ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

December 18, 2015

Links:

Commissioner names Program Review task force

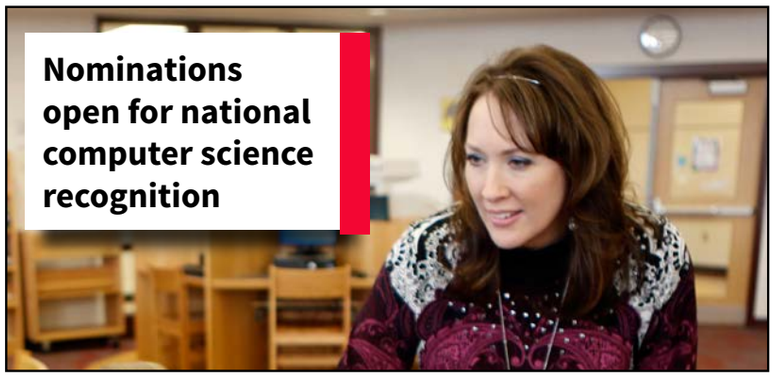
Poverty is a factor in Kentucky students' school readiness

EVERY CHILD PROFICIENT & PREPARED FOR SUCCESS KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

All photos by KDE unless otherwise noted

Thousands of Kentucky students learn to code

Kentucky schools on national Advanced Placement Honor Roll



Nominations open for national computer science recognition

Additional content:

- Pruitt tells Board new ESSA law provides opportunity for Kentucky education
- Edington joins Board of Education
- Craft Academy applications due in February
- Nominate your child's teacher for Presidential awards
- Make sure your child pays attention to deadlines for financial aid

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.

Thousands of Kentucky students learn to code

By learning to write even a few lines of code, Kentucky students also may have been rewriting their future during Computer Science Education Week.

From Dec. 7-11, students across the state participated in the Hour of Code, a worldwide, hands-on experience in learning to write computer code. The event is designed to introduce students to coding in hopes of filling the growing number of jobs in which computer programming is a necessary skill.

"The Hour of Code is a great way to introduce students to computer science," Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt said. "Coding not only teaches students technical skills, but also fosters creativity and problem-solving skills that students will need in any future career."

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that occupations related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics will grow to more than 9 million between 2012 and 2022, an increase of about 1 million jobs over 2012 employment levels.

By 2020, there will be 1 million more computer programming jobs than students graduating from college with this skill, according to Code.org, a national, nonprofit organization that sponsors the Hour of Code. And it's not just about filling information technology jobs; the same skills are needed in manufacturing, defense, health care, finance and government.

Kentucky students participated across all grade levels using self-guided tutorials on laptops, tablets and smartphones.

At the STEAM Academy (Fayette County), freshmen in Ashley Rosen's integrated science class wrote short poems and learned to code them with some help from teachers and fellow students. At Beechwood Elementary (Beechwood Independent) students in the 2nd through 6th grades participated with the help of librarian Jennifer Tierney.

"It's really cool to watch the problem solving skills develop as they continue," Tierney said. "It's building their 21st Century skills."

Brenden Talbert, left, a student at the STEAM Academy (Fayette County), helps Chyna George, center, work on coding her poem as Chaz Berry, right, works on his own project during an Hour of Code activity in Ashley Rosen's integrated science class.
Photo by Mike Marsee, Dec. 9, 2015

Joey Yeager (left) and Chase Flaherty (right), both 3rd-graders at Beechwood Elementary (Beechwood Independent), use an iPad to code during Hour of Code.
Photo by Brenna Kelly, Dec. 7, 2015

Pruitt tells Board new ESSA law provides opportunity for Kentucky education

Stephen Pruitt

Reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act ushers in a new day in Kentucky and across the nation, Commissioner Stephen Pruitt told the Kentucky Board of Education at its recent meeting.

As the board met Dec. 8, the U.S. Senate approved the bill, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). President Obama signed the bill the next day.

ESSA shifts much of the oversight and responsibility for schools from the federal government to the states – including how accountability is determined and how to define and improve low-performing schools.

"This will give us an opportunity to bring all shareholders to the table to create a system that not only holds schools and districts accountable for students' education, but also celebrates the good things happening in our schools," Pruitt told the board. "Our goal is to ensure we do the very best for all of our kids and provide them with a well-rounded education."

In other business, the board received a report on the status of Priority Schools. Of the 36 Priority Schools assessed during the 2014-15 school year, 11 schools exited Priority status, four scored in the Distinguished category, nine scored in the Proficient category and nine were categorized as Progressing. Three schools entered Priority status. The department already has started to address those Priority Schools making little or no progress by implementing novice reduction strategies, strengthening the capacity of leadership in those schools and districts, and working to ensure that resources are aligned to Priority School work.

The board also unanimously approved its Legislative Agenda for the 2016 Regular Session of the General Assembly. In addition to its biennial budget priorities, policy priorities include a clearer definition of bullying, enhanced career and technical education, support for district improvement, greater dual credit opportunities and addressing the unfunded liability faced by the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. The next regular meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education will be Feb. 3, 2016 in Frankfort.

Kentucky schools on national Advanced Placement Honor Roll

The College Board has named six Kentucky public school districts to the 6th Annual Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Roll.

The districts are among 425 public and private districts in the U.S. and Canada that have shown a commitment to expanding access to AP coursework while also improving student performance.

