



Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship

Grade Point Average Earning Structure and Postsecondary Outcomes

Introduction

This report was prepared as a result of language included in the 2024-2026 Executive Branch Budget Bill, 2024 House Bill 6, directing KHEAA to conduct an evaluation of how KEES scholarships are distributed based on recipients' high school GPAs.

The Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) was created by the 1998 Kentucky General Assembly to provide scholarships to eligible high school students based on their yearly grade point average (GPA) and supplemental awards based on their highest ACT (or equivalent SAT) score attained by their high school graduation date. Students who graduate from Kentucky public high schools and non-public high schools certified by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) can earn KEES GPA awards. Graduates of non-certified high schools and GED graduates only earn KEES based on their highest ACT score. Supplemental awards can also be earned by students who are eligible for the free or reduced priced lunch program (FRPL) any year of high school and who score well on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge Advanced International exams. Each year, roughly 92.6 percent of high school graduates from public and KBE-certified schools earn at least some KEES money. The average disbursed KEES award for postsecondary attendance is just over \$1,710 per student per academic year. For FY2025, KEES disbursements totaled \$114.5 million for 67,760 students.

Prior to the 2026-2027 academic year, the base GPA award that could be earned for each year of high school ranged from \$125 for a 2.50 GPA to \$500 for a 4.0 or higher GPA. KEES GPA base awards have not been increased since the enabling legislation. The 2026 General Assembly included language in HB 500, the 2026-2028 Executive Branch Budget Bill, that removed the ability to earn base scholarship awards for GPAs below a 2.75 beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year.

KEES awards can be used at eligible two- and four-year public and private Kentucky postsecondary institutions for up to eight semesters within five years of high school graduation or achievement of a bachelor's degree, whichever occurs first. The 2017 Kentucky General Assembly further expanded KEES eligibility by allowing Kentucky high school graduates enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program to use their KEES award for reimbursement of approved training-related expenses. Postsecondary students must meet certain GPA and academic progress renewal requirements to continue receiving KEES awards in subsequent award periods.

To conduct this analysis, KHEAA looked at six cohorts of high school classes, beginning with the high school graduating class of 2014-2015, and compared the high school GPAs by both the lowest grade band achieved by each student and the 12th-grade GPA achieved. For postsecondary enrollment, KHEAA looked at KEES disbursement and renewal data to gather headcounts. KHEAA used FRPL data as a proxy variable for income, as students with FRPL status qualify for free or reduced priced lunch during high school due to a lower household income.

Across the six cohorts spanning 2014-2015 through 2019-2020, the dominant trend is one of rising GPAs and a strengthening pipeline into four-year institutions, set against a group of students with lower GPAs, a group in which FRPL students are more heavily represented, who are less likely to appear in either the KEES recipient population or the immediate postsecondary enrollment population. The share of students earning a 4.00 or higher grew in every grade and every cohort, most steeply by the senior year, and that top band increasingly drives immediate enrollment, sustained renewal, and attendance at four-year institutions, both public and private. Renewal outcomes in particular reflect two forces working together: academic achievement and the length of the program a student enters. Sustained multi-year renewal concentrates among high-performing students at four-year institutions, public and private alike, while the lower renewal counts at two-year and proprietary institutions may partly reflect shorter credential structures rather than weaker outcomes, and the two explanations need to be read side by side.

The most consequential methodological finding is that classifying students by their lowest grade-level GPA versus their 12th-grade GPA produces systematically different pictures, and that the difference between them is itself meaningful: it measures the population of students who recovered from an early academic dip. That gap is largest precisely where it carries the most weight for policy, including apprenticeship students and the top band of immediate enrollees. This argues for reporting both views rather than selecting one. The lowest-band measure captures whether a student struggled at any point during high school, while the 12th-grade measure reflects how they finished.

Two equity themes run through every section of the analysis. First, FRPL students concentrate in the lowest GPA band in every grade, under both classification methods, and across every outcome examined. Second, the lowest band is consistently where weaker outcomes cluster: students in this band are the least likely to receive KEES, the most likely to delay enrollment, the most likely to attend two-year colleges, and the least likely to renew. The renewal pattern is the one outcome that needs a caveat — low-band students disproportionately attend two-year colleges, so their lower renewal numbers may partly reflect shorter program length rather than weaker performance.

GPA Band Composition by Grade (Tables 1A-1D)

Tables 1A through 1D show the breakdown of student GPA achievements by grade level, graduating cohort, FRPL status, and KEES recipients. “Students” are the headcount of graduated students per cohort, “FRPL” is the headcount of students with FRPL status, and “KEES Recipients” are the students that received one or more KEES disbursements. For students who graduated early, their 11th grade-GPA is reflected in the 12th-grade GPA band.

The KEES GPA calculation methodology is defined in state regulation. Letter grades are converted to a 4.0 scale where A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0, and F=0.0. All coursework is unweighted, except for Dual Credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge Advanced International exams, which receive one additional quality point in the calculation, resulting in some KEES GPAs exceeding a 4.0. Individual school districts make their own determinations of where the letter grade cut-offs are for their high schools.

Student GPAs rose steadily across the six cohorts, and the gains became more pronounced at each successive grade level. The proportion of students earning a 4.00 or higher grew in every grade, with the sharpest increases appearing in the senior year. Further, the implementation of the Dual Credit Scholarship program in the 2016-2017 academic year significantly increased enrollment in dual credit courses, impacting KEES GPA earnings for students who have the ability to access and successfully complete dual credit coursework. At grade 9, the top band expanded from roughly 4,600 students in the 2014-2015 cohort to about 6,900 in 2019-2020; by grade 12, it nearly doubled over the same period, climbing from about 8,000 to more than 14,300. In the 2019-20 cohort, students with a 4.00 or above made up the largest single 12th-grade band, outnumbering the combined total of every band below 3.00.

Although students earning less than a 2.5 GPA do not earn a KEES award for that school year, KHEAA included data for this grade band in the tables to show the full range of high school GPA performance and how students who fall into this lowest grade band for at least one year of high school earn and utilize KEES awards. Fewer students fell into the lowest GPA band as they moved through high school. In grade 9, between roughly 9,000 and 10,000 students per cohort had a GPA below 2.50; by grade 12, that count had dropped to between about 5,201 and 7,123. This suggests academic performance improves as students matriculate toward high school graduation — students who started in the lowest band frequently moved up into higher bands by their senior year, emptying the bottom of the distribution.

