

Kentucky Chamber
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Kentucky in national forefront on education

Notable progress has been made, but challenges remain

KENTUCKY is getting national attention – for its politics and its education system. It's hard to pick up a newspaper these days – including some that circulate nationally – without reading a reference to education in Kentucky. For all of its struggles, the state continues to make progress.

The progress is important to employers, particularly in areas such as preparing students for success in college or careers. But, as always, much work remains to be done if Kentucky is to offer a world-class education to every student in every school.

Here is a closer look at developments in Kentucky's schools and their implications for our workforce.

54.1% ready for college and career

Better preparing students for life after high school – whether they go on to college, another type of postsecondary education or enter the workplace – has long been a goal of the education system. But emphasis on this future-building element accelerated with the passage of legislation in 2009 that mandated new, tougher academic standards.

The state uses specific measures to determine college and career readiness. These include the ACT, college placement tests, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, ACT WorkKeys and others.

Since Kentucky began measuring college and career readiness, the rate has increased from 34 percent in 2010 to 54.1 percent in 2013. As Education Commissioner Terry Holliday put it: "That's around 8,000 students who now have a much better shot at getting a good job, paying taxes and becoming self-sufficient."

The state also reports that more students are graduating from high school.

Graduation rate is 86.1%

Kentucky changed the way it calculates the graduation rate in 2013, moving to a method the federal government has mandated that starts with the number of students in a high school freshman class, accounts for students who move in and out



Kentucky was the first state in the nation to adopt tougher math and language arts standards – known as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards – and 2013 marked the second time students were tested on them. As expected, scores were up from 2012, but significant challenges persist – also as expected.

of the system and then looks at how many students get a diploma four years later.

Based on that calculation, Kentucky's 2013 graduation rate was 86.1 percent. Because of the change in the calculation method, a direct comparison to the performance of previous years is not possible.

Students' achievement test scores edging up

College and career readiness is one component of the state's overall accountability system that measures how well schools are doing. Another key piece – and one that is watched closely by educators and parents – is student performance on tests of reading, math, science, social studies and writing.

Kentucky was first to adopt the tougher standards

Kentucky was the first state in the nation to adopt tougher math and language arts standards – known as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards – and 2013 marked the second time students were tested on them. As expected, scores were up from 2012, but significant challenges persist – also as expected.

According to state reports, the percentage of higher-performing students increased in nearly every subject at every grade level in 2013. Significantly, students in groups that have historically achieved at lower levels also performed better.

Progress, yes, "though slower than we would like," Commissioner Holliday told the news media. Of particular concern: slight declines in reading, social studies and math scores by elementary school students and lower high school math scores.

Kentucky's early adoption of the tougher standards and its ongoing commitment to their use in the classroom has attracted national attention. Known nationally as the Common Core State Standards, and here as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, the learning guidelines were developed by a consortium of 48 states to better prepare students to succeed in a



The Kentucky Chamber's 2013 Policy Council on Education was led by **Stephen Branscum**, President/CEO of Branscum Construction Company in Russell Springs. The council's 2014 agenda will be released next month.

globally competitive environment.

After Kentucky adopted the new approach, teachers statewide began the hard work of making them meaningful for student achievement. Much has been asked of the teachers, and they have been delivering.

Chamber provides business support

The business community, led by Kentucky Chamber members, has supported the educators' efforts with an information campaign to build employer and public understanding of the new standards and what they will mean for improving workforce preparation. Advocacy groups, including usual political foes such as the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Education Association (the national teachers union) are publicly campaigning in support of the Common Core Standards.

The result in Kentucky – so far – has been less pushback against the more challenging learning guidelines than has emerged in a few other states. Some misunderstanding persists – such as the incorrect notions that the standards are an attempt by the federal government (i.e. President Obama) to control local schools or that the standards are actually a national curriculum.

As such, it is critical that employers and other proponents of high-performing schools encourage our legislators and other policy leaders to stay the course with the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. The Kentucky Chamber plans to continue doing just that.

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2014 Board Chairwoman Elizabeth McCoy, Planters Bank, talks with 2013 Chairman Jim Booth, Booth Energy.

McCoy begins term as Kentucky Chamber chairwoman

ON OCT. 1, Elizabeth McCoy, president and CEO of Planters Bank, began her term as chair of the Kentucky Chamber's 2014 Board of Directors.

McCoy succeeds 2013 Chairman Jim Booth, CEO of Booth Energy. Wil James, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Kentucky, has been named chair-elect for 2014.

