

“Thirty-Four Inducted Into ARI Student Senate”

Thirty-four students from across Eastern Kentucky, including two from the Pike County School District and two from Pikeville Independent High School, were inducted on September 12 into the first-ever Appalachian Renaissance Initiative Student Senate.

The Student Senate is part of the \$29 million Race to the Top Grant received by the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC) and is comprised of students from seventeen school districts in the region. Each district selected one junior and one senior to send to the Senate.

Representing Harlan County High School are senior Jay Phillips and junior Abby Landis. Phillips and Landis are members of the HCHS leadership program.

The job of the Student Senate Members will be to develop means within their districts of obtaining the students' opinions and ideas for improving education and to then formulate a “Plan” of changing their districts for the better.

The students were formally sworn into office in the courtroom of Family Judge Larry Thompson by ARI Student Agency Lead Kelli Thompson. Also on hand was KVEC Director Jeff Hawkins.

Former Governor Paul Patton was the featured speaker at the event. Patton urged the students to think radically about such things as year-round school, longer school days, daily physical activity built into the curriculum and moving students along by progress rather than grade.

“I don't think anything is off the shelf,” Patton said.

He charged the students not to fear failure, to always challenge themselves and to always be willing to compromise and adapt. He also stressed that they “have a pretty awesome responsibility,” and that they could “fundamentally change education and be a model for the nation.”

The former Governor said, “I charge you on behalf of your school district and on behalf of the United States of America.”

Thompson said the students will have a face-to-face meeting on October 24 at the East Kentucky Exposition Center to discuss their “Plan” for their district. In the future, however, most meetings will be held via Lync or other networking to avoid interference with classes and other student activities.