The relationship between FRPL status and GPA band shifted in an encouraging direction over the six cohorts. Among 9th-grade students, FRPL-eligible students made up about a quarter of the highest band (4.00 or above) in the earliest cohort, rising to roughly a third by 2019-2020 — a meaningful gain in representation at the top of the distribution. FRPL students remained more concentrated in the lowest band over the same period, but the upward movement in the top band is the more notable trend, indicating that high achievement became more common among FRPL students across the cohorts studied.

Table 1A: High School GPA Band Composition by Cohort - Grade 9

	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients
Below 2.50	9,917	7,311	3,125	10,184	7,769	3,079	9,351	7,292	2,678	9,583	7,610	2,587	8,604	6,829	2,131	8,620	6,909	2,046
2.50 to 2.74	3,809	2,357	2,100	3,856	2,551	2,054	3,732	2,596	1,903	3,760	2,582	1,910	3,528	2,488	1,646	3,432	2,478	1,474
2.75 to 2.99	3,551	2,095	2,178	3,569	2,168	2,167	3,461	2,183	2,111	3,414	2,212	1,944	3,355	2,194	1,855	3,155	2,105	1,560
3.00 to 3.24	4,817	2,518	3,370	4,899	2,671	3,354	5,008	2,922	3,269	4,849	2,907	3,081	5,001	3,011	3,091	4,693	2,851	2,715
3.25 to 3.49	4,756	2,167	3,650	4,719	2,317	3,624	4,731	2,470	3,462	4,789	2,576	3,433	4,652	2,549	3,193	4,488	2,553	2,952
3.50 to 3.99	9,294	3,483	7,574	9,408	3,729	7,681	9,932	4,160	7,997	10,147	4,443	8,002	10,369	4,803	8,043	10,316	4,803	7,787
4.00 & above	4,439	1,100	3,679	4,876	1,234	3,910	5,236	1,462	4,238	5,953	1,740	4,799	6,510	1,990	5,246	6,936	2,251	5,526
Total	40,583	21,031	25,676	41,511	22,439	25,869	41,451	23,085	25,658	42,495	24,070	25,756	42,019	23,864	25,205	41,640	23,950	24,060

Table 1B: High School GPA Band Composition by Cohort - Grade 10

	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients
Below 2.50	10,956	7,969	3,512	10,958	8,283	3,296	10,747	8,265	3,293	9,846	7,715	2,561	9,747	7,595	2,620	9,575	7,576	2,274
2.50 to 2.74	4,172	2,531	2,430	4,180	2,596	2,326	3,994	2,671	2,183	3,894	2,623	1,987	3,882	2,645	1,886	3,811	2,653	1,721
2.75 to 2.99	3,441	1,903	2,221	3,513	2,139	2,181	3,403	2,128	2,032	3,464	2,227	1,978	3,325	2,184	1,881	3,064	2,038	1,587
3.00 to 3.24	5,063	2,602	3,606	5,018	2,773	3,540	5,014	2,859	3,395	5,107	2,989	3,311	5,003	2,957	3,091	4,807	2,878	2,842
3.25 to 3.49	4,519	2,101	3,491	4,653	2,276	3,570	4,650	2,337	3,498	4,839	2,569	3,461	4,788	2,551	3,381	4,574	2,568	3,031
3.50 to 3.99	8,312	3,069	6,849	8,646	3,408	7,133	8,864	3,688	7,184	9,548	4,423	7,540	9,266	4,271	7,230	9,605	4,515	7,282
4.00 & above	4,870	1,223	4,015	5,324	1,395	4,258	5,517	1,588	4,458	6,636	2,031	5,331	6,972	2,174	5,580	7,263	2,377	5,797
Total	41,333	21,398	26,124	42,292	22,870	26,304	42,189	23,536	26,043	43,334	24,577	26,169	42,983	24,377	25,669	42,699	24,605	24,534

Table 1C: High School GPA Band Composition by Cohort - Grade 11

	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients
Below 2.50	9,920	7,204	2,877	10,472	7,876	3,019	9,611	7,479	2,647	9,772	7,586	2,508	9,270	7,239	2,266	9,206	7,256	2,126
2.50 to 2.74	4,035	2,482	2,263	3,913	2,596	2,046	3,757	2,489	1,877	3,742	2,591	1,824	3,681	2,561	1,691	3,431	2,460	1,462
2.75 to 2.99	3,420	2,010	2,089	3,492	2,139	2,068	3,321	2,121	1,922	3,171	2,058	1,729	3,337	2,134	1,830	3,030	2,043	1,488
3.00 to 3.24	5,124	2,811	3,511	4,957	2,853	3,395	4,796	2,905	3,097	4,923	2,960	3,091	4,801	2,929	2,954	4,600	2,917	2,588
3.25 to 3.49	4,481	2,207	3,380	4,616	2,399	3,480	4,670	2,599	3,388	4,533	2,596	3,123	4,503	2,553	3,000	4,313	2,533	2,780
3.50 to 3.99	8,585	3,450	7,003	8,790	3,628	7,186	8,592	3,906	6,826	8,892	4,263	6,883	8,826	4,370	6,723	8,999	4,465	6,575
4.00 & above	6,552	1,731	5,371	6,773	1,813	5,441	8,111	2,412	6,648	9,120	2,991	7,408	9,382	3,088	7,559	9,781	3,254	7,870
Total	42,117	21,895	26,494	43,013	23,304	26,635	42,858	23,911	26,405	44,153	25,045	26,566	43,800	24,874	26,023	43,360	24,928	24,889

