



Introduction

The Early Graduation statute and regulation are a result of Senate Bill 61 (2013) and are a companion regulation to Senate Bill 97 (2013). To summarize the regulation; beginning in 2014-2015, Early Graduation will be possible for students who intend to move on an accelerated timeline through high school and graduate college ready in three academic years or less. Early Graduation is a deliberate pathway for students that wish to complete high school early, receive a diploma from the district and be eligible for acceptance into a two-or four- year Kentucky SACS accredited, public or non-profit institution without remediation. The regulation provides a financial incentive, known as the Early Graduation Certificate, for the student to support this action.

Requirements

- Early Graduation Candidates must meet the proficiency benchmarks on Kentucky required end-of-course exams. Currently those classes are ENGLISH II, ALGEBRA II, BIOLOGY, US HISTORY.
- Early Graduation Candidates must meet Council of Post-Secondary Education (CPE) defined college readiness benchmarks on a college readiness exam. Current benchmarks for the ACT (English = 18, Reading = 20, Mathematics = 19) as set by CPE in 13 KAR 2:020.

Incentives

A student who meets the Early Graduation requirements in 704 KAR 3:305 shall earn an Early Graduation Certificate and be eligible for a one-time scholarship award to be used at a SACS accredited Kentucky college or university the academic year immediately following early high school graduation.

- The award shall be equal to one-half (1/2) of the state portion of the average statewide per pupil guarantee for one year. This award amount is determined in the biennial budget for each fiscal year. For the academic year 2013-2014, the statewide per pupil guarantee was \$3827 (half of that would be approximately \$1913).
- The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) will administer the scholarship; funds will be forwarded directly to the institute of higher education. This scholarship is to be used at a Kentucky public two or four year or non profit independent institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)
- Early Graduation Certificate funds shall be available only during the academic year following graduation.

Effective with the Class of 2015, students who are eligible for the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) program and graduate from a Kentucky high school in three years may be eligible for a KEES award that is the equivalent of four years of high school.

- The KEES award amount is based on the average of GPA awards.
- The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) should be contacted for additional information regarding the KEES program.

REASONS FOR EXITING EARLY GRADUATION

- **Voluntary academic**
 - Student is meeting blueprint for success but voluntarily chooses to remain in high school longer than three years to complete a career track, certification or accelerated/advanced courses such as AP, IB or dual credit.
- **Voluntary Financial/Scholarships**
 - Student is meeting blueprint for success but voluntarily chooses to remain in high school longer than three years to be eligible for college scholarships and financial benefit.
- **Involuntary academic**
 - Student is not meeting academic benchmarks on End-of-Course exams or proficiency benchmarks on the ACT. Student and family are counseled and advised against continuing on an Early Graduation pathway.
- **Health**
 - Student health issues that prevent student from accomplishing Early Graduation criteria.
- **Athletics**
 - Students choose to stay the full four years in high school to take advantage of programs in sports in high school.

Communicating the Initiatives and Criteria

The district informational letter and letter of intent will be posted to the school and district website.

Parents will be informed during Open House and other parent meetings by request.

All communications will take place by the first day of school (placed on website).

Criteria for Successful Entrance

All candidates will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Early Graduation Committee. However, the criteria below are indicators of successful completion of the program.

GPA - Student has demonstrated high academic potential in rigorous courses.

Attendance - 95% average attendance rate

Discipline - students should not have excessive behavior issues. This indicator will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Benchmarks - Meets state benchmarks on state level assessments

Student Disposition:

1. *The decision to commit to graduating early is based on thoughtful conversations with families, school counselors and students, reviewing all the issues which surround accelerating high school graduation.*
2. *Students intend to begin and stay on this pathway, beginning in middle school or ninth grade.*
3. *Students have a clear academic or career goal in mind and therefore a reason to demonstrate proficiency in high school and move on.*
4. *Student is persistent, self-motivated and can set and achieve goals independently.*
5. *Student is emotionally and academically mature, can deal with their schedule and classes being “out of step” with same age peers.*
6. *Student shows indications of being on or surpassing benchmarks for College and Career Readiness goals through standardized test scores. High grades alone do not determine a successful early graduate.*
7. *Students have a desire to succeed and “move on when ready.”*
8. *Students do not have excessive absences, tardiness or truancies.*
9. *Students do not have excessive behavior issues. This is a pathway for those students who want to accomplish a goal. Students who cannot reliably accomplish the class and homework without prodding or support are not good candidates for Early Graduation.*

Entrance Process

1. Upon submission of the Letter of Intent middle and/or high school counselors will meet with potential applicants to explain the Early Graduation Option.
2. A screening committee consisting of middle and/or high school counselors, will review the Letter of Intent and criteria for successful completion of potential applicants for the Early Graduation Option.

