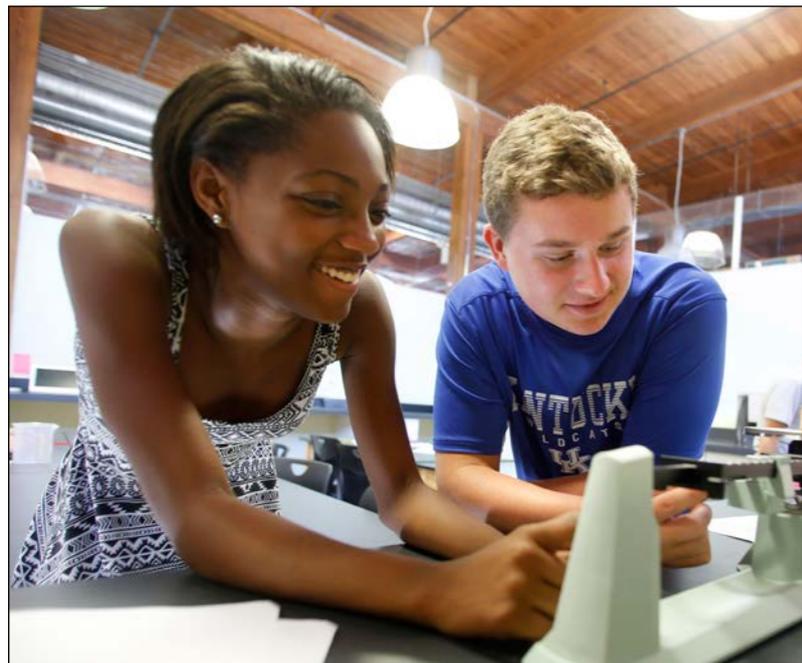


ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

November 16, 2015



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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.

Pruitt: Proud to call Kentucky home

As I drove away from the interview with the Kentucky Board of Education to become the Commonwealth's sixth commissioner of education, my wife Cecelia turned to me and asked me one simple question.

"This wasn't in the plan, was it?"

No, it hadn't been in the plan. The plan had involved working to improve science education and definitely not being a commissioner of education. For five years, my work with science education had been a labor of love. I had the privilege of working alongside some of the nation's best minds – teachers and scientists alike – to craft the standards designed to help prepare students for the increasingly complex and technological world in which they live.

Although that had been the plan, Kentucky happened. I had never applied for a job as commissioner of education before, although I was not unfamiliar with the position, having served several roles — including chief of staff with the Georgia Department of Education — before beginning my tenure with Achieve. The fact that I applied to be commissioner here has everything to do with Kentucky. The Commonwealth is one of those rare places where big ideas in education – like the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 and Senate Bill 1 in 2009 – aren't just talked about. In Kentucky, big ideas happen.

I had to be a part of it. It was my calling.

Kentucky already has made great strides in education, such as the impressive feat of increasing the college- and career-readiness rate from 34 percent in 2010 to 62 percent last year. This year, it increased again to almost 67 percent of the Commonwealth's high school graduates being prepared to either enter the workforce, a postsecondary training program, the military

or enroll in college and begin taking credit-bearing classes without a need for remediation.

True, there is more work to do, as the recent release of K-PREP scores showed. The number of students scoring at the proficient level plateaued over the past year. We already are working on ways to keep all students progressing, helping them have a deeper understanding of the world around them. There is still work to be done and the Commonwealth's teachers, schools and districts, as well as the Kentucky Department of Education, are up to the task.

As Kentucky's new commissioner of education, I want you to know that I value your views, your input and your help in preparing our students for tomorrow. That's why I am traveling the state to meet parents, educators and students – to see what is happening where the rubber meets the road, the classroom.

My grandmother was a teacher, so was my mother and so am I. Just because my office is in Frankfort doesn't mean that my heart isn't still in the classroom. I know the look on a child's face when they understand something for the first time. I remember as a teacher what it felt like to see that recognition dawning.

I am also a parent. I see the victorious moments that make me proud that my children are public school students. I want every parent to see their child victorious in their education. Those are the things that keep me going.

I am honored and humbled that the Kentucky Board of Education chose me as its commissioner of education – to lead the charge for educational improvement for our children. I am proud to call myself a Kentuckian, even if it wasn't a part of my original

plan. I wouldn't have it any other way.



Meet Kentucky's 2016 Teacher of the Year

Lisa Lamb could see very early on that her daughter Ashley had a love for learning, so it didn't surprise her that Ashley discovered a love for teaching as well.