Table 1D: High School GPA Band Composition by Cohort - Grade 12

	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients	Students	FRPL	KEES Recipients
Below 2.50	7,123	5,240	1,458	6,773	5,231	1,190	6,817	5,333	1,244	6,778	5,439	1,140	6,535	5,201	1,128	5,668	4,681	811
2.50 to 2.74	3,352	2,261	1,573	3,062	2,127	1,333	3,082	2,209	1,290	3,056	2,220	1,261	3,046	2,259	1,153	2,654	1,978	859
2.75 to 2.99	3,329	2,138	1,807	3,086	2,066	1,561	2,878	1,982	1,417	3,017	2,123	1,429	2,863	2,029	1,270	2,533	1,856	977
3.00 to 3.24	5,041	2,997	3,085	4,877	3,039	2,765	4,525	2,964	2,540	4,645	3,123	2,428	4,600	3,072	2,410	4,331	3,056	1,883
3.25 to 3.49	4,983	2,697	3,515	4,736	2,810	3,005	4,534	2,806	2,824	4,545	2,783	2,729	4,418	2,728	2,578	4,259	2,745	2,259
3.50 to 3.99	11,434	5,128	8,876	10,885	5,429	8,377	10,463	5,526	7,634	10,552	5,683	7,472	10,469	5,702	7,294	10,760	6,210	6,954
4.00 & above	8,009	2,189	6,529	10,685	3,327	8,706	11,825	3,934	9,810	12,696	4,461	10,397	12,895	4,580	10,462	14,300	5,252	11,416
Total	43,271	22,650	26,843	44,104	24,029	26,937	44,124	24,754	26,759	45,289	25,832	26,856	44,826	25,571	26,295	44,505	25,778	25,159

Postsecondary Enrollment Timing (Tables 2A-2B and 3A-3B)

Tables 2A through 3B show immediate (2A-2B) and one-or-more gap-year (3A-3B) postsecondary enrollment by GPA band, under both the lowest-grade-band and 12th-grade-band classifications, with enrolled counts, share of graduates, and FRPL status. “Enrolled” is the headcount of students for a given cohort that fell into their respective GPA band. “% of graduates” is the percent of the total cohort, which includes the graduated non-KEES recipients, that achieved the respective GPA band and received KEES. “FRPL” is the headcount of FRPL-eligible students that used KEES by GPA band. The tables titled “Immediate Postsecondary Enrollment” show the students who received a KEES disbursement in the academic year immediately following high school graduation. The tables titled “1+ Gap Year” show students who did not receive a KEES disbursement until at least the second academic year following high school graduation.

The choice between classifying students by their lowest grade-level GPA or their 12th-grade GPA produces two markedly different views of who enrolls, and the contrast is instructive. When students are grouped by their lowest band, immediate enrollment spreads fairly evenly across the middle and upper bands, with the 3.50-to-3.99 band contributing the most enrollees in any given cohort. When the same students are grouped by their 12th-grade GPA, immediate enrollment concentrates heavily in the top two bands: students earning a 4.00 or above grew from about 6,300 immediate enrollees in 2014-2015 to nearly 10,900 in 2019-2020, representing close to a quarter of all graduates in the later cohorts. In short, a strong senior-year finish is far more common among immediate enrollees than a consistently high GPA four-year record, and the lowest-band view obscures this by reclassifying any student who stumbled early into a lower band.

Immediate enrollment far exceeds delayed enrollment across every band. Gap-year enrollment counts are a fraction of the student population that utilizes KEES, numbering in the hundreds rather than the thousands. One distinction is worth noting: under the lowest-band classification, students below a 2.50 form the largest gap-year band, the only instance in which the bottom band leads. This suggests that students who experienced more significant early academic difficulty but ultimately enrolled were disproportionately likely to delay entry. Under the 12th-grade classification, this concentration softens and the distribution shifts toward the middle and upper bands.

Table 2A: Immediate Postsecondary Enrollment by Lowest High School Grade Band																		
	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL
Below 2.50	5,294	12.2%	3,173	5,067	11.5%	3,175	4,681	10.6%	3,050	4,269	9.4%	2,830	4,038	9%	2,683	3,384	7.6%	2,275
2.50 to 2.74	2,700	6.2%	1,343	2,558	5.8%	1,319	2,366	5.4%	1,285	2,342	5.2%	1,301	2,188	4.9%	1,246	1,887	4.2%	1,093
2.75 to 2.99	2,417	5.6%	1,126	2,204	5%	1,099	2,230	5%	1,174	2,173	4.8%	1,160	2,139	4.8%	1,132	1,742	3.9%	930
3.00 to 3.24	3,487	8.1%	1,485	3,438	7.8%	1,525	3,333	7.5%	1,639	3,269	7.2%	1,570	3,171	7.1%	1,565	2,840	6.4%	1,386
3.25 to 3.49	3,024	7%	1,113	3,184	7.2%	1,335	3,055	6.9%	1,272	3,035	6.7%	1,405	2,926	6.5%	1,360	2,762	6.2%	1,321
3.50 to 3.99	5,416	12.5%	1,628	5,644	12.8%	1,868	5,930	13.4%	2,169	6,086	13.4%	2,359	6,038	13.4%	2,333	6,078	13.6%	2,396
4.00 & above	2,125	4.9%	464	2,385	5.4%	517	2,725	6.2%	664	3,220	7.1%	851	3,425	7.6%	928	3,658	8.2%	1,054
Total	24,463	56.5%	10,332	24,480	55.5%	10,838	24,320	55%	11,253	24,394	53.8%	11,476	23,925	53.3%	11,247	22,351	50.1%	10,455

Table 2B: Immediate Postsecondary Enrollment by Grade 12 GPA Band																		
	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL
Below 2.50	1,133	2.6%	665	892	2%	535	945	2.1%	572	850	1.9%	582	840	1.9%	542	542	1.2%	385
2.50 to 2.74	1,320	3%	768	1,077	2.4%	638	1,030	2.3%	640	1,006	2.2%	637	924	2.1%	619	623	1.4%	403
2.75 to 2.99	1,537	3.5%	862	1,299	2.9%	747	1,155	2.6%	704	1,177	2.6%	752	1,060	2.4%	669	754	1.7%	478
3.00 to 3.24	2,687	6.2%	1,405	2,357	5.3%	1,287	2,168	4.9%	1,280	2,109	4.6%	1,237	2,093	4.7%	1,251	1,531	3.4%	957
3.25 to 3.49	3,166	7.3%	1,499	2,681	6.1%	1,413	2,525	5.7%	1,384	2,411	5.3%	1,305	2,284	5.1%	1,273	1,864	4.2%	1,044
3.50 to 3.99	8,295	19.2%	3,397	7,781	17.6%	3,556	7,041	15.9%	3,474	6,837	15.1%	3,378	6,677	14.9%	3,326	6,174	13.8%	3,219
4.00 & above	6,322	14.6%	1,734	8,389	19%	2,660	9,455	21.4%	3,198	9,990	22%	3,576	10,026	22.3%	3,554	10,844	24.3%	3,953
Total	24,460	56.4%	10,330	24,476	55.3%	10,836	24,319	54.9%	11,252	24,380	53.7%	11,467	23,904	53.4%	11,234	22,332	50%	10,439