The Kentucky districts recognized include:

- Berea Independent
- Boyle County
- Bullitt County
- Fort Thomas Independent
- Hopkins County
- Logan County

Fort Thomas Independent and Logan County have received the award multiple years in a row, as has the Archdiocese of Louisville, which also was named to the AP Honor Roll.

There are more than 30 AP courses, each of which connects directly to a wide variety of college majors and careers.

In recent years, Kentucky has worked to expand AP access to, and participation and success in, AP classes through the AdvanceKentucky program. A total of 101 Kentucky public high schools in 74 districts have participated since its inception in 2008.

AP participation and performance has increased significantly under AdvanceKentucky's mission to engage more students traditionally underrepresented in AP, including minority and low-income students.

Of the six public school districts named to this year's AP Honor Roll, three – Bullitt County, Hopkins County and Logan County – have participated in AdvanceKentucky.

Edington joins Board of Education

Susan Edington

At the Kentucky Board of Education meeting Dec. 8, Franklin Chief Circuit Court Judge Phillip Shepherd administered the oath of office to Susan Kaye Edington of Madisonville. Edington is a teacher and program coordinator at Murray State University. She represents the 1st Supreme Court District and replaces Jay Parrent, who resigned. Edington will serve for the remainder of the unexpired term ending April 14, 2018. In a related matter, the board elected Bill Twyman as its new vice chair to replace Parrent.

Nominate your child's teacher for Presidential awards

Nominations are open for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), which honors mathematics and science teachers in grades K-6.

Anyone may nominate exceptional mathematics or science teachers — including computer science teachers — who are teaching grades 7-12 for the 2014-15 award year. Teachers also may apply directly.

The nomination deadline is April 1, which gives nominated teachers time to prepare their applications prior to the May 1 application deadline. Teachers in grades 7-12 will be eligible to apply during the 2015-16 program year. Click here for more information or to nominate a teacher or apply directly.

Craft Academy applications due in February

The Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics is a dual-credit residential high school for academically exceptional Kentucky students. The Academy, housed on the campus of Morehead State University, opened in August.

The Craft Academy is designed to meet the unique educational needs of academically gifted and talented high school juniors and seniors in the Commonwealth. A college-level curriculum allows students to finish high school while also completing up to two years of university coursework.

Students focus on a core of math and science courses while engaging in electives in arts and humanities. In addition, the Craft Academy offers unique, project-based STEM courses to enrich educational experiences and develop competencies in entrepreneurship and innovation, design and creativity, and civic and regional engagement.

Students live on campus in a newly renovated residence hall designed for high school-aged students. To be eligible students must:

- Be a high school sophomore;
- Complete geometry, Algebra I and Algebra II prior to enrollment;
- Score a minimum 18 English, 22 reading, and 22 math on the ACT; and
- Submit a completed application and all required materials no later than Feb. 1, 2016.
- Required materials include an official high school transcript, ACT or SAT test scores, and three letters of recommendation, one of which must be written by school personnel and at least one written by a community member.

Sixty high school sophomores will be selected to begin the fall 2016 semester at Craft Academy. The cost of tuition, room and a meal plan are covered by the Academy. Students will be responsible for purchasing textbooks, additional meals and any other personal or miscellaneous expenses. There is no fee to apply.

Parents, students and teachers eligible for national computer science recognition

Nominations are open for educators, students and others to be recognized as a Computer Science Education Champion of Change in a program sponsored by the White House.

The program recognizes:

Educators who are serving as creative leaders in integrating and promoting active learning of computer science in their classrooms, are innovating to better engage all students in computer science education or are integrating computer science for digital humanities, science, mathematics, art and other coursework.

Outstanding students who demonstrate creativity in their applications or a high proficiency in computer science and leadership, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Leaders from organizations that are developing high-quality, evidence-based tools, resources and other computer science learning opportunities for students of all ages.

Parents who have figured out new solutions for including computer science in the school day.

Individuals who have led the way on national, state and district efforts to increase access to computer science education.

Business leaders taking action to expand access to and inspiration for students in computer science education.

Click here for more information or to make a nomination.

Make sure your child pays attention to deadlines for financial aid

High school seniors should keep track of deadlines for applying for college financial aid. Here are some tips from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA):

- Students should check with the financial aid offices of the schools to which they have applied to determine if they require any forms other than the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Familiarize yourself with the FAFSA. Unless students are starting college before July 1, they cannot file the FAFSA until after the first of the year. But your child should still take a look at the information the FAFSA requires and make plans to attend a College Goal Kentucky session.
- Look for scholarships using KHEAA's "Affording Higher Education" and a free online scholarship search. You can find a link to a free search site under the "Paying for College" tab on www.kheaa.com.
- Attend any college fairs and financial aid seminars offered at schools or in the area. If a company charges a fee for helping with applications, remember that students can do it on their own for free. If you decide to pay for help, make sure the company is reputable by checking with the state Attorney General's office or the Better Business Bureau.

KHEAA

Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

KHEAA is the state agency that administers Kentucky's student financial aid programs, including the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship. Its sister agency, the Kentucky Higher Education Student Loan Corporation (KHESLC), offers Advantage Loans to help students and parents pay for college. For more information about Advantage Loans, visit www.kheslc.com.

To find links to other useful education websites, go to www.gotocollege.ky.gov. For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaacom.