

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

704 KAR 3:305, Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation (First Reading)

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.160(1) (a), (d), KRS 156.070, 158.645, 158.6451, SB 61, SB 64, SB 97

History/Background:

Existing Policy. During the 2013 legislative session, the Kentucky General Assembly passed SB 97, SB 61, and SB 64. SB 97 allows local school districts to adopt policies to raise the compulsory school age from 16 to 18 beginning in the 2015-16 school year. SB 61 recognizes that some students are on an accelerated academic path, and in order to meet their needs to earn the diploma early and move on to college, an early graduation pathway must be available. This pathway will be available to students beginning in the 2014-15 school year. SB 61 partially removes the disincentive of the loss of SEEK funds for districts when students graduate early. SB 61 addresses that by awarding the district one half of the SEEK funds that would have been generated by the student during the year after the student graduates. A disincentive parents and students have experienced if a student graduated early has also been addressed by SB 64. SB 64 provides that if a student graduates early, the student will receive an additional year of Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship funds.

The proposed changes to 704 KAR 3:305 outline the competency-based criteria that must be met for a student to graduate early from a Kentucky high school; upon graduation, the student will be exempt from the requirements contained in SB 97 that raise compulsory school age attendance to eighteen (18).

In the 2011-12 school year, a small number of students graduated early. Seven hundred and nineteen (719) students graduated early from Kentucky high schools that year through earning all credits required for graduation by the local district. However, only sixty-six (66) of these students were college- and/or career-ready. This regulation will ensure that all students who graduate early from high school are college-and/or career-ready.

Since the criteria are competency-based, the paths students take may differ; however, the competency criteria remain the same for all students. Those criteria require the student to:

- Score proficient on the end-of-course exams required by the Kentucky Board of Education through 703 KAR 5:200; and
- 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.

Schools with students who express an intent to graduate early will be required to meet the requirements related to alternative programming as outlined in 704 KAR 19:002.

Attachment A illustrates one early graduation model, *Excellence for All*, that has been piloted in Kentucky. The lessons learned from that pilot have helped inform the changes to 704 KAR 3:305.

This is the first reading of the regulation and it will come back for approval at the October meeting.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Even though the impact on the total population of students will be small, an early graduation pathway helps meet college and career readiness goals by advancing the strategic priorities of every student graduating from high school and requiring each student to be college- and career-ready.

Early graduation allows students who wish to graduate early and who demonstrate competency to “move on when ready”.

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