McCoy is a resident of Hopkinsville, holds a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Kentucky and is a certified public accountant. She serves on the boards of the Kentucky Banker's Association, the Hopkinsville Industrial Foundation, the Hopkinsville/Christian County Economic Development Council and the Gatton College Business Partnership Foundation Board. She also recently received the Fannie Bronson Postell Award as Outstanding Woman of the Year.

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*Photos of the Board of
Directors appear on Page 4*

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CEO COMMENTARY

Austere budget requires review of Kentucky's antiquated prevailing wage law

By Kentucky Chamber President & CEO
Dave Adkisson

IN THE COMING WEEKS, Gov. Steve Beshear and legislative leaders will begin preparing Kentucky's 2014-2016 budget for the 2014 session of the General Assembly. The story is expected to be a familiar one, with funding requests falling short of available revenue to pay for them. That is particularly true in education, where officials say an additional \$121 million will be needed in fiscal 2015 to fund K-12 education at levels equal to 2008.

This might not sound like an impossible goal to reach under normal economic growth when the \$20 billion biennial budget is considered as a whole. However, Kentucky should expect minimal revenue increases over the next two years, according to the Consensus Forecasting Group. As one leading state budget analyst put it, he is "optimistically uncertain" there will be growth in the state's economy because of uncer-

tainty about business growth and investments in the state.

These grim projections leave Kentucky's lawmakers no choice but to start thinking differently about ways to increase state revenues without adversely affecting Kentucky's ability to retain and attract jobs. One way to achieve this goal is pretty straightforward: repeal Kentucky's antiquated prevailing wage law.

The law, according to numerous accounts that include a report by the nonpartisan Legislative Research Commission, increases public construction labor costs by 17 to 24 percent per project. Projects covered by the prevailing wage law include roads, school construction/renovation, bridges and public water/sewer construction. In the case of schools, the "prevailing wage" must be paid on all state, local and public school construction projects exceeding \$250,000.

The LRC report pointed out that the state Labor Cabinet's method of determining what constitutes a prevailing wage does not accurately

represent a local construction wage. Instead, it is an inflated union construction wage. That makes construction projects more expensive, and that means fewer schools can be built across the state, fewer crumbling bridges replaced and fewer roads repaved.

The Kentucky Chamber strongly urges the General Assembly to repeal the state's prevailing wage law as it drafts the 2014-2016 budget. This move would save taxpayers millions of dollars every year – money that would be far better spent meeting the critical needs of our citizens, especially educating our children.

At a minimum, lawmakers should modernize the prevailing wage law by enacting recommendations from the LRC study that would ensure prevailing wages established in a local community are a true representation of local wages and not artificially inflated construction wages.

While we all want Kentuckians — including

construction workers — to prosper and take home more in their paychecks for their families, do we really want our state and local governments to pay millions of dollars for inflated construction costs each year while many of our teachers haven't had raises and our kids haven't had new textbooks for several years?

Kentucky's lawmakers have shown, with pas-

Repealing the state's prevailing wage law would save taxpayers millions of dollars every year – money that would be far better spent meeting the critical needs of our citizens, especially educating our children.

sage of the comprehensive pension reform bill in 2013, that they can work through partisan differences to modernize state government and help put Kentucky's financial house in order. The Kentucky Chamber hopes to see that cooperative spirit continue in the 2014 session with the repeal of Kentucky's prevailing wage law.

Corrections reform legislation yielding positive results in the Commonwealth

SUPPORTERS of Kentucky's 2011 House Bill 463, a landmark corrections reform bill, met in the Capitol Rotunda Sept. 25 to hear the latest evidence of its continued success. Chamber President & CEO Dave Adkisson joined Rep. John Tilley, Sen. Whitney Westerfield and members of the law enforcement community to voice support for the reform's impact.

Rep. Tilley, who played a fundamental role in passing the legislation as the chairman of the bipartisan task force responsible for drafting the bill, announced several impressive milestones achieved as part of the reform effort. Kentucky has seen a steeper decline in its prison population than any other state in the South, dropping more than 8% since July 2012. Perhaps of most significance was the drop in

the state's recidivism rate – the percentage of prisoners who, after completing their sentence, commit another crime – which decreased by 4%, the lowest rate in more than a decade.

Adkisson once again commended the legislature for its bipartisan work on this effort.

"Today's announcement is an excellent example of what can happen when we put politics and bickering aside. Kentucky is finally being 'smart on crime' and rather than wasting money locking up low-level offenders, we are saving money that can ultimately be funneled back into important areas like education," said Adkisson.



