

KENTUCKY SCHOOL UPDATES

HIGH SCHOOLS

THE BASICS OF THE LAW

- The Kentucky Board of Education is responsible for establishing **graduation requirements** using the goals for students adopted by law. (See Goals in the chapter on assessment and accountability.) In 2006 the Board adopted new requirements that will begin with the class of 2012. (See chart at the end of the chapter.) Requirements were last changed beginning with the class of 2002.
- Pre-college curriculum requirements include minimum courses needed for college admission. This more rigorous curriculum includes foreign language, geometry, at least one lab course in science and more rigorous electives. (See chart at the end of the chapter.)
- The **Commonwealth Diploma Program**, begun in 1986, provides students with a special diploma for exceptional work in high school. Requirements include completion of state and local graduation requirements and the state’s pre-college preparatory curriculum; a grade “C” or better in four Advanced Placement (AP) courses in English, foreign language, an elective, and mathematics or science; and completion of AP or International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations in three of the four required AP subject areas. Students who score at or above an established cut-off point can be reimbursed for the cost of taking the AP examinations. It is expected that there will be significant changes in the Commonwealth Diploma requirements in the next few years, so students pursuing this diploma need to work with school counselors to be sure they are aware of any changes.
- With regard to **advanced placement courses**, the following requirements have been established by law.
 - ✓ uniform criteria must be established for advanced placement courses
 - ✓ a core curriculum of no less than one course in at least four of six subjects (English, science, mathematics, social studies, foreign language and the arts) of advanced placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment or dual credit courses must be offered at all high schools; classes can be on-site or through Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS) and probably through courses at colleges or universities
 - ✓ tuition and costs for students taking KVHS courses during the school day for credit must be paid by school districts
 - ✓ credits toward graduation and grades for calculating grade point averages (GPAs) for students who successfully complete courses through KVHS must be accepted by school districts and credits for high school graduation for students in grades five

through eight who complete a KVHS course with an A or B or who score a 3 or higher on AP exams must accepted

- ✓ college credit must be granted to students scoring a 3 or higher on AP exams from Kentucky public colleges and universities based on a Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) regulation. (Enacted in 2002.)

- Rules for high school-aged students taking the exam for a General Education Diploma (GED) changed in 2004. Students enrolled in a GED program operated or contracted by the school district or who obtain a GED by October 1 following their withdrawal from school will not be counted as a drop out. They must continue however, to participate in and be counted in their school's testing and accountability. Schools may work with students on obtaining a GED and continue to receive state funding for those students. However, school principals are strongly encouraged to use this option only when there are no other choices for students who want to leave school

PLANNING FOR COLLEGE or WORK

- Students and their families need to plan ahead for college, vocational/technical school or work with regard to academic preparation and financial costs. Every student and his or her parents should begin working on their Individual Learning Plan with teachers and school counselors beginning in middle school. Goals and areas of career interest should be identified and high school classes selected with those future plans in mind as well as results of the EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT and Work Keys tests. (See What's New? below.) Students need to take high level classes to prepare themselves for education and work after high school.

In addition, families should begin early to plan for the cost of college or vocational/technical school. The following programs can help.

- The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education has developed a program called **Kentucky Go Higher** to support and encourage Kentucky students to get a good education. It's Web site, <http://www.gohigherky.org/> is a useful planning and information tool for students and parents.

- The **Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship Program (KEES)** uses lottery funds for student scholarships to Kentucky colleges, universities, and vocational programs. The amount students earn is based on their grade point average (GPA) each year of high school and their highest ACT test score. In calculating eligibility, advanced placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses are weighted on a five-point scale, meaning an A is worth 25 percent more than an A in a regular course. High schools are required to weight these courses before reporting GPAs to the state. The higher the GPA and ACT score, the more scholarship money a student earns with the maximum amount \$2,500 a year and the minimum \$125 for eligible students. High school counselors can provide students with more information. Students must maintain a satisfactory GPA in college to maintain their KEES grants.

