

# Reporter

Volume 21, Number 4

April, 2006

## SCHOOLS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, INC.

### Public Relations Message

#### **Standards & Poor's Kansas Education Resource Management Study, Phase III**

As *No Child Left Behind* and the policymakers set higher and higher academic standards and levels of accountability for Kansas schools, identifying best practice will help guide local leadership in their decision making. For this reason, Governor Sebelius commissioned Standard and Poor's (S&P) to evaluate the effectiveness of our schools and their resource management particularly in districts where student achievement is high and spending is prudent.

The report found that "Kansas Highly Effective Resource Districts (KHREDs) use a combination of wise spending and cost avoidance, along with organizational strategies that include the creative deployment of staff, optimal use of time, and implementation of well researched instructional programs." Associated with these outcomes, eighteen resource strategies in the areas of organizational attributes, money management, staff, time and programmatic resources were identified. This article will focus on the organizational and monetary strategies that were found to be exceptional. The next newsletter will address the remaining three areas.

Highly effective schools are intentional in their actions and decision making. Strategic goals, which are clear and concise, are directed at meeting student needs. Resources are allocated to support their goals. Major decisions regarding resources are determined jointly with district and building leadership input. The two entities work together to recommend academic programs based on student learning needs. District spending is aligned with strategic priorities to ensure that dollars are spent

in a deliberate and focused manner. The goal in a highly resource effective district remains to optimize the return on resources. Therefore, it is appropriate that significant spending decisions support the district strategic plan.

Budgets and other processes ensure effective spending through a controlled goal-justified process that requires diligent purchasing options and utilizes sophisticated financial management strategies related to spending and saving options even though there may be some risk involved. These options may include deferring capital outlay, maintenance and other operating expenditures. It could also include cutting personnel costs by cutting employee benefits and raising insurance deductibles or searching for low-interest loans as well as refinancing or implementing interest-extended payments for capital purchases or shifting costs from operating to capital budgets. It was stressed in the S&P report that these districts exhibit rigor but not rigidity. To be sure they are addressing needs appropriately, they might make allocations in two phases to allow themselves the flexibility to most accurately meet needs.

The districts identified as highly effective are inclined to cut inefficiencies thru multiple purchasing approaches or closely watching how they deliver services. They pay attention to cost avoidance as well as investigating a wide variety of purchasing options including the potential advantages and disadvantages of bids, group purchases, cooperative and consortium buying and centralized management. They may also outsource or in-source some services when it is advantageous. All the while, they are also looking at reducing their inefficiencies in day-to-day operations. Energy usage or the manner in which the district provides transportation would fall into this category.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Gafri Announces New NREA Award

The NREA and Great American Financial Resources, Inc., are proud to announce a new partnership between NREA and GAFRI to create the Communities and Rural Education Service Award CARES. The CARES Award is designed to recognize a rural school district for outstanding efforts to build strong ties between the school district and the community it serves. The winning school district must demonstrate innovative or creative ways the school district has contributed to the community.

The CARES Award will be funded by Great American Financial Resources, Inc., an American company. GAFRI is based in Cincinnati, Ohio and serves the financial needs of nearly one million Americans. The company is owned by the Carl Linder Family and has over \$20 billion in assets. The company specializes in insurance, financial resources, and money management services.

Great American Ball Park is home of the Cincinnati Reds Baseball Team.

GAFRI is the newest NREA Academy Level Sponsor. The NREA membership will be receiving more information about GAFRI and the CARES Award.

The NREA is very proud to partner with GAFRI to initiate the CARES Award, an award that will be accessible to outstanding rural school districts. The CARES Award will be unique in this sense because the award will recognize a school district for nationwide excellence.

The following is a draft of the Announcement for the first NREA CARES Award.

**ABOUT THE AWARD:** THE C.A.R.E.S. Award recognizes outstanding efforts to build strong ties between rural school districts and the communities they serve. The winning entry will demonstrate innovative or creative ways a district has contributed to its community.

**WHO CAN ENTER:** Qualifying rural school districts must be School District Members of the NREA. School districts are encouraged to self-nominate.

**WHAT TO ENTER:** Districts should submit eight copies of the C.A.R.E.S. Award Nomination Form and Work Plan (no longer than 3 pages, double spaced), along with any supporting materials, such as brochures, curricula, multimedia, etc. For the 2006 C.A.R.E.S. Award, projects must have been in place during the 2005-2006 school year.

