

**EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET**  
**Kentucky Board of Education**  
**Department of Education**  
**(Amended at ARRS Committee)**

**704 KAR 3:305. Minimum requirements for high school graduation.**

RELATES TO: KRS 156.160(1)(a), (d), 158.140(6), 158.142, 158.645, 158.6451

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: KRS 156.070, 156.160(1)(a), (d), 158.140(6), 158.142

NECESSITY, FUNCTION, AND CONFORMITY: KRS 156.160 requires the Kentucky Board of Education to promulgate administrative regulations relating to the courses of study for the different grades and the minimum requirements for high school graduation. KRS 158.142(3)(b) requires the board to promulgate administrative regulations establishing requirements for early graduation from high school. The content standards for the courses of study are established in the Kentucky academic standards incorporated by reference in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8. This administrative regulation establishes the minimum requirements necessary for entitlement to a high school diploma.

**Section 1. Definitions.**

(1) "Continuity of services plan" means a plan that outlines the ways in which a student will receive access to essential services that will end if the student graduates early.

(2) "Early Graduation Certificate" means a certificate, awarded by the district and signed by the principal and superintendent, that shall qualify the recipient to be awarded a high school diploma and a scholarship award equal to one-half (1/2) of the state portion of the average statewide per pupil guaranteed base funding level, to be used at a Kentucky public two (2) year community and technical college or a Kentucky four (4) year public or non-profit independent institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

(3) "Early Graduation Program" or "EGP" means an optional, criteria-based program in which a student may receive a diploma from the school district, an Early Graduation Certificate, and a scholarship award upon successful completion of all program requirements provided in Section 5 of this administrative regulation in three (3) academic years or less.

(4) "Graduate early" means a student is awarded a diploma from the district, in under four (4) academic years from the start of grade 9, based upon meeting the minimum credit requirements of this administrative regulation and additional requirements as may be imposed by a local board of education.

(5) "Individual Learning Plan" or "ILP" is defined in 704 KAR 19:002.

**Section 2.**

(1) A district shall implement an advising and guidance process throughout the middle and high schools to provide support for the development and implementation of an individual learning plan for each student. The plan shall include career development and awareness and specifically address the content as provided in the Kentucky academic standards for career studies established in 704 KAR Chapter 8. The individual learning plan shall not be a substitute for the statement of transition service needs for students with disabilities as provided in 707 KAR 1:320.

(2) A district shall develop a method to evaluate the effectiveness and results of the individual learning plan process. The evaluation method shall include input from students, parents, and school staff. As part of the evaluation criteria, the district shall include indicators related to the status of the student in the twelve (12) months following the date of graduation.

(3) A feeder middle school and a high school shall work cooperatively to ensure that each student and parent receives information and advising regarding the relationship between education and career opportunities. Advising and guidance shall include information about financial planning for postsecondary education.

(4) A school shall maintain each student's individual learning plan. The individual learning plan shall be readily available to the student and parent and reviewed and approved at least annually by the student, parents, and school officials.

(5) Beginning with a student's eighth grade year, the individual learning plan shall set learning goals for the student based on academic and career interests and shall identify required academic courses, electives, and extracurricular opportunities aligned to the student's postsecondary goals. The school shall use information from the individual learning plans about student needs for academic and elective courses to plan academic and elective offerings.

(6) The development of the individual learning plan for each student shall be established within the first ninety (90) days of the sixth grade year and shall be focused on career exploration and related postsecondary education and training needs.

### Section 3.

(1) For students entering grade 9 on or before the first day of the 2018-2019 academic year, each student in a public school shall have a total of at least twenty-two (22) credits for high school graduation.

(2) Those credits shall include the content standards as provided in the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and KAR Chapter 8.

(3) Additional standards-based learning experiences shall align to the student's individual learning plan and shall consist of standards-based content.

