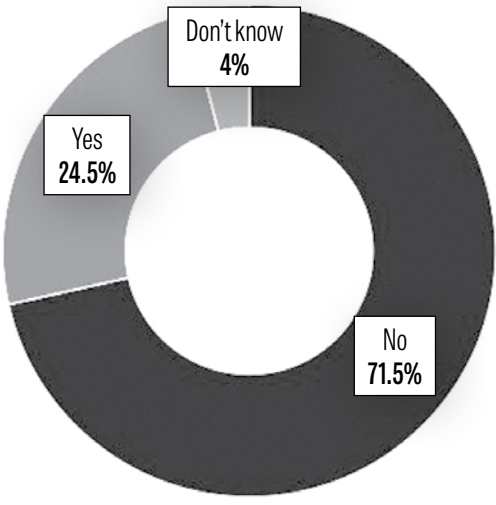


ONLINE POLL:
Do you believe 15-year-olds should be able to obtain their driver's permit?



This poll reflects the opinions of 201 respondents. Visit www.state-journal.com to take part in today's poll.

EDITORIAL

Local organizations, volunteers step up for area kids

When there is a need, the Frankfort community always shows up and helps out — especially when children are involved. Last week, we saw two shining examples of neighbors helping neighbors when The Kings Center had an official ribbon-ceremony to mark the installation of its new bike shelter to keep kids' bicycles out of the elements and Kiwanis Club of Frankfort's 76th annual Pancake Breakfast, the organization's largest fundraiser, the proceeds of which provide events and activities for local youth.

Walk Bike Frankfort hosted Carb-Load for a Cause, a spaghetti dinner, 0.5K fun run/walk and silent auction, at Sig Luscher Brewery in November to benefit the bike enclosure project at The Kings Center. Robert Semones provided surveying. Prentice Harvey handled the legal work and Cyrus Hines built the secure storage facility.

"It's a joy to see the community coming together for our future residents. It's going to change how we move around the community," The Kings Center Executive Director Deneen Petty said. "The kids' bikes will be off the street. And the kids can sit and get shade and relax. It's another place for us to gather and have events."

Speaking of coming together, hundreds of hungry folks — including many new faces — were on hand for the Kiwanis Club of Frankfort's Pancake Breakfast at Franklin County High School Saturday. The event was free, but donations — to help the organization reach its \$10,000 goal — were welcome.

The Kiwanis Club of Frankfort sponsors Key Clubs at local high schools, the CKI Club at Kentucky State University and the Longest Day of Play, which is slated for 5-7 p.m. at Juniper Hill Park and Aquatic Center followed by a pool party from 7-9 p.m. The organization has also donated to programs like Amtryke Bikes for disabled students, Project Graduation, Scouts, ROSM, elementary reading programs, Millville Music Festival, Sharing is Caring at KSU and the Wanda Joyce Robinson Foundation. The club provides scholarships to students in our leadership programs as well as events for local children and families.

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child and we are grateful for all the organizations and volunteers that invest in our youth and thankful for those who support these worthy causes.

Will Ky. shut down a school serving thousands of students?

Accountability for academic performance is suddenly all the rage among Kentucky's anti-education-freedom bureaucrats and politicians, but only because it involves a new program offering parents a choice for their children outside the traditional K-12 public school system.

Case in point: Rural Breckinridge County's Cloverport Independent School District, where 275 students attend brick-and-mortar schools, has started the Kentucky Virtual Academy (KVA). More than 3,000 students statewide — including about 800 from the Jefferson County Public School District, Kentucky's largest — are enrolled in the online academy in only its second year, more than double the school's enrollment in 2023-24.

In December, the Kentucky Board of Education adopted a new regulation which, if implemented, will essentially shut down KVA, denying thousands of students an alternative their families believe is a better educational fit.

The board's action is mostly about appeasing overpaid and parent-choice-hostile bureaucrats who run Kentucky's local school systems and who loathe the fact that state education dollars leave their districts and follow students to the KVA.

State senators deserve kudos for taking action to try and keep thousands of families from being denied the KVA option by passing a bill that bars the state from cutting funding or capping virtual schools' enrollment for three years.

