

ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

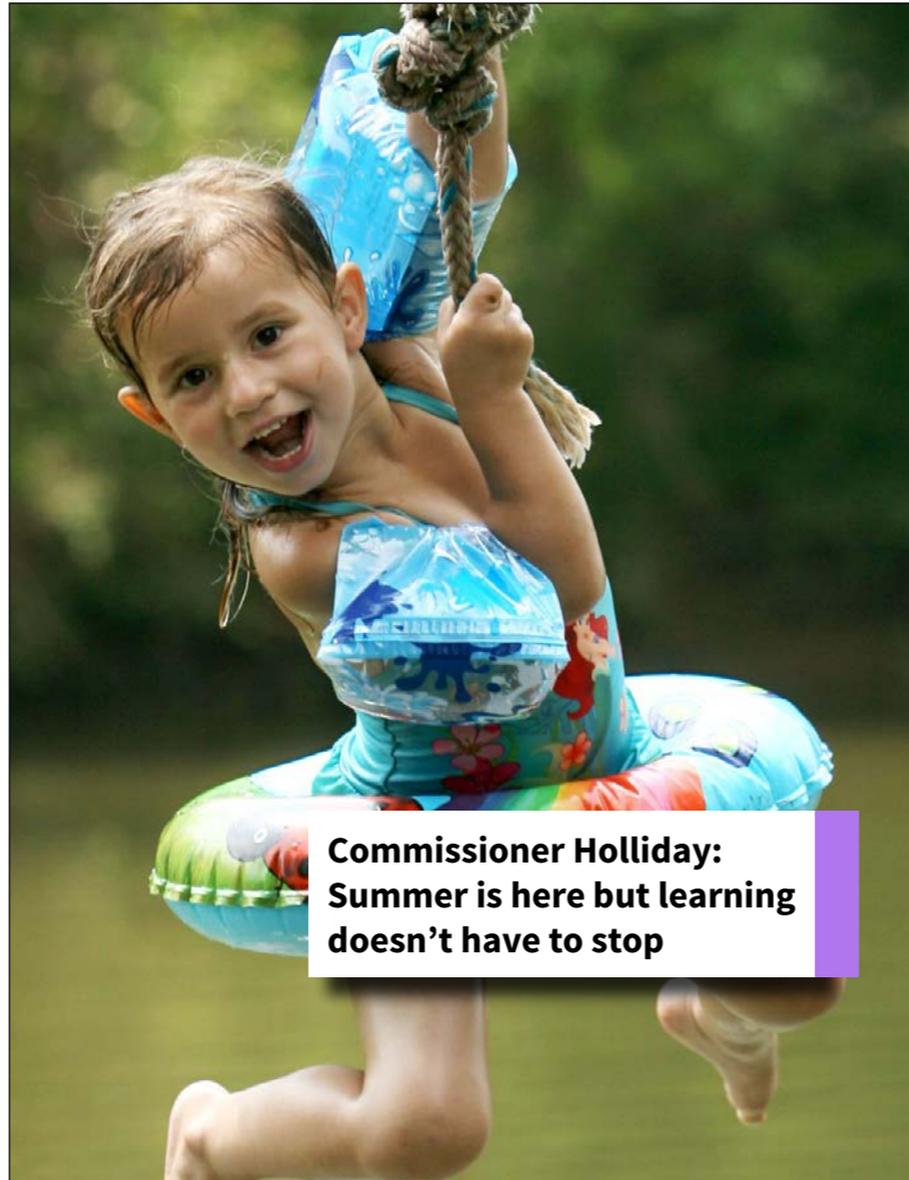
May 29, 2015



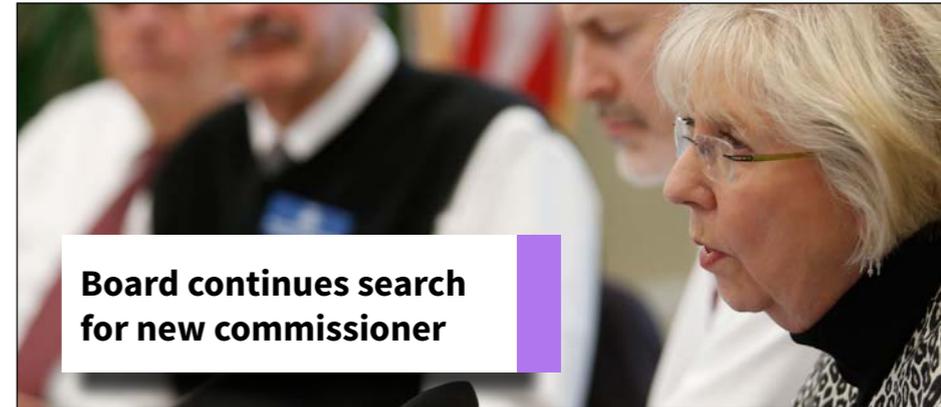
Links:

[Student writing winners announced](#)

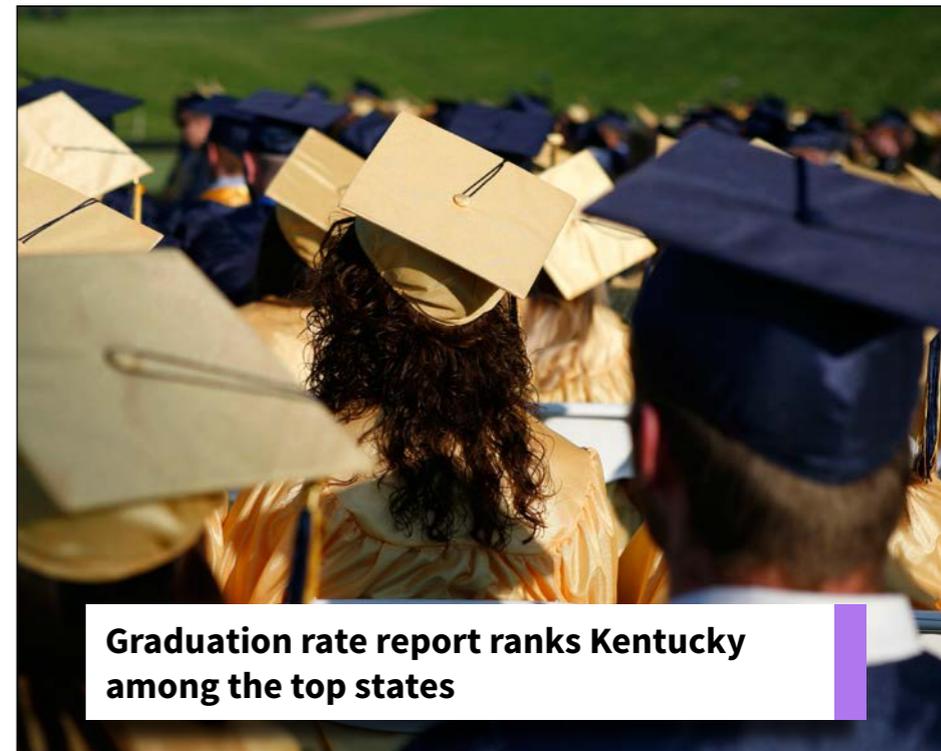
[Kentucky among handful of states with reliable test scores](#)



Commissioner Holliday:
Summer is here but learning doesn't have to stop



Board continues search for new commissioner



Graduation rate report ranks Kentucky among the top states



All photos by Amy Wallot unless otherwise noted

Additional content:

- KET's Education Matters examines importance of achieving literacy by third grade
- Dealing with debt collectors
- Guides to summer camps



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.

Summer is here but learning doesn't have to stop



Dr. Terry Holliday

Summer is here. For students it marks the end of a year spent acquiring knowledge that will prepare them to succeed in the next grade and beyond. For parents it marks another year of supporting their children's education, from getting them to and from school on time, to attending PTA meetings and helping with homework assignments and science fair projects.

After all that hard work, summer is a time for families to relax, rejuvenate and revel in carefree days of fun in the sun. But that doesn't mean the learning has to stop.

Both children and adults should strive to be life-long learners and summer is the perfect opportunity to pursue interests that may not fit into the day-to-day structure of the school year.

