

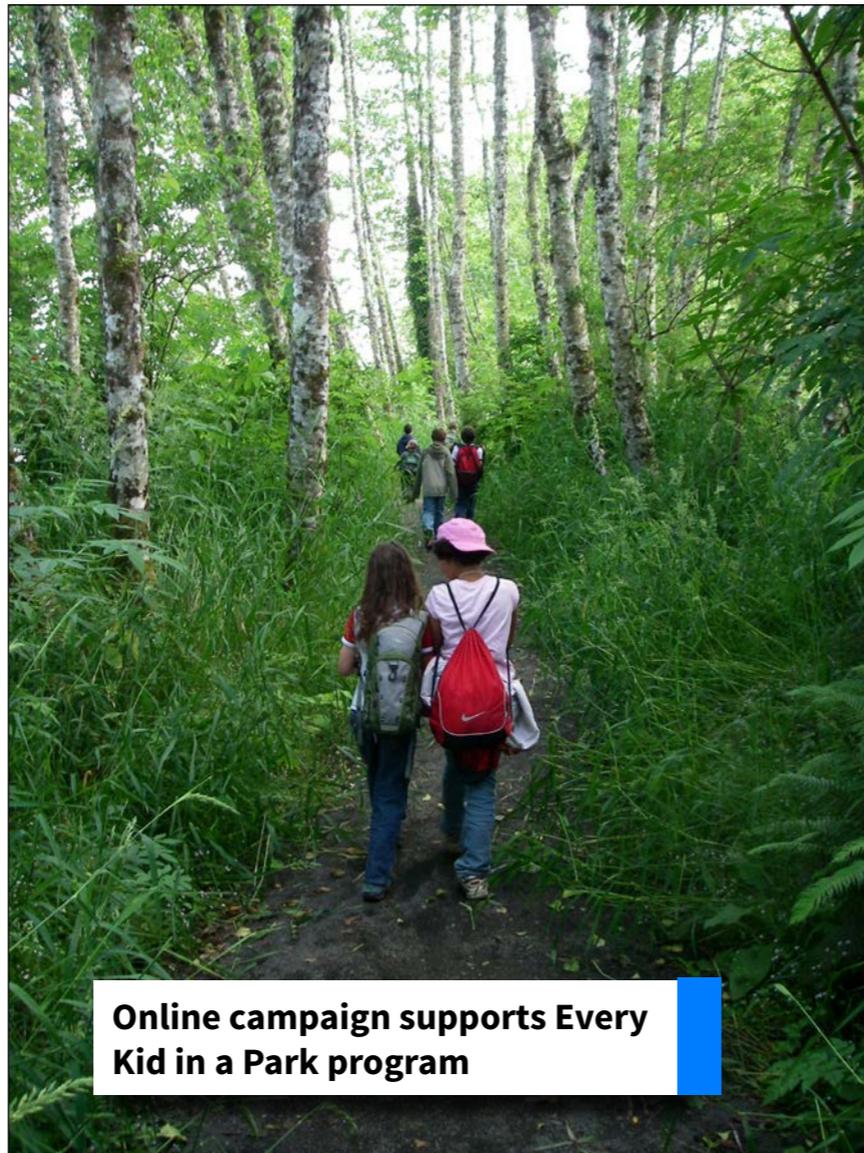


## Links:

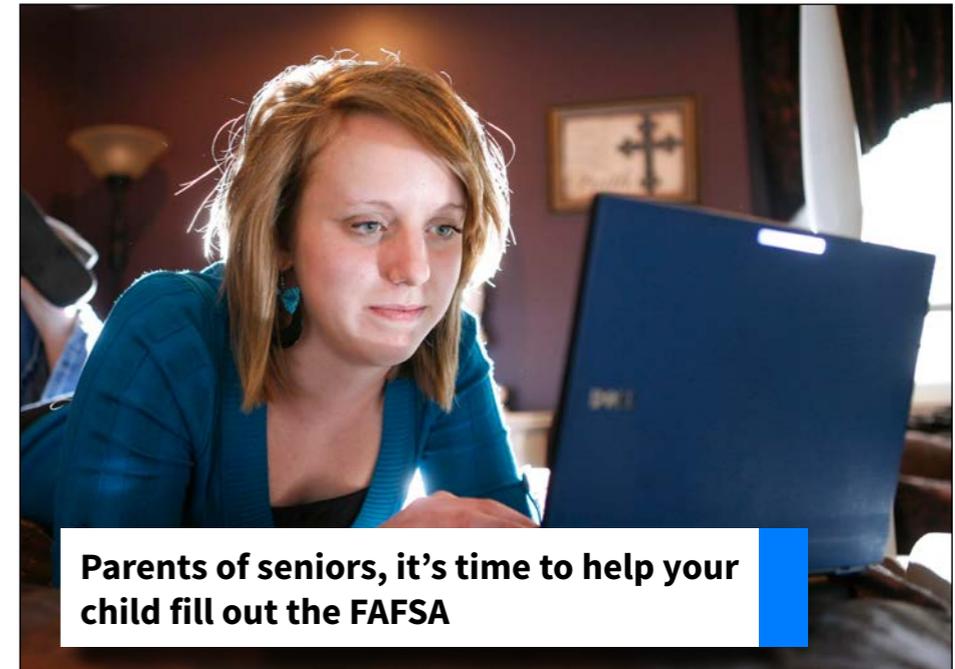
[Poverty is a factor in Kentucky's student's school readiness](#)

[Kentucky high school grad rate among top 10 in the nation](#)

[Muhlenberg educator named Special Education Teacher of the Year](#)



**Online campaign supports Every Kid in a Park program**



**Parents of seniors, it's time to help your child fill out the FAFSA**



**Susan Edington looking to help build bridges**



## Additional content:

- A new year, a new day
- KET show helping with financial aid process
- New Electronic Campus site: Access to online degrees
- Be wary of student loan repayment companies



## 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.

# Commissioner Pruitt: A new year, a new day



Stephen Pruitt

It's a new calendar year, a new day in Frankfort and a new day in Washington D.C., and I couldn't be more excited. When the page on the calendar turns from December to January, I always get a sense of renewal, drive and enthusiasm for the future. The feeling is more acute in 2016 than I remember in a long time.

Part of the reason is that I am here in Kentucky. Nationally, the state has an excellent reputation for improving K-12 education and the prospect to build on that legacy is one of the main things that drew me to my new Kentucky home.

I am eternally grateful to the Kentucky Board of Education for trusting me with the opportunity. I pledged to them, as I do to you, to listen to all sides and make decisions in the best interest of children. As stated in the Supreme Court opinion in *Rose v. Council for Better Education* more than a quarter century ago, "Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an adequate education."

But to me, adequate, doesn't set the bar high enough. My goal is to build on our accomplishments of the past 25 years to provide each child and every child with an equal opportunity to an excellent, world-class education that will lead them to success in their postsecondary endeavors and in life. I believe, as do

