

ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

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All photos by KDE unless otherwise noted

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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.

Kentucky Board of Education agrees to study public charters

The Kentucky Board of Education agreed during its meeting Oct. 5 to study the concept of public charter schools in Kentucky. Currently 43 states have legislation that allows charter schools. Kentucky does not.

“I think we need to look at all of the options for school improvement,” said Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt. “I’ve seen charters done well and not so well, so I don’t think that they are necessarily a silver bullet that will solve all of our problems with the achievement gap. However, we do need to consider a variety of tools in our utility belt for closing the opportunity and achievement gaps, as well as the continuous improvement of all of our schools.”

The board agreed to study public charter schools at a special meeting in November, with the date to be announced.

Also at its meeting, the board heard a report on the 2016 Unbridled Learning Accountability System. Statewide, student achievement is up at almost all grade levels, with notable improvement in middle school mathematics. Graduation and college/career-readiness rates also improved statewide. More information on the statewide results is available [here](#).

The Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) strategy for reducing the number of students scoring novice, the lowest performance level, showed promise with schools/districts in the novice reduction pilot recording a lower percentage of novice learners than those not in the pilot. The state recorded 3,000 fewer novice learners in the 2015-16 school year than the year before.

During an update on districts in state assistance, the board learned that Fleming County improved to a distinguished school district and Robertson County improved to

a distinguished/progressing school district according to the latest accountability results.

As for state-managed districts, Breathitt County celebrated its first school of distinction and the fact that ACT scores increased by nearly two points at the high school. In Menifee County, the high school improved to be a proficient/progressing school.

The financial situation in each of the state-assisted and state-managed districts, including Caverna Independent, which is under state assistance, also has improved.

Leadership for all of the districts said the financial and academic improvement they have seen would not have been possible without assistance from KDE staff.

In other business, the board shared with Commissioner Pruitt the results of a discussion from an Oct. 4 work session on his self-evaluation. The board cited multiple strengths in three main areas:

- relationships: outreach to various audiences and groups; accessibility; and active listening
- communication: consistency of message; collaboration inside and outside of the agency; and establishment of the annual state of education address
- leadership: willingness to challenge authority if an idea is not in the best interest of students, educators or citizens of Kentucky; ability to make tough decisions; and management through a time of transition
- Areas of growth and potential performance goals include:
 - relationships: strengthen connection with higher education and early childhood; increase visits to schools and districts
 - communication: increase use of social media; pare down the amount of content in



Mary Gwen Wheeler, Kentucky Board of Education member, Kevin Brown, associate commissioner and general counsel, Mary Ann Miller, KBE executive director and commissioner’s policy adviser and Sam Hinkle, KBE member, at the Oct. 5 board meeting.

weekly emails or target emails to address certain audiences

- leadership: develop and implement a new accountability system under ESSA; develop and implement a strategic plan; continue improvements at the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf; and embrace innovation as a key strategy

The board will formalize the commissioner’s evaluation by approving it in written form and discuss goals for the upcoming year at its December meeting.

The board also has adopted a new vision statement: “Each and every student empowered and equipped with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to pursue a successful future.”

All the meeting materials are available on the board’s [public portal here](#). The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be Dec. 7 in Frankfort.

Five Kentucky public schools named National Blue Ribbon Schools



- Schaffner Traditional Elementary (Jefferson County)
- Southwest Calloway Elementary (Calloway County)

The Kentucky schools are among the 329 public and private, elementary, middle and high schools across the country recognized this year. There also are five private schools in Kentucky named as part of the 2016 cohort of Blue Ribbon Schools.

In its 34-year history, the national Blue Ribbon Schools program has become a trademark of excellence and a symbol of exemplary teaching and learning recognized by everyone, from parents to policymakers.

The program recognizes schools in one of two performance categories:

The U. S. Department of Education (USED) named five Kentucky public schools as 2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools, based on their overall academic excellence.

The five Kentucky schools and their districts are:

- Gray Middle School (Boone County)
- Johnson Elementary (Laurel County)
- Moyer Elementary (Fort Thomas Independent)

• *Exemplary High Performing Schools* are among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. Various student group performance and high school graduation rates also are at the highest levels.

• *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* are among the state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's student groups and all students over the past five years. Student group performance and high school graduation rates for each group are at high levels.

"Kentucky's Blue Ribbon Schools are great examples of what can happen when there is attention to equity, achievement and integrity at the school level," Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt said. "Their focus on serving all students, creating a culture of highly effective teaching and learning and taking an honest look at how they can continuously improve have earned them this honor."

"Kentucky's Blue Ribbon Schools represent educational excellence and serve as models for schools across Kentucky."

Since USED revamped the Blue Ribbon program in 2003, 59 Kentucky public schools have been designated Blue Ribbon Schools, with 93 public schools named Blue Ribbon Schools over the life of the program. More information on the program and a list of past Kentucky winners are [available here](#).

Governor's School for Entrepreneurs accepting applications



Applications are being accepted for the Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE), a three-week residential summer program for students in grades 9-11 that will be held June

25-July 15 at a location to be announced.

The program offers a creative, free-thinking environment for teens to create and build their ideas for products and services. A minimum GPA or ACT score is not required to apply.

Students will learn from more than 20 guest entrepreneurs, use 3D printers, take course in web and mobile app development, participate in pitch competitions and more.

The application deadline is Jan. 4. Click [here](#) for more information or [here](#) to apply.

Packets with GSE posters and handouts have been mailed to schools, and GSE representatives are available to visit schools. Call (859) 568-2199 to schedule a visit.



Scholarships available for high school students to study abroad



The U.S. Department of Education is now accepting applications for the Department of State-sponsored study abroad programs for U.S. high school students for 2017-18. These merit-based scholarships include international airfare, tuition and program costs, as well as meals and living accommodations (often with a host family). The programs have no language prerequisites and gap year students are encouraged to apply as long as they meet the age requirements.

Each program has a separate online application process and application deadlines vary from late October through early January. Visit the program websites or www.exchanges.state.gov more information. The programs include:

- **The National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y)**

offers merit-based scholarships to study one of seven critical foreign languages: Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian (Tajiki), Russian and Turkish. The NSLI-Y program is designed to immerse participants in the cultural life of the host country, provide formal and informal language practice, and spark a lifetime interest in foreign languages and cultures. The deadline is Oct. 27. Visit nsliforyouth.org for more information.

- **The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Abroad Program** offers merit-based scholarships to study for an academic year in countries that may include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Macedonia, Malaysia, Morocco, Philippines, Senegal, Thailand and Turkey. This program increases understanding between people in the U.S. and people in countries with significant Muslim populations. Students live with host families, attend local high schools, do community service and complete a capstone project. Applications are due Dec. 1. Visit yes-abroad.org for more information.

- **The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX)** offers merit-based scholarships to study for an academic year in Germany. The program celebrates German-American friendship based on common values of democracy. Students live with host families, attend local schools and participate in community life in Germany. More information is available [here](#).

For more information on exchanges sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, visit exchanges.state.gov. For information on having an international experience without leaving home, consider hosting a Department of State-sponsored exchange student. Learn more at hosting.state.gov.

U.S. JCI Senate Foundation offers scholarships

The U.S. JCI Senate Foundation is offering \$1,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who plan to continue their education at accredited post-secondary colleges, universities or vocational schools. The Kentucky JCI Senate is accepting applications from students who will enter college in fall 2017.

Applications are reviewed by a panel of judges, and two top-ranked applications will be forwarded to the U.S. JCI Senate Foundation. Applications submitted from the states are reviewed by another panel, which selects the winners of the scholarship grants.

The application deadline will be in January. Click [here](#) or email Kentucky Scholarship Chairwoman [Karen Kopp-Voshel](#) for more information.



Four things to know after filing the FAFSA

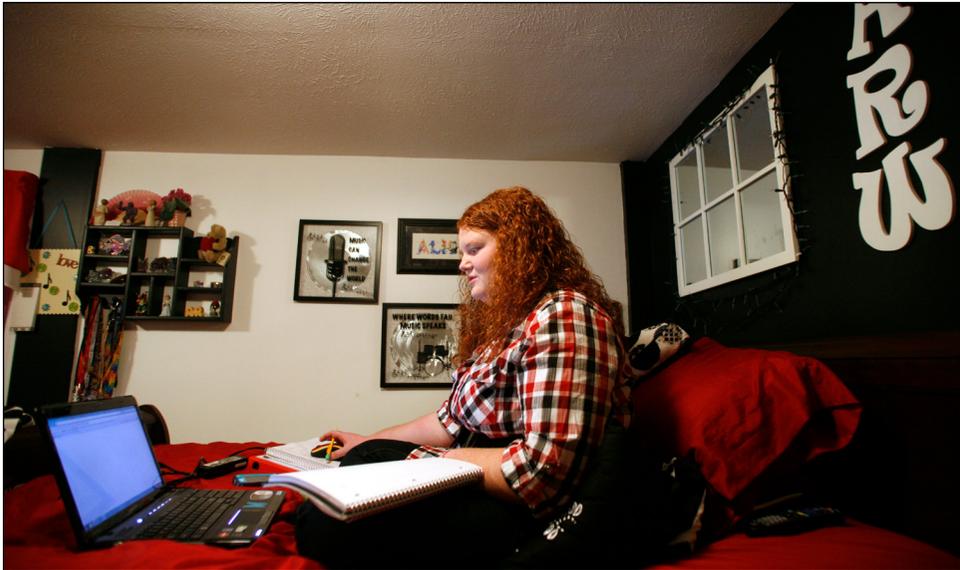
The 2017–18 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) became available Oct. 1. The U.S. Department of Education has a few tips about what to look out for after your child submits the form.

1. The FAFSA confirmation page is not your financial aid award. After you complete the FAFSA online and click “SUBMIT,” you’ll see a confirmation page. This is not the award package. That will come separately from the school(s) the student is accepted into. Schools [calculate aid](#). The confirmation page provides federal aid estimates based on the information provided.
2. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is just one of many factors used to calculate aid. Some schools may meet 100 percent of financial need, and other schools may only meet 10 percent – it depends on the school and the financial aid they have available that year. Students should complete the FAFSA annually because there are [many factors](#) that can change each year you plan to be in school.
3. You won’t receive an award letter from your school right away. Even though the 2017-18 FAFSA is available in October this year, that doesn’t mean schools will send award letters earlier. Some schools may send letters earlier, while other schools may stick to the timeline they have used in the past.
4. You can submit a FAFSA correction later, such as adding a school. After your FAFSA has been submitted and processed (takes about three days), students can go back and submit a correction to certain fields. This includes correcting a mistake or adding another school. You can add up to 10 schools at a time.

More information on the tips and filling out the FAFSA is available [here](#).



Help your child develop good study habits



Parents know the evening homework and study drill. Whether you sit with your young students to help them complete their assignments, or monitor your teen’s progress in their studies, you want to help them cultivate the kind of willpower and self-discipline that’s required to build healthy study habits.

Studies have shown that that self-discipline accounts for more than twice as much impact as student’s IQ—in grades, test scores, school selection, school attendance, hours spent doing homework, hours spent watching television (inversely) and the time of day students began doing homework.

That illustrates a major reason why students fall short of their intellectual potential: failure to exercise self-discipline. Nowhere is the need for self-discipline more apparent than in study habits.

The National PTA has put together a list of ways you can help your children develop good study habits. Read the full list [here](#).