Ashley Lamb-Sinclair's pursuit of knowledge led her to start down several career paths before she embarked on a career in education that led to her being named the 2016 Kentucky Teacher of the Year. Lamb said her daughter is every bit as much a student as a teacher.



Ashland Inc. and the Kentucky Department of Education announced the 2016 Teachers of the Year winners at a ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort. Joshua DeWar of Jefferson County, from left, is the 2016 Elementary School Teacher of the Year; Ashley Lamb-Sinclair of the Oldham County school district is the 2016 Kentucky Teacher of the Year; and Karen Mallonee, of Daviess County, is the 2016 Middle School Teacher of the Year.

"I always told her if I was a millionaire, she'd be a professional student," Lamb said. "She loved to learn and then she wanted to teach others."

Lamb-Sinclair, who teaches English and creative writing at North Oldham High School (Oldham County), did not plan on being a teacher. Her mother said she initially wanted to be a lawyer, and Lamb-Sinclair said she considered a number of options before turning to teaching.

"At some point in college, after, like, 25 different majors, I realized that I needed to just do what I always knew I needed to do and was avoiding," Lamb-Sinclair said. "I had a lot of ideas, but ultimately I'm one of those people who was just born to teach. There's nothing else for me."

Lamb-Sinclair is in her 10th year as a teacher and her fourth year at North Oldham. She previously taught at Bryan Station High School (Fayette County) and Myers Middle School (Jefferson County).

She was chosen from among 24 educators who received Ashland Inc. Kentucky Teacher Achievement Awards in a program co-sponsored by Ashland and the Kentucky Department of Education.

Joshua DeWar, a 2nd-grade teacher at Engelhard Elementary School (Jefferson County), was named the 2016 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. Karen Mallonee, a world language/Spanish teacher at College View Middle School (Daviess County), is the 2016 Middle School Teacher of the Year.

"Our most important assets in education are the teachers in the classrooms. These teachers honored here today represent the best of the best in Kentucky," Kentucky Education Commissioner Stephen L. Pruitt said at the awards ceremony. "Even with tight resources and a continual push to make sure all students are ready for college and career, Kentucky's teachers are proving high student achievement is possible."

Lamb-Sinclair, who will represent Kentucky in the national teacher of the year competition, received \$10,000 and will be offered a one-semester sabbatical. DeWar and Mallonee received \$3,000 each, and the other 21 Teacher Achievement Award winners received \$500 each.

"It definitely validates the work that every teacher puts in," Lamb-Sinclair said. "I feel like I'm just a representative of a bigger workforce, of people who spend their day-to-day life putting energy into kids."

Kentucky students continue to outperform national peers

Kentucky's public school students continue to outperform their peers nationally in 4th- and 8th-grade reading and in 4th-grade mathematics, according to data released from the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card.

However, Kentucky's 8th-grade students scored below the national average in mathematics, mirroring a drop seen nationally among middle schoolers.

"While we are encouraged by our students' performance in reading, middle school math continues to be a concern and an area where we need additional emphasis going forward," said Commissioner of Education Stephen L. Pruitt. "I look forward to partnering with shareholders to seek solutions and ensure ALL students have the opportunities they need to achieve mathematics literacy, achieve at high levels and become college- and career-ready. We owe this to our students to ensure they can succeed in the career path of their choosing."

NAEP is administered to a random sampling of students in 4th and 8th grades. Not all students, schools or districts participate.

The 2015 data indicate:

- Only a handful of states scored higher than Kentucky in 4th-grade and 8th-grade reading. The average reading score of 4th-grade students in Kentucky was 228. This was significantly higher than the average of 221 for public school students across the United States. The average reading score of 8th-grade students in Kentucky was 268. While down slightly from the 2013 NAEP administration, the drop is not considered statistically significant and was still higher than the average score of 264 for public school students across the nation.

- In 4th-grade mathematics, the average score of Kentucky students was 242 – slightly higher than the average score of 241 for public schools students nationally. Fewer than 10 states scored higher than Kentucky. The average mathematics score of 8th-grade students in Kentucky was 278 as compared with 281 nationally. Kentucky's 8th-grade mathematics scores mirrored a three-point drop seen nationally.

Kentucky's results have remained steady over the past few years, with minor gains and losses, yet are up over time. Since 1998, Kentucky's 4th-graders have gained 10 points on the NAEP reading assessment and 8th-graders have gained six points. Since 2000, Kentucky's 4th-graders have gained 23 points on the NAEP mathematics assessment and 8th-graders have gained 8 points.

In 2015, all 50 states, along with the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools, participated in the NAEP reading and mathematics assessments.

"The information included in the NAEP results provides useful information on how students are performing not only in Kentucky, but across states," Pruitt said. "While many states saw scores decrease this year – particularly at the 8th-grade level – according to analysis at the national level, the data doesn't support one specific reason why this happened."

The NAEP grading scale ranges from 0 to 500. Students' performance on NAEP fits into one of four categories: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient or Advanced.

In Kentucky, in reading, 75 percent of 4th-graders and 78 percent of 8th-graders scored at the Basic level or above. In mathematics, 84 percent of 4th-graders and 68

percent of 8th-graders scored at the Basic level or above.

More information is available from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.



Parent involvement celebrated this month

November is National Parent Involvement Month and [National Parental Involvement Day](#) is being celebrated this year on Nov. 19.

The parent recognition efforts are sponsored by [Project Appleseed](#) and designed to celebrate the extraordinary impact public school parents have had on America. This year, Project Appleseed will honor public school parents whose children are listed by the [Smithsonian](#) as the most significant people in American history. The list is only a small snapshot of the impact public schools parents have on the country. Ten more parents will be added each year.

Parents, grandparents and others can take the [Parent Involvement Pledge](#) which shows that they take responsibility and are committed to public schools. The pledge asks participants to volunteer five hours at their child's school each semester.

Project Appleseed also offers a [Parent Involvement Report Card](#), where parents can assess their involvement in their child's school, and a Parent Involvement Tool Kit to help parents and educators make the most of their parental involvement.



Open Source High video contest

Open Source High is awarding cash prizes to the top three videos for math, science and history. In addition, the top 10 videos will receive a limited edition Sun-Spot Gravity T-shirt. To enter, videos must be original content, two minutes or less in length and be submitted by midnight Nov. 22.

For more details and to enter, visit OpenSourceHigh.com.



Students can prepare projects for National History Day in Kentucky

National History Day in Kentucky (NHDKy), the state affiliate of National History Day, gives students the opportunity to explore the past in a creative, hands-on way. NHDKy challenges students in grades 4-12 to think like historians. Students choose their own topics and conduct their own research to produce a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance or website, becoming experts on a topic while learning real-world skills.

Students may work in a group or individually, depending on the format they choose, and have the option to present their findings in NHDKy competition. Competition is not required; students might instead arrange to present their work in their school or in a local historical organization or library.

The Kentucky Historical Society coordinates this adaptable academic program. It is one of many activities from which Kentucky Junior Historical Society groups may choose, but students do not have to be members to participate.

Click [here](#) or email [Cheryl Caskey](mailto:Cheryl.Caskey) for more information.



Be cautious about zero percent credit card offers

College students and high school seniors headed for college may receive letters offering them credit cards with zero percent fees. They should read those offers carefully, advises the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

Most cards that offer zero percent interest to new cardholders do so for only a limited time, perhaps six months. After that, the interest rate may rise to more than 20 percent, depending on the cardholder's payment record during the introductory period.

If all the purchases are not paid off before the introductory rate expires, the higher interest rate may be applied to those purchases from the time they were made.

Students should contact the credit card issuer to make sure they understand exactly what their obligations will be. It is always a good idea to get that information in writing and to save it for future reference.

KHEAA is the state agency that administers Kentucky's grant and scholarship programs, including the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship. It provides financial literacy videos at <http://itsmoney.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.

To learn how to plan and prepare for higher education, go to www.gotocollege.ky.gov. For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaa.com.



Take the Congressional App Challenge

Students from Kentucky's 5th Congressional District can participate in the [Congressional App Challenge](#), an app competition for U.S. high school students.

"The Congressional App Challenge for our region will work in concert with the SOAR mission to promote STEM-related education in our schools and showcase the young high-tech ingenuity already being displayed by many of our students," said U.S. Rep. Harold "Hal" Rogers. "I am eager to see the apps that students submit for this challenge and look forward to displaying the winner on a national platform."

The Congressional App Challenge submission period ends Jan. 15, 2016, and submissions must include a video of students presenting each app. Winners will be selected by a panel of local judges and the winning app for Kentucky's 5th District will be featured on a display in the U.S. Capitol building.



The challenge was created because Congress recognized that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) skills are essential for economic growth and innovation, and that the U.S. has been falling behind on these fronts. STEM occupations are projected to grow by 17 percent between 2008 and 2018, compared to 9.8 percent growth for non-STEM occupations. According to some estimates, the U.S. may be short as many as 3 million high-skilled workers by 2018.

To maintain American competitiveness, it's crucial that the United States invests in its youth and helps them acquire necessary STEM-based skills. The app challenge highlights and encourages students to pursue those skills. The Internet Education Foundation will be serving as the operational sponsor of the Congressional App Challenge.

For more information, visit congressionalappchallenge.us.