- The **Kentucky Education Savings Plan Trust** allows families to save for college expenses. Contributions are tax-free until savings are withdrawn and then are taxed at a lower rate if used for qualified higher education expenses.
- **Kentucky's Affordable Prepaid Tuition (KAPT)** program is intended to help Kentucky families afford college by guaranteeing the cost of tomorrow's tuition at today's prices. The Setting Aside for a Valuable Education (SAVE) Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 2001, allows these investments to be tax free. Enrollment periods are limited so it is important to check the Web site or call to know when it is possible to sign up for this program. Visit www.getkapt.com or call 1-888-919-KAPT for more information. (Enacted in 2000.)
- **Kentucky's foster and adopted children** are eligible for free tuition and student fees in Kentucky's public colleges, universities, and technical and vocational schools. School counselors should be able to provide more information. (Enacted in 2001.)

WHAT'S NEW?

- ➔ Senate Bill 130, enacted in 2006, requires additional diagnostic testing to evaluate student's readiness for high school, college, technical schools or the workplace. Beginning in the fall of 2006, eighth grade students will take **EXPLORE**, a high school readiness exam and tenth grade students will take **PLAN**, a college readiness exam. Beginning in 2007-08, all eleventh grade students will take the **ACT**. All of these tests assess English, reading, mathematics and science. Schools are required to use results of these tests to provide guidance and assistance to students in preparing for postsecondary education or work. High school students whose ACT scores do not meet requirements for credit-bearing classes in college will be provided the opportunity to take accelerated classes in their areas of weakness and they may take the ACT a second time at the expense of the Kentucky Department of Education. (See Assessment and Accountability beginning on page 1 for use of these assessments in accountability.) Students who do well on these tests will be encouraged to take higher level classes to help them be well-prepared for school or work after high school.
- ➔ No later than the 2007-08 school year, students in grades 10, 11 or 12 will have the opportunity to take the **WorkKeys** assessment in reading for information, locating information and applied mathematics. Students meeting satisfactory scores will receive the appropriate "Kentucky Employability Certificate," which can be helpful with job applications. Students who do not perform at this level, shall be eligible for additional assistance. Information from all of these tests will be used to develop each student's Individual Learning Plan.
- ➔ House Bill 197 enacted in 2006 required the Kentucky Department of Education to pilot **end-of-course exams** for high school students in Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry. End-of-course exams provide a consistent standard for coursework across the state, so schools could use them to judge the quality of their curriculum and instruction compared

to state standards. These exams could also be used by students to demonstrate their competency in a subject for high school credit so that students can progress based on their performance rather than the amount of time they have spent in a particular class. A study of this pilot program must be conducted and reported to the legislature before end-of-course exams can be required.

- ➔ The Kentucky Board of Education adopted regulations that allow students to receive **credit for mastery of material**, not just seat time or time in the classroom. Some high schools are working on performance-based grading, allowing students to move at their own pace and move ahead once they demonstrate that they have mastered the content for a class. This new rule will make it easier for those schools and their students to use performance-based programs.
- ➔ Many colleges and high schools have begun offering **dual credit classes** for high school students. In a dual credit class, a student earns both high school and college credit at the same time for the same course. The Kentucky Board of Education has appointed a task force to study dual credit opportunities and make policy recommendations to assure that students get the most benefit from these courses. The Board adopted regulations that protect high schools from losing ADA funding for students who take dual credit courses outside the high school building.

RESULTS

- The **high school graduation rate in Kentucky** continues to be too low and the dropout rate too high. In 2005, 6,522 students in dropped out of Kentucky high schools. According to the EPE Research Center only 69.7 percent of students entering ninth grade in Kentucky graduated four years later in 2003. (There are a number of ways to calculate graduation rates, all of which indicate rates that are unacceptable.) Students report dropping out of school for a wide range of reasons. They may be struggling academically, bored with school or in need of a job because of family circumstances. Many students who drop out report that they have made few or no connections with anyone at school – friends, teachers or groups with similar interests.
- Colleges and universities are reporting that many students who graduate from high school enter college unprepared for college level work and require remediation or simply drop out of college without a certificate or degree. Schools, districts and the state are working to keep students in schools and on track to graduate with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in college, technical school or the workplace. Following are Kentucky programs focused on high school students.
- **GEAR UP Kentucky** (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Education Programs), funded by a federal grant, is a program that encourages low income middle and high school students to stay in school and attend post secondary education. It focuses on preparing students for college work and educating them and their families about financial resources available for college. The Department of Education, local

schools, and colleges work together to coordinate this program. Kentucky received a \$10 million matching grant for 2000-2005 and has a second matching grant of \$21 million for 2005-2011.

- The **Kentucky Virtual High School** and the Virtual Advanced Placement Academy offer high school courses online throughout the school year and also for summer school. It is managed by the Kentucky Department of Education, but credit for courses is granted by the student's local high school.
 - Students must have approval from their high school to take these courses. The cost is \$150 per semester ($\frac{1}{2}$ credit) or \$300 per full course for schools but scholarships are available for many courses and fees have been lowered each year. The school should pay the tuition if the course is not available at the high school. Students may be asked to pay the fee if the course is already offered at the school or is above and beyond the daily instructional program.
 - KVHS teachers are Kentucky-certified in the subjects they teach.
 - KVHS also offers 9-week credit recovery sessions for students year round, to help students who are behind or who may have failed a course.
 - In 2006, the KVHS is expanding the number of courses in its Content Repository initiative to make high quality online content available at no cost to teachers in traditional classrooms to supplement face-to-face instruction. For more information visit the Web site at <http://www.kvhs.org/>.
- To support the secondary reform agenda, the Kentucky Department of Education applied for and was awarded Honor States Grants from the National Governors Association in the areas of Advanced Placement Expansion, Virtual Learning, and Longitudinal Data Systems. These initiatives provide resources and national expertise to help the state make needed changes in middle and high schools.
- The Council on Postsecondary Education and the Kentucky Department of Education participated in the **American Diploma Project (ADP)** to establish a statewide definition of college readiness in English and mathematics based on the American Diploma Project benchmarks. Beginning in 2005, public Kentucky colleges have agreed to place students in credit-bearing courses if they can demonstrate these standards of college readiness.
 - ACT of 18 in reading or writing classes
 - ACT of 19 in mathematics for entry-level math classes (which may not meet requirements for many college majors)
 - ACT of 22 in mathematics for college algebra (requirement for many college majors)
 - ACT of 27 in mathematics for college calculus (requirement for math-intensive majors)

