

# ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

March 31, 2015



## Link:

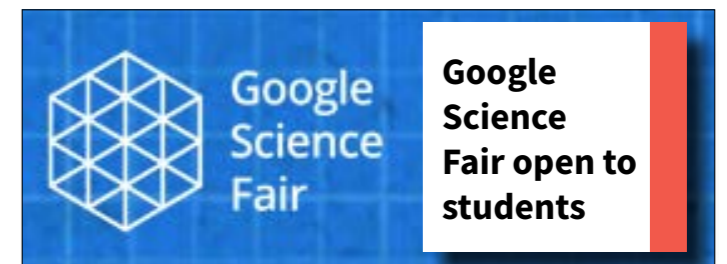
- Educators rewarded in week three of TELL Kentucky Survey



Teachers help parents understand new math instruction



Early graduation pathway now offered



Google Science Fair open to students



All photos by Amy Wallot unless otherwise noted

## Additional content:

- Poll: Parents' outlook positive
- Scholarship helps high school students take dual credit classes



## 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.

# Teachers help parents understand new math instruction

Many parents may wonder why their child's math homework looks so different from the way they learned how to do math – the answer, Kentucky teachers say, is because today's math instruction is different.

Instead of using borrowing and carrying, students now group numbers into 10s, they add and subtract using place value, and when multiplying and dividing they break the numbers into parts, draw area models or equations.

The idea is that by using multiple strategies and showing their work, students will develop an understanding of mathematics reasoning, not just how to follow steps to get an answer, said Renee Yates, a Kentucky Department of Education instructional specialist.

In order to help parents, a growing number of teachers across the state and country are holding mathematics nights for parents, posting videos online, creating websites and sending home detailed sheets to explain how math is being taught – and why.

"We have to figure out how we can educate our parents to understand the reason why we want kids to be able to understand flexible thinking with numbers," Yates said. "Many of us didn't like math in school and part of that, is that we were taught to use a series of specific steps of borrowing and carrying numbers and not to think about what the quantity of the numbers really meant."

Yates recently gave presentations on math instruction to the parent/teacher groups at all six Lincoln County elementary schools.

She shared videos, showed several math strategies and explained the reasons behind them.

"By the end of the evening the one parent that was there, who was vocal with her negative comments, she came up to me at the end and said, 'Now I understand,'" she said.

Whitesville Elementary preschool teacher Donna Howard heard frustrations from parents about math during conferences at the Daviess County school.

Many of the parents were never taught with number lines, 10 frames, tally marks, number racks or dice, she said. They assumed math instruction in preschool involved counting and identifying numbers.

However, the foundational skills of creating sets, sorting and finding patterns will give the students better understanding when they learn to count, Howard said. In order to help her parents Howard is planning a math night where she plans to teach parents the math games she plays with students using simple inexpensive math tools, let them make the tools and take them home to use them with their children.

"The sooner in their child's education that we can let our parents

know about this," she said, "I think it will help them develop that deep mathematical understanding."

Ruth Wall, a 4th-grade teacher at Camp Dick Robinson Elementary in Garrard County, has held math nights for two years just before she begins to teach the students multiplication and division.

At the events, she showed a video, directed parents to her website and used a PowerPoint presentation, but she started by asking parents to solve a problem.

"Interestingly enough, some parents solved it in their heads, usually exactly the same strategy I'm teaching their children," she said. "They had just never seen it done on paper before."

Wall also explained to parents that while she is teaching their children several different ways to multiply and divide, they will eventually learn – what she calls tic-tac-toe, crossing out the ones and adding a zero to hold the one's place when multiplying.

And when they learn it, they will see it as a shortcut.

"They are going to have a full understanding of what is going on," she said. So while it might seem silly to parents to make 20 rows of 50 dots to show 20 times 50, students will understand math concepts earlier and at a much deeper level than their parents did, she said.

## Math resources for parents

[Ruth Wall's website](#)

[Learnzillion.com](#)

[Parent Roadmap to the Common Core Standards - Mathematics](#)

[Parent's Guides to Success](#)



*Wearing the mathematician hat, preschool student Kaden Coons helps his teacher Donna Howard solve a math word problem at Whitesville Elementary School (Daviess County).*

*Photo by Amy Wallot, Feb. 5, 2015*

# Early graduation pathway now offered

When students at Marshall County High School started hearing about early graduation, Elaine Hogancamp and Scott Terry fielded two types of questions from two groups of people.

Hogancamp, a guidance counselor at the school, and Scott Terry, an assistant principal, said students wanted to know what they had to do to leave high school a little early, while parents wanted to know how it would affect their children in college.

The questions started after the [early graduation pathway](#) was created by the Kentucky General Assembly last year.

Parents and students across the state will likely be asking the same questions as they learn about the early graduation option.

Early graduation isn't for everyone, but Kelly Clark, who is coordinating the program in the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Next Generation Learners, said more students took advantage of the option in its first year than KDE officials had expected.

"Parents have been really excited about this," Clark said. "We thought we'd have around 100 students when we looked at the data from years past of kids who left who would have been college- and career-ready, but about 300 kids applied the first year."

