

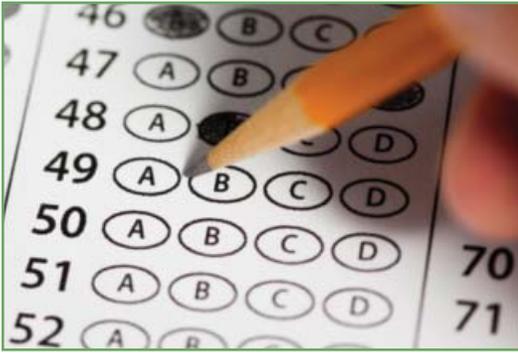


Tougher Standards to Prepare Kentucky's Students for College and Career



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Introduction

KENTUCKY STUDENTS are being taught mathematics and English/language arts under new, more challenging standards that are designed to improve their preparation for college and career. Progress is measured by state tests that reflect the performance of both students and schools in meeting the requirements of the higher standards.

The complexity of the process understandably raises many questions as parents, employers, civic leaders and other interested Kentuckians seek to learn more about the state's education improvement efforts. This overview addresses some of those questions and suggests additional resources that offer more detailed information.

Kentucky's Standards: More Rigorous for Today's World

LEGISLATION ENACTED by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2009 mandated new, more rigorous academic standards and new state tests. Two years later, Kentucky became the first of 46 states to adopt what are called the Common Core State Standards in math and English. These became the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, and they were incorporated into the state's classrooms beginning in the 2011-12 school year. (The Kentucky Board of Education approved new science standards in June 2013, but they are not yet part of classroom instruction; social studies standards are still being developed).

Standards are simply what students are expected to learn as they move from grade to grade through school. They help set clear, consistent expectations for students, parents and teachers and build students' knowledge and skills. Kentucky's new standards – benchmarked internationally to better prepare students to succeed in a global economy – require students to show they have a deeper understanding of subjects.



Comparing the old standards to the new

Here is an example of a standard for 6th grade reading. The first version is what Kentucky had in place before; the second is the current standard.

PREVIOUS STANDARD

- Students will apply knowledge of synonyms or antonyms to comprehend a passage.
- Students will select, based on context, the appropriate meaning for a word that has multiple meanings.

CURRENT STANDARD

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Use content (e.g. the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph, a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g. audience, auditory, audible).
- Consult reference materials (e.g. dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning of its part of speech.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g. by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Similarly challenging standards, which go deeper every year, are in place for math and English/language arts for elementary, middle and high school students. More information, including a complete list of the new standards, is available at: corestandards.org.

Testing to Measure Progress — of Students, Schools and Districts

TESTING ON the new standards began in the spring of 2012 – in the closing weeks of the school year to ensure student learning continues as long as possible. Previously, tests were administered earlier in the year, and educators sometimes found it challenging to keep students' focused after the testing was concluded.

Results from the first round of testing were available in the fall of 2012. Parents received an individual report on their child, and results for schools and districts were made available to the public via the media and online resources of the Kentucky Department of Education. This process will continue through subsequent school years.

What tests students take when depends on grade level. These tests include subject-matter tests to gauge students' learning; end-of-

course exams to determine students' knowledge after completing coursework in high school; and tests developed by ACT to measure students' high school and college readiness. This includes the ACT itself. The mandatory tests are administered as indicated in the table below.

The tests are scored on a different scale than in the past (now, 100 is the top possible score; in the past, the top possible score was 140). That, coupled with the fact that the more challenging standards result in more difficult tests, was expected to result in a decline in scores in 2012, and that is what happened across Kentucky. However, education officials expect this short-term decline to improve as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and better equipped to meet the challenges they present.



Test Questions

Here is an example of a 6th-grade math question (no calculator allowed).

An expression is shown below:

$$6m + 5p^3 - 1$$

What is the value of the expression when $m = 1/3$ and $p = 2$? Show your work.

And here is a 5th-grade math question (calculator allowed).