Table 3A: 1+ Gap Year Postsecondary Enrollment by Lowest High School Grade Band																		
	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL
Below 2.50	1,121	2.6%	750	1,123	2.5%	809	1,074	2.4%	789	981	2.2%	724	886	2%	643	1,088	2.4%	803
2.50 to 2.74	322	0.7%	187	320	0.7%	194	346	0.8%	218	325	0.7%	219	312	0.7%	204	351	0.8%	220
2.75 to 2.99	227	0.5%	127	275	0.6%	163	243	0.6%	141	273	0.6%	176	247	0.5%	141	285	0.6%	170
3.00 to 3.24	259	0.6%	135	269	0.6%	156	270	0.6%	145	285	0.6%	164	292	0.7%	180	349	0.8%	209
3.25 to 3.49	181	0.4%	89	176	0.4%	86	201	0.5%	113	243	0.5%	137	224	0.5%	122	273	0.6%	148
3.50 to 3.99	222	0.5%	80	234	0.5%	103	232	0.5%	94	311	0.7%	145	310	0.7%	153	377	0.8%	174
4.00 & above	47	0.1%	12	66	0.1%	19	69	0.2%	16	89	0.2%	22	105	0.2%	38	99	0.2%	36
Total	2,379	5.4%	1,380	2,463	5.4%	1,530	2,435	5.6%	1,516	2,507	5.5%	1,587	2,376	5.3%	1,481	2,822	6.2%	1,760

Table 3B: 1+ Gap Year Postsecondary Enrollment by Grade 12 GPA Band																		
	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL	Enrolled	% of Graduates	FRPL
Below 2.50	325	0.8%	208	301	0.7%	221	294	0.7%	212	289	0.6%	225	283	0.6%	214	268	0.6%	197
2.50 to 2.74	253	0.6%	171	252	0.6%	178	258	0.6%	179	256	0.6%	194	229	0.5%	159	235	0.5%	165
2.75 to 2.99	267	0.6%	171	262	0.6%	179	263	0.6%	180	256	0.6%	177	214	0.5%	156	226	0.5%	159
3.00 to 3.24	396	0.9%	242	405	0.9%	262	366	0.8%	259	319	0.7%	212	315	0.7%	214	349	0.8%	249
3.25 to 3.49	346	0.8%	212	319	0.7%	197	303	0.7%	184	319	0.7%	204	292	0.7%	174	396	0.9%	262
3.50 to 3.99	584	1.3%	296	597	1.4%	359	596	1.3%	345	640	1.4%	395	614	1.4%	377	777	1.7%	469
4.00 & above	208	0.5%	80	326	0.7%	133	354	0.8%	156	426	0.9%	178	427	1%	186	571	1.3%	259
Total	2,379	5.5%	1,380	2,462	5.6%	1,529	2,434	5.5%	1,515	2,505	5.5%	1,585	2,374	5.4%	1,480	2,822	6.3%	1,760

Scholarship Renewals (Tables 4A-4B)

Students must meet KEES renewal requirements to retain their award each year of postsecondary enrollment. First-year students must have a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA at the end of their first award year to retain their full award for the second award period. Students are allowed to retain their full award amount for third and subsequent award periods if their cumulative GPA is at least 3.0, or if it is at least 2.5 and they are considered “on track to graduate” as defined by their postsecondary institution. Students receive a 50% award reduction if they have a cumulative GPA between 2.5 and 2.99 and their institution reports they are not on track to graduate, but they were enrolled as a full-time student at least one term of the prior year. If a student has a cumulative GPA less than 3.0, was reported as not on track to graduate, and has only enrolled part-time, the student loses their award. Students who experience a 50% reduction or lose their KEES award may regain their award by achieving the renewal benchmarks at the end of a subsequent academic year. For all award periods, students who are enrolled part-time from six to 11 hours receive a pro-rated disbursement amount based on the number of hours.

Tables 4A and 4B show the number of students by renewal count — no renewal, one renewal, or two or more — across GPA bands under the lowest-grade-band (4A) and 12th-grade-band (4B) classifications. Renewal table populations include all six cohorts combined. “No renewal” is the population that received KEES for one award period only, “1 Renewal” shows students that received KEES awards for two award years, and “2+ renewals” are students that received KEES awards for three or more award years.

Renewal success rises sharply with high school GPA, and the 12th-grade classification shows this most clearly. Among students in the top band, those renewing twice or more overwhelmingly outnumber those who never renewed; in the 2019-2020 cohort, for instance, roughly 9,500 students in the top band renewed at least twice while about 1,000 did not renew at all. The lowest-band classification preserves the same upward relationship but in compressed form, because a single early dip in high school does not predict renewal failure the way a low senior year GPA does. Across both classifications, students who have zero renewals cluster in the lower bands, and the no-renewal counts decline steadily as GPA rises. This structure held consistently across all six cohorts.

Table 4A: Renewals by Lowest High School Grade Band

GPA Bands	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals
Below 2.50	4,115	828	1,473	3,940	802	1,458	3,694	791	1,278	3,311	742	1,204	2,922	820	1,195	2,745	652	1,085
2.50 to 2.74	1,494	394	1,140	1,419	371	1,093	1,351	403	963	1,354	362	955	1,161	431	911	1,126	320	792
2.75 to 2.99	1,055	355	1,238	1,037	327	1,117	1,001	348	1,130	984	323	1,142	950	382	1,055	859	317	851
3.00 to 3.24	1,040	449	2,260	1,096	442	2,173	1,090	448	2,069	1,191	403	1,961	1,022	521	1,917	1,106	430	1,659
3.25 to 3.49	623	300	2,285	683	344	2,334	678	318	2,262	749	360	2,175	632	413	2,106	761	389	1,885
3.50 to 3.99	438	347	4,855	484	350	5,046	557	435	5,174	619	426	5,355	600	585	5,171	791	574	5,100
4.00 & above	30	47	2,096	36	59	2,355	41	73	2,683	42	88	3,180	67	123	3,344	113	160	3,488
Total	8,795	2,720	15,347	8,695	2,695	15,576	8,412	2,816	15,559	8,250	2,704	15,972	7,354	3,275	15,699	7,501	2,842	14,860

