

A BIG WIN FOR KENTUCKY STUDENTS



Kentucky Core Academic Standards

Kentucky has had a long history of poor academic performance, but significant improvement has been made in recent years, putting the state in a much stronger position on several indicators of educational performance. Kentucky students have consistently made gains on the Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reaching an all-time high in 2013. This improvement is in no small part due to the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, business leaders, community organizations, and other advocates across the state that have joined together to build support for reforms to boost student achievement.

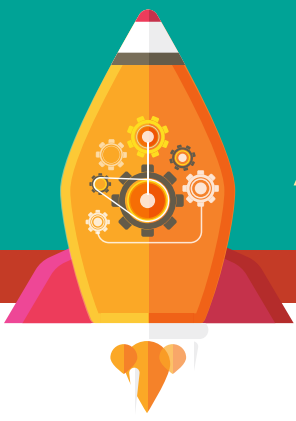
Kentucky's Proficiency Rates on the Nation's Report Card

Year	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
2011	39%	35%	27%	33%
2013	41%	36%	30%	38%

Before 2010, Kentucky's K–12 academic standards were vague and open to differing interpretations. According to the Fordham Institute, the English language arts standards left out more than half of the essential content, and both the math and English standards were among the worst in the nation. Kentucky was not stacking up in other areas either, receiving a 'C' in rigor and a 'D' in postsecondary and workforce readiness in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's 2007 *Leaders and Laggards* report. Lacking the skills to complete college-level work, 38% of students entering Kentucky public institutions of higher education in 2008 had to enroll in at least one remedial course.

In February 2010, Kentucky was the first state to adopt a set of academic standards in math and English language arts that were higher, clearer, and more focused on the skills that matter most for success after high school. Teachers began instructing the content outlined in the standards the following year, and student success soon became evident. Since then, the number of Kentucky high school students meeting the ACT college readiness benchmarks has increased by 15%.

With the adoption of improved standards, Kentucky is one step closer to ensuring that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. On the last census, only 31.7% of the working-age population held a two- or four-year degree. But by 2018, there will be more than 1 million job openings in Kentucky, 54% of which will require some education beyond high school, resulting in a 22% skills gap. By raising the bar, we can be confident that Kentucky students will be qualified to fill these jobs and contribute to the growth of our economy.



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Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

Since 2010, teachers across Kentucky have been hard at work learning and implementing the standards. It was, and continues to be, a significant undertaking, involving the development of aligned curricula, instructional materials, and learning strategies to engage students more deeply than ever before.

The next phase of this work was to implement tests in Kentucky that are more meaningful to students, teachers, and parents in determining which skills a student has or has not yet mastered in order to be prepared to succeed. We needed a test that measured the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that parents, teachers, business leaders, and higher education leaders have said our students need in order to be successful. While our previous state tests could not evaluate this level of learning, the improved Kentucky Performance Ratings for Educational Progress (K-PREP) assessments are an opportunity to move beyond rote-memorization bubble tests to demonstrate learned skills.

Kentucky was originally a member of two multistate consortia, PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. After opting to create a test unique to Kentucky, the state left both consortia and began administering the K-PREP in grades 3–8 in 2012. Additionally, high school students began taking ACT end-of-course exams in English II, Algebra II, Biology, and U.S. History. These higher-quality tests gave a realistic baseline of student achievement. Although scores dropped in the first year, they have since consistently increased as students and teachers become more familiar with the standards and tests. Because they provide teachers, parents, and students with actionable information on student progress, the tests have helped improve learning. Last year, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of students meeting college readiness benchmarks on the ACT and on the number

of students reaching proficiency on the K-PREP at every grade level.

Putting better assessments in place is not enough; they need to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds schools accountable for successfully teaching the content outlined in the standards. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Kentucky are receiving the same high-quality education. Meaningful tests serve as schoolwide academic checkups that can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support so interventions can be put in place. In addition, improved assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them with the resources necessary to help them excel.

