

Feedback for 704 KAR 3:305

The following questions arose in gathering feedback on 704 KAR 3:305. Responses to the questions are included below.

Intent Form

Question: What happens if the student does not fill out the intent form but meets all requirements?

Answer: The intent form is required by SB 61. The student must fill out the intent form if they wish to take advantage of the financial incentives provided through the Early Graduation Certificate. The intent of placing the student in IC as an early graduate is to initiate a mechanism by which the student is tracked so that: a) schools can plan on $\frac{1}{2}$ average statewide per pupil guaranteed base funding distribution upon the student's early exit to earmark for other purposes; b) the SEEK funds can be calculated and distributed early; c) the student scholarship of the remainder of the $\frac{1}{2}$ average statewide per pupil base funding can be instituted at KHEEA; and d) early testing can be arranged for the ACT, COMPASS or KYOTE to allow the student to meet the college-ready benchmarks.

Should the situation arise where a student comes into the school system after 9th grade (from out-of-state, private school or homeschool) and wishes to graduate early, the regulation allows for this "as soon as the intent is known."

There are restrictions on how late a student can indicate they wish to graduate early, because of the complex financial arrangements. The regulation states:

- (a) A student's intent to graduate early shall be entered into the student