Sadly, some of the academic learning that occurred during the school year can

be lost during the off months, a phenomenon called summer slide.

Research shows that students can lose up to three months of learning over the summer, with low-income students being disproportionately affected. The National Summer Learning Association has collected research which reveals:

- Students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer.
- Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months.
- More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income students can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college.

Parents can combat the summer slide by making sure children have access to a wide variety of learning opportunities this

summer. I encourage parents and children take advantage of a wide variety of summer learning activities, including many that are free.

Kentucky's public libraries offer summer reading programs that can help students maintain or advance their reading skills and, as an added benefit, grow their knowledge in a myriad of subject areas. Parents can help their children find fun and engaging books by using "Find a Book Kentucky" which uses the widely-adopted Lexile measure to match readers with books that will provide the right level of challenge to support reading growth. On the [website](#), students can build personal reading lists and then locate the selections at their local library. They can also make a pledge to read. So many Kentucky students made a pledge last year that our state had the most pledges of any state in the country. Let's put Kentucky on top again this summer. You can find more information on KDE's [summer reading webpage](#).



Reading is only one way for students to continue learning, from trips to museums, to planting a garden, to exploring parks, to attending camps – the opportunities are endless. Whatever activities they choose, I encourage parents take an active role in preventing summer slide to make sure students are ready to pick up where they left off when classes resume this fall.

I wish all of you and your families a fun, safe and relaxing summer. As you may be aware, this summer will mark the end of my tenure as education commissioner. In April, I announced that I plan to retire on Aug. 31. The Kentucky Board Education is in the process of selecting a new commissioner. But I assure you, during my remaining months at KDE I will continue reaching toward the goal that has guided my work as education commissioner the past six years – making sure that every child in Kentucky is prepared to succeed in college, career and life.



Graduation rate report ranks Kentucky among the top states

A recent report on graduation rates calls Kentucky “a beacon to all other states” and lauds the state’s ability to all but eliminate the opportunity gap between low-income students and all other students to graduate on time.

The 2015 Building a Grad Nation

report is released annually by the Alliance for

Excellent Education, America’s Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University. Based on 2013 data, the report shows that Kentucky’s overall adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) is 86.1 percent, the tenth highest in the nation. The national high school graduation rate hit a record high of 81.4 percent.

Kentucky is one of only two states that graduate 85 percent or more of its low-income students on time. Even though nearly half of Kentucky’s students are considered low-income, its graduation rate for low-income students is 85 percent, nearly identical to its graduation rate for middle/high-income students and well above the national average for all students. Nationwide, low-income students are graduating at a rate 15 percentage points behind their more affluent peers.

“As a result of Senate Bill 1 (2009), we have made a concerted effort to ensure all of our students not only graduate from high school, but graduate college- and career-ready”



Commissioner Terry Holliday said. “We have worked with districts to identify students earlier who are not on track and then provided supports such as transitional courses in reading and mathematics to get those students back on track for an on-time graduation.”

According to the report, im-

proved graduation rates nationwide have resulted primarily from leadership, reforms, and multi-sector efforts at state, district, and school levels.

“I think you will see the graduation rate continue to climb in Kentucky once students are required to stay in school until they are 18,” Holliday said.

Governor Steve Beshear and First Lady Jane Beshear led an effort to raise the compulsory school age in Kentucky from 16 to 18. All 173 Kentucky school districts adopted a policy to keep students in school until they turn 18.

The policy takes effect in most districts starting this fall. In 2013-14, 1.5 percent, or about 4,600 students dropped out of school in grades 7-12.

The GradNation campaign, led by America’s Promise, seeks to raise the national on-time graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and increase postsecondary enrollment and completion. It is estimated that Kentucky needs fewer than 1,900 additional students to graduate on time to meet the campaign’s 90 percent goal.

Board continues search for new commissioner

The Kentucky Board of Education recently discussed the characteristics it would like to see in the next commissioner of education and at a special meeting voted to hire a firm to conduct a search to replace current Commissioner Terry Holliday when he retires Aug. 31.

