

EDUCATION

Kentucky's economic viability is directly linked to the education and skills of its citizens. The Kentucky Chamber believes that education at all levels must be responsive to the needs of employers and all students – children and adults. With a focus on lifelong learning, the education and workforce council works to ensure that Kentucky's economy inherits a prepared, productive and diverse workforce. The council develops policies to support and improve education at all levels.



COMMITTEE CHAIR
Kelly Swartz,
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America would save more than \$17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for health care for the uninsured by graduating all students.

Alliance for Excellent Education

LOOK FOR:

tough choices

Chamber policy statements that embody the Tough Choices ideas will be noted with this symbol.

Improving education at all levels

Kentucky's economic viability is directly linked to the education and skills of its citizens. The Commonwealth must recognize that the relationship between workforce capability and economic growth is fundamental and critical, particularly as Kentucky and the nation face increasing competition from around the world. The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce believes that education at all levels must be responsive to the needs of employers and all students — both children and adults.

The Commonwealth must reinforce the relationship between funding, expectations for high student achievement and accountability at all levels of education—from early childhood through postsecondary and adult. Accountability is the foundation for Kentucky's system of education. The state must continually measure its progress toward specific goals to ensure a successful future for Kentucky and its citizens and accountability for taxpayers.

To ensure that Kentucky is fully competitive for federal education funds, state policy-makers should explore available changes to laws and regulations, if needed, that would focus on adopting internationally benchmarked standards, improving the recruitment, retention, and rewarding of educators, the creation of charter schools, improving data collection and

turning around the lowest-performing schools.

Tough Choices or Tough Times

To help Kentucky increase the level of student achievement and compete globally, the Kentucky Chamber encourages Kentucky's school systems to implement elements of Tough Choices or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. The report, sponsored by The National Center on Education and the Economy, proposes a dramatic restructuring of all aspects of the nation's education system including recruiting teachers from the top third of high school graduates going on to college, allowing academically prepared students to graduate from high school in fewer years and implementing standards and assessments reflective of today's business needs.



POSTSECONDARY

Maintain 2007 Task Force Report

The Kentucky Chamber's 2007 Postsecondary Education Task Force report underpins an aggressive, ongoing policy agenda. It is time to build on the structural changes and goals embodied in the 1997 Higher Education Reforms and create a new commitment that funds enhanced accountability and supports a seamless, efficient system of learning and teaching. The Chamber's 2009 progress report points to the need to accelerate improvements in Kentucky's postsecondary education system.

Make Higher Education Affordable

Making sure that postsecondary education is affordable for Kentucky students should be a priority for the Commonwealth. The Chamber advocates a shared responsibility model, the Guaranteed Access Program (GAP) that would simplify the state's financial assistance process. Under the GAP approach, the cost of postsecondary education would be shared among students, families, postsecondary institutions and the government.

Create a Seamless Education Experience

A student's progress through the education system depends on how well he or she is prepared at each level to succeed at the next. Too often, a lack of communication, collaboration and coordination among the levels of education creates obstacles for students. The Chamber commends the Kentucky General

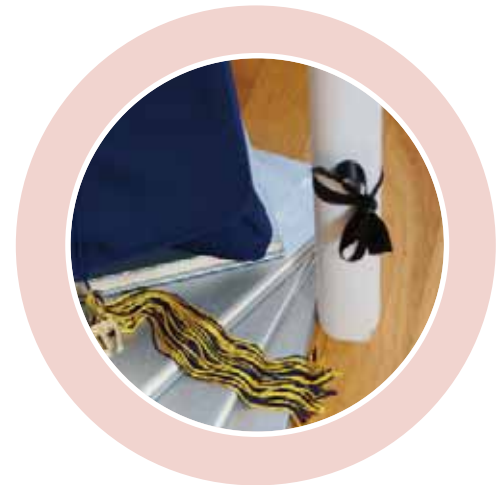
Assembly for passing Senate Bill 1 in the 2009 legislative session which focused on these issues. Much work is still to be done as the various departments and workgroups develop new standards and tests to better educate the state's children. The Chamber acknowledges the importance of the implementation process and urges those involved to ensure the new structure results in the creation of a seamless education experience for students, beginning with preschool and continuing through postsecondary graduation and/or workforce preparation.

Reduce Time to Degree

The Kentucky Chamber small business supports efforts among policymakers and postsecondary education institutions to shorten the time required to obtain an associate and bachelor's degree, while maintaining academically rigorous and focused programs. Kentuckians need efficient and affordable postsecondary education while employers need qualified applicants. Both should have their needs met in a timely manner. The Chamber supports programs aimed at reducing the need for remediation for students entering postsecondary education institutions, improving credit transfer policies and providing incentives for students to graduate on time.

Reinvest in the Research Challenge Trust Fund

The Commonwealth's landmark Research Challenge Trust Fund ("Bucks for Brains")



If the students who dropped out of the Class of 2008 had graduated, the state's economy would have benefited from an additional \$4.2 billion in income over their lifetimes, higher tax receipts and higher levels of worker productivity.

Alliance for Excellent Education

If we do not prepare to succeed in a highly competitive, knowledge-based, technology-driven global economy, we can expect the long-term decline in the earning power of our workers to continue to accelerate until we join the ranks of the second-rate powers.

Tough Choices or Tough Times

has been used to attract world-class researchers and professors to Kentucky universities. The Kentucky Chamber encourages lawmakers to continue the trust fund or to devise a similar program that would provide matching dollars to give universities flexibility, with accountability, to ensure that they can attract research faculty and provide up-to-date facilities, technology or other tools they need to succeed in meeting the expectations of the 1997 postsecondary education reforms.