The Senate's version of House Bill 241 reinforces what should be the first priority of our schools — educating students. It recognizes the importance of having a system with the flexibility and innovation to provide that education regardless of obstacles like the weather or a pandemic.

It's likely that some — if not several — of those hundreds of former JCPS students snared in a COVID-shutdown fiasco which occurred in Louisville are now enrolled in KVA with hopes of finally making up at least some of the ground they lost.



Jim Waters
Guest columnist

Most important, it gives parents an option for students statewide trapped in failing schools without options. Perhaps the richest irony in the debate over the KVA is that Kentucky's public education establishment and its media cronies are suddenly expressing grave concerns about low test scores.

Such concern seems to have grown exponentially since the nearly across-the-board failure of a majority of Kentucky's public school students to reach math and reading proficiency was hardly even an afterthought in the education establishment's narrative during last year's school-choice amendment campaign.

Regarding the new KVA, any competent educator knows it takes time for new educational ventures to achieve healthy results. This is certainly true for publicly funded, independently run schools — like public charter schools — which a growing mountain of research indicates begin to outperform traditional public schools after three years.

New public charter schools are generally given five years before their performance can be fairly evaluated. The KVA should also be given sufficient time to demonstrate its effectiveness, which the current version of HB 241 does.

Many parents choose an alternative because their children aren't succeeding in school. This

means many children enter the new school already behind; it takes time for them to catch up.

HB 241 as passed by the Senate merges a bill providing districts hit hard by weather closures five calamity days that don't need to be made up with Senate Bill 268, sponsored by Sen. Aaron Reed, R-Shelbyville, which bars the state from cutting funding or capping virtual schools' enrollment for three years.

Ironically, the original House bill would let Kentucky's public school districts off the hook because of missed weather days when students in virtual schools — which the Senate legislation protects — can attend school no matter the weather conditions.

This merging of bills is a distasteful aspect of legislative activity, which is why the process is often compared to "sausage making." However, such a procedure is occasionally necessary, especially when the KDE attempts to regulate a public school out of existence just because it's different and sends thousands of children and their families scrambling for a new school.

Our state's K-12 establishment is infected with extreme opposition to educational freedom, causing it to obsessively seek to deny parents statewide an opportunity like the Cloverport academy. The Senate's merged version of the bill, which now returns to the House for consideration, offers a cure for this ailment.

Passing the merged bill achieves the goal of both original bills: it relieves districts hit hard by weather of five make-up days and protects the KVA option for thousands of students.

Jim Waters is president of the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions, Kentucky's free-market think tank. Read previous columns at www.bipps.org. Reach him at jwaters@freedomkentucky.com and [@bipps](https://twitter.com/bipps) on Twitter.

LETTER

REINSTATE FUNDING FOR LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS AND CHILD CARE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

Dear editor,

As a resident of Frankfort and a parent of a former Frankfort Independent Schools student, educator and backyard farmer, I am deeply dismayed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's decision to retract nearly \$700 million in funding from the Local Food for Schools and Child Care Cooperative agreement. This reckless move undermines efforts to provide fresh, nutritious food to children while stripping essential support from local farmers, ranchers and fishermen.

The Local Food for Schools program has been a lifeline for communities nationwide, including our own — FIS has a robust Farm-to-School program and I'd like to see that expanded to all Franklin County Schools. Directing funds exclusively toward purchases from local producers not only strengthens our agricultural economy but also provides

much-needed relief to school nutrition programs struggling to serve healthy, appealing meals with limited budgets. Without this support, schools will be forced to rely on cheaper, highly processed foods, directly impacting children's health and well-being.

Beyond school cafeterias, this program spurs long-term investment in local and regional food infrastructure — ensuring that American producers can continue feeding our communities. Strengthening these supply chains is critical to fostering a resilient food system that serves farmers and families. There is no greater return on investment than supporting local producers while advancing child nutrition. This decision is a step backward at a time when we should be expanding, not eliminating, programs that work. I urge the public to speak out and demand the reinstatement of this essential funding. Our children, farmers, and communities depend on it.

*Natalie Gwishiri
Frankfort*

SUBMIT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The State Journal encourages readers to submit letters to the editor. To submit a letter email letters@state-journal.com.

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