

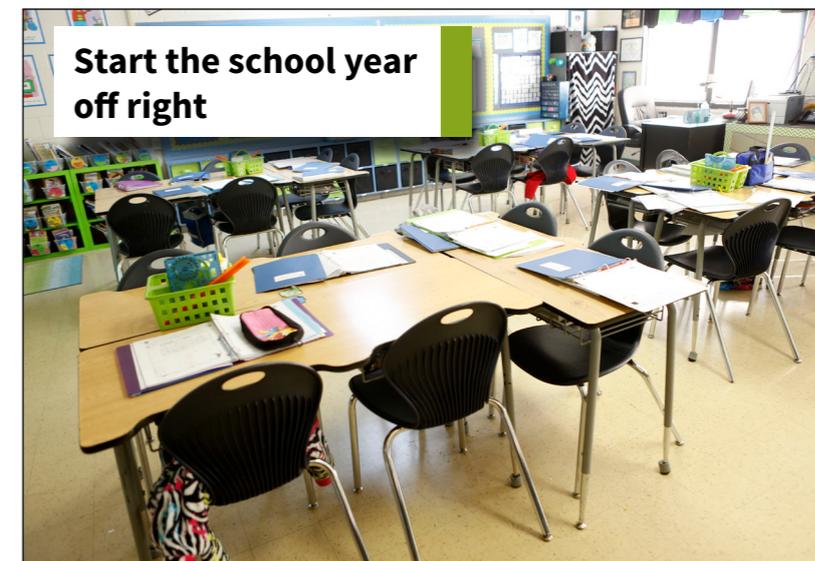
ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

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Students head back to class – some sooner than others



Start the school year off right



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Kentucky kids are worth it



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Twitter chat

Parents: Want to chat with educators? A parent/teacher Twitter chat takes place at 9 p.m. every Wednesday. To participate or just follow the conversation, use the hashtag #PTchat.

Students head back to class – some sooner than others

Though the temperature outside may not feel like summer is over, children across the state are heading back to school this month.

It's time for a return to early bed times, morning routines and homework.

Some Kentucky students are already in class. In Logan County, 3,400 students started classes July 27, the first of Kentucky's 173 school districts to start the school year. While it may seem early, students there get a two-week fall break in October.

The first week of August will see students in 39 districts begin classes. The second week of August is the most popular time to go back to school in Kentucky, with 111 districts starting. Wednesday, Aug. 10, is the most widely chosen day, with 64 districts kicking off the school year.

Nineteen districts head back to school the third week in August, while students in two districts get a little bit more summer than everyone else. Ludlow Independent and Metcalfe County both begin classes on Aug. 24.



Back to school spending

Families with students in kindergarten through 12th grade are expected to spend an average of \$673.57 on apparel and accessories, electronics, shoes and school supplies – up from last year's \$630.36 – for a total of \$27.3 billion, according to the National Retail Federation.

Parents say they will spend an average \$235.39 on clothing, \$204.06 on electronics, \$126.35 on shoes and \$107.76 on school supplies, according to the Federation's annual survey conducted by Prosper Insights and Analytics.

Start the school year off right

Heading back to class can be a hard transition for both parents and children. PBS Parents offers these tips for easing into the school year:

• Meet the new teacher

For kids, one of the biggest back-to-school fears is, "Will I like my new teacher?" Breaking the ice early on is one of the best ways to calm everyone's fears. Take advantage of your school's open house or back-to-school night.

• Tour the school

If your school hosts an open house, be sure to go. Familiarizing your child with his or her environment will help them avoid a nervous

stomach on the first day. Together you can meet their teacher, find their desk or explore the playground.

• Tool up

Obtain the class supply list and take a special shopping trip with your child. Having the right tools will help him or her feel prepared. While keeping basic needs in mind, allow for a couple of splurges, like a cool notebook or a favorite-colored pen. These simple pleasures make going back to school a lot more fun. School supply lists also provide great insight into the schoolwork ahead. Get your child excited about upcoming projects by explaining how

new supplies might be used.

• Ease into the routine

Switching from a summer to a school schedule can be stressful to everyone in the household. Avoid first-day-of-school mayhem by practicing your routine a few days in advance. Set the alarm clock, go through your morning rituals, and get in the car or to the bus stop on time. Routines help children feel comfortable, and establishing a solid school routine will make the first day of school go much smoother.

Read more about transitioning from summer to school [here](#), and find back to school tips [here](#).

Billboards remind drivers to stop for school buses

As a new school year begins, Kentucky drivers will soon see reminders across the state to watch out for stopped school buses.

Approximately 45 billboards have started going up that warn of the danger in passing a stopped school bus. The billboards feature an extended stop sign arm on the side of a school bus with the words, "It's not JUST a stop sign, it's a child's life."

"It is paramount that our children arrive at school and back home safely each day," said Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt. "While stopping for a school bus might be a minor inconvenience for drivers, it could be a matter of life or death for a child. I call on all Kentuckians to be especially cautious around school buses, not just at the beginning of the school year, but **anytime** they approach these big yellow vehicles."

In the 2014-15 school year, 75 percent of the school bus-related fatalities occurred when a student was hit by a passing vehicle, according to the annual National School Bus Loading and Unloading Survey. While Kentucky has not recorded any such fatalities, bus drivers often see drivers illegally passing their buses as children attempt to get on and off the bus.

