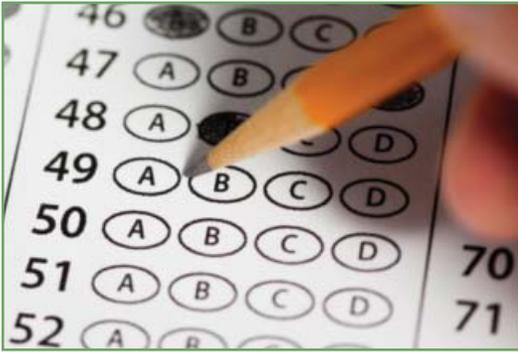


# New Standards, New Tests and New Scores

Preparing Kentucky's Students for College and Career





## Introduction

**KENTUCKY STUDENTS** are being taught mathematics and English/language arts under new, more challenging standards that are designed to improve their preparation for college and career. Progress is measured by state tests, administered for the first time in 2012, that reflect the performance of both students and schools in meeting the requirements of the higher standards.

The complexity of the process understandably raises many questions as parents, employers, civic leaders and other interested Kentuckians seek to learn more about the state's education improvement efforts. This overview addresses some of those questions and suggests additional resources that offer more detailed information.

## New Standards: More Rigorous for Today's World

**LEGISLATION ENACTED** by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2009 mandated new, more rigorous academic standards and new state tests. Two years later, Kentucky became the first of 46 states to adopt what are called the Common Core State Standards in math and English (science and social studies standards are still being developed). These became the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, and they were incorporated into the state's classrooms beginning in the 2011-12 school year.

Standards are simply what students are expected to learn as they move from grade to grade through school. They help set clear, consistent expectations for students, parents and teachers and build students' knowledge and skills. Kentucky's new standards – benchmarked internationally to better prepare students to succeed in a global economy – require students to show they have a deeper understanding of subjects.



### Comparing the old standards to the new

Here is an example of a standard for 6th grade reading. The first version is what Kentucky had in place before; the second is the new standard.

#### PREVIOUS STANDARD

- Students will apply knowledge of synonyms or antonyms to comprehend a passage.
- Students will select, based on context, the appropriate meaning for a word that has multiple meanings.

#### NEW STANDARD

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Use content (e.g. the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph, a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g. audience, auditory, audible).
- Consult reference materials (e.g. dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning of its part of speech.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g. by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Similarly challenging standards, which go deeper every year, are now in place for math and English/language arts for elementary, middle and high school students. More information, including a complete list of the new standards, is available at: [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).

## Testing to Measure Progress — of Students, Schools and Districts

**TESTING ON** the new standards began in the spring of 2012 in the closing weeks of the school year to ensure student learning continues as long as possible. Previously, tests were administered earlier in the year, and educators sometimes found it challenging to keep students' focused after the testing was concluded.

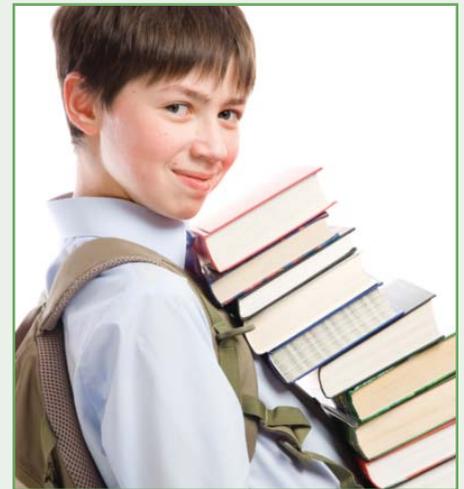
Results from the 2012 tests are expected to be available at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. Parents will receive an individual report on their child, and results for schools and districts will be made available to the public via the media and online resources of the Kentucky Department of Education.

Which tests students take when depends on grade level. These tests include the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress, known as K-PREP; end-of-course exams to determine students'

knowledge after completing coursework in high school; and tests developed by ACT to measure students' high school and college readiness. This includes the ACT itself. The mandatory tests are administered as indicated in the following table.

