a test it
should have (especially if you
take past testing in considera-
tion) scored somewhere near
the bottom on?

have asked for sealed bids or
announced that the guns
would be auctioned.
Todd County Sheriff's
Deputy Gerald Barnett also
said the sheriff's office didn't
know it was supposed to log
every purchase of weapons.

The answer is not as com-
plicated as it may seem. The
school system tackled the
problem head-on by giving
teachers the time to learn the
new materials. For instance,
some math being taught to
students in 7th or 8th grade
used to be something a junior
in high school would be
expected to master. The
teachers came up with a plan
and also implemented new
strategies to help the students
catch up.

A sign that things are differ-
ent is apparent in the lower
grades where the new, stricter
criteria makes it harder for a
fourth- or fifth-grader to make
the Principal's List. A few
names are all that appear on
the list now when in past
years it could have been
dozens.

Also, in the high school
there has been a push for col-
lege-level courses for students.
The college courses push the
students further and help with
testing, but they also give a
tremendous leg-up by helping
students excel on the col-
legiate level.

and is some better than ne
was.
• Greenfield said January's
fiscal court meetings will be
regular court meetings. The first will
be at 9 a.m. Jan. 10 and the
second at 9 a.m. Jan. 24,
both at the Todd County
Courthouse.

Then there is the upcoming
Career Path Institute. The
training that will come from
this manufacturing regional
jobs training center will be
able to help put highly-trained
and skilled workers into the
workforce, and these highly-
trained workers will be able to
fill positions that are needed.
Still, a big worry now that it
seems Todd County (and even
a majority of the school sys-
tems in Kentucky) are on the
right academic track is that
the past funding cuts, which
have cost the county good
teachers and support person-
nel, may have been small
compared to what could
come.

According to Education
Commissioner Terry Holliday
the cuts have damaged the
ability to educate in this state,
and he is seeking \$300 mil-
lion-plus more in funding just
to bring the levels back to
what it was in 2008.

If there isn't any additional
funding, there will have to be
some terribly tough decisions
made by school systems
across the state and especial-
ly in Todd County.
"If we continue to receive
cuts, we will have to look at
raising additional local taxes
to continue to have current

programs and teaching
staff," said Makka Wheeler,
finance officer for Todd
County Schools, in an email
to the Standard. "We will
have to look at cutting teach-
ers' positions and additional
programs. We need stability
of state and federal revenues,
however, we have had seven
years of cuts."
I agree with Wheeler, espe-
cially the part about stability
of revenues. Without that
there will be cuts, and if the
funding keeps falling at the
rate it has recently then there
may also be a need for a local
tax increase just to keep
some much-needed early edu-
cation programs alive.
It is my hope that each cit-
izen of Todd County will put
as much pressure as possible
on those we have elected to
at least keep funding steady
and stop the cuts.
There is too much
momentum in our school sys-
tem to take steps back
because we can't supply our
students with what they
need.
As the philosopher
Plutarch said, "The mind is
not a vessel to be filled, but a
fire to be kindled."
Let's help stoke the fire
we already have.