**DEADLINES:** Nominations will be accepted through **May 31, 2006**. The winning district will be notified by September 15, 2006.

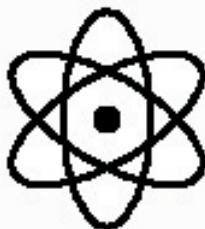
**THE JUDGES:** Nominations will be evaluated by the NREA Award and Recognition Committee. To evaluate the success of the initiative, the judges will be looking for evidence of careful planning as well as results that indicate the project met its objectives.

**THE AWARD:** The winning district will be honored with a \$5,000 prize and recognized at the 98th Annual NREA Convention, October 23-25, 2006, in Kansas City, Missouri. Airfare and hotel accommodations will be provided for two representatives from the winning school district.

**WHERE TO SEND ENTRIES:** Return eight copies of the Nomination Form and Work Plan to: NREA C.A.R.E.S. Award, 112 Fourth Street, Box 2, Norman, Oklahoma 73019, by **May 31, 2006**. Please note that support materials will not be returned.

For nomination forms or if you have questions, please contact Bob Mooneyham, NREA Executive Director, at 405-325-7959 or via email at [bmooneyham@ou.edu](mailto:bmooneyham@ou.edu).

*(From the Spring Issue of Rural Education News)*



### Do You Know a Great Mathematics or Science Teacher?

Recognize the best mathematics and science teachers in your community by nominating them for the 2006 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Each year, the White House, in conjunction with the National Science Foundation, selects highly qualified K-12 teachers for the Presidential Awards, recognizing them for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession. The nomination period for the nation's highest honor for mathematics and science teachers is open until May 1, 2006. Nominate a teacher today by visiting: [www.paemst.org](http://www.paemst.org).

**Call for Presentations**  
**"NREA: Crossing Into Our Next Century"**  
**98th Annual National Rural Education**  
**Association Convention**  
**October 23-25, 2006**  
**Westin Crown Center Hotel**  
**Kansas City, MO**

You are invited to submit a proposal to make a presentation at the 98th Annual NREA Convention. The submission deadline is **June 15, 2006**. Suggested topics for presentations are:

- Rural schools achieving quality through leadership, instruction, curriculum, and professional learning.
- Rural schools building a community by keeping rural values and culture, while becoming part of the global community.
- Rural schools in the digital age. Where can technology take us?
- Rural schools looking to the future. Where is rural education going and what will rural students need to succeed in life?
- Rural school administration and governance.
- The state of rural education and rural America.
- Other rural issues of interest.

Workshops will be presented in four Professional Learning Sessions, with eight workshops per session, on October 23-25, 2006. All proposals for workshop presentations must be submitted electronically by June 15, 2006.

More information can be obtained from the National Rural Education Association website at <http://www.nrea.net/NREA%20Annual%20Convention.htm>

SPRING

## eLearning Opportunity

The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher website provides educators free access to professional development courses, anytime, anywhere eLearning supports mastery of academic content; models teaching strategies that have been successful in the classroom; and provides a classroom application component, follow-up activities, and an online assessment. It's simple: Access the website ([www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative](http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative)), enroll, complete the course, take an assessment, and complete follow-up activities, and incorporate what you learn in the classroom. Principals may use an implementation rubric developed for each session. These sessions are from the recent highly successful Teacher-to-Teacher workshops.



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As inefficiencies are recognized and addressed, the savings gained are then plugged into moving the district closer to achieving its strategic goals. It is likely that money will be invested in professional development or major programs that have been tagged to meet specific academic needs.

Based on comments in House and Senate Education Committee meetings, it is very likely that the results of the Standard & Poor's report will be closely scrutinized and integrated into future improvement models. In addition, the Center for Innovative School Leadership is beginning to compare districts they are evaluating with the Standard & Poor's resource management model as they suggest ways districts can be more effective.

In the next newsletter I will address the staff, time, and programmatic resources identified by Standard and Poor's in highly effective Kansas school districts.

*Val DeFever*  
*Public Relations Representative*

## Mark Your Calendar

October 23-25, 2006  
98th Annual NREA Convention  
Kansas City, MO  
Contact: 405-325-7959  
website: <http://www.nrea.net>



Contact: 785-532-5886 or go to our  
website at <http://coe.ksu.edu/sqe>.

## SQE Executive Board

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