In the past, schools and districts received an overall score on a scale of 0 to 140. Under the new assessment and accountability system, schools and districts will receive an overall score on a scale of 0 to 100. It's not possible to directly compare the new scores with the old, and it may appear that scores have dropped. This is a brand-new system, however, with a new way of scoring. Education officials expect this short-term decline to improve as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

Test type	Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
K-PREP Assessments	Reading	X	X	X	X	X	X				
	Mathematics	X	X	X	X	X	X				
	Science		X			X					
	Social Studies			X			X				
	Writing*		1	2	3		2		2	2	
End-of-Course Exams		Taken when courses are completed.									
ACT Family	EXPLORE						X				
	PLAN								X		
	ACT									X	



### Sample Test Questions

Here is an example of a 6th-grade math question (no calculator allowed).

An expression is shown below:

$$6m + 5p^3 - 1$$

What is the value of the expression when  $m = 1/3$  and  $p = 2$ ? Show your work.

And here is a 5th-grade math question (calculator allowed).

Mara needs to buy 2 pieces of rope to hang a swing. Each piece of rope must be 10 FEET long. The rope is only sold in lengths that are whole numbers of YARDS. What is the LEAST number of YARDS of rope Mara must buy to make the swing? Show your work or explain your thinking.

## College and Career Ready — How Do You Define It?

**KENTUCKY HAS** adopted specific definitions for what it means to be college and career ready. High school students must score at a particular level on certain tests or hit career academic and technical benchmarks.

The tests that indicate college readiness include the ACT (with scores of at least 20 in reading; 19 in math and 18 in English; 36

is the highest ACT score); COMPASS (college placement tests that evaluate reading, writing and math skills); and Kentucky online testing, or KYOTE, (a web-based placement program that uses standardized tests to measure college preparedness).

Tests that indicate career readiness include the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB (a multiple-choice

test to determine qualification for enlistment in the armed forces); the ACT Work Keys (an assessment that measures real-world skills in applied math, reading for information and locating information); the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment and certificates accepted by specific industries.

## Measuring School Performance — More Than Just Test Scores

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**AS IN THE PAST**, Kentucky schools will be measured based on their students' performance on state tests and other factors. The formula for those measurements includes the following elements:

- Achievement – student achievement on tests
- Gap – how achievement varies among different groups of students
- Growth – how much student performance improves from one year to the next
- College/Career Readiness – number of students who hit the targets to achieve the required level of preparation
- Graduation Rate – number of students completing high school

Additional elements, such as reviews of academic programs that are not subject to testing, will become part of the formula in future years.

Each school and district will get an overall score on a scale of 0 to 100. All scores will be put in order, from high to low and by elementary, middle or high school level, and divided into equal sections called percentiles. If, for example, a school's score falls into the 99th percentile, that means the school is performing better than about 99 percent of other schools at its level.

### Finding Out More

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**SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS**, including the Kentucky Department of Education, have developed detailed information about the new standards and testing system. Here are several online resources that could be helpful:

- [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov)
- [achieve.org/achieving-common-core](http://achieve.org/achieving-common-core)
- [readykentucky.org](http://readykentucky.org)
- [pta.org](http://pta.org)

Information on test scores, once they are released, also will be available online. In the past, the state Department of Education produced the Kentucky Performance Report for each school and



- Schools and districts at or above the 90th percentile will be labeled **Distinguished**.
- Those in the 70th to 89th percentile will be labeled **Proficient**.
- Those below the 69th percentile who fail to meet their yearly goals for progress will be labeled **Needs Improvement**.

district. A large document, the report provided details about student performance on the subjects tested. School and district report cards also offered information about test scores, teacher qualifications and more.

The state department will continue to produce documents similar to the Kentucky Performance Report and those will be posted on the agency's website. School and district report cards also will be produced and expanded with items reflecting the requirements of the new tests and accountability system.

Parents will have access to their children's test score information through the Parent Portal of Infinite Campus, also found on the Kentucky Department of Education website: [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov).