

ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

October 15, 2015



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[Semifinalists named for 2016 Kentucky Teacher of the Year](#)

[Four Kentucky public schools win Blue Ribbon honors](#)



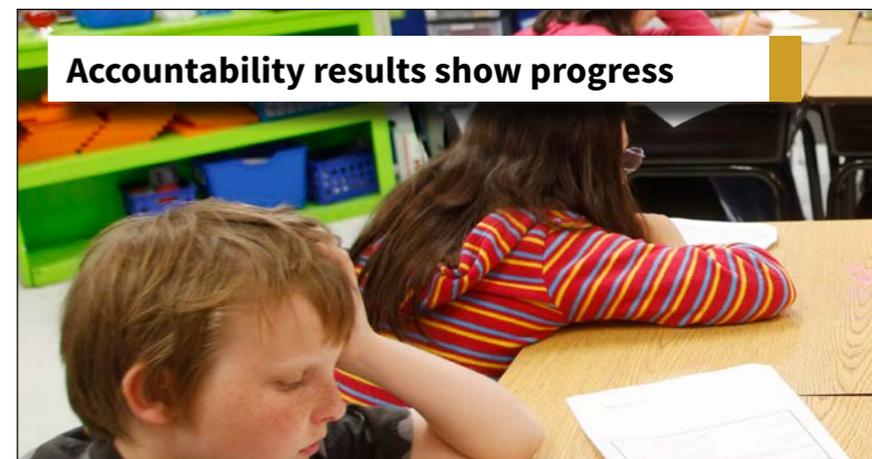
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Accountability results show progress

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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 hired as new Kentucky education commissioner

Stephen L. Pruitt will begin his role as the sixth Kentucky Commissioner of Education on Oct. 16 after the Kentucky Board of Education finalized his hiring during its Oct. 6 meeting.

Pruitt has been senior vice president at Achieve Inc., an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit education reform organization.

Under Pruitt's contract ratified by the board, he will be paid \$240,000 annually over four years.

"The Commonwealth has a rich history of and commitment to improving the lives of its children through public education. I am honored to serve as Kentucky's next commissioner of education and be able to continue that tradition," Pruitt said at the meeting. "I am excited to work alongside Kentucky's educators and education shareholders to support our students, so they can graduate college/career-ready, realize success in their postsecondary endeavors, get good jobs and help Kentucky prosper."

In addition to working at Achieve, Pruitt's prior experience includes chief of staff, associate state superintendent, director of academic standards, and science and mathematics program manager with the Georgia Department of Education; and high school chemistry teacher in Fayetteville and Tyrone, Georgia. He earned a bachelor's degree from North Georgia College and State University; a master's from the University of West Georgia and a doctorate from Auburn University.

Pruitt is a native of Talmo, Georgia. He and his wife have two children, a son in college and a daughter who is a high school junior and will be attending public school in Kentucky once the family relocates.



New KBE member appointed



Sarah Murphy Ford of Owensboro was sworn in as the newest member of the Kentucky Board of Education during the board's Oct. 6 meeting.

Ford, who was appointed by Gov. Steve Beshear, is vice president of Scott & Murphy Inc./Hartz Contracting.

Ford represents members at large and replaces Trevor R. Bonstetter, who resigned. Ford will serve for the remainder of the unexpired term, which ends April 14, 2016.

Graduation and student readiness continue to improve assessment and accountability results show

The number of students graduating from high school and considered college/career-ready continues to increase, according to data released by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).

In 2015, the college/career readiness rate jumped to 66.8 – up from 62.5 percent last year and 54.1 percent in 2013. The four-year graduation rate is up as well to 87.9 percent – from 87.5 percent in the 2013-14 school year.

“Kentucky schools are to be congratulated for their continued progress on graduating more students with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in the 21st century,” said Interim Education Commissioner Kevin C. Brown. “The gains we are seeing are the result of a lot of hard work by our teachers, administrators and our students with the support of parents, community members and our education partners.”

The percent of students scoring at the proficient and distinguished levels has increased in nearly every subject and at every grade level as compared to 2012, the first year of the K-PREP assessments. However, scores remained relatively flat in the past year.

“While we would like to see big gains in achievement every year, it is not uncommon to

see some ups and downs from year to year. Overall, we are moving in the right direction from where we started,” Brown said.

However, students in groups that have historically had achievement gaps continue to lag behind their peers across multiple content areas and grade levels.