many among us, that education is the key to prosperity in Kentucky. It is the one thing with the potential to break the cycle of poverty that has plagued this state for far too many years.

With that said, it is a new day in Frankfort with a new governor, new administration and a new session of the General Assembly that in the next few months – hopefully with the education community's input and expertise – will determine the course toward our goal. Lawmakers will approve a new biennial budget and are poised to consider a slew of education legislation.

It's also a new day in Washington, D.C., with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this time around known as the Every Student Succeeds Act. It provides us a greater opportunity to chart our own course for the future of education than any time in recent history.

In the coming weeks, as always, it is important that policy decisions are based on the facts of today. We must build on our successes with the goal of moving education forward. It is absolutely essential that we are honest with ourselves and with our children and that we continue to have high expectations for all.

We have some great opportunities ahead of us, some would call them challenges, but I see them in a more positive light. These opportunities have reignited a fire within me, and hopefully one within you to work hard, stand up for what is right for Kentucky's kids and not take the easy way out, even if it is the more popular choice. This will take attention, accurate information, hard work, courage, compromise and understanding. I'm up for the task, are you?

## Online campaign supports Every Kid in a Park program



The Outdoor Foundation and the Outdoor Industry Association have launched a campaign to support the White House's [Every Kid in a Park](#) youth initiative, which gives 4th-grade students the chance to visit federally managed lands and waters.

