

Many more Kentucky students learning STEM in afterschool

New study finds impressive leap in Kentucky afterschool programs providing STEM education, but room for improvement in frequency of STEM engagement, technology learning in afterschool

Submitted by Magen Eissenstat

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Ninety-one percent of parents in Kentucky now report their child’s afterschool program offers STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning opportunities – an increase from 72% in 2014. Today, 51,846 Kentucky students are getting STEM education in their afterschool program. But approximately 5 in 6 Kentucky children and youth whose parents want afterschool programs for them (84%) are not enrolled at all. Afterschool STEM Takes Off, released today by the Afterschool Alliance, finds increases in STEM in afterschool from 2014 to 2025 in every state. It is based on a survey of 30,515 U.S. parents of school-age children who live in their households, conducted by Edge Research – including 601 in Kentucky. It finds that most Kentucky parents recognize the value of STEM education in afterschool, with 81% agreeing that afterschool

programs help children gain STEM interests and skills. Afterschool STEM Takes Off finds STEM education in Kentucky is most often taking place at afterschool programs based at a public or charter school or library. But the new study finds that how often children engage with STEM in afterschool varies. Sixty percent of Kentucky parents report their child engages with STEM in afterschool at least two to three times per week. That compares to 54% nationally, with low-income parents across the country reporting significantly less frequency than parents with higher incomes. In Kentucky, 89% of parents report their child’s afterschool program is offering science and math, compared to just 68% who report it is providing technology activities. “In Kentucky and across the country, afterschool programs are providing the STEM education and engagement that students need to succeed in school and in life,” said Afterschool Alliance Execu-

tive Director Jodi Grant. “Afterschool is an optimal setting for STEM because it creates opportunities for students to explore their interests and apply STEM skills to real-world problems through hands-on, team-based engagement outside of the school day. We commend the afterschool providers in Kentucky for the remarkable work they are doing. But too many children and youth are shut out of afterschool programs altogether, and reversing that is essential to ensuring that Kentucky youth and its economy can thrive.” “There is good news in this new report. Kentucky afterschool programs have stepped up in a big way and are meeting the challenge to prepare our children and youth to be STEM-literate citizens who can succeed in the workforce of tomorrow,” said Kathleen Kelly, Director of Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance. “But we need the resources to do more to ensure that all our state’s young people can access the afterschool and summer learning programs that will help

them thrive, and that these programs thoroughly engage them in all the STEM subjects. We will work with local and state lawmakers and our many partners in our communities to ensure we can continue the progress.” Nationally, the study finds 92% of parents of afterschool students now report their children have STEM learning opportunities in their afterschool program, but students in rural communities and low-income families lag behind. In most respects, Kentucky results mirror the national findings, which include: Children in families with low incomes are less likely to have multiple exposures to STEM in afterschool each week than those whose families have higher incomes. Less than half of parents with low incomes (48%) say their child engages in STEM in afterschool multiple times per week, compared to 56% of parents with middle incomes and 60% of parents with high incomes. Rural parents report fewer computer science

and technology opportunities in afterschool. Just 70% of rural parents with a child in an afterschool program report the program offers computer science, compared to 88% of urban parents. Similarly, just 66% of rural parents with a child in an afterschool program report the program offers technology education, compared to 86% of urban parents. Two in three parents with children in afterschool programs (65%) value STEM extremely or somewhat when selecting a program – but there are differences by race. Native American parents (73%), Black and Hispanic parents (70%), and Asian American parents (68%) place greater importance on STEM in afterschool than White families (62%). Parents of boys and girls report similar levels of access to STEM in their child’s afterschool program, but parents of girls prioritize computer science, technology, and engineering less than parents of boys. Parents today report that 93% of male children and 91% of females have

STEM opportunities in afterschool. But there are differences in how much parents of boys and girls prioritize different STEM subjects, with 63% of boy parents placing greater importance on computer science, technology, and engineering, compared to just 53%, 56%, and 58%, respectively, of girl parents. The national and Kentucky America After 3PM 2025 STEM findings and accompanying data are available at <https://aa3pm.co>. This fifth edition of America After 3PM is based on a survey conducted in English and Spanish using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. Data were collected between January 31 and April 21, 2025. The margin of error for the child- and household-level data is +/- < 1 percent. Previous America After 3PM surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020. The America After 3PM STEM findings are based on research funded by Overdeck Family Foundation.

Beautify the Bluegrass voting under way

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (KT) – Voting is under-way now through Sept. 1 to select the 2026 Beautify the Bluegrass Governor’s Award from among five local finalists located across the state. The partnership between Kentucky Living, Kentucky Electric Cooperatives and the Kentucky Governor’s Office is celebrating its 10th consecutive year. Beautify the Bluegrass

showcases the dedication Kentuckians pour into their communities across the commonwealth, highlighting standout projects that demonstrate local spirit through efforts such as revitalized communal spaces, park cleanups and public art displays. Since launching in 2017, the initiative has given Kentuckians a voice in selecting the Governor’s Award recipient, with the winning project recognized by Gov. Andy Beshear.

“Thank you to Kentucky Living and Kentucky’s Electric Cooperatives for highlighting people working to make a difference in their communities,” Beshear said. “We are always excited to celebrate Kentuckians who roll up their sleeves to make our new Kentucky home more beautiful. Congratulations to all these finalists, and good luck.” Announced by Gov. Beshear during Kentucky Living’s 2026 Best in Kentucky Awards

Show, this year’s finalists were selected from an exceptional group of projects showcasing the creativity and commitment behind community improvements across the Bluegrass State. The five finalists are: — Worthington Memorial Park Jackson Energy Cooperative and others, Jackson County. — Cumberland Falls Spring Cleanup Kentucky Wildlands/Eastern Kentucky PRIDE, Whitley &

McCreary County. — Paula’s Garden America in Bloom Lawrenceburg, Anderson County. — Danville Mural Project Danville-Boyle County Convention and Visitors Bureau and others, Boyle County. — Cardinal Park City of Union, Boone County. Go to kentuckyliving.com through Sept. 1 to learn more about this year’s projects, vote for your favorite finalist and

see community pride in action across the state. Kentucky’s electric cooperatives serve more than 1.8 million people, about 35 percent of the state’s population, in 117 of Kentucky’s 120 counties. Readers can visit KentuckyLiving.com through Sept. 1 to learn more about this year’s projects, cast their vote for their favorite finalist and see community pride in action across the Commonwealth.

Looking back to Aug. 27, 2018

Written by Jonathan Wright

The following information was entered into the Aug. 27, 2018, edition of The Ledger Independent: — **MCTC celebrates 50th anniversary**

Maysville Community and Technical College celebrated its 50th anniversary Sunday evening. Former alumni, young and old, from the campus were invited to take part in the festivities. Cara Clarke, chair for the com-

mittee that organized the celebration, outlined the numerous activities for attendees to participate in. As soon as the festivities began, Clarke said alumni were greeted by the MCTC Mountain Boys, playing bluegrass music on the campus lawn. Inside were refreshments, with the campus library showcasing several photos and artifacts belonging to numerous eras of MCTC’s lifetime. The Kentucky Symphony Orchestra also held a performance, playing a medley of music from different eras from the 1960s and onward. Alumni could also hear from the college presidents, both former and current, about their stories while on campus.

“We have the past presidents, at least three of them and Dr. Stephen Vacik, with John Klee moderating,” Clarke said, “and he’s talking to them about their memories and things that happened to them when they were operating MCTC.” The forum was held in the Crockett Auditorium. Among the presidents who were on hand for the forum were Dr. James C. Shires, Dr. Augusta A. Julian, Dr. Ed Story and Vacik, the current president of MCTC. Each president gave their account of how their careers led them to MCTC. Shires said to the many alumni in attendance that the community itself was what compelled him to work here. “Believe it or not, I

turned down a job at a college in the Virgin Islands to to come to Maysville,” he said, eliciting laughs from the crowd. Shires said he had worked closely with colleges and universities in the past, most notably the University of Kentucky. From there, he learned of the community college system, and three new campuses —one of them was Maysville Community College. “From the very beginning of my visit here, and then deciding to come here, I could see the support that this college, as small as it was, had,” Shrines said. All of the other presidents echoed those remarks — that the community is what drew them to work at the college, and the community makes the college. Former State Representative Mike Denham, graduate of the first class at what was then Maysville Community College, said he was very pleased with the celebration and with the lengths those who put the event together went to. “It’s a great day,” Den-

ham said. “It’s a lot of fun and they’ve gone through a lot of trouble to prepare everything. These presidents have done a good job in moving the college forward and they deserve a lot of credit for it.” Vacik said he is humbled by being among those who have built the college into what it is today and being part of the legacy that MCTC continues to forge. “It’s pretty humbling,” Vacik said, “you get to look back and see we started with 58 graduating students in 1970, after admitting students in ‘68; and this last year we had thousands of credentials awarded to somewhere around 700 students, give or take a few. That legacy is not one I take for granted, I feel very fortunate to be a president here, and to get to work with the faculty and staff that we do have.” Vacik went on to punctuate the statement with a quote from Sir Isaac Newton in describing his role at MCTC: “I stand on the shoulder of giants that have gone before me.”

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