(4) The required credits and demonstrated competencies shall include the following minimum requirements:

(a) Language arts - four (4) credits (English I, II, III, and IV) to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area and comply with the following:

1. Language arts shall be taken each year of high school; and

2. If a student does not meet the college readiness benchmarks for English and language arts as established by the Council on Postsecondary Education in 13 KAR 2:020, the student shall take an English and language arts transitional course or intervention, which is monitored to address remediation needs, before exiting high school;

(b) Social studies - three (3) credits to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;

(c) Mathematics - three (3) credits to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area and include the following minimum requirements:

1. Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. An integrated, applied, interdisciplinary, occupational, or technical course that prepares a student for a career path based on the student's individual learning plan may be substituted for a traditional Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II course on an individual student basis if the course meets the content standards in the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 Chapter 8;

2. A mathematics course or its equivalent as determined by the district shall be taken each year of high school to ensure readiness for postsecondary education or the workforce;

3. Any mathematics course other than Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II shall be counted as an elective; and

4. If a student does not meet the college readiness benchmarks for mathematics as established by the Council on Postsecondary Education in 13 KAR 2:020, the student shall take a mathematics transitional course or intervention, which is monitored to address remediation needs, before exiting high school;
- (d) Science - three (3) credits that shall incorporate lab-based scientific investigation experiences and include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (e) Health - one-half (1/2) credit to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (f) Physical education - one-half (1/2) credit to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (g) Visual and performing arts - one (1) credit to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area or a standards-based specialized arts course based on the student's individual learning plan;
  - (h) Academic and career interest standards-based learning experiences - seven (7) credits including four (4) standards-based learning experiences in an academic or career interest based on the student's individual learning plan; and
  - (i) Demonstrated performance-based competency in technology.

#### Section 4.

- (1) Beginning with students who enter grade 9 on or after the first day of the 2019-2020 academic year, in order to receive a high school diploma, each student in a public school shall earn a total of at least twenty-two (22) credits for high school graduation.
- (2) The required credits shall include the content standards as provided in the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8.
- (3) Additional standards-based learning experiences shall align to the student's individual learning plan and shall consist of standards-based content.
- (4) Each student shall be required to complete the following foundational credits and demonstrated competencies, consisting of ten (10) credits:
  - (a) English/language arts - two (2) credits (English I and II) to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (b) Social studies - two (2) credits to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (c) Mathematics - two (2) credits (Algebra I and Geometry) to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (d) Science - two (2) credits that shall incorporate lab-based scientific investigation experiences and include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (e) Health - one-half (1/2) credit to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area;
  - (f) Physical education - one-half (1/2) credit to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area; and
  - (g) Visual and performing arts - one (1) credit to include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area or a standards-based specialized arts course based on the student's individual learning plan.
- (5) In addition to the foundational requirements established in subsection (4) of this Section, every student shall earn a minimum of twelve (12) personalized credits in order to receive a high school diploma. These twelve (12) personalized credits shall include:
  - (a) Two (2) additional English/Language Arts credits that include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area and are aligned to the student's individual learning plan;

- (b) Two (2) additional mathematics credits that include the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area and are aligned to the student's individual learning plan;
- (c) One (1) additional science credit that includes the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area and is aligned to the student's individual learning plan;
- (d) One (1) additional social studies credit that includes the content contained in the Kentucky academic standards for this content area and is aligned to the student's individual learning plan;
- (e) Academic and career interest standards-based learning experiences - six (6) credits including four (4) standards-based learning experiences based on the student's individual learning plan;
- (f) Demonstrate performance-based competency in technology as approved by the Kentucky Department of Education;
- (g) Pass a civics test as required by KRS 158.141; and
- (h) Beginning with students entering grade 9 on or after the first day of the 2020-2021 academic year, successfully complete one (1) or more courses or programs that meet the financial literacy requirements pursuant to KRS 158.1411 and standards as established in 704 KAR Chapter 8.

#### Section 5.

- (1) Only students who meet the criteria established in this section shall be eligible for the Early Graduation Program:
  - (a) Students wishing to participate in the EGP shall indicate that intent to the school principal in writing at the beginning of grade 9 or as soon as the intent is known to the student, but no later than the first thirty (30) school days of the academic year in which the student intends to graduate;
  - (b) Schools and districts shall not prohibit a student from completing the EGP if the student meets all EGP requirements provided in this section;
  - (c) Students who enroll in the EGP and meet the criteria provided in this section shall receive from the school district a diploma and an early graduation certificate;
  - (d) The school or district shall enter the enrolled EGP student into the student information system by October 15 of the year in which the student intends to graduate;
  - (e) Students participating in the EGP shall complete all requirements set forth in this section applicable to the academic year in which the student intends to graduate; and
  - (f) A student who has indicated an intent to complete the EGP may participate in the state administration of the college entrance exam prior to the junior year, if needed.
- (2) To participate in the EGP and graduate during the 2022-2023 school year, a student shall:
  - (a) Meet the requirements of subsection 1 of this section;
  - (b) Meet the college readiness exam benchmarks established by the Council on Postsecondary Education in 13 KAR 2:020 for placement in credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation;
  - (c) Complete one (1) or more courses or programs that meet the financial literacy requirements pursuant to KRS 158.1411; and
  - (d) Obtain a passing grade on the civics test pursuant to KRS 158.141.
- (3) By July 1, 2023, each school district shall provide each school within the district with the policy established by the local board of education for students wishing to participate in the EGP and earn an Early Graduation Certificate and scholarship. The district policy shall include:
  - (a) Criteria for supporting the development and monitoring of the student individual learning plan, as provided in Section 2 of this administrative regulation;

- (b) Goal planning related to the attainment of established district essential workplace ethics programs as provided in KRS 158.1413;
  - (c) Completion of a professional resume; and
  - (d) Completion of one (1) postsecondary admissions application that may be used at a Kentucky public two (2) year community and technical college or a Kentucky four (4) year public or non-profit independent institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in which the student is interested in applying.
- (4) Beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year, each EGP participant, with the support of the comprehensive school counselor, or designee, shall:
- (a) Identify all EGP requirements and develop a strategy within the individual learning plan for meeting those requirements, including the district's established workplace ethics program provided in KRS 158.1413; and
  - (b) Complete an entrance interview with the principal, or designee, to discuss postsecondary goals and career aspirations.
- (5) Beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year, to successfully complete the EGP and earn an Early Graduation Certificate and scholarship, the student shall:
- (a) Communicate intent to the principal as required in subsection (1) of this section;
  - (b) Meet the college entrance exam benchmarks established by the Council on Postsecondary Education in 13 KAR 2:020 for placement in credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation;
  - (c) Earn ten (10) foundational credits that shall include the content standards as provided in the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8;
  - (d) Complete the essential workplace ethics program requirements established by the school district pursuant to KRS 158.1413;
  - (e) Complete one (1) or more courses or programs that meet the financial literacy requirements pursuant to KRS 158.1411; and
  - (f) Obtain a passing grade on the civics test pursuant to KRS 158.141.
- (6) By July 1, 2024, each local board of education shall establish a policy requiring high schools to determine performance descriptors and evaluation procedures for an EGP performance-based project, portfolio, or capstone required for students who intend to complete the EGP beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year. Performance descriptors and evaluation procedures shall provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate attainment of the following critical skills required for postsecondary and career success:
- (a) Attainment of essential workplace ethics program components as established by the board of education pursuant to KRS 158.1413;
  - (b) Demonstration of an ability to apply the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and KAR Chapter 8, as a life-long learner and contributing member of society;
  - (c) Demonstration of written and verbal communication skills needed for postsecondary success; and
  - (d) Demonstration of an ability to think critically, synthesize information, and draw conclusions.
- (7) Beginning July 1, 2024, the performance-based project, portfolio, or capstone shall be required for completion of the EGP.
- (8) A school shall maintain and make readily available to the Kentucky Department of Education the EGP participant's performance-based project, portfolio, or capstone for a minimum of five (5) years.

#### Section 6.

- (1) A local board of education may substitute an integrated, applied, interdisciplinary, occupational, technical, or higher level course for a required course if the alternative

course provides rigorous content.

(2) For students with disabilities, a local board of education may substitute a functional, integrated, applied, interdisciplinary, occupational, technical, or higher level course for a required course if the alternative course provides rigorous content. These shall be based on grade-level content standards and may be modified to allow for a narrower breadth, depth, or complexity of the general grade-level content standards.

#### Section 7.

(1) A local board of education may award credit toward high school graduation for satisfactory demonstration of learning based on content standards described in the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8, and a rigorous performance standards policy established by the local board of education. A school shall establish performance descriptors and evaluation procedures to determine if the content and performance standards have been met.

(2) A local board of education shall award credit toward high school graduation based on:

(a) A standards-based Carnegie unit credit that shall consist of at least 120 hours of instructional time in one (1) subject; or

(b) A performance-based credit based on standards, regardless of the number of instructional hours in one (1) subject.

(3) A local board of education which has chosen to award performance-based credit shall award a standards-based credit earned by a student enrolled in grade 5, 6, 7, or 8 if:

(a) The content of the course is the same as that described in the Kentucky academic standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8; and

(b) The district has criteria in place to make a reasonable determination that the middle level student is capable of success in the high school course.