Director of the National Center for Innovation in Education and former commissioner Gene Wilhoit facilitated a discussion about the kind of person they would like to see in the position. Board members discussed the need for professional qualifications, leadership, relationship building and communication skills.

The board also considered input from the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents.

“We need to put kids and what is best for them first,” board member Sam Hinkle said. The board agreed wholeheartedly and said that would be its first priority in the search process.

The board also solicited public input on characteristics and all input will be provided to the board before the list of characteristics is finalized.

According to KRS 156.148, the commissioner shall possess the professional qualifications determined by the Kentucky Board of Education as appropriate for the office.

The board received three proposals from search firms after issuing a Request for Proposals; however one was disqualified because the bid was not signed. After evaluating the bids by taking into account things like previous experience, qualifications, familiarity with Kentucky’s education needs, availability to conduct search, references and cost, a subcommittee of the board and KDE staff scored the proposals. Greenwood/Asher and Associates scored the highest.

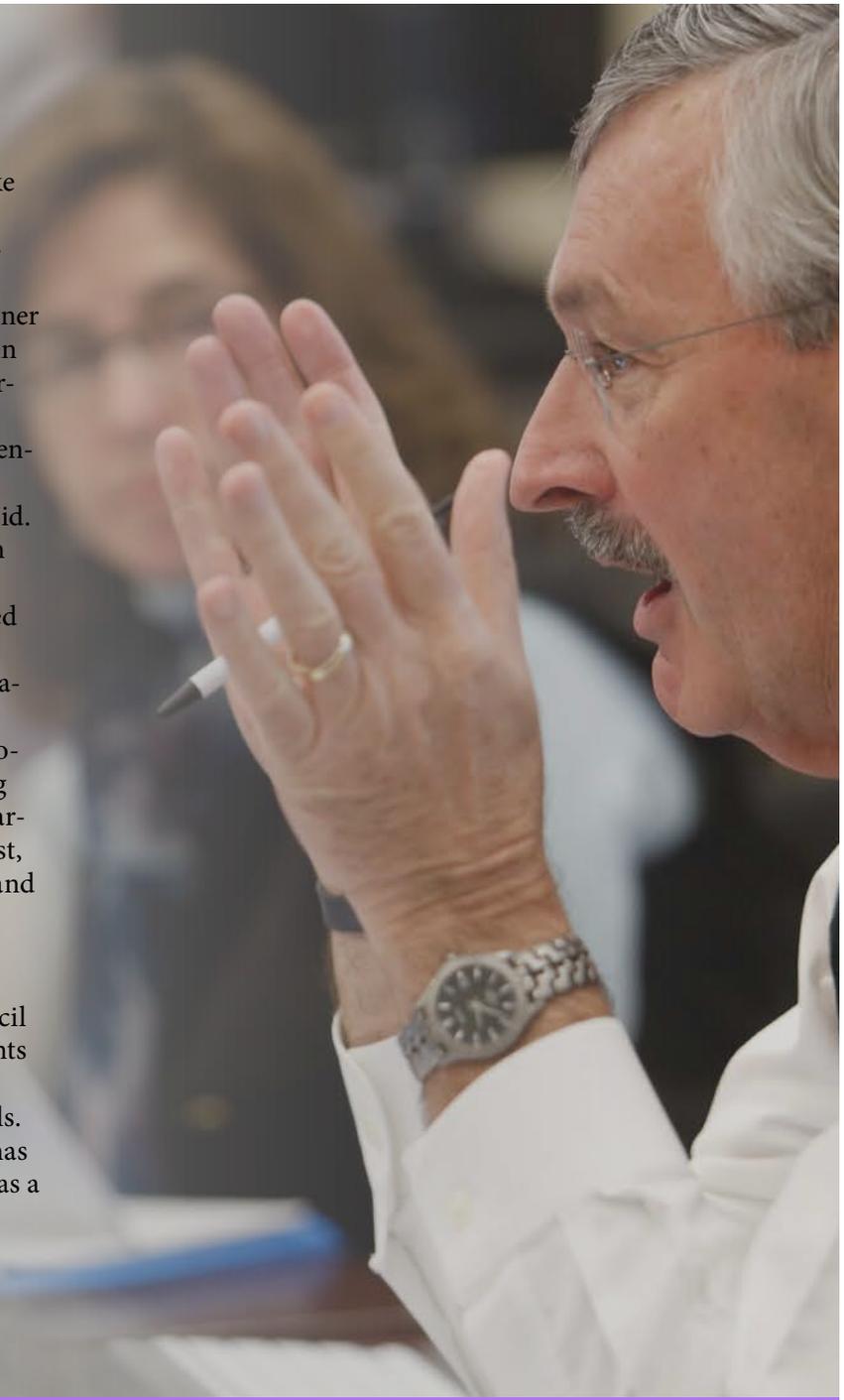
Greenwood/Asher made an oral presentation to the board which then voted unanimously to hire the Florida-based firm.