“KDE is in the process of addressing these persistent gaps by assisting schools and districts in the development of plans to meet the needs of all students and reduce novice student performance,” Brown said. “This is not only about compliance with state and federal law, but is a moral imperative about reaching each child. By focusing on the individual needs of students we will not only reduce achievement gaps, but also improve achievement for all students.”



The numbers of schools and districts performing at the highest levels are up from last year. A total of 704 schools and 120 districts are classified as either proficient or distinguished.

Also, 10 of the state’s 36 lowest-performing schools, known as Priority Schools, made enough improvement over the past three years to exit Priority status. To see the results the Unbridled Learning assessment and accountability system for your child’s school or district, click [here](#) then use the pull down menus.



Associate Commissioner: Data can help parents make sure your child stays on track



Kelly Foster

October is an important month in Kentucky education. It presents an opportunity for all of us to take a look at how our public schools, districts and students are performing.

The results from state testing in the 2014-15 school year are used to determine how schools and districts are progressing toward various goals, such as proficiency, closing the achievement gap, student growth, high school graduation and college and career readiness. As part of the Unbridled Learning Accountability System, schools and districts also receive an overall determination on how well they are doing.

At many schools across the state, there was reason to celebrate. At others, the mood was much more subdued. But for all, the numbers provide

a road map of sorts for how they can continue to improve.

Superintendents, school boards, principals, school-based decision-making councils and teachers must review and analyze the data to determine what instructional changes need to occur and which students may need additional interventions in order to be successful. That involves asking question such as:

- What does the data tell us?
- What does the data not tell us?
- What are the reasons for celebration (analysis of data)?
- What are opportunities for improvement (analysis of data), including contributing factors and root causes?

Having a clear understanding of the data is essential to develop a data-driven school or district improvement plan. At the district and school level, using data to ensure quality plans are developed is key to increasing student achievement and overall school improvement. Using the data questions to guide the development of the plan helps keep emotions out of the conversation and stakeholders focused on students and what is best for them.

Later this month, parents also will receive individual reports showing how their student performed on state tests.

The major question parents should be asking is, “Is my child on track to graduate ready for college and career?” They should be able to tell as early as third grade. A student in grades 3-8 and in high school who has reached the proficient/distinguished level is on course to be ready for college or the workplace by the time they graduate from high school. If a child scores at the novice or apprentice level, he or she will likely need some additional supports to get back on track. Take the time to look at your child’s report when you receive it and talk with your child’s teachers about how you can work together to provide your child the best chance to succeed.

There are steps that every parent can take to help ensure their child’s success – from creating an atmosphere where expectations are high and education is valued, to making sure homework is completed every night. It’s also important to keep an open mind. Just because your child isn’t learning something the same way you did doesn’t mean it is wrong – it’s just different, and usually it’s different for a good reason. In our increasingly technological world, students must be able to think, reason and apply their knowledge in more varied ways than ever before. Today’s learning ensures they have not just the knowledge, but the skills to be able to do that.

Data, ultimately, is what helps guide educators to see what works and what doesn’t. But any information, no matter how useful, won’t help if it isn’t carefully examined. So take the time this fall to look at how your child – and your child’s school – is doing and investigate how you can help be a part of their success.



Your child can be a safety superhero

Kentucky Safe Schools Week is Oct. 18-24 with the theme, "I want to be a school safety superhero."

Sponsored by [the Kentucky Center for School Safety](#), the week focuses on building up the self-esteem of students and teaching them to be resilient while working toward an environment of free of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and conflict. All Kentuckians are urged to improve the safety of our schools by educating students, staff and community members.

The campaign highlights the word SUPER and qualities necessary to be a SUPERHERO at school.

- S -- Strong
- U -- Understanding
- P -- Powerful
- E -- Encouraging
- R -- Respectful

Being both strong and understanding incorporates the need to make good choices and to know when to show power or be encouraging. The respectful aspect goes back to treating others as one wants to be treated.

From Superman to Captain America, most

superheroes started with problems or issues and turned their uniqueness into a power or force. They used their power for the betterment of society.

Both parents and children can take the [Superhero Pledge](#) on the Kentucky Center for School Safety website. Click view the statics to see how many people in your county are superheroes. As of this week, McCracken



County was in the lead with more than 700 pledges.