The option became available after Senate Bill 61 passed the legislature last year. The bill was a companion to SB 97, which requires students to stay in school until they reach age 18 or graduate.

"The idea is if we're going to make kids stay in school, there should be some mechanism for kids who are ready to graduate not to be punished by that age-18 requirement and to move on when they're ready," Clark said.

If students meet the requirements for early graduation, that overrides the minimum-credit requirement to graduate, she said. (The

state requires a minimum of 22 credits for graduation; individual districts may require more.)

Students must take the four courses attached to current End-of-Course exams – Algebra II, Biology, English II and U.S. history – and meet proficiency benchmarks on those exams, take the ACT – the early-graduation pathway allows them to take it prior to their junior year at schools' expense – and meet the benchmarks for college- and career-readiness.

"Of course, we don't really want students graduating after four courses, so the guidance wrapped around it is that these are kids that typically have a really good idea of what they want to do and why they want to leave early," Clark said. "So we suggest that they go to the post-secondary institution that they're interested in and get admission criteria from them, and that admission criteria and what we're saying they need to leave high school doesn't always match up."

Therein lies the difference between what students are asking and what parents are asking in their schools.

Students want to know the requirements, but "parents' questions tend to go a little bit further: How is this going to transfer into post-secondary? What do the colleges think? What about scholarships?" Terry said.

The key Clark said, is planning, even as early as middle school.

It's important that early graduation candidates be self-starters and that they have a goal they are working toward, she said.

Guidance counselors can play a major role in helping students do that, she added.

About half of the statewide applicants are juniors, about one-quarter are sophomores and about one-quarter are freshmen.

It doesn't matter when students apply,



*Marshall County High School counselor Elaine Hogancamp, center, works with students Karly Hardin and Karson Johnson at the school. Hogancamp is among the educators helping interested students take advantage of the early graduation option that became available last year. Photo provided by Marshall County Schools*

but it does matter that they meet the Oct. 1 deadline if they hope to graduate in the same school year so they can also meet financial aid deadlines set by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

Clark said there can be financial incentives tied to early graduation, and KDE is attempting to develop a cost calculation tool to help prospective early graduates determine if the pathway is right for them.

Students can take dual credit courses that effectively allow them to earn college credit for free.

There is also a scholarship attached to completion of the early graduation criteria, and students can get up to four years of KEES (Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship) money as well.

"That could add up to \$2,000 right now," Clark said, "and that's a good chunk of change."



# Google Science Fair now open to students

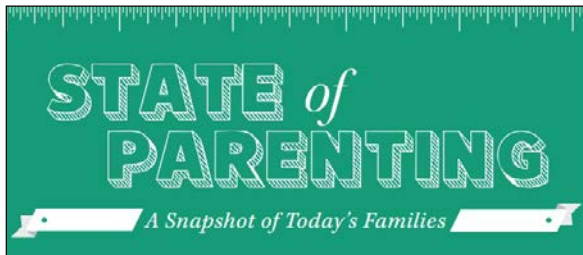


The [Google Science Fair](#) competition offers an opportunity for young people to come up with their own science or engineering project, share their findings with the world – and compete for prizes including a \$50,000 scholarship. Any student between the ages of 13 and 18 can enter, but he or she must obtain a parent's permission in order for their submission to be valid.

Before your child begins, make sure he or she first visits the [Before You Start](#) section of the [How to Enter](#) part of the website.

Behind many budding young scientists or engineers is a supportive parent. The submission deadline is May 19.

## Poll: Parents' outlook positive



The results of an NBC News poll on the state of American families show that parents are generally positive about the future. The findings of the poll, sponsored by Pearson, revealed that parents are spending more time with

their children than their parents did with them and are having family dinners together regularly.

The results are based on telephone interviews in English and Spanish with 803 parents, guardians, or primary caregivers of children ages 3-18 in the continental U.S. Interviews were conducted on both landline telephones and cell phones from Oct. 28 to Nov. 16, 2014.

Nearly four in five parents reported having dinner as a family on most days of the week. Parents also wanted to be more involved in their children's education and said they were largely satisfied with the current state of their schools. While they agreed more than a high school diploma is needed to achieve the American dream, they also said good social and communication skills can be more important than grades when it comes to their child's success. But there were gaps in just how positive parents were, largely based on their income, race, level of education and marital status.

For an in-depth look at the state of parenting poll click [here](#).

## Scholarship helps high school students take dual credit classes

Kentucky high school juniors and seniors have until May 15 to apply for a scholarship to help pay for dual credit classes taken at a Kentucky college or university.

The Mary Jo Young Scholarship, named for a former member of the Board of Directors of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), provides assistance with tuition and textbook expenses for up to two classes each semester.

To be considered, students must be in grades 11 or 12 during the 2015-2016 academic year. They must have at least an 18 ACT composite or earn at least a 2.5 GPA during the 2014-2015 academic year. Priority is given to students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

The application is available on [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com). Students must apply through their [www.kheaa.com](http://www.kheaa.com) account.

KHEAA is the state agency that administers the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES), need-based grants and other programs to help students pay their higher education expenses. To learn how to plan and prepare for higher education, go to [www.gotocollege.ky.gov](http://www.gotocollege.ky.gov).

