



Commonwealth of Kentucky
Office of the Governor

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**Governor, Education Commissioner Challenge School Districts to
Adopt New Graduation Age Policy**

Leaders launch “Blitz to 96” to get 96 districts to keep students in school through age 18

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 25, 2013) -- Beginning today, Kentucky’s school districts have an unparalleled opportunity to offer students a better future, while at the same time strengthening their communities’ workforce and families – all by taking a simple vote. Governor Steve Beshear, First Lady Jane Beshear and Education Commissioner Terry Holliday called on the state’s 174 school districts to adopt a new policy requiring students to remain in school through their 18th birthdays.

Senate Bill 97 (SB 97), known as the “Graduate Kentucky” bill, passed this year and phases in an increase in the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18, amending the school attendance law created in 1934.

“The days of dropping out of high school and expecting a dependable, well-paying job are long gone,” said Gov. Beshear. “If the high school dropouts of 2009 had graduated, Kentucky’s economy would have an additional \$4.2 billion in wages over those students’ lifetimes. Guiding those students to graduation creates significant benefits not only for the students themselves, but also for the communities where they live.”

The Kentucky Board of Education passed a resolution encouraging school districts to be early adopters of a policy to raise the compulsory school attendance age to 18 earlier this year.

“Our goal is to graduate every student in Kentucky ready for college and career. We can’t do that if they’re not in school,” said Commissioner Holliday. “With this law, Kentucky school boards and districts have an opportunity to help students, who would otherwise drop out at 16, stay in school, graduate and become productive taxpaying citizens.”

The adoption of SB 97 is voluntary until 55 percent of the state’s school districts adopt the policy. Once 96 districts have approved the change, the remaining school districts must adopt and implement the policy within four years.

“America’s Promise applauds the work of Kentucky educators and leaders in helping create a path that will ensure more students graduate,” said Alma J. Powell, chair of America’s Promise Alliance, the nation’s largest partnership network dedicated to improving the lives of young people. “The importance of a high school diploma for long-term personal and economic opportunity and success cannot be overstated – not only for the students themselves but also their families, their communities, and the future of our nation.”

Districts to race to complete voting in ‘Blitz to 96’

June 25 is the first day school districts may vote to adopt the change, and is also the first day of the “**Blitz to 96**” initiative – a statewide push to reach the 55 percent threshold that will create the statewide attendance age standard. The first districts to adopt the policy in the “**Blitz to 96**” will be invited to Frankfort for a special news conference with the Governor and Commissioner to recognize them for their swift action.

The Governor, First Lady and Commissioner are hopeful that all 174 school districts will increase the standard voluntarily.

“We have worked hand in hand with education leaders and legislators for five years to promote the Graduate Kentucky bill and are happy that this commonsense policy is finally ready for implementation,” said First Lady Beshear. “The Blitz to 96 encourages school districts to update this long overdue policy quickly, and take advantage of the resources available to keep students enrolled and engaged.”

The Kentucky Department of Education is providing \$10,000 planning grants to school districts that adopt the new attendance age policy in the 2013-14 school year. The funds are designed to be used to plan for full implementation in the 2015-16 school year. Several school districts have already signaled their intention to vote to approve the change within days of June 25.

Research shows that high school graduates live longer, are less likely to be teen parents, and are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children. High school graduates are also less likely to commit crimes, rely on government healthcare or use other public services.

More information about Graduate Kentucky, the Blitz to 96, and resources available to school districts is available at www.graduate.ky.gov. Specific information for school districts applying for the planning grants is available on the KDE website at <http://education.ky.gov/school/Pages/CompAttend.aspx>.

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