3. An Early Graduation Committee will be established for each student prepared for entry in to the program. The EGC will consist of the student, parent, principal/designee, and counselor. The EGC will conduct an initial meeting to discuss readiness into the program. The committee will review the District Early Graduation Things to Consider sheet. **(Appendix B)** The EGC will decide upon acceptance to the program. All required committee members must sign the letter of intent. Upon acceptance to the program, students will review pathway options. **(Appendix C)** The superintendent will sign the letter of intent upon recommendation of the committee.
4. The EGC will encourage the student to be in frequent communication with the college/ university of choice to ensure acceptance in to the selected program.
5. The signed Letter of Intent will be scanned into the ILP onto the Advising Page and student is flagged in Infinite Campus as being in an alternative program.
6. Schools must enter status as an Early Graduate into Infinite Campus no later than October 1st of the year in which the student makes the declaration as stated in Section 9 of 704 KAR 3:305
7. Students meeting the criteria will follow the Early Graduation Track upon entering 9th grade. **(Appendix C)**

Progress Monitoring and Support for Early Graduate Students

- The EGC will meet with students enrolled in the Early Graduation Option at least three times a year to review current data and determine student status in the program. The EGC will identify areas of concerns and provide the necessary interventions for students. Notes from regularly scheduled counseling meetings including family and student are recorded and filed in the ILP to ensure progress on Early Graduation pathway.

Blueprint for Intervention	
<p>9. Students who are at risk of not meeting the program criteria will be provided additional counseling from school counselors.</p> <p>10. Parents will be notified as concerns are identified.</p>	
ACT	
<p>12. The Building Assessment Coordinator will ensure that Early Graduate Candidates have the opportunity to take the ACT.</p>	
Transition Plan for Early Graduates /Students Exiting the Program Before Graduating	
<p>13. Early Graduation Committee meeting will be scheduled for those students who are not meeting the program criteria or who decide to discontinue participation in the Early Graduation Pathway.</p> <p>14. The Early Graduation Committee will review transcripts and determine a pathway to meet high school requirements.</p> <p>15. The Early Graduation Committee will seek to place the student in an appropriate pathway that will ensure readiness for college and/or a career.</p>	
Graduation Ceremony Options	
<p>16. Early Graduation students will participate in the graduation ceremony during the year program requirements are complete.</p>	
Diploma Options	
<p>17. Students will receive a general diploma from McCracken County Public Schools (not McCracken County High School).</p>	



APPENDIX A: Letter of Intent to Apply for Early Graduation



Early Graduation Information

Letter of Intent to Apply for Early Graduation

Senate Bill 61, passed during the 2013 Kentucky General Assembly, provides a pathway to early graduation for students who intend to complete high school in three academic years or less. Beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, students who complete the Early Graduation requirements (see below) may receive a diploma from their district. Students who graduate in three years or less are also eligible for an Early Graduation Certificate, which they may use the year immediately following high school graduation when enrolling in an SACS accredited Kentucky two- or four- year institute of higher education.

Clarifying Points:

- The statutory changes and regulation go into effect beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year.
- KRS 158.142 states that a local board of education shall not impose graduation requirements that prohibit a student who is pursuing an early graduation program from finishing high school in less than four (4) years.
- Early Graduation is defined as a student meeting the performance criteria outlined in 704 KAR 3:305 Section 9 (2) and doing so in three years or less from the date of first enrolling in grade nine.
- To meet the criteria, students that intend to graduate early must meet minimum proficiency benchmarks for the four End of Course exams required for state accountability and meet college ready benchmarks for the ACT or other college readiness exam.
- A student who wishes to graduate early must complete a *Letter of Intent to Apply for Early Graduation* within the first 30 days of the academic year in which they want to graduate and the information must be entered into Infinite Campus and the ILP no later than October 1st of the academic year they intend to graduate.
- Students may take their one state supported ACT exam earlier than their junior year, as provided by the regulation.
- Early Graduation students require consistent monitoring and counseling to ensure they are on track to complete the early graduation requirement. The ILP should be completed and regular meetings between the student, family and counselor should monitor and update student progress as required in Section 4 of 704 KAR 3:305.

- The *Letter of Intent* is not binding; students may revert to regular student enrollment with the knowledge they have to meet the District's minimum requirements and that they will not be eligible for the Early Graduation Certificate.

Incentives:

- 1) A student who meets the Early Graduation requirements in 704 KAR 3:305 shall earn an Early Graduation Certificate to be eligible for a one time scholarship award to be used at a Kentucky two- or four-year public or independent non-profit SAC's accredited college or university the year immediately following high school graduation. The award shall be equal to one-half (1/2) of the SEEK statewide per pupil guarantee for one year.
- 2) Students who graduate from high school in three years shall also receive a Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) award equivalent to completing high school in four years.

