

College and Career Ready: Kentucky's Definition

Defining College-and Career-Ready

“We want all our students to graduate from Kentucky schools “college- and career-ready.” While this is an oft repeated statement in education discussions and the public dialogue around improved student achievement, there is still confusion about what it means. According to Achieve, Inc., a national leader in education reform and the organization that catapulted the term “college and career-ready” into the mainstream lexicon of school reform, “college and career ready refers to the content knowledge and skills high school graduates must possess in English and mathematics – including, but not limited to, reading, writing, communications, teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving – to be successful in any and all future endeavors.” In Kentucky, this is defined by the newly adopted Common Core standards. “Of course readiness for college depends on more than English and mathematics knowledge; to be successful after high school, all graduated must possess the knowledge, habits and skills that can only come from a rigorous, rich and well-rounded curriculum.”

To define it further, being ready for college means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills in English and mathematics, as defined in the common core standards, to be placed and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial coursework. Similarly, being “career-ready” is the same academic and skill threshold, defined by the common core standards, to qualify for and succeed in a postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for a student’s chosen career (i.e. technical/vocational program, community college, apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training.)

Evaluating College- and Career-Ready

In Kentucky, this “readiness” is evaluated in a number of ways. First, and most importantly, is a student’s success in the required core curriculum as defined by the Kentucky Board of Education. In Kentucky this is defined as (beginning with the class of 2012):

- 4 credits in English Language Arts
- 3 credits in Social Studies
- 3 credits in Mathematics (including Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II)
- 3 credits in Science
- ½ credit in Health
- ½ credit in Physical Education
- 1 credit in Visual and Performing Arts
- 7 credits in electives

In addition, a number of assessments will be used to measure student growth and academic performance. These include both formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are defined as a process used by teachers and students during instruction to evaluate whether students are learning the material. They are periodic checks to diagnose student learning. These assessments occur regularly in classrooms and provide teachers with important information on how to adjust instruction for individual students. These periodic checks may include; teacher-designed paper- and pencil-tests, classroom observations, class projects, commercially developed assessments and other measures.

In addition, a series of summative assessments, assessments given at the end of a semester, school year or other defined period of time, also are used to measure a student's readiness. At the high school level in Kentucky, these include combined criterion and norm referenced assessments in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. An on demand writing test and a writing test on editing and mechanics will also be given. To further supplement these state developed assessments, a series of national college- and career-ready assessments, the Explore (8th grade), Plan (10th grade) and ACT (11th grade) will be given. These assessments provide students, parents and schools with a national external validation of college- and career-readiness in addition to the results of the classroom and state measures.

The intent of this robust and balanced assessment system, a students' success in required core courses, success on teacher developed formative measures, summative state assessments, and success on a national exam is to:

1. Measure an individual student's achievement in the core subject areas;
2. Provide teachers and parents a valid and reliable analysis of skills mastered by individual students;
3. Provide information to teachers that enables them to improve instruction for current and future students;
4. Provide longitudinal profiles and data on student success; and
5. Ensure school and district accountability for student achievement.

Aligned to the high school graduation requirements are the requirements developed by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education for college admission (13 KAR 2:020.) For entrance into community colleges, students must have a high school diploma or have successfully passed the GED. Admission into a 2-year degree program, requires taking the ACT and a high school diploma. For a 4-year degree program, admission requires meeting the high school graduation requirements plus two units in the same foreign language, and taking the ACT. Placement of first-time students enrolled in an associate or baccalaureate degree program or a certificate or diploma program, in credit bearing courses, requires ACT scores of over 18 for English and 19 or higher in mathematics.