

# ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

January 30, 2015



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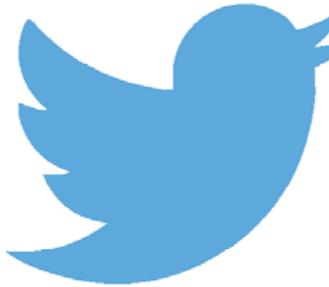
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## Twitter chat

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.

All photos by Amy Wallot unless otherwise noted



## Commissioner Terry Holliday: Short legislative session packed with education issues

The legislative session that began earlier this month will be busy for the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). Here are some of the hot topics on the education agenda for the General Assembly, which reconvenes Feb. 3 in Frankfort.

**1) Charter Schools** – Legislation has again been filed to create charter schools in Kentucky. Our state is one of eight without charters.

**2) Teacher Pension Plan** – The Kentucky Teacher Retirement System has asked the General Assembly to consider a plan that would require a \$3.3 billion bond to shore up the underfunded retirement system. This system is critical for the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers.

**3) School Funding** – While 2015 is not a budget session, a number of funding issues could surface. The Council for Better Education report recently released at the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents' winter meeting will garner a lot of attention. The \$2 billion-plus price tag is sure to get attention. Also, KDE will be releasing a report on funding of the career and technical education programs in Kentucky. Finally, we may see discussion of impact of revenue and Support Excellent Education in Kentucky (SEEK) funding shortfalls.

**4) Dual Credit** – A recent set of recommendations from the dual credit task force is likely to generate discussion about how to ensure quality, access, funding and transferability of courses.

**5) Merging County Systems** – Several county school districts have been identified for state assistance and state management. Some county systems are very close to not having a 2 percent fund balance. The General Assembly previously enacted legislation that allowed a financially insolvent independent district to merge with a

county system; however, no statutes allow for the merger of an insolvent county district with another county system.

**6) Closing Achievement Gaps** – This will be part of the charter school issue but will also be an overarching theme of the Education committees. In Kentucky, the achievement gap – the differences in the test scores between different groups of students – begins before children enter kindergarten, continues throughout P-12 and postsecondary schools and is obvious when we look at labor and salary studies for adults.

At the national level, KDE will be working to support reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – most recently dubbed the No Child Left Behind Act – and the Carl Perkins Act, which is the primary vehicle for federal funding of career and technical education. We are very excited about the potential of both bills moving forward very quickly under the leadership of Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.



# Breakfast Challenge winners announced

More students are getting the nutrition they need to learn, thanks to the Kentucky School Breakfast Challenge.

The challenge is aimed at increasing breakfast program participation. Students who eat breakfast show improved academic performance, including a general increase in math and reading scores. In Kentucky, many students don't take advantage of the opportunity to eat breakfast at school and start the school day hungry.

For the Kentucky Breakfast Challenge, schools measured the average daily student participation in the program for the month of September and compared that to participation numbers for the same month in 2013.

First, second and third places were awarded for schools using the Community Eligibility Provision, also known as CEP – through which all students eat for free, as well as the traditional breakfast program at elementary, middle and high schools across the state.

The Kentucky Department of Education sponsored the breakfast challenge in cooperation with the Southeast United Dairy Industry Association, which provided cash awards for the top three winning schools in both CEP and Traditional categories at each level.

## **Elementary:**

**First place:** CEP: Allen County Primary Center; Traditional: Lincoln Elementary (Simpson County)

**Second place:** CEP: Bonnieville Elementary (Hart County); Traditional: Kirksville Elementary (Madison County)

**Third place:** CEP: Hiseville Elementary (Barren County); Traditional: Franklin Elementary (Simpson County)

## **Middle school:**

**First place:** CEP: Lincoln County Middle School; Traditional: Franklin-Simpson Middle School (Simpson County)

**Second place:** CEP: South Marshall Middle School (Marshall County); Traditional: Simons Middle School (Fleming County)

**Third place:** CEP-tie: Winburn Middle School (Fayette County) and Bullitt Lick Middle School (Bullitt County); Traditional: Hebron Middle School (Bullitt County)

## **High school:**

**First place:** CEP: Dayton High School (Dayton Independent); Traditional: Fleming County High School

**Second place:** CEP: Lawrence County High School; Traditional: Franklin-Simpson High School (Simpson County)

**Third place:** CEP: Fulton City High School (Fulton Independent); Traditional: The Learning Center at Linlee (Fayette County)

First-place winners each received \$1,500; second-place winners received \$1,000; and third-place winners received \$500. The Southeast United Dairy Industry Association also provided grants to help schools make improvements to their breakfast programs to increase participation.