Letter of Intent to Apply for Early Graduation

Intended Graduation Year _____

Student name	
SSID#	
Date of Birth	
Parent/Guardian name	
Permanent Mailing Address	
City, State, Zip code	
Parent phone number	
Parent email address	

High School Name:	District:
Principal:	Mailing Address:

Date student entered high school (MM/DD/YEAR) _____

Date student intends to graduate (MM/DD/YEAR) _____

Disclosures: (parent/guardian and student initial each statement)

_____ I have read and understood the attached information regarding Early Graduation.

_____ I understand that this Intent to pursue Early Graduation is an accelerated pathway and I intend to meet the academic criteria and timeline of the intent, graduating within three years of entry into high school. By meeting these requirements, I am eligible for the Early Graduation Certificate and a diploma.

_____ I understand that, should I attain Early Graduation and be awarded an Early Graduation Certificate award, I may need to provide additional information to the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) in order to have funds sent to my college or university.

_____ I understand that failure to meet the Early Graduation criteria or timeline will result in having to complete the regular minimum requirements for high school, and forfeiture of the Early Graduation Certificate.

_____ I understand that if I intend to and attain Early Graduation, the Intent is not binding and I may choose stay in high school to pursue available opportunities. I understand however, that by remaining in high school, I forfeit the Early Graduation Certificate.

Signatures: (print name and sign)

Student _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

Principal _____ Date _____

Superintendent _____ Date _____

The student status as an Early Graduate is to be entered into Infinite Campus no later than October 1st of the academic year in which the student makes the declaration, as stated in Section 9 of 704 KAR 3:305.

Date entered into IC _____ By (print name and sign) _____

Exam Requirements for Early Graduation:

Exam	Benchmark	Student Score/Date	Met Benchmark (Y/N)
ACT English	18		
ACT Math	19		
ACT Reading	20		
Biology End of Course (EOC)	154		
English II EOC	154		
Algebra II EOC	148		
US History EOC	147		

If this student transfers to another Kentucky high school before completing Early Graduation, the Early Graduation Intent and information must be moved in Infinite Campus and a counselor must be assigned to monitor the student's progress.

Date moved_____

School, District_____

Date entered into IC_____

By (print name and sign) _____

- A copy of this Intent form should be placed in the Student's Cumulative folder and a copy given to the student for their records.



Appendix B:

Issues to Consider Surrounding the Early Graduation Option

9 th Grade	10 th Grade
Honors English 1	Chemistry or AP Chemistry
Honors Algebra 1	Honors Geometry
Honors English 2	Honors Algebra 2
Honors Biology	AP Language
AP Government or AP World Civilizations	AP US History
Health/PE	Elective
Elective	Elective
Elective	Elective

All students are unique, so as you think about Early Graduation; there are many factors which could affect your decision. Below are some questions to ask yourself as you begin considering an Early Graduation option.

- Has your child met the benchmarks on state or school assessments? (ex, KPREP, ACT, End-of-Course)
- Is your child emotionally mature enough to work independently?
- Is your child socially immature and would mind being in classes with students that are older?
- Is your child one who has a plan for the future?
- Does your child want to stay in high school to complete four years of activities, sports, or competitions?
- Would your child benefit from taking advanced level AP or dual credit courses-gaining college credit while remaining in high school environment?
- Are you ready financially to send a student to college early?
- Are there scholarships, academic opportunities or events in the high school that the student would benefit from by staying four years?

- Does your child have a career track that they can add onto their college readiness by

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
Honors English 1	Honors English 2	AP Language
Honors Algebra 1	Honors Geometry	Honors Algebra 2
Honors Biology	Chemistry	AP Physics
AP Government	AP World Civilizations	AP US History
PE/Health	Elective	Humanities
Elective	Elective	Elective
Elective	Elective	Elective
Elective	Elective	Elective

staying four years?

- Does Early Graduation adequately prepare your child for their academic plan?
- Will your child be willing to forego senior traditional activities (i.e., prom, banquets, award ceremonies, trips, and recognitions)?
- Will your child be willing to forego participation in athletic activities?
- Will your child’s college/university allow your child to participate in athletic activities?
- Will your child be eligible for all scholarships?

Appendix C:

Sample Pathways for Students for Early Graduation—2 Year Program

9 th Grade		10 th Grade
English II EOC		ACT
Biology EOC		US History EOC
AP Exams (Students who take AP classes)		Algebra 2 EOC
		On-Demand Writing
		AP Exams (Students who take AP classes)
		KOSSA (Career Pathway-depends on electives taken)
College Course	ACT Subject Test Area	ACT Benchmark
English Composition	English	18
College Algebra	Math	22 (19)
Social Sciences	Reading	22 (20)
Biology	Science	23

Sample Pathways for Students for Early Graduation—3 Year Program

ASSESSMENTS

9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th Grade
	English 2 EOC	ACT
	Biology EOC	US History EOC
	On-Demand Writing	Algebra 2 EOC
	AP Exams (Students who take AP classes)	On-Demand Writing
		KOSSA (Career Pathway)
		AP Exams (Students who take AP classes)