Table 4B: Renewals by Grade 12 GPA Band

GPA Bands	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals	No Renewal	1 Renewal	2 or More Renewals
Below 2.50	1,078	170	210	871	138	184	913	143	188	835	141	167	791	167	171	583	104	126
2.50 to 2.74	1,068	187	319	905	150	277	878	156	256	886	161	218	728	195	232	578	111	171
2.75 to 2.99	1,120	229	459	977	200	386	893	174	352	901	188	346	759	207	310	641	130	211
3.00 to 3.24	1,613	408	1,066	1,562	368	835	1,379	368	795	1,381	313	740	1,278	383	756	1,117	267	504
3.25 to 3.49	1,446	483	1,587	1,377	415	1,214	1,348	412	1,072	1,299	359	1,077	1,064	470	1,047	1,155	348	760
3.50 to 3.99	2,115	956	5,813	2,452	934	5,001	2,315	950	4,379	2,214	937	4,340	2,048	1,087	4,167	2,393	970	3,606
4.00 & above	355	286	5,893	551	490	7,678	685	613	8,517	734	605	9,083	686	766	9,016	1,033	912	9,482
Total	8,795	2,719	15,347	8,695	2,695	15,575	8,411	2,816	15,559	8,250	2,704	15,971	7,354	3,275	15,699	7,500	2,842	14,860

Enrollment by Institution Type (Tables 5A-6B)

KEES awards can be used at eligible participating Kentucky postsecondary institutions, including public, private, and proprietary institutions that offer at least an associate's degree. Students who are pursuing a program of study not offered in Kentucky may be eligible to use their KEES award at an out-of-state institution located in a state that participates in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Academic Common Market (ACM) program.

Tables 5A through 6B show enrollment counts and percentages of students across institution types by high school GPA band, for immediate (5A-5B) and one-or-more gap-year (6A-6B) enrollment, under both the lowest-grade-band and 12th-grade-band classifications. Tables 5A through 6B combine the populations of all six cohorts. "Number of students" are the headcounts for students for their GPA bands by institution type. "% of students" is the percentage of students for the GPA band by institution type.

Public four-year universities and public two-year community and technical colleges together account for the large majority of enrollees in both timing categories, with private four-year institutions being a consistent but smaller third sector, and proprietary and out-of-state (ACM) enrollment being marginal throughout. The two public sectors split cleanly by academic performance, and the split sharpens under the 12th-grade view: public four-year universities draw overwhelmingly from the top band, with more than 35,000 immediate enrollees having earned a 4.00 or above in each year of high school — the single largest type-by-band concentration anywhere in the section — while public two-year colleges distribute more evenly across the middle bands and lead the lower bands. Under the lowest-band view, the public four-year mass shifts down into the 3.50-to-3.99 band, because high-finishing students who dipped earlier are reclassified downward.

The two enrollment-timing tables differ chiefly in scale and in which sector predominates. Immediate enrollment is far larger and tilts toward four-year universities in the upper bands; gap-year enrollment is a much smaller population that tilts toward two-year colleges, which under the lowest-band view absorbed nearly 30 percent of gap-year students below a 2.50 — the single largest concentration in the gap-year analysis. This is a clear signal that students with greater early academic difficulty who eventually enroll do so disproportionately at two-year colleges after a delay. The upper-band dominance of four-year universities seen in immediate enrollment is muted among gap-year students, and proprietary institutions, though small in absolute terms, make up a larger share of the gap-year group than of the immediate group, particularly in the lower bands.

Table 5A: Institution Type by Lowest High School Grade Band, Immediate Enrollment

Institution Type	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	8,958	6.23%	6,085	4.23%	5,924	4.12%	9,716	6.75%	9,750	6.78%	21,914	15.23%	12,996	9.03%
Public 2-year	14,013	9.74%	5,844	4.06%	4,870	3.38%	6,533	4.54%	5,016	3.49%	6,642	4.62%	1,287	0.89%
Private 4-year	3,196	2.22%	1,914	1.33%	1,930	1.34%	3,049	2.12%	2,995	2.08%	6,258	4.35%	3,084	2.14%
Proprietary 4-year	434	0.3%	131	0.09%	116	0.08%	148	0.1%	102	0.07%	134	0.09%	17	0.01%
Proprietary 2-year	78	0.05%	21	0.01%	23	0.02%	16	0.01%	15	0.01%	7	0%	0	0%
ACM	40	0.03%	36	0.03%	31	0.02%	65	0.05%	103	0.07%	231	0.16%	153	0.11%
Total	26,719	18.57%	14,031	9.75%	12,894	8.96%	19,527	13.57%	17,981	12.5%	35,186	24.45%	17,537	12.18%

Table 5B: Institution Type by Grade 12 Band, Immediate Enrollment

Institution Type	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	1,796	1.25%	2,170	1.51%	2,740	1.9%	5,328	3.7%	6,603	4.59%	21,288	14.8%	35,416	24.62%
Public 2-year	2,698	1.88%	3,001	2.09%	3,197	2.22%	5,643	3.92%	6,032	4.19%	14,250	9.9%	9,383	6.52%
Private 4-year	588	0.41%	696	0.48%	918	0.64%	1,764	1.23%	2,077	1.44%	6,734	4.68%	9,648	6.71%
Proprietary 4-year	89	0.06%	84	0.06%	93	0.06%	168	0.12%	150	0.1%	338	0.23%	160	0.11%
Proprietary 2-year	23	0.02%	17	0.01%	22	0.02%	22	0.02%	24	0.02%	41	0.03%	11	0.01%
ACM	8	0.01%	12	0.01%	12	0.01%	20	0.01%	45	0.03%	154	0.11%	408	0.28%
Total	5,202	3.63%	5,980	4.16%	6,982	4.85%	12,945	9%	14,931	10.37%	42,805	29.75%	55,026	38.25%

Table 6A: Institution Type by Lowest High School Grade Band, 1+ Gap Year Enrollment

Institution Type	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	1,028	6.86%	500	3.34%	428	2.86%	534	3.57%	465	3.1%	781	5.21%	289	1.93%
Public 2-year	4,417	29.49%	1,239	8.27%	929	6.2%	971	6.48%	654	4.37%	650	4.34%	118	0.79%
Private 4-year	406	2.71%	130	0.87%	114	0.76%	143	0.95%	116	0.77%	180	1.2%	57	0.38%
Proprietary 4-year	265	1.77%	72	0.48%	56	0.37%	50	0.33%	45	0.3%	48	0.32%	5	0.03%
Proprietary 2-year	153	1.02%	32	0.21%	21	0.14%	19	0.13%	11	0.07%	8	0.05%	0	0%
ACM	4	0.03%	3	0.02%	2	0.01%	6	0.04%	7	0.05%	15	0.1%	6	0.04%
Total	6,273	41.88%	1,976	13.19%	1,550	10.34%	1,723	11.5%	1,298	8.66%	1,682	11.22%	475	3.17%