As supporters, we need to ensure that our tests continue to be used to provide a strong measuring stick of how Kentucky students are doing on the path to college and careers at the state and national level. The assessments include many of the criteria that make a high-quality test a useful tool that benefits our students.

A High-Quality Assessment

- Is fully aligned to the underlying standards.
- Is developed with input from both academic and testing experts, as well as teachers.
- Is field tested and reviewed before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats.
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as academic checkups to make sure students are keeping pace.
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are struggling so that interventions can be put in place.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between curriculum and standards?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points in their education. Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments. College- and career-ready standards are generally designed to prepare students to enter basic college math and English classes with the expectation of receiving a B or better.
- A curriculum is the course of study covering the standards. Under state law, it is set by local schools and includes the lesson plans, programs, textbooks, and online/digital materials that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

2. If students are learning with different curricula, how can they take the same test?

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students still master the same skills outlined in the standards. Teachers can be innovative in their instruction, designing lessons to best reach their students and creating a classroom where all students can achieve.

3. How will test scores impact schools and districts?

- Schoolwide test results will be used as one measure for school accountability. Just as tests are used as academic checkups for individual students, they are also used as checkups for schools. Districts need to identify areas of low performance so that interventions can be put in place to ensure students are on track to graduate college- and career-ready.

4. How will test scores impact teachers?

- For teachers of tested courses (primarily English and math), student growth on the state tests will be one of the measures used in teacher evaluations. School districts will decide how heavily the scores count in the overall evaluation. Other measures, including observations by



Kentucky 11th Graders Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks

2012	47%
2013	54%
2014	62%

Kentucky Core Academic Standards

- Are more rigorous academic standards that help prepare all students for, success after high school.
- Emphasize real-world skills such as critical-thinking and problem-solving.
- Are comparable across states.

Better Assessments

- Give an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- Ensure that all students are held to the same expectations.
- Identify struggling students so that they can get the help they need and graduate prepared for college.

administrators or peers and student/parent surveys, will also factor into the evaluations.

- For teachers whose subjects are not tested annually, student growth will be measured through goals set by the school district for incremental assessments or evaluations of student progress.

5. How will test scores impact students?

- Currently, high school test scores can account for up to 20% of a student's end-of-course grade. (This could change as different measures are being explored for high school courses.)

6. What kind of professional development did teachers receive in preparation for the standards and the new test?

- Since the new standards were adopted in 2010, the Kentucky Department of Education established a leadership capacity-building training model.
- Through Kentucky's eight regional education cooperatives, regional groups worked with math and English language arts specialists and postsecondary professors in each subject area to train teachers.
- Teachers worked together to analyze the standards and group the learning into units and lesson plans.

7. What kind of data are collected? Is it released?

- Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Kentucky is required to collect data on schools performance. Data collected will include student test scores and information such as attendance, support services, and academic growth. *The state will not release any personally identifiable student information.* Only individuals who interact with students on a daily basis, such as teachers and parents, are allowed to see student-specific information.

Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups.

8. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Since 1992, the Kentucky Department of Education has involved local teachers in the development of content, standards, and assessments. Committees known as Content Advisory Committees are on a three-year rotating cycle of juried professionals. Experts in the field are on loan on a regular basis from their local teaching duties to advise on standards, content, assessments, and accountability needs.
- A legislatively mandated School Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability Council includes two teacher leaders who have direct input into and oversight of all assessment and accountability measures.

9. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Yes, but not under the Common Core guidelines. Technology is a smart investment. Ensuring that all students in Kentucky, regardless of geography or household income, have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.
- Kentucky has a strong Department of Career and Technology Education that guides schools on mandates requiring technology skills needed for success in college and career.

10. Where can I go for more information?

- www.education.ky.gov
- www.kytech.ky.gov
- www.cpe.ky.gov
- www.BusinessForCore.org