According to a survey by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services of more than 96,000 school bus drivers in 33 states, drivers, who each recorded vehicles illegally passing their bus for one day, found 74,421 illegal passes.

In Kentucky, it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus in either direction on a two-lane road if the warning lights on the bus are on. School bus drivers use a "flashing signal light system" to alert motorists of pending actions:

- Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.



- Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate that the bus has stopped and children are getting on or off the bus. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop sign is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they can start moving again.

More than 385,000 children in Kentucky ride some 9,855 school buses each day. To keep those children safe during their travels, the National Transportation Safety Administration offers these tips to drivers:

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods with school zones, watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking of getting there safely.
- Slow down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood.
- Slow down. Watch for children playing and congregating near bus stops.

**It's not JUST
a stop sign,
it's a child's life.**

- Be alert. Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- Observe the posted speed limit in school zones.

The first 23 billboards will go up in Pikeville, Prestonsburg, Paintsville, Danville, Frankfort, Georgetown, Harrodsburg, Versailles, Lexington, Owensboro and Henderson, with other communities to follow the first week of August.

The billboard space is being donated by Lamar Advertising Co. of Lexington, Outfront Media of Louisville and Fairway Outdoor Advertising in Eastern Kentucky. The Kentucky Department of Education is paying for the printing and installation.

The billboards are part of a Bus Safety Back to School Campaign undertaken by the Kentucky Department of Education. The campaign [website](#) features additional school bus safety resources including a school bus safety pledge, coloring pages and tips for parents.

Commissioner names Dyslexia Task Force



Stephen Pruitt

whether dyslexia adversely impacts a child's education so much that he or she requires specially designed instruction.

Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt has named a task force to study dyslexia and develop recommendations on policy, personnel, and the instructional and fiscal resources needed to identify and support students with dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. While dyslexia is recognized as a specific learning disability in both federal law and Kentucky regulations, there has been a lot of discussion over the years as to

“Dyslexia is a growing issue that needs to be better understood by our educators and policymakers,” Pruitt said. “There are children in Kentucky’s schools that need greater support to allow them the opportunity to learn and be successful. They are our students and it is their right – and our responsibility – to provide them the kind of education that can help them excel. It is time to dig more deeply into how we can best educate these children.”

Jeanna Mullins with the University of Kentucky’s Human Development Institute will facilitate the group’s work, which will include:

- surveying the national landscape by reviewing the most current national data and research on dyslexia;
- conducting an environmental scan to determine implications for policy and programming;
- reviewing current policies and practices being implemented across the Commonwealth and other states for screening, identifying and instructing students with dyslexia;
- examining and analyzing state level intervention data and current practices for students with dyslexia; and
- developing recommendations to the commissioner of education on policy, personnel, and the instructional and fiscal resources needed to support the implementation of the methodologies for identifying and serving students with dyslexia.

The task force will develop and report findings and recommendations to the commissioner by May 31, 2017.

“It’s important to remember that there will not be a silver bullet that can automatically help all children with dyslexia perform better in the classroom.

Each child has his or her own unique circumstances and needs and we must be mindful of that,” Pruitt said. “While we can’t provide teachers with a single program or idea that will reach everyone, what we can do is provide more information, more options and have an open and honest discussion about dyslexia and how we can better serve these children.”

Kentucky has a rich history of dyslexia awareness, and as part of its work the task force will hear from individuals who have experience and expertise in this area, Pruitt said.

Click [here](#) for more information and a full list of the task force members.

Kentucky kids are worth it

Registration is open for the Kids Are Worth It! Conference, a statewide, multidisciplinary conference focused on child abuse prevention, scheduled for Sept. 12-13 at the Crowne Plaza Louisville Airport in Louisville.

The conference, now in its 20th year, is presented by Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky. The event allows certified and classified school staff members to network with and learn from state, local and national experts about effective child abuse prevention and intervention methods.

More than 30 workshops will be offered, covering issues that parents, families, children and teens face every day. Parents can gain insight into the struggles their kids face and find some ideas on how to better access resources in the community.

An advance registration discount is available through Aug. 15, and a discount is available for five or more participants from the same agency. PTA/PTO representatives are welcome. Click [here](#) for more information.



New scholarship helps high school students take dual credit courses

Students at Kentucky's public high schools can take advantage of a new dual credit scholarship during the 2016-17 school year. This program was [initially announced](#) by Gov. Matt Bevin and Education and Workforce Development Secretary Hal Heiner on June 1.

Dual credit allows students to earn high school and college credit for passing classes offered by colleges.

The new scholarship provides \$52 per credit hour for up to two dual credit classes taken at a Kentucky college during the school year. That is the highest rate participating colleges can charge for classes under the program. A student can use the scholarship for no more than nine credit hours.

Students can use the scholarship for general college classes and for career and technical courses. Career and technical courses must be in a state-approved pathway that leads to a credential recognized by an industry.

To be eligible for the scholarship, a student must be a Kentucky resident. Eligible students also must complete a 30-minute college success counseling session available through their high schools.

No application is necessary for the scholarship. Public school districts will pay the course costs for recipients through funds provided by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority. Students still must enroll through the college's regular admissions process.

KHEAA administers the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) and other state student aid programs. For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaa.com; write KHEAA, P.O. Box 798, Frankfort, KY 40602; or call (800) 928-8926, ext. 6-7214.