(4) A local board of education which has chosen to award performance-based credit shall establish a policy for a performance-based credit system that includes:

(a) The procedures for developing performance-based credit systems and for amending the system;

(b) The conditions under which each high school may grant performance-based credits and the related performance descriptors and assessments;

(c) Objective grading and reporting procedures;

(d) Content standards established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8;

(e) The extent to which state-provided assessments will be used in the local performance-based credit system;

(f) The ability for students to demonstrate proficiency and earn credit for learning acquired outside of school or in prior learning; and

(g) Criteria to ensure that internships, cooperative learning experiences, and other learning experiences in the school and community are:

1. Designed to further student progress towards the individual learning plan;

2. Supervised by qualified instructors; and

3. Aligned with state and local content and performance standards.

(5) A board of education may award standards-based, performance-based credit toward high school graduation for:

(a) Standards-based course work that constitutes satisfactory demonstration of learning in any high school course, consistent with Sections 3 and 4 of this administrative regulation;

(b) Standards-based course work that constitutes satisfactory demonstration of learning in a course for which the student failed to earn credit when the course was taken previously;

(c) Standards-based portfolios, senior year, or capstone projects;

(d) Standards-based online or other technology mediated courses;

- (e) Standards-based dual credit or other equivalency courses; or
  - (f) Standards-based internship, cooperative learning experience, or other supervised experience in the school or the community.
- (6) Each local board of education shall maintain a copy of its policy on high school graduation requirements. This policy shall include a description of how the requirements address KRS 158.6451(1)(b).

Section 8.

- (1) A student who satisfactorily completes the requirements of this administrative regulation and additional requirements as may be imposed by a local board of education or meets the requirements for the Early Graduation Program established in Section 5 of this administrative regulation shall be awarded a graduation diploma.
- (2) A local board shall not adopt any high school graduation requirements that include achieving a minimum score on a statewide assessment as established in KRS 158.140.
- (3) The local board of education shall award the diploma.

Section 9. This administrative regulation shall not be interpreted as prohibiting a local governing board, superintendent, principal, or teacher from awarding special recognition to a student.

Section 10.

- (1) If the severity of an exceptional student's disability precludes a course of study that meets the high school graduation requirements established in Sections 3 and 4 of this administrative regulation leading to receipt of a high school diploma, an alternative course of study shall be offered.
- (2) This course of study shall be based upon student needs and the provisions established in 704 KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8, and shall be reviewed at least annually.
- (3) A student who completes this course of study shall receive an alternative high school diploma to be awarded by the local board of education consistent with the graduation practices for all students.
- (4) A local board of education may establish policies to award an alternative high school diploma to a former student who has received a certificate or certificate of attainment.

Section 11.

- (1) Any student seeking to graduate early who receives services deemed essential by the local school district shall engage in meaningful consultation with a school-based mental health services provider, as defined by KRS 158.4416, on the creation of a continuity of services plan prior to graduation.
  - (2) School districts shall ensure the creation of a continuity of services plan for all students identified as a homeless child pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 11434, a migratory child pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 6399, or youth engaged in foster care pursuant to KRS 620.020(5).
  - (3) The completion of a transition plan for children aging out of foster care, as described by 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(H), shall meet the requirements outlined in this section.
- (5 Ky.R. 633; 6 Ky.R. 53; eff. 7-17-1979; 6 Ky.R. 238; 526; eff. 4-1-1980; 9 Ky.R. 1027; 1208; eff. 8-3-1983; 11 Ky.R. 1076; eff. 3-12-1985; 17 Ky.R. 113; eff. 9-13-1990; 23 Ky.R. 3419; 3827; 24 Ky.R. 82; eff. 7-2-1997; 32 Ky.R. 1779; 2028; 33 Ky.R. 766; eff. 10-6-2006; 37 Ky.R. 138; 1644; eff. 2-4-2011; 39 Ky.R. 612; 1115; eff. 1-4-2013; 40 Ky.R. 1138; 1406; eff. 3-7-2014; 45 Ky.R. 1414, 2111, 2342; eff. 4-5-2019; 47 Ky.R. 1068, 1559; eff. 5-4-2021; 49 Ky.R. 91, 1109, 1425; eff. 4-4-2023.)

FILED WITH LRC: December 13, 2022

CONTACT PERSON: Todd G. Allen, General Counsel, Kentucky Department of Education, 300 Sower Boulevard, 5th Floor, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601, phone 502-564-4474, fax 502-564-9321, email [regcomments@education.ky.gov](mailto:regcomments@education.ky.gov).