158.140 Admission to high school -- Promotion -- Classification -- High school diploma -- Alternate high school diploma -- Academy diploma -- Posthumous diploma -- Diploma for certain honorably discharged veterans -- Vocational certificate of completion.

(1) When a pupil in any public elementary school or any approved private or parochial school completes the prescribed elementary program of studies, he or she is entitled to a certificate of completion signed by the teacher or teachers under whom the program was completed. The certificate shall entitle the pupil to admission into any public high school. Any promotions or credits earned in attendance in any approved public school are valid in any other public school to which a pupil may go, but the superintendent or principal of a school, as the case may be, may assign the pupil to the class or grade to which the pupil is best suited. In case a pupil transfers from the school of one (1) district to the school of another district, an assignment to a lower grade or course shall not be made until the pupil has demonstrated that he or she is not suited for the work in the grade or course to which he or she has been promoted.

(2) Upon successful completion of all state and local board requirements, the student shall receive:

(a) A diploma indicating graduation from high school; or

(b) An alternate high school diploma if the student has a disability and has completed a modified curriculum and an individualized course of study pursuant to requirements established by the Kentucky Board of Education in accordance with KRS 156.160.

(3) (a) The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, located at Western Kentucky University, and the Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics, located at Morehead State University, may award a diploma to any student who completes his or her high school program at the respective academy. If the academy issues a diploma, the board of regents of the host university shall provide to the commissioner of education a letter of assurance that the program of study completed by its students, in combination with previously earned secondary credits, meets the minimum high school graduation requirements established by the Kentucky Board of Education under KRS 156.160(1)(d).

(b) A local school district may award a joint diploma with the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky or the Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics to any student who was enrolled in a district high school and completed his or her high school program at the respective academy.

(c) The respective academy and the home school district shall ensure that student transcripts from each institution accurately reflect the dual credit coursework.

(4) A local school board may award a diploma indicating graduation from high school to any student posthumously with the high school class the student was expected to graduate.

(5) (a) A local board of education shall award an authentic high school diploma to an honorably discharged veteran who did not complete high school prior to being

inducted into the United States Armed Forces during:

1. World War II, as defined in KRS 40.010;
2. The Korean conflict, as defined in KRS 40.010; or
3. The Vietnam War. As used in this paragraph, "Vietnam War" means the period beginning August 5, 1964, and ending May 7, 1975. However, for a member of the United States Armed Forces serving in Vietnam prior to August 5, 1964, the period shall begin February 28, 1961.

(b) Upon recommendation of the commissioner, the Kentucky Board of Education in consultation with the Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall promulgate administrative regulations to establish the guidelines for awarding the authentic diplomas referred to in paragraph (a) of this subsection.

(6) Any high school graduation requirements adopted by a local board shall not include achieving a minimum score on a statewide assessment administered under KRS 158.6453.

(7) The Department of Education shall establish the requirements for a vocational certificate of completion. A student who has returned to school after dropping out shall receive counseling concerning the vocational program. A student who has completed the requirements established for a vocational program shall receive a vocational certificate of completion specifying the areas of competence.

Effective: July 15, 2026

History: Amended 2026 Ky. Acts ch. 15, sec. 3, effective July 15, 2026. -- Amended 2020 Ky. Acts ch. 112, sec. 4, effective July 15, 2020. -- Amended 2015 Ky. Acts ch. 15, sec. 1, effective June 24, 2015. -- Amended 2012 Ky. Acts ch. 27, sec. 2, effective July 12, 2012. -- Amended 2008 Ky. Acts ch. 134, sec. 26, effective July 15, 2008. -- Amended 2005 Ky. Acts ch. 54, sec. 1, effective June 20, 2005; and ch. 53, sec. 1, effective June 20, 2005. -- Amended 2004 Ky. Acts ch. 97, sec. 1, effective July 13, 2004. -- Amended 2002 Ky. Acts ch. 121, sec. 1, effective July 15, 2002. -- Amended 1998 Ky. Acts ch. 598, sec. 10, effective April 14, 1998. -- Repealed and reenacted 1990 Ky. Acts ch. 476, Pt. V, sec. 400, effective July 13, 1990. -- Amended 1984 Ky. Acts ch. 224, sec. 1, effective July 13, 1984. -- Recodified 1942 Ky. Acts ch. 208, sec. 1, effective October 1, 1942, from Ky. Stat. sec. 4363-5.

Legislative Research Commission Note (7/15/2008). A reference to "KRS 156.160(1)(c)" in subsection (3)(a) of this statute, as amended by 2008 Ky. Acts ch. 134, sec. 26, has been changed in codification to "KRS 156.160(1)(d)" by the Reviser of Statutes under the authority of KRS 7.136(1) to reflect the insertion of a new paragraph in KRS 156.160(1) and change in the designation of succeeding paragraphs in 2008 Ky. Acts ch. 92, sec. 1.