Rep. John Tilley, Sen. Whitney Westerfield and members of the law enforcement community recently spoke during a news conference at the Capitol Rotunda to tout the positive impact of Kentucky Chamber-supported House Bill 463.

As of now, the bill is still on track to save the Commonwealth over \$400 million in the next decade alone.

Adkisson testifies on P3



On Sept. 29, Kentucky Chamber president and CEO Dave Adkisson testified before the transportation committee on the benefits of public-private partnership (P3) legislation. The Chamber released a report on P3 this summer, which examines how greater engagement of the private sector in state government through partnerships can help the state meet essential needs while saving tax dollars and improving efficiency. The Chamber will continue to advocate for P3 legislation in the upcoming 2014 Kentucky General Assembly. Download the report at kychamber.com/p3.

KEMI partnership generates a total of \$200,000 in savings for Chamber members

THE KENTUCKY CHAMBER recently partnered with Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance (KEMI) to make workers' compensation rates more affordable for Kentucky Chamber members and to provide the resources and support necessary to improve and maintain a safe work environment.

This partnership is creating big savings for Kentucky Chamber members. Since the program was launched on July 1, 2013, members have saved a combined total of approximately \$200,000.

"With such significant savings in such a short period of time," said Denise Scott, the Chamber's director of member services, "I believe this program not only benefits current members but also provides



a great opportunity for the Chamber to attract new members."

Members who meet specific qualifications will receive a discount of 10% on KEMI's extremely competitive rates when they choose KEMI for their workers' compensation insurance coverage. In addition to the assurance that comes with

KEMI's A- "Excellent" financial stability rating from A.M. Best, KEMI policyholders also gain access to a wealth of safety resources (such as the OSHA 10-Hour class) and, if desired, personalized on-site claims reviews.

To learn more, contact your insurance agent, visit www.kemi.com/kychamber or call Michael Huff, KEMI Underwriting Manager, at 859-425-7800.

KENTUCKY CHAMBER NEWS BRIEFS

Legislative Preview Conference set for Dec. 9

The Kentucky Chamber's Annual Legislative Preview Conference has been scheduled for Dec. 9, and will be held at the Griffin Gate Marriott Resort & Spa in Lexington. Session topics will include federal issues, the state budget, tax reform, health care, energy and environmental regulations and education standards. Presented by Brown-Forman, the event will begin at 8 a.m. Visit kychamber.com to register.

Best Places to Work program adds category for small businesses; applications due Oct. 31

The application process for the 10th annual Best Places to Work in Kentucky program is now open, and this year's competition features a new category that will honor the best small businesses to work at in the Commonwealth. In 2014, winners will be selected from

three categories instead of two – small companies of 15-149 employees, medium companies of 150-499 employees and large companies consisting of more than 500 employees (category based on number of U.S. employees, only Kentucky employees surveyed).

If you think your company is one of the Best Places to Work in Kentucky, apply at bestplaces-toworkky.com. Applications must be submitted by Thursday, Oct. 31, 2013.

More than 350 business leaders participate in World Trade Day event

In early September, more than 350 business leaders attended Kentucky World Trade Day, presented by UPS, at the Galt House Hotel and Suites in Louisville. The event, hosted by The Kentucky World Trade Center and managed by the Kentucky

Chamber, featured two sessions on trading with European countries and a keynote address by John Sullivan Wilson, lead economist of the development economics research group for The World Bank.

The World Trade Center Kentucky (WTC-KY) is the leading provider of trade consulting, trade education and trade missions across the state. Each year, the WTC-KY responds to more than 500 service requests and organizes international trade education programs covering topics ranging from international sales contracts to market entry strategies. In addition, they organize comprehensive trade missions, which allow Kentucky businesses to explore a market through site visits, business matchmaking and introductions to government officials.

Kentucky Chamber receives national award for efforts toward smoke-free Kentucky



The Kentucky Chamber recently received an award from the non-profit group Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights (ANR) for its advocacy efforts in support of a statewide smoke-free law in the Commonwealth. The Chamber, with strong support from its members, has been a long-time advocate of implementing a statewide smoke-free law in Kentucky. The business community has been hit hard by the negative impact smoking has on the workforce in terms of both employee productivity and high insurance costs. From left, Rep. Susan Westrom, Chamber Public Affairs Manager Ashli Watts, John Harryman, chair of the Chamber's Health & Wellness Policy Council and president of Norton Brownsboro Hospital, and Cynthia Hallett, executive director of the Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights.