The Parks 4 Kids campaign is seeking donations of any amount to help individual 4th-graders, a 4th-grade class or an entire school of 4th-graders visit a park through Crowdrise, which will connect donors with specific projects.

The Outdoor Foundation and the Outdoor Industry Association's campaign goal is to raise \$1 million and connect at least 100,000 kids with meaningful outdoor experiences to federal lands and waters. [Click here to donate or to register a project.](#) As of early January, there were only two Kentucky projects registered, one in Louisville and one in Glasgow.



# Parents of seniors, it's time to help your child fill out the FAFSA

The start of the new year means high school seniors planning to attend college or technical school this fall can start filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The U.S. Department of Education and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority both urge families to fill out the form as soon as possible. The information on the FAFSA determines if students qualify for federal grants and student loans. It is required to apply for state grants and scholarships. In addition, many colleges use the information to award their own grants and scholarships. Students should submit the FAFSA even if they feel it is unlikely they will qualify for aid. Although the FAFSA is the student's responsibility, parents have a large role in the process when a student is determined to be a [dependent](#), according to the U.S. education department. Most students going directly to college from high school are considered dependent. Most parents have many questions about what to include on the form and how best to help their children. The U.S. Department of Education has provided these [answers to common questions](#) parents have when helping their children prepare for and pay for college or career school:

## Does my child need to provide my information on the FAFSA?

Your child's [dependency status](#) determines whose information must be reported on the FAFSA. Even if your child lives on his own, files his own taxes and supports himself, he still may be considered a dependent student for federal student aid purposes. If your child was born on or after Jan. 1, 1993, then he or she is most likely considered a dependent student and will need to include your information on the FAFSA.

## Why does my child need to provide my information on the FAFSA?

Dependency guidelines are determined by Congress and are different from

those of the IRS. If your child is considered a dependent student, it doesn't mean you, the parent(s), are required to pay anything toward your child's education. This is just a way of looking at everyone in a consistent manner.

## Which parent's information should I include when completing the FAFSA?

If your child needs to report parent information, [here are some guidelines](#) to help.

## Who's considered part of the household?

When completing your child's FAFSA, your [household size](#) should include parents, any dependent student(s) and any other child who lives at home and receives more than half of their [support](#) from you. Also include any people who are not your children but who live with you and for whom you provide more than half of their support.

## What else do I need to know before I begin?

You and your child will each need to [get an FSA ID](#), which is made up of a username and password. It is used to confirm your identity when accessing your financial aid information and to

electronically sign the FAFSA. You can save time by getting your FSA IDs prior to starting the FAFSA.

Certain information and documents are necessary to complete the FAFSA and it's good to have them handy before you begin. [Here's a checklist](#) to help you get ready.

More information about the FAFSA —including [11 common mistakes](#), a [seven-step guide](#) to filling out the FAFSA and what to do if you and your child aren't in the [same location](#) — is available [here](#).



## KET show helping with financial aid process

Kentucky Educational Television's "College Financial Aid Call-In 2016," a one-hour special edition of "Education Matters" that aired earlier this month will air again at 2 p.m. EST Saturday Jan. 16, on KETKY and at 4 p.m. EST Friday Jan. 29 at 4 p.m. The show can also be [streamed online](#) at KET.org. The show offers help in navigating the college financial aid process.

The program, hosted by Bill Goodman, features a panel of financial aid representatives from public and private Kentucky colleges and universities. They provide information on the availability of scholarships, grants and other financial aid, and offer tips on applying for student loans.

Panelists include:

- Michael Birchett, director of financial aid, Bluegrass Community and Technical College



- Bob Fultz, director of financial aid, Georgetown College
- Becky Gilpatrick, director of student aid services, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
- Sandy Neel, executive director of financial aid, University of Louisville

Issues discussed include common application mistakes, documents necessary to apply for financial aid, types of aid, deadlines and financial aid packages.

Additionally, co-host Renee Shaw speaks with four members of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence's Student Voice Team about their navigation of the college search and financial aid application process.

