

ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

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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.

Commissioner Stephen Pruitt: Choosing to be great



Stephen Pruitt

Good schools and great districts don't happen by accident.

For both teachers and districts, greatness comes through much of the same process as it does in the subject I use to teach, chemistry. In chemistry, you come up with a hypothesis based on the best data you have, run experiments and then evaluate the data to see if you're right.

In the classroom, teachers use the best proven education strategies they can find to help every one of their students be successful. Then several times a year, the teachers and leaders in the school district take a hard look at the data, evaluate what's working and what's not and make changes accordingly.

In late September, the Kentucky Department of Education released the latest round of scores from the

Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) assessments. And overall, things are headed in the right direction in Kentucky.

The numbers of schools and districts performing at the highest levels are up from last year. A total of 802 schools and 138 districts are now classified as either proficient or distinguished. And the percent of students scoring at the proficient and distinguished levels has increased in nearly every subject and at every grade level since 2012, the first

year of the K-PREP assessments. The state's overall score, as well as elementary and high school overall scores, also improved over last year.

While we deserve to feel good about how far we've come in the past three decades, there's more work to be done. Choosing to be great includes a commitment to each and every child. This must be our focus going forward.

This is where everyone in Kentucky comes in.

For teachers and school leaders, the hard work has begun by digging deeper into the scores to discover what the numbers are telling them. If math scores are lagging in one grade, it's time to re-evaluate the teaching strategies that are being used and start looking for new, research-based ideas.

Or perhaps students lacked preparation moving into that grade. If reading scores are lagging in the middle grades, we need to find a new way to reach those students.

This is the grueling work that takes place behind the scenes and often is unnoticed by the public at large. It may be unnoticed, but it is crucial to the future of Kentucky.

Parents have a part to play as well. Every parent should look not only at their child's test results, but also at how well their school and district are performing. Education is not a spectator sport. It is your right and your duty to demand the best education for your child and your community.

I always say that as Kentucky's Commissioner of Education, I believe I have the second best job in the world. The best job, of course, is being a teacher in front of a classroom full of kids.

I believe that this state has some of the country's best, most dedicated and most professional teachers. It's my honor to be their commissioner.

But to keep Kentucky moving forward, we need to be thoughtful, we need to be strategic and we need to be informed while charting the course ahead. Greatness is a decision. Educators make a decision every day that they will provide their students the opportunity that will change their lives.

It is time we all make the decision to be great.

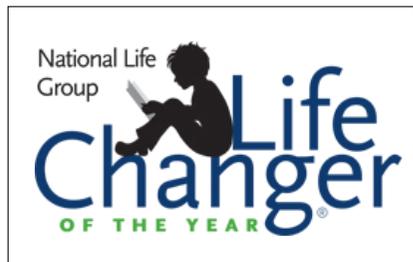
Scholarship available from fitness organization



Fittous is offering a scholarship for high school and college students who create an infographic about health, fitness or nutrition with a short essay explaining it or research and create an essay on fitness, health or well-being. The winner will receive a \$500 scholarship.

The application deadline is July 31. Click [here](#) for more information.

LifeChanger of the Year award honors school employees



Nominations are open for LifeChanger of the Year, an award sponsored by the National Life Group Foundation that honors K-12 public and private school educators and employees from around the country who are making a difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence and leadership.

Anyone may nominate any full-time K-12 school employee for the award. Winners and their schools are awarded cash prizes, including a top cash prize of \$10,000.

The nomination deadline is Jan. 1. Click [here](#) for more information.

LawnStarter scholarship promotes entrepreneurship

LawnStarter is offering a scholarship geared toward promotion of entrepreneurship to current or incoming college students enrolled in two-year, four-year or graduate programs.

Students must send a transcript, resume and essay with their application. A \$1,000 scholarship is awarded twice each year during the fall and spring semesters.

The application deadline is Dec. 31 for the spring semester scholarship; the fall semester application period is May 1-Aug. 20. Click [here](#) for more information.



Kentucky PTA sponsors Unity Day

Unity Day this year is Nov. 21. The purpose of Unity Day is to celebrate the differences that make us unique and contribute to what unifies us. All PTAs/PTSAs are encouraged to work with their school and community to promote this special day. Celebrate cultural differences through art, music and performances.

Ideas for Unity Day:

Multicultural Meal – Have a meal and invite each family to bring a traditional family food. Plan to teach a game or dance unique to each culture represented.

Multicultural Panel Discussion – Give parents an opportunity to discuss their own school experiences and create a venue for parents and teachers to share with each other their views and expectations regarding education.

“We Are One” Poster – Create a “We Are One” poster using photos and construction paper. Have participants decorate the poster with photos of their friends or pictures of children of all races interacting together. Display the posters for all to see.

Linking Hands – Using construction paper, have children draw outlines of their hands. To make a long chain, have the children do this multiple times. Cut the hands out of paper and glue them together to make a chain. Let the children decorate the hands with markers, stickers and glitter. Hand the hands around a room or along a hallway.

Unity Quilt – Use squares of paper and have children write something unique about themselves. Connect the squares to make a quilt to hang in the hallway with a banner, “Our School Has Unity Covered.”





Scholarship available from skin care organization

Thank Your Skin is offering a scholarship for high school and college students who write an essay about natural skin care. The winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship and the opportunity to be a paid contributor to thankyourskin.com. The application deadline is Nov. 30. Click [here](#) for more information.

Kentucky residents have chance to win an iPad in KHEAA drawing



Kentucky residents have another chance to win a new iPad from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) in a sweepstakes being held through Facebook. The contest runs from midnight on Nov. 16 through midnight on Dec. 15.

To enter, a Kentuckian must visit the KHEAA Facebook page, click on the orange graduate icon

and answer one question about college. KHEAA will not share or sell any personal information to a third party.

Only Kentucky residents are eligible. Employees of KHEAA or its sister agency, the Kentucky Higher Education Student Loan Corporation (KHESLC), and their immediate family members are not eligible. Prior winners are also not eligible.

The drawing will be held in late December, and the winner will be notified by email. The winner must respond by email within three calendar days to receive the iPad with Retina display. If no response is received within three days, another winner will be drawn.

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.

For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaa.com; write KHEAA, P.O. Box 798, Frankfort, KY 40602; or call (800) 928-8926, ext. 6-7214.

Avoid these common student financial aid mistakes

Many students spend more for college than they should by making some common mistakes when seeking financial aid. Follow these tips from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) to make sure you get the help you need.

Some people don't bother to apply for financial aid because they don't think they'll qualify. But they should submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to find out if they're eligible for state and federal student aid programs. Not filing may hurt their chances of getting more free money for college.

Another common mistake is waiting until the last minute to apply for financial aid. Some programs have deadlines, while others have

limited funds. Students and families should submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after Oct. 1 of each year.

Colleges send each student who has applied for student aid a financial aid package. Students and their families should look it over carefully. They should compare offers if they have received offers from more than one school to see which one is the best deal. Of course, students should also consider other factors, such as whether a school offers the academic program a student wants or if it meets other expectations.

Students who need loans to help pay for college must be good consumers. They should apply for federal student loans before applying

for private loans. Not all private lenders offer the same rates and benefits. Borrowers should pay close attention to what lenders call the back-end benefits: the interest rate and principal reductions offered when repaying the loan.

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