In total, 42 schools across the state received more than \$61,000 in grant funds.



# Information and resources available to help guard against the spread of flu

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts that this will be a particularly heavy flu season. The number of flu cases typically peaks in January and February.

Recently, the CDC issued a health advisory saying that the vaccine developed for 2014-15 is less effective than usual; however, the CDC encourages everyone to still get vaccinated because children are among the most vulnerable to the disease.

Complete information about the flu and how to contain and manage it is available at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) and at [www.cdc.gov/flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/). Additionally, parents should remind their children to:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoid close contact with those who are already sick
- Get plenty of sleep
- Eat healthy food and drink plenty of fluids
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or the crook of your arm
- Stay home if ill for at least 24 hours after fever is gone.



## Federal junior duck stamp contest underway

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program provides a creative outlet for students through a contest. The program teaches students about wetlands, waterfowl, land stewardship, migratory birds and conservation and gives them an appreciation of art and writing.

Students may submit their artwork and a two- to three-sentence conservation message for the [state contest](#), which is judged in four groups of grade levels: K-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. More than 600 prizes are awarded at the state level, including cash prizes, and the best-of-show selection will represent Kentucky in the national contest, where the winning artist will receive a \$1,000 cash prize.

Entries must be postmarked by March 15 and may be submitted individually or as a group.

Click [here](#) for a brochure detailing the program and the art contest, or go [here](#) for more information on the program.



## WKU offers interactive web design competition

The Western Kentucky University School of Journalism & Broadcasting's High School Interactive Design Competition offers students who are interested in web design, interactive design, game building or app building the chance to compete for team and individual prizes.

The competition is open to students ages 13 and above in grades 9-12. Submissions should be web-based and interactive and can be in the form of an original game, a mobile or web app, a digital animation, a website or a combination of those things.

The prize for the winning team or group is a half-day web design master class at school. Individuals may compete for one of two \$250 scholarships for use at the WKU School of Journalism & Broadcasting.

Entries must be submitted by Feb. 14. Click [here](#) for more information or to enter online.



## Mission Discovery space camp coming to Kentucky



Kentucky Space and Higher Orbits are collaborating to bring Kentucky's first Mission Discovery Camp to Louisville. The four-day weekend camp for students in the 8th grade and above will be held Feb. 21-22 and Feb. 28-March 1 at the Kentucky Science Center.

Students will have the chance to meet and work with astronauts, astronaut trainers, scientists and NASA leaders and to present an idea for an experiment to be carried out in space. The best ideas will be built, launched to

the International Space Station and carried out in space.

The camp is open to students from the 8th grade to undergraduate level, with a limit of 250 participants. Some age exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis.

The program cost is \$500, and scholarships are available. For more information, go [here](#) or email Michelle Ham at [michelle@higherorbits.org](mailto:michelle@higherorbits.org).

## State offers numerous financial aid programs

Kentuckians needing help with college costs may be able to take advantage of the student aid programs administered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

They include the:

- Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES). Kentucky students earn KEES awards by making good grades in public and private high schools. They can earn more by doing well on the ACT. Home-schooled and GED students can earn KEES awards based on their ACT scores.
- College Access Program Grant. This grant can be used at the state's public colleges and many of Kentucky's private colleges. It is based on need.
- Kentucky Tuition Grant. Also based on need, this grant is available to students attending the state's private colleges.
- Go Higher Grant. This program provides funding for adult students who attend college on a part-time basis.

For all but the KEES program, students must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also called the FAFSA, to apply for these awards. Some also require a separate application.

For more details about these and other student aid programs, visit [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com) and click on the Paying for College tab.



## Nominations open for civic education award

Nominations are being accepted through Feb. 27 for the 2015 Kentucky Outstanding Civic Education Leadership Award. Presented by the Kentucky Office of Secretary of State in conjunction with the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Kentucky Department of Education, the award recognizes efforts to promote civic engagement among Kentucky students.

Those eligible for the award include teachers, school administrators, educational leaders, legislators and community organization leaders who have made notable contributions toward promoting or implementing civic learning to prepare students to be engaged and responsible citizens.

One finalist is selected from each of 16 regions, and the award winner selected from that group will receive \$1,000 to be used toward resources or equipment for his or her school or program.

The winner and finalists will be recognized at a ceremony held during the Whitaker Bank/KHSAA Boys Sweet 16 basketball tournament March 18-22 in Lexington.

Click [here](#) for more information on the award or to download the nomination packet.