

Kentucky Women in Education From KIWSA to

By Nannette Johnston, KASA Director of KWEL



Kentucky Women in Education Leadership, Cohort 1.

In January, the Kentucky Women in Education Leadership (KWEL) selected its first cohort of 30 women leaders and held its first awe-inspiring, transformative leadership forum.

During a time when few women held leadership roles in education, KASA proudly elected its second female president, Marilyn Hohmann. Under her leadership, KASA initiated the Kentucky Institute for Women in School Administration (KIWSA).

This program, beginning with a weekend seminar and leadership activities in 1986, brought together 26 women who were committed to advancing in leadership to better serve the students of Kentucky. As a cohort of women leaders, they learned more about themselves, their leadership styles, and how to overcome obstacles. They also were inspired to take a leap into “uncharted waters,” learning from other strong women who had achieved leadership roles in Kentucky districts – women such as Lois Adams Rodgers. As Dr. Karen Cheser, a 1999 inductee, stated: “My belief is that KIWSA gave me the encouragement to pursue the roles I have had since 1999 – principal, curriculum director, assistant superintendent, deputy superintendent, and now superintendent. KIWSA ended in 2001, but a group of us who remember the power of KIWSA has helped resurrect this powerful program, making it even better and more relevant for today.”

In January, the Kentucky Women in Education Leadership (KWEL) selected its first cohort of 30 women leaders and held its first awe-inspiring, transformative leadership forum. Each of the inductees in this diverse group shared a common goal – to make a difference in the lives of students and have a bigger impact and influence in the district they serve or will serve in the future.

“The KWEL forum has left me rejuvenated and highly motivated to excel in our field,” Althea Hurt, KWEL steering committee member, inductee, and elementary school principal, said. “From the first meeting of the steering committee, to the debriefing at the conclusion of the forum, I have felt a sense of confidence in knowing ‘Yes I can!’ I have often found myself in discussions about that ‘glass ceiling’ and how women are always underpaid and overlooked. Now, I am ready to stop discussing and complaining and start doing! The networking opportunities are invaluable, and I truly feel that I have made new friends. I am honored to have been a part of the beginning and now a member of the first cohort. I shared with the steering committee that my mother once told me, ‘If you are the smartest person in the room, then

Leadership: KWEL

you are in the wrong room.' I believe that I am blessed to have been given the opportunity to fellowship in the RIGHT room!"

As a retired superintendent with 12 years of experience, Dot Perkins, co-op director and steering committee member, reflected on how much she could have benefited from the organized support and mentoring of other women who were also serving in the same capacity. "Empowered women need to empower other women," Dot said. "We need strong women leaders to carry the torch of leadership and encourage other women to pick up their torch as well. Women in leadership are responsible for helping others be the best version of themselves and grow more leaders."

Patricia Sheffer, steering committee member and current superintendent of Union County Schools, shares the double benefit of supporting aspiring leaders and continuing to grow as a female superintendent through the KWEL organization.

"KWEL is one of the most rewarding cohorts that KASA offers explicitly for the *she-roes* of Kentucky," Patricia said. "I understand the pressure that comes with being a woman in a leadership position. We must perform at a higher standard, we must build and rely upon our own support networks, and we must demonstrate the business acumen needed to shatter outdated stereotypes. As a member of KWEL, I've already had the great fortune of connecting with some of the most successful, powerful women across the commonwealth. This program will prove to be a source of support for women aspiring to lead at high levels and for those already in the position of high level leadership."

Eager to help with the KASA vision of reviving this support system, I was honored to accept the role as program director of KWEL. As a member of the original KIWSA and a superintendent for 10 years in Hardin County, I was excited to be involved in work that would support, inspire, and make a positive impact on education leadership in Kentucky. I am thrilled to be part of a program that supports other women in their leadership journey – from women currently serving as district CEOs to those who have retired from executive leadership positions. The steering committee and I share a unified message: We are optimistic about the future as we work to empower more women to become executive level leaders of our schools and school districts, increasing the impact women have on our students around our state. KWEL will help lead the way. ✍️

Save the Date

for KWEL 2019

Application process opens
September 1

Registration for the 2019 KWEL
Forum opens November 1

More information is available at
www.kasa.org



Nannette Johnston serves as KASA's program director for the Kentucky Women in Education Leadership and director of faculty and curriculum for the new superintendent program. She served in Kentucky public schools as a teacher, director, and superintendent of Hardin County Schools until her retirement in 2016. Johnston was recognized as KASA Superintendent of the Year in 2014.