Students also can be a "Silent Hero" and help without getting involved if they fear retaliation. The Kentucky Center for School Safety offers to partner with

schools and provide a free online reporting tool, the [S.T.O.P! TIPLINE](#).

The tip line encourages students, parents or community members who know of an unsafe situation in school to anonymously pass on that information to school personnel by using a digital format.

Kentucky Safe Schools week is part of National Bullying Prevention Month, which is observed in October. Anti-bullying resources are available [here](#) and [here](#).

Students who graduate from high school early can earn state scholarship

Kentucky high school students who earn their diploma in three years or less may qualify for a scholarship from the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

To take advantage of the Early Graduation Scholarship Certificate program, students must sign a letter of intent to graduate early before the start of their junior year.

They must meet ACT benchmarks: at least an 18 on the English exam, at least a 19 on the math exam and at least a 20 on the reading exam. In addition, they must pass end of course exams in four subjects: Algebra II, biology, English II and U.S. history.

The amount of the scholarship varies each year. It is based on the amount of state funding provided to high schools.

The scholarship can be used only during a student's first year in college. The student must attend a Kentucky public or private nonprofit college or university to receive the funds.

KHEAA is the state agency that administers Kentucky's student financial aid programs, including the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship. Its sister agency, the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, offers Kentucky Advantage Loans to help students and parents pay for college. For more information about Advantage Loans, visit www.kheslc.com.

To find links to other useful education websites, go to www.gotocollege.ky.gov. For more information about Kentucky scholarships and grants, visit www.kheaa.com.



Students can draw “Farm to School Lunch Snapshot” in Kentucky Ag Department’s art contest



Agriculture Commissioner James Comer invites Kentucky students to enter the Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s annual Farm to School Month Art Contest.

“This contest helps students and their parents understand the importance of providing fresh, local foods to Kentucky school children,” Comer said. “Farm to School helps kids get a good start on a healthy lifestyle. It also helps Kentucky farmers make a living.”

The theme this year is “Farm to School Lunch Snapshot.” Any student attending a public, private, parochial or home school in Kentucky is eligible.

Entries must be submitted to each student’s county school food service director by Oct. 30. Each entry must be the student’s original drawing on 8½-by-11-inch white, unlined paper with the theme printed on it.

Each student’s name, address, grade and school must be listed on the back of the entry. All artwork must be colorful so it could be reproduced on note cards, calendars or possibly T-shirts.

Each county will select one winner in each of the elementary, middle/junior high school and high school age groups. Each food service director will bring her or his county’s winning entries to the KDA Administrators Conference Dec. 9-11 in Lexington, where the entries will be judged.

Statewide awards will be presented in each of the three categories. First-place winners will receive \$50, second place \$30, and third place \$20.

Food service directors will get a chef to spend the day with them and their staff for a first-place entry, Farm to School gift baskets for each director and staff member for second place, and one Farm to School gift basket for third place.

Go to www.farmtoschool.org for more information or contact Tina Garland, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School Program coordinator at (502) 382-7505 or tina.garland@ky.gov

BRINGING KENTUCKY FARMS TO SCHOOL
Growing healthy children and communities

3.17 percent of the total budgets of Kentucky schools was spent on local foods during the 2011-2012 school year.

702 schools in 60 Kentucky districts are buying local Kentucky foods for their school cafeterias. Money invested in agriculture has a positive economic impact on rural and urban communities.

\$1,615,747 in school food dollars was invested in Kentucky communities in the 2011-2012 school year.

61 percent of Kentucky schools say they will buy more local food in the future. Expect growth in these product categories in the future: plant-based proteins, herbs, meat or poultry, eggs, and grains/flour.

81% Fruit	80% Veggies	15% Fluid Milk	11% Meat/Poultry	8% Eggs
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Local foods span the school meal tray*

363,819 students in Kentucky are learning to make lifelong healthy eating choices. With farm to school programs, kids are more likely to eat their fruits and vegetables and try new, healthy foods.

Healthy habits take root
Beyond serving local foods at mealtime, schools are planting gardens, visiting farms and turning the cafeteria into a classroom.

Local farmers make the grade, A+!

THE USDA FARM to SCHOOL CENSUS
is taken from an estimated 13,133 public school districts across the country, with a 75% response rate (data from about 9,887 districts nationally)

HUNGRY FOR MORE?
www.kyagr.com/consumer/farm-to-school.html
farmtoschool.org
www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/state/ky/