- **The Kentucky High School Feedback Report**, prepared by the Council on Postsecondary Education, provides information to the public and to Kentucky high schools about their students' college-readiness, college first-year performance in English and mathematics, and persistence to sophomore year, of graduates who take the ACT and enroll in a participating Kentucky college or university. The 2002 High School Feedback Report was released in May 2006, and the 2004 report is expected in the fall of 2006. Go to www.education.ky.gov, click on Max Data System and click on Postsecondary for the latest reports.
- The **Kentucky Secondary Alliance**, created by the Department of Education has identified and provides support for over 75 high schools and the middle schools that send students to them, as they work to restructure their schools. In addition in 2005-06 they conducted seven student summits on high schools around the state talking with high school students about secondary education. The goal of the Kentucky Alliance is to mobilize the resources, knowledge, and capacities of the schools, districts, department of education, and communities to shape policy and practice so that **all** Kentucky students leave high school prepared and ready to pursue a next level of learning in college and/or the workforce.
- State and regional **P-16 Councils** (preschool through four years of college) are working to improve communication between schools and colleges in an effort to improve students' ability for success.
- Colleges, universities and community and technical colleges are working with local high schools to develop **dual credit classes** to offer college credit to students as they complete their high school careers. These programs can target low-achieving students who are at risk of dropping out of high school and high-achieving students who need the additional challenge of college level work and want to get a head start on postsecondary studies.
- The **Kentucky Scholars Program** is a project of the Partnership for Successful Schools that engages business leaders in conversations with high schools students to help them understand more about the skills needed for the workplace of the future. Students are encouraged to complete the "Scholars Core Course of Study" including four courses of English, three courses of math, three courses of science, three and one-half courses of social studies and two courses in a foreign language. Research has shown that students who successfully complete this coursework are more likely to be successful in college and the workplace.
- The Prichard Committee prepared a report and recommendations to improve high schools entitled "High Achieving High Schools. It is available online at www.prichardcommittee.org or by calling 859-233-9849.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ✍ **All Kentucky high school students** should have access to advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment and dual credit courses. School-based decision making councils at each high school must adopt a policy on the recruitment and assignment of students to these courses recognizing that all students have the right to be academically challenged and encouraged to participate to the extent possible. Schools should be helping students through their individual learning plans to prepare for these higher level courses by taking any necessary prerequisite courses and taking more rigorous classes.
- ✍ The opportunity to earn **KEES scholarships** based partly on high school grades, should be an incentive for students to do better in school. It should also encourage more students who thought they could never afford college to consider postsecondary education.
- ✍ More emphasis will be placed on the need for students to take higher level classes to prepare themselves as well as possible for postsecondary education or the workplace.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- ★ **Talk with students at all grade levels** about the need to take the highest level courses possible in middle and high school, and to continue taking these courses in their senior year to be well-prepared for college or work.
- ★ **Remind students and parents** about the opportunity to earn KEES scholarships and the options to save for college or other postsecondary education programs.
- ★ **Ask** how your high school will help students meet the new graduation requirements and how they will use the new EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT and Work Keys to counsel students.
- ★ **Ask** about plans to offer Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual credit classes. Ask how previous students have scored on the AP exams. Scores of 3, 4 or 5 (on a 5-point scale) suggest the course is meeting AP standards.
- ★ **Request** information about Kentucky Scholars, a model program of the Partnership for Successful Schools, for improving high school academic achievement. Contact the Partnership for more information.
- ★ **Encourage local business** leaders to use the *Learning Equals Earning Employee Communications Packet* developed by the Partnership for Kentucky Schools. It includes written and electronic messages employers can use to help employees better support local schools. Topics include reading, math and science, essential workplace skills, back-to-school issues, technology, high school records, quality teaching and summer learning. Also ask for *Learning Equals Earning* posters. See below for more information.

- ★ **Ask** for a copy of *Turn Up the Volume: The Students Speak* toolkit developed by the Partnership for Kentucky Schools. **Use** its detailed instructions to conduct research-quality focus group studies with students as facilitators. See below for contact information.

- ★ **Obtain and review** the Second Edition of *Ready for Work: Essential Skills for Kentucky Jobs*, a toolkit designed to help communities and schools address student performance and job preparation. Researched and produced by the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, this four-volume report looks at preparation of Kentucky students for life after high school from the perspective of employers, parents, educators, and students. See below for contact information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

- **Kentucky Department of Education**, (800) 533-5372 or visit the Web site at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Default.htm>.
 - **Division of Career and Technical Education**, (502) 564-3472;
 - **Division of Curriculum Development**, (502) 564-2106;
 - **Kentucky Virtual High School**, (502) 564-4772 or (866) 432-0008 or visit the Web site at <http://www.kvhs.org/>;
 - **Division of Secondary and Virtual Learning**, (502) 564-4772
 - **Office of Leadership and School Improvement** (502) 564-2116;
 - **Special Projects Branch (advanced placement grant)**, (502) 564-2106.
- **Kentucky Education Savings Plan Trust**; (877) 598-7878 (KY TRUST) or visit the Web site at <http://www.kentuckytrust.org/>.
- **Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship Program**, (800) 928-8926 ext. 7397 or visit the Web site at <http://www.kheaa.com/>.
- **Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority**, (800) 928-8926 or visit the Web site at <http://www.kheaa.com/>.
- **Kentucky's Affordable Prepaid Tuition**; Office of the State Treasurer, 1-888-919-KAPT or visit <http://www.getkapt.com/>.
- **Kentucky Scholars Program**, (859) 278-6512 or pmarquette@kentuckyscholars.org or visit the Web site at www.kyscholars.org.
- **Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence**, P.O. Box 1658, Lexington, KY 40588-1658; (859) 233-9849 or (800) 928-2111; e-mail: admin@prichardcommittee.org or visit the Web site at <http://www.prichardcommittee.org/>.
- **Web site with links to college and scholarship information**, <http://www.collegeky.com/>.

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