Table 6B: Institution Type by Grade 12 Band, 1+ Gap Year Enrollment

Institution Type	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	270	1.8%	276	1.84%	320	2.14%	442	2.95%	485	3.24%	1,136	7.59%	1,096	7.32%
Public 2-year	1,259	8.41%	1,035	6.91%	994	6.64%	1,426	9.52%	1,251	8.35%	2,140	14.29%	873	5.83%
Private 4-year	116	0.77%	80	0.53%	85	0.57%	147	0.98%	134	0.89%	335	2.24%	248	1.66%
Proprietary 4-year	71	0.47%	56	0.37%	64	0.43%	88	0.59%	69	0.46%	132	0.88%	61	0.41%
Proprietary 2-year	43	0.29%	36	0.24%	25	0.17%	46	0.31%	32	0.21%	53	0.35%	9	0.06%
ACM	1	0.01%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.01%	4	0.03%	12	0.08%	25	0.17%
Total	1,760	11.75%	1,483	9.89%	1,488	9.95%	2,150	14.36%	1,975	13.18%	3,808	25.43%	2,312	15.45%

Renewals by Institution Type (Tables 7A-9B)

Tables 7A through 9B show institution-type distribution by GPA band for each renewal outcome — no renewal (7A-7B), one renewal (8A-8B), and two or more renewals (9A-9B) — under both the lowest-grade-band and 12th-grade-band classifications. Renewals by Institution Type tables show aggregate populations of all six cohorts, like Tables 5A-6B. “Number of Students” is the headcount of students by renewal category and institution type. “% of Students” is the percentage of students by renewal category and institution type.

Renewal outcomes split by institution type along lines that are as much structural as academic, and reading these three tables together makes that distinction unavoidable. Sustained renewal is overwhelmingly a public four-year, high-GPA phenomenon: under the 12th-grade view, public four-year universities in the top band hold the largest two-or-more-renewal count in the entire section, more than 32,000 students, reflecting both strong academic performance and the four-year program structure that allows renewals to accumulate. Moving across the three tables, the institutional composition shifts predictably — public two-year colleges and the lower bands dominate the no-renewal group, carry a meaningful share of the single-renewal group, and appear far less often among students with two or more renewals.

Private four-year institutions show a renewal pattern that closely tracks the public four-year sector, though at a smaller scale. Like public universities, they are concentrated among students who renew, and their presence grows steadily across the renewal categories — thin in the no-renewal group, larger in the single-renewal group, and largest among students with two or more renewals, where under the 12th-grade view they hold several thousand students in the upper bands. This is the expected trend of a four-year program: renewals accumulate over the full course of enrollment rather than ending early, so the institution's students cluster at the high end of the renewal distribution. Within that distribution, private four-year enrollees skew toward the upper GPA bands, much as their public counterparts do, reflecting the same joint role of academic achievement and program length in producing sustained renewals. They remain a smaller channel than either public sector throughout, but the shape of their renewal pattern places them clearly alongside the four-year institutions rather than the two-year and proprietary institutions.

Table 7A: Institution Type by Lowest High School Grade Band, No Renewal														
	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
Institution Type	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	6,540	13.35%	3,332	6.8%	2,547	5.2%	3,060	6.24%	2,122	4.33%	2,035	4.15%	227	0.46%
Public 2-year	11,309	23.08%	3,467	7.07%	2,454	5.01%	2,507	5.12%	1,369	2.79%	921	1.88%	50	0.1%
Private 4-year	2,341	4.78%	984	2.01%	792	1.62%	901	1.84%	571	1.17%	485	0.99%	46	0.09%
Proprietary 4-year	462	0.94%	99	0.2%	82	0.17%	57	0.12%	45	0.09%	35	0.07%	1	0%
Proprietary 2-year	49	0.1%	12	0.02%	3	0.01%	6	0.01%	3	0.01%	0	0%	0	0%
ACM	26	0.05%	11	0.02%	8	0.02%	14	0.03%	16	0.03%	13	0.03%	5	0.01%
Total	20,727	42.3%	7,905	16.12%	5,886	12.03%	6,545	13.36%	4,126	8.42%	3,489	7.12%	329	0.66%

Table 7B: Institution Type by Grade 12 Band, No Renewal														
	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
Institution Type	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	1,601	3.27%	1,710	3.49%	1,963	4.01%	3,205	6.54%	3,171	6.47%	6,028	12.3%	2,184	4.46%
Public 2-year	2,772	5.66%	2,662	5.43%	2,566	5.24%	3,913	7.98%	3,434	7.01%	5,541	11.31%	1,189	2.43%
Private 4-year	550	1.12%	548	1.12%	651	1.33%	1,039	2.12%	952	1.94%	1,781	3.63%	598	1.22%
Proprietary 4-year	130	0.27%	100	0.2%	94	0.19%	156	0.32%	103	0.21%	150	0.31%	48	0.1%
Proprietary 2-year	12	0.02%	16	0.03%	11	0.02%	9	0.02%	12	0.02%	12	0.02%	1	0%
ACM	6	0.01%	7	0.01%	6	0.01%	8	0.02%	17	0.03%	25	0.05%	24	0.05%
Total	5,071	10.35%	5,043	10.28%	5,291	10.8%	8,330	17%	7,689	15.68%	13,537	27.62%	4,044	8.26%

Table 8A: Institution Type by Lowest High School Grade Band, One Renewal														
	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
Institution Type	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	1,047	6.14%	720	4.22%	713	4.18%	1,023	6%	858	5.03%	1,298	7.61%	304	1.78%
Public 2-year	2,953	17.32%	1,230	7.21%	1,029	6.03%	1,256	7.37%	903	5.3%	990	5.81%	160	0.94%
Private 4-year	391	2.29%	256	1.5%	255	1.5%	350	2.05%	319	1.87%	378	2.22%	77	0.45%
Proprietary 4-year	119	0.7%	45	0.26%	24	0.14%	41	0.24%	32	0.19%	29	0.17%	0	0%
Proprietary 2-year	120	0.7%	24	0.14%	30	0.18%	17	0.1%	5	0.03%	6	0.04%	0	0%
ACM	5	0.03%	6	0.04%	1	0.01%	6	0.04%	7	0.04%	16	0.09%	9	0.05%
Total	4,635	27.18%	2,281	13.37%	2,052	12.04%	2,693	15.8%	2,124	12.46%	2,717	15.94%	550	3.22%