The firm also conducted the search for current commissioner Terry Holliday, Council on Postsecondary Education President Bob King and University of Kentucky Presidents Lee Todd and Eli Capilouto.

One of the partners of Greenwood/Asher is a product of the Kentucky public schools. Betty Asher grew up in Breathitt County and still has a home in Kentucky. The firm has successfully conducted more than 2,000 searches in K-12 and higher education and has a 97 percent rate of return business.

KBE board members have said they would like to have a commissioner by the time Holliday leaves, but are willing to hire an interim commissioner if need be.

The next regular meeting of the KBE is scheduled for June 2-3 in Frankfort.



KET's Education Matters examines importance of achieving literacy by third grade

Studies show that children who can't read by the third grade are at much greater risk for academic failure. KET's Education Matters recently discussed the importance of early interventions to help students achieve grade-level reading fluency and comprehension at an early age.

Education Matters "Reading by Third Grade" is available streaming online [here](#) and will air at 2 p.m. EDT May 30 on KETKY.

The program addresses the importance of a multi-pronged approach to teaching literacy, and investigates the role that summer learning programs, school readiness initiatives, school-based interventions and parent engagement can play in helping children become skilled readers.

Scheduled panelists include Dewey Hensley, chief academic officer for Jefferson County Public Schools, who discusses the district's Third Grade Reading Pledge, which aims to ensure that every JCPS student is reading on



grade level by the end of the third grade.

Also appearing on the show; Brigitte Blom Ramsey, the new executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, and Shawn Justice, principal at Tygart Creek Elementary School in Carter County.

A video segment from Tygart Creek Elementary illustrates how the school's short- and long-term reading intervention strategies have been successful in assisting at-risk students improve their literacy skills.

There are also segments spotlighting a professional development partnership between Camp Taylor Elementary School in Jefferson County and Bellarmine University, as well as a demonstration of a literacy technique called "dialogic reading," which is designed to foster critical thinking skills while parents read with their children.

Dealing with debt collectors

If you or your child is having trouble re-paying student loans and other debts, you may be contacted by a debt collection agency.

Don't try to dodge a collector. It's in your best interest to work with the agency to work out a payment schedule so you can pay your debts and start to reestablish your credit.

Most collection agencies abide by the law, but you may be contacted by one that doesn't. In that case, you should know your rights and responsibilities, according to the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

The agency must tell you the amount requested and the name of the creditor, as well as

what to do if you don't think you owe the money.

An agency trying to collect a debt may not make threats, use tricks to try to get someone to pay or make calls late at night.

If you think a collection agency has violated the law, you can file a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at www.consumerfinance.gov.

KHEAA is the state agency that administers Kentucky's grant and scholarship programs, including the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES).

It provides financial literacy videos at <http://its-money.kheaa.com>. KHEAA also provides free copies of "It's Money, Baby," a guide to financial literacy, to Kentucky schools and residents upon request at publications@kheaa.com



**Still looking for camps for your children this summer?
Check out these resources:**



- [Lexington Herald Leader's Camp Guide](#)
- [Kidscamp.com guide](#)
- [Kentucky Science Center Camps](#)
- [University of Kentucky's summer camp guide](#)
- [Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Camps](#)
- [STEM and Innovation Camps](#)