Grant Universities Bonding Authority

Currently, 43 states allow public universities to issue their own revenue bonds to finance building projects that generate income sufficient to cover the debt service. To the extent that such an approach would not negatively impact the Commonwealth's state bond rating, the Kentucky Chamber believes a similar approach should be implemented in Kentucky with structural safeguards and oversight that ensure projects are consistent with the state's vision for postsecondary education.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACHIEVEMENT Require Education Accountability

Individuals and institutions should be held accountable for student achievement through a series of performance measures that will help gauge teacher, student and administrator performance. The Chamber further believes that efforts to build stronger schools, and thereby

enhance the state's economic prosperity, should include end-of-course examinations for students, holding educators accountable for student success and holding postsecondary institutions accountable for the preparation of high quality teachers.

Improve Academic Achievement and Performance

Students at all levels should be challenged even as they are provided the environment and instruction they need to succeed. Improving academic achievement of all students by encouraging rigorous courses, tying student grades to their progress on state standards and regularly assessing performance is critical for continuous improvement.

At the high-school level, financial rewards — in particular the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship — should be weighted to provide students with greater incentives to take more rigorous courses. Under current law, a student can score a 15 on the ACT and still receive KEES Scholarship funds. The Chamber supports raising this score to more accurately reflect the minimum score needed for admission to Kentucky's postsecondary institutions.

At the postsecondary level, ensuring timely degree completion is a key strategy in managing limited state and student resources. Policymakers should review factors that might delay a student's degree progress, and develop strategies and incentives leading to measureable reductions in time-to-degree.



Additionally, the Chamber believes that policy-makers should support a range of strategies to improve student transfer of course credits among Kentucky's postsecondary institutions including expanded financial aid opportunities for adult and part-time learners, better outreach and improved advising services, more flexible course delivery targeted to adult learners, better pathways between technical and applied four-year programs and performance-based institutional rewards for improved transfer rates and reduced incidence of remediation.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Invest in Early Childhood Education

Kentucky must invest in early childhood education and development. Ensuring a successful beginning for Kentucky's students will require an innovative, increased investment in preschool and efforts to fully fund all-day kindergarten equitably statewide. In addition, the Chamber supports greater investment in health screenings and enhanced child care programs for Kentucky's developing youth.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY

Reduce the Dropout Rate

Higher education attainment is the foundation of accelerating economic growth. In 2008, 6,489 students in the state dropped out, and nearly 26% of adults in Kentucky have less than a high-school education. The Kentucky Chamber supports raising Kentucky's compulsory school-attendance age to 18 and the development of alternative learning tracks

and learning environments that will assist students who are struggling in the standard high-school setting to complete a high-school degree and to matriculate toward certificate and postsecondary degree programs.

Develop and Reward Effective Educators

Quality teaching is the single most important factor in students' academic success. To ensure every Kentucky student has a high quality teacher every year, the Kentucky Chamber believes the state should undertake a formal statewide policy review of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and require providers to redesign professional development programs to better meet the needs of classroom teachers.

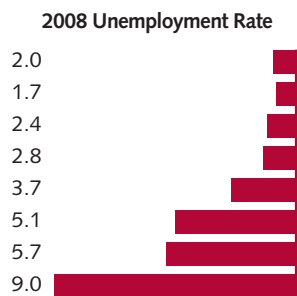
Policy-makers must professionalize the teacher compensation system to reward excellence and provide incentives to attract educators to underserved areas (both geographic and subject matter).

Require Collaboration on Principal Hiring
Because superintendents are held accountable for the performance of individual schools and entire districts, they must have the authority to make or participate in critical personnel decisions. The Chamber supports measures that would allow the superintendent to remove the leadership of a consistently low-performing school. Similarly, school councils have an appropriate role to play in the hiring of school principals. To achieve both these goals, the Kentucky Chamber supports requiring



High-quality early childhood education is one of the best investments a nation can make in its young people.

Tough Choices or Tough Times



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

EDUCATION PAYS

Doctoral degree
Professional degree
Master's degree
Bachelor's degree
Associate degree
Some college, no degree
High school graduate
Less than a high school diploma

2008 Median Weekly Earnings

\$1,555
\$1,522
\$1,228
\$978
\$736
\$645
\$591
\$426

school councils and superintendents to collaborate on the hiring of principals.

Improving School Safety

The Kentucky Chamber supports measures to improve school safety through more effective employee screening and other measures to protect and safeguard school buildings and offices.

ADULT AND WORKFORCE

Enhancing Workforce Preparation

The Kentucky Chamber supports the widespread use

small business

of industry-based credentials to establish uniform standards in workforce preparation. Students who pursue technical training instead of a college education should be eligible for financial awards of all types. The Chamber supports redesigning postsecondary financial aid programs to assist working adults and full implementation of the new state initiative to assess middle and high school students to provide career guidance to ensure their college, technical school and/or workplace readiness.

The Commonwealth must expand employer and community involvement through efforts that help Kentuckians understand the need to improve schools, develop strategies for enhanced parent involvement in schools and en-

gage business representatives in a regular review of state academic standards. The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to create incentives for Kentucky's employers to support and encourage involvement in all facets of the ongoing task of improving public education in Kentucky.

Further, the Chamber supports tougher penalties on truant students because the tendency for a weak or strong work ethic is often apparent in a student's attendance record.

Improve Adult Education System

Fully 80% of Kentucky's adults who receive a GED in-

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stead of a high-school diploma are not prepared for postsecondary education or training. Kentucky must develop new standards and expectations in line with the GED 2012 National Test that will reflect the expanded rigor and relevance expected in a high-school diploma. It is critical that Kentucky's Adult Education programs collaborate with employers, local community colleges and technical schools to help ensure quality learning experiences for those working toward a GED. Additionally, there should be improved and expanded financial aid opportunities for working adults who need assistance for additional technical training and postsecondary education.