Adkisson chairing Council of State Chambers board

Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Dave Adkisson began his term Oct. 1 as chairman of the 2014 Council of State Chambers (COSC) Board of Directors. He was recently elected to this post by other state chamber presidents from across the U.S. Adkisson succeeds 2013 COSC Chairman Barry Kennedy of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce. Prior to being elected chairman, he served as the founding chairman of the State Chamber Policy Center, a think tank dedicated to state chamber policy issues, based in Washington, D.C. At left, Adkisson speaks to members of COSC and the Association of State Chamber Professionals during both organizations' annual dinner in Kiawah Island, S.C.



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Trustees not pictured:

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Barry Racey
Director, Government & Public Relations
West Chester, OH

Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance
Bradley Smith
Executive VP/CEO
Louisville

Century Aluminum of Kentucky, LLC
Jason Curry
HR Manager
Hawesville

Marathon Petroleum Company LP
Sheila Fraley
Community Relations Representative
Catlettsburg

Dana Holding Corporation
Jeff Cole
Director of Marketing
Maumee, OH

Ralcorp Frozen Bakery Products
Ed Judice
Manager - Employee & Community Relations
Louisville

Doe Anderson, Inc.
Todd Spencer
President & CEO
Louisville

Louisville Bedding Company
Alice Walter
VP, Human Resources
Louisville

Emerson Power Transmission
Dan Fannin
Vice President of HR
Maysville

Steel Technologies, Inc.
Michelle Mees Harper
Assistant General Counsel
Louisville

JBS Swift & Company
John Cliff
Vice President
Louisville



Kentucky Chamber
Uniting Business. Advancing Kentucky.



Steve Loyal, Atmos Energy, and Kurt Neubauer, JAUST Consulting Partners; Wil James, Jr., Toyota, and First Lady Jane Beshear; Bryan Sunderland, Kentucky Chamber, and Rusty Ashcraft, Alliance Coal; Aimee Hiller, Kentucky Chamber, Dan Bork, Lexmark, and Kathy Bork.

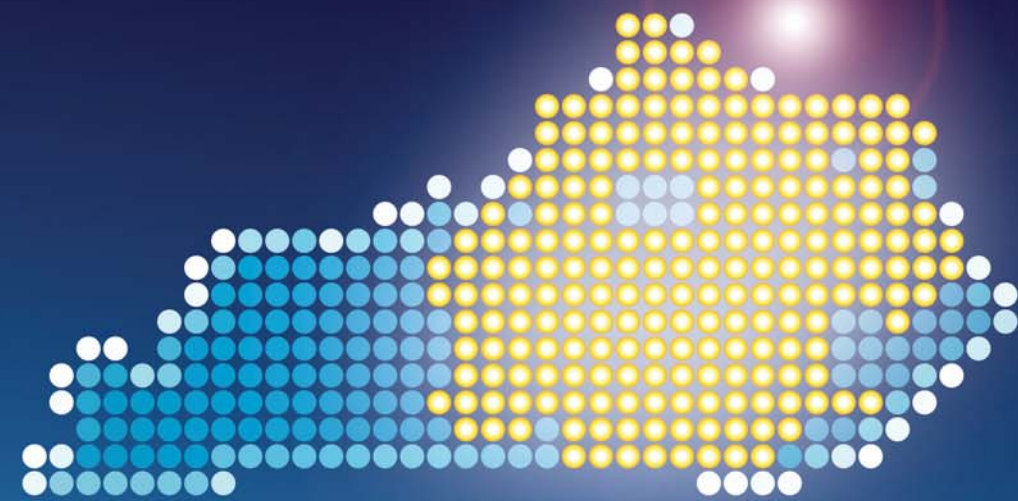
Beshears host Chamber leaders at Governor's Mansion



On Sept. 4, Gov. Steve Beshear and First Lady Jane Beshear hosted the Kentucky Chamber's Key Investors and guests at the Governor's Mansion in Frankfort. More than 100 attended the event, which was sponsored by Booth Energy, Toyota and Planters Bank.

BELOW: Ruth Brinkley, Kentucky ONEHealth; Jim Booth, Booth Energy, Kathy Martin, Past Chairman Wayne Martin, and Jim Host; Congressman Hal Rogers and Steve Lochmueller; Michael McCall, KCTCS, and Elizabeth McCoy, Planters Bank.





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