The students are:

- Amanda Wahlstedt, a senior at Knox Central High School
- Tsage Douglas and Keith Guy, both seniors at Scott County High School
- Lydia Burns, a senior at West Jessamine High School

## New Electronic Campus site: Access to online degrees

The Southern Regional Education Board's new [Electronic Campus](#) puts online learning at the fingertips of college students across its 16 member states. The newly revamped website is a gateway to distance learning where students can:

- search more than 3,700 degree programs
- review admission requirements
- understand their eligibility for financial aid

The Electronic Campus is designed for adult and e-learners seeking e-learning courses or programs and information. The campus makes access to postsecondary opportunities easy for mid-career professionals, working parents and older adults who want to start or complete degrees, satisfy certification requirements for their jobs or upgrade their skills with individual courses.

There's also a Kentucky specific page available [here](#).



## Deadline extended for essay and slogan contest

The Office of the Secretary of State's 2015-16 Essay and Slogan Contest deadline has been extended to Jan. 22. The contest helps students tangibly interact with the concepts associated with government and democracy while garnering recognition and prizes.

The slogan contest, now in its 27th year, is open to students in grades 6-8; the essay contest is for students in grades 9-12.

Cash prizes will be awarded to students in both divisions, including \$1,000 awards for the first-place slogan and for the winning essay at each high school grade level. For the first time, a desktop computer will be awarded to the school with the highest participation rate.

Go to [www.sos.ky.gov/contests](http://www.sos.ky.gov/contests) for more information, including prizes, rules, prompts, and entry forms.

In addition to the Secretary of State's Office the contest is sponsored by the University of Kentucky Scripps Howard First Amendment Center, the Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

# Susan Edington looking to help build bridges

At its December meeting, Susan Edington was sworn in as the newest member of the Kentucky Board of Education.

Edington, an assistant professor of early childhood and elementary education at Murray State University, fills the seat vacated by Jonathan Parrent, who resigned last year. She will fill out the rest of Parrent's term, which expires April 14, 2018.

Edington has a wide variety of experience in education. She worked her way through college as a secretary at the Shelby County Vocational School. She has taught high school English in Eminence, Ky., New York and Ohio. Edington also taught education courses, English and reading at Madisonville Community College for 10 years before completing her doctorate and beginning work at Murray State as the 2+2 education coordinator and instructor.

Kentucky Teacher staff had a chance recently to ask Edington about her priorities while serving on the Kentucky Board of Education. Here's what she had to say.

## Why were you interested in serving on the Kentucky Board of Education?

"For the lack of a better word, I am passionate about children and their well-being. In one way or another, children and their well-being have dictated both my professional and personal life. What could be more gratifying or fun than to interact and work for Kentucky's children with other people who have the same passion?"

## What impact do you hope to have on the board?

"I hope to help facilitate the bridges being built among the total preschool through college graduate education continuum. Kentucky has launched several

excellent P-16 initiatives that address closing achievement gaps and raising the level of educational attainment and economic development in Kentucky. Because I've had my feet in several worlds that affect those initiatives, perhaps I can help aide communication and foster relationships."

## Other than more money, what do Kentucky schools need most?

"Public support and respect, a restoration of teaching as a profession. If we look at other professions and the definition of 'professional,' teaching is losing ground, and teachers are assuming more of a technician's role."

## What small change would have the greatest impact on Kentucky's schools?

"A conscientious regard for the new teacher. Unwittingly, we set up some new teachers for failure when we ask them to assume coaching positions or other extracurricular activities that take away valuable instructional planning time from the students. First year teaching is a full-time job and first-year teachers should not be asked to assume any additional responsibilities. I would actually argue that teachers need three years to hone their teaching skills before assuming extracurricular responsibilities."

## What major change would you make to improve Kentucky schools?

"Broaden the curriculum to ensure that visual and performing arts and vocational trades are treated with as much respect and importance as other subjects. We say we want to compete and interact in the global world. What better way than through the universal language of music, art and theater? We say we want to promote tolerance and diversity. What better way than through a shared esteem for our universal languages?"

Click [here](#) to read the full Q&A on Kentucky Teacher.