Table 8B: Institution Type by Grade 12 Band, One Renewal														
	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
Institution Type	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	193	1.13%	226	1.33%	292	1.71%	614	3.6%	805	4.72%	2,148	12.6%	1,685	9.88%
Public 2-year	562	3.3%	609	3.57%	676	3.96%	1,185	6.95%	1,316	7.72%	2,758	16.18%	1,415	8.3%
Private 4-year	55	0.32%	79	0.46%	103	0.6%	221	1.3%	291	1.71%	773	4.53%	503	2.95%
Proprietary 4-year	19	0.11%	22	0.13%	31	0.18%	46	0.27%	44	0.26%	93	0.55%	35	0.21%
Proprietary 2-year	32	0.19%	22	0.13%	26	0.15%	38	0.22%	27	0.16%	50	0.29%	7	0.04%
ACM	2	0.01%	2	0.01%	0	0%	3	0.02%	4	0.02%	12	0.07%	27	0.16%
Total	863	5.06%	960	5.63%	1,128	6.6%	2,107	12.36%	2,487	14.59%	5,834	34.22%	3,672	21.54%

Table 9A: Institution Type by Lowest High School Grade Band, Two or More Renewals														
	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
Institution Type	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	2,409	2.59%	2,547	2.74%	3,100	3.33%	6,179	6.64%	7,242	7.79%	19,379	20.83%	12,760	13.72%
Public 2-year	4,214	4.53%	2,401	2.58%	2,331	2.51%	3,754	4.04%	3,406	3.66%	5,401	5.81%	1,199	1.29%
Private 4-year	872	0.94%	805	0.87%	1,000	1.08%	1,943	2.09%	2,224	2.39%	5,577	6%	3,020	3.25%
Proprietary 4-year	120	0.13%	61	0.07%	67	0.07%	100	0.11%	70	0.08%	118	0.13%	21	0.02%
Proprietary 2-year	65	0.07%	18	0.02%	11	0.01%	12	0.01%	18	0.02%	9	0.01%	0	0%
ACM	13	0.01%	22	0.02%	24	0.03%	51	0.05%	87	0.09%	217	0.23%	146	0.16%
Total	7,693	8.27%	5,854	6.3%	6,533	7.03%	12,039	12.94%	13,047	14.03%	30,701	33.01%	17,146	18.44%

Table 9B: Institution Type by Grade 12 Band, Two or More Renewals														
	Below 2.50		2.50 to 2.74		2.75 to 2.99		3.00 to 3.24		3.25 to 3.49		3.50 to 3.99		4.00 and above	
Institution Type	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students
Public 4-year	275	0.3%	513	0.55%	809	0.87%	1,963	2.11%	3,120	3.35%	14,270	15.34%	32,665	35.12%
Public 2-year	636	0.68%	773	0.83%	958	1.03%	1,989	2.14%	2,550	2.74%	8,126	8.74%	7,673	8.25%
Private 4-year	99	0.11%	150	0.16%	249	0.27%	655	0.7%	969	1.04%	4,521	4.86%	8,798	9.46%
Proprietary 4-year	12	0.01%	19	0.02%	32	0.03%	57	0.06%	72	0.08%	227	0.24%	138	0.15%
Proprietary 2-year	23	0.02%	15	0.02%	10	0.01%	22	0.02%	18	0.02%	33	0.04%	12	0.01%
ACM	1	0%	3	0%	6	0.01%	10	0.01%	28	0.03%	129	0.14%	383	0.41%
Total	1,046	1.12%	1,473	1.58%	2,064	2.22%	4,696	5.04%	6,757	7.26%	27,306	29.36%	49,669	53.4%

Non-Recipients (Tables 10A-10B)

Non-recipients represent students in each cohort who graduated and earned a KEES award but did not receive a KEES disbursement. Tables 10A and 10B show the number of non-recipient graduates by GPA band, with FRPL status and share of cohort, under the lowest-grade-band (10A) and 12th-grade-band (10B) classifications.

Non-receipt of the scholarship is overwhelmingly associated with low high school GPAs, particularly under the lowest-band classification. Students who earned below a 2.50 at least one year of high school accounted for roughly 24 percent of each graduating cohort's non-recipients, a figure that held remarkably steady across all six years. The remaining bands were comparatively small. Under the 12th-grade classification, this bottom band is roughly halved, to between 11 and 13 percent, and non-recipients redistribute upward into the middle and upper bands. This indicates that a meaningful share of non-recipients finished high school with a respectable GPA yet still did not draw an award. This points to non-academic factors, such as not enrolling in postsecondary education or pursuing workforce or out-of-state paths, rather than a failure to meet the grade-point threshold in a year of high school. FRPL students concentrate in the bottom band of the non-recipient population. Across cohorts, non-receipt numbers creep modestly upward, most visibly in the upper 12th-grade bands.

Table 10A: Non-recipients by Lowest High School Grade Band (Graduates Only)

	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort
Below 2.50	10,534	8,038	24.3%	10,970	8,623	24.8%	10,632	8,492	24.1%	10,947	8,805	24.1%	10,730	8,643	23.9%	10,955	8,929	24.6%
2.50 to 2.74	1,517	986	3.5%	1,549	1,030	3.5%	1,695	1,163	3.8%	1,827	1,258	4%	1,802	1,294	4%	1,928	1,373	4.3%
2.75 to 2.99	994	616	2.3%	1,024	647	2.3%	1,048	703	2.4%	1,154	760	2.5%	1,255	813	2.8%	1,305	908	2.9%
3.00 to 3.24	1,056	595	2.4%	1,028	573	2.3%	1,181	680	2.7%	1,328	827	2.9%	1,448	882	3.2%	1,559	984	3.5%
3.25 to 3.49	703	332	1.6%	739	370	1.7%	818	413	1.9%	957	518	2.1%	976	500	2.2%	1,072	587	2.4%
3.50 to 3.99	1,117	322	2.6%	1,194	340	2.7%	1,275	432	2.9%	1,404	518	3.1%	1,487	607	3.3%	1,646	686	3.7%
4.00 & above	520	73	1.2%	689	108	1.6%	736	128	1.7%	870	166	1.9%	893	177	2%	938	188	2.1%
Total	16,441	10,962	37.9%	17,193	11,691	38.9%	17,385	12,011	39.5%	18,487	12,852	40.6%	18,591	12,916	41.4%	19,403	13,655	43.5%

Table 10B: Non-recipients by Grade 12 GPA Band (Graduates Only)

	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
GPA Bands	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort	Students	FRPL	% of Cohort
Below 2.50	5,667	4,369	13.1%	5,589	4,483	12.7%	5,579	4,550	12.6%	5,655	4,646	12.5%	5,419	4,455	12.1%	4,870	4,110	10.9%
2.50 to 2.74	1,779	1,322	4.1%	1,730	1,313	3.9%	1,793	1,391	4.1%	1,801	1,395	4%	1,892	1,482	4.2%	1,796	1,414	4%
2.75 to 2.99	1,523	1,107	3.5%	1,524	1,142	3.5%	1,460	1,099	3.3%	1,586	1,200	3.5%	1,594	1,208	3.5%	1,557	1,220	3.5%
3.00 to 3.24	1,954	1,347	4.5%	2,111	1,490	4.8%	1,983	1,419	4.5%	2,218	1,677	4.9%	2,185	1,606	4.9%	2,451	1,853	5.5%
3.25 to 3.49	1,466	989	3.4%	1,731	1,198	3.9%	1,706	1,244	3.9%	1,815	1,271	4%	1,835	1,279	4.1%	1,992	1,436	4.5%
3.50 to 3.99	2,557	1,440	5.9%	2,505	1,511	5.7%	2,823	1,709	6.4%	3,076	1,922	6.8%	3,148	1,987	7%	3,786	2,515	8.5%
4.00 & above	1,479	376	3.4%	1,976	536	4.5%	2,013	579	4.6%	2,301	711	5.1%	2,434	832	5.4%	2,873	1,046	6.4%
Total	16,425	10,950	37.9%	17,166	11,673	39%	17,357	11,991	39.4%	18,452	12,822	40.8%	18,507	12,849	41.2%	19,325	13,594	43.3%

Registered Apprentices and Approved Workforce Trainees (Table 11)

Legislation passed during the 2017 Regular Session expanded the use of KEES in the 2018-2019 academic year by allowing Kentucky high school graduates enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program to receive reimbursement of their tuition, books, required tools and other approved training-related expenses. The maximum amount an approved workforce trainee can receive each year is the amount of KEES they accumulated by high school graduation. Legislation passed in 2019 added eligibility for students enrolled in a qualified workforce training program beginning in the 2020-2021 school year. Eligibility was further expanded by legislation passed during the 2023 Regular Session that provided reimbursement to students at qualifying proprietary institutions, the Kentucky College of Art and Design, and approved KCTCS Workforce Solutions programs. Table 11 shows the students in our report cohort who received one or more apprenticeship KEES disbursements by high school GPA band, comparing the lowest-grade-band and 12th-grade-GPA classifications.

The apprenticeship group, numbering approximately 270 students, offers the clearest single illustration of the contrast between the two classification methods. Grouped by their lowest grade-level GPA, these students skew toward the bottom: those below a 2.50 form the largest band at about 22 percent, the bottom three bands together hold more than half the group, and only a handful reach a 4.00 or above. Grouped by their 12th-grade GPA, the distribution reverses almost entirely. The 3.50-to-3.99 band becomes dominant at nearly 40 percent, the top band rises to about 20 percent, and the share below a 2.50 GPA collapses to 3 percent.

The data suggests that apprenticeship students commonly experienced early academic dips in high school but finished strong, and the legislative changes allow them to access their KEES for training in the skilled trades that are critical to the state's economy. While our study cohort only consists of 270 apprenticeship students across all six cohorts, the 2023-24 through 2025-26 cohorts not included in this report have 277 or more students per cohort receiving benefits in the apprenticeship and workforce category.

Table 11: Apprenticeship Students by High School GPA Band				
GPA Bands	Lowest Grade Band		12th-Grade GPA Band	
	Students with 1 or more disbursements	% of Students	Students with 1 or more disbursements	% of Students
Below 2.50	58	21.50%	8	3%
2.50 to 2.74	47	17.40%	13	4.80%
2.75 to 2.99	37	13.70%	16	5.90%
3.00 to 3.24	49	18.10%	30	11.10%
3.25 to 3.49	30	11.10%	43	15.90%
3.50 to 3.99	44	16.30%	107	39.60%
4.00 & above	5	1.90%	53	19.60%
Total	270	100%	270	100%

Conclusion

This study tracked six graduating cohorts of Kentucky students, from 2014-2015 through 2019-2020, linking high school GPAs to KEES receipt, enrollment, institution type, renewal, and apprenticeship participation.

The methodological finding is that classifying students by their lowest grade-level GPA versus their twelfth-grade GPA produces systematically different pictures, and that the difference between the two is itself informative — it measures students who recovered from an early academic dip and finished strong. The apprenticeship pathway illustrates this most sharply: a small group of roughly 270 students appears academically weak under the lowest-band measure but markedly stronger under the 12th-grade measure. Renewal outcomes require similar care, reflecting both achievement and program length: sustained renewal concentrates among strong students at four-year institutions, while lower counts at two-year and proprietary institutions may partly reflect shorter credential structures rather than weaker performance.

Two equity-related patterns run throughout. FRPL-eligible students are more represented in the lower GPA bands across every grade, but their representation in the highest band improved over the cohorts studied — rising in the 9th-grade figures from roughly a quarter of the top band to about a third — indicating that high achievement became more common among these students over time. Taken together, the findings describe a program whose benefits track closely with academic achievement, set against a backdrop of gradually rising performance and improving representation of FRPL students at the top of the distribution.

The clearest trend is a steady rise in GPAs across the cohorts, most pronounced by the senior year; in the most recent cohort, students earning a 4.00 or above formed the single largest 12th-grade band. Within a graduates-only population, this reflects genuine improvement in measured performance, and the strongest finishers increasingly drive immediate enrollment, sustained renewal, and attendance at four-year institutions, both public and private, while two-year colleges serve a broader population and lead the lower bands. This utilization reflects the expansive reach of KEES as contemplated in its enabling legislation to provide financial assistance for Kentuckians to access public and private postsecondary education in the Commonwealth.