Mara needs to buy 2 pieces of rope to hang a swing. Each piece of rope must be 10 FEET long. The rope is only sold in lengths that are whole numbers of YARDS. What is the LEAST number of YARDS of rope Mara must buy to make the swing? Show your work or explain your thinking.

Students were tested on the new standards for the first time in Spring 2012. As this chart shows, which test students take in what year depends on grade level.

GRADE	Reading (KCAS)	Writing (KCAS)	Mathematics (KCAS)	Science (CC 4.1)	Social Studies (CC 4.1)	EPAS
3	MC, short answer		MC, short answer			
4	MC, short answer, extended response	Editing/Mechanics	MC, short answer, extended response	MC, short answer, extended response		
5	MC, short answer, extended response	Writing prompt	MC, short answer, extended response		MC, short answer, extended response	
6	MC, short answer, extended response	Editing/Mechanics and Writing prompt	MC, short answer, extended response			
7	MC, short answer, extended response		MC, short answer, extended response	MC, short answer, extended response		
8	MC, short answer, extended response	Writing prompt	MC, short answer, extended response		MC, short answer, extended response	EXPLORE
9	English II End-of-Course		Algebra II End-of-Course	Biology End-of-Course	U.S. History End-of-Course	
10		Writing prompt				PLAN (includes editing/mechanics)
11		Writing prompt				ACT
12						

MC = Multiple Choice Questions; Short Answer = student writes a few sentences; Extended Response = like Open Response, student writes a few paragraphs
 KCAS = KY Core Academic Standards = Common Core EPAS = EXPLORE, PLAN ACT System CC 4.1 = Core Content 4.1

College and Career Ready — How Do You Define It?

KENTUCKY HAS adopted specific definitions for what it means to be college and career ready. High school students must score at a particular level on certain tests or hit career academic and technical benchmarks.

The tests that indicate college readiness include the ACT (with scores of at least 20 in reading; 19 in math and 18 in English;

36 is the highest ACT score); COMPASS (college placement tests that evaluate reading, writing and math skills); and Kentucky online testing, or KYOTE, (a web-based placement program that uses standardized tests to measure college preparedness).

Tests that indicate career readiness include the ASVAB, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery that is a

multiple-choice test to determine qualification for enlistment in the armed forces; the ACT Work Keys, an assessment that measures real-world skills in applied math, reading for information and locating information); the KOSSA, the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment; and certificates accepted by specific industries.

Measuring School Performance — More Than Just Test Scores

AS IN THE PAST, Kentucky schools will be measured based on their students' performance on state tests and other factors. The formula for those measurements includes the following elements:

- Achievement – student achievement on tests
- Gap – how achievement varies among different groups of students
- Growth – how much student performance improves from one year to the next
- College/Career Readiness – how many students hit the targets to achieve the required level of preparation
- Graduation Rate – how many students complete high school

Additional elements, such as reviews of academic programs that are not subject to testing, will become part of the formula in future years.

Each school and district will get an overall score on a scale of 0 to 100. All scores will be put in order, from high to low and by elementary, middle or high school level, and divided into equal sections called percentiles. The performance of a school or district will be judged based on its percentile.



Finding Out More

SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS, including the Kentucky Department of Education, have developed detailed information about the standards and testing system. Here are several online resources that could be helpful:

- <http://education.ky.gov/comm/UL/Pages/default.aspx>
- achieve.org
- readykentucky.org
- pta.org

Information on test scores is available online. In the past, the state Department of Education produced the Kentucky Performance Report

for each school and district. A large document, the report provided details about student performance on the subjects tested. School and district report cards also offered information about test scores, teacher qualifications and more.

All of that data is now available in the School Report Card found at <http://OpenHouse.education.ky.gov/>. There is a state report card, one for every district and one for each school in every district.

Parents have access to their children's test score information through the Parent Portal of Infinite Campus, also found on the Kentucky Department of Education website: education.ky.gov.