

# THE STURGIS NEWS

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**MEREDITH KELLEY** of Webster County was crowned Miss Union County Fair 2025 on Monday night. Union County's 75th annual fair opened Saturday with the livestock show, but Monday night drew a large crowd that enjoyed a variety of food while they watched one of the fair's most popular events—the crowning of the fair queen. **Brooke Burton**, left also of Webster County, was first runner-up and **Kinley Clark**, right of Union County, was named second runner-up. Six young ladies vied for the title of Miss Union County Fair 2025.

## Board Of Education Reviews State Policy Changes

During a school board work session Wednesday evening, Assistant Superintendent Evan Jackson shared a number of policy/procedure changes that will be implemented for the 2025-26 school year. The changes become effective June 27, and follow laws passed by Kentucky legislators during their 2025 session. While some of the changes are simply language changes others will have a direct impact on schools across the state and the personnel employed by those districts.

The Kentucky School Boards Association has made recommended changes to the language and added the new laws to the policies/procedures required for school districts, and on Monday, Jackson reviewed some of the changes that will have the most impact on school personnel, students and parents. The original documents is over 200 pages, Jackson told the board, but on Wednesday, he reviewed only a portion of the changes, highlighting those most important locally.

Following are highlights of Jackson's presentation:

\*A policy directly impacting the board regards child labor laws. Schools will post child labor laws in schools that house grades 6 through 12. There are also specific guidelines for grades K through five.

\*Sick leave must be reported to the Kentucky Teacher Retirement System for employees who are a member of KTRS.

\*Evaluations of certified employees will now be conducted every five years rather than every three years.

\*Professional development will target specific guidelines during an employee's first four years of

employment and then every four years after that rather than annually

\*Guidelines for disposal of school property are clarified

\*The district must make the budget available to the public

\*School nutrition service requirements have changed and a public hearing is no longer required

\*Advanced course work opportunities for students must be made available with students earning credits for these classes.

\*Graduation requirements now include all students passing a financial literacy class. The class may count at a math credit or an elective credit.

\*Students must pass a civics exam. The board of education many require students to take a civics class or allow a student to take and pass a civics exam.

\*Language changes have been made to graduation requirements and address early graduation programs.

\*One of the biggest changes is a new state law that requires schools to begin each day with a moment of silence or reflection for not less than one minute and not more than two minutes. This must be implemented for the first thing students do each day. Districts are also required to notify parents of this state legislation policy addition.

\*Lower grade students may be retained if they are not meeting grade level criteria.

\*Students will be prohibited from accessing social media through the school district network (Union County already has this policy in place).

\*SB 181 states any school employee and/or volunteer can only communicate elec-

tronically with students through board approved platforms. Locally, those platforms may include

School email

Google classroom

Infinite Campus

Edgenuity

Conversations (a Mass Communication system application provided by the district's website company.

All conversations will be recorded

Jackson noted that there are some exceptions to this policy for direct family members, but employees can only communicate with students through these channels. Parents may sign waivers for their child to access a specific employee, but that waiver is not a blanket for contact with all school personnel.

Violation of this policy must be reported—there is a guideline for who should be contacted based on who committed the violation.

The board and school administration will continue to work on SB 181 guidelines to clarify any questions parents, students and school personnel may have.

\*The district must adopt a policy related to the above mentioned communication law and the punishment and/or consequences for violating that law.

\*Beginning this year non-resident students can enroll in virtual academies at any other school (Dr. Terra Hancock noted that in this region districts have an agreement to take care of their own students)

\*A district must set guidelines/requirements for students enrolled in remote, virtual or on-line learning

\*The wellness/welfare policy will undergo updates

\*A new law clarifies that

students who take medication at school must have that authorized by their doctor and that paper work must be on file with the school and signed by both the doctor and the student's parent. This policy applies to both prescribed or over the counter medication.

\*Schools must also put in place a way to make students aware of sexual extortion and what is it. Notifications on this law will be sent to the parents. Posters related to sexual extortion will be placed in schools for students in grades 6-12.

\*Communication devices

cannot be accessed during instructional time.

\*Students who are 15 may now receive driving permits; however, the new law specified that a student must meet all the academic requirements in order to do so.

\*The new laws also prohibit teachers from being "friends" with students on social media platforms.

The board will continue to review additional policies, and on Monday, they were expected to give second and final reading to the policies and procedures as recommended by the Kentucky School Boards Association.

### School Board Member Resigns; Seat Will Be Filled Within 60 Days

The Sturgis News learned Friday that Union County Board of Education member Don Yarber has resigned from his seat on the board.

Yarber won his board seat in the November 2024 general election and was seated in January 2025. In his written resignation to board chair Jennifer Buckman, Yarber cited "declining health" as his reason for stepping down.

"We thank Mr. Yarber for his time and service, and we wish him the best," acknowledged Board Chairperson Jennifer Buckman.

Superintendent Dr. Terra Hancock added, "We are grateful to Mr. Yarber for his willingness to serve." She continued, "As we move forward, we remain committed to working together with our Board to build a district where students succeed with confidence, character, and bravery."

On Monday night at their regular meeting, the board accepted Yarber's resignation and began making plans to select a new member to fill the District 3 vacancy.

Per Kentucky state laws, the board has 30 days to advertise for letters of interest from individuals in the district Yarber represented. They then have 60 days to appointment someone to fill Yarber's board seat. If the local board cannot reach a decision within the 60-day time frame, a new board member will be appointed by the Commissioner of Education.

The board will likely begin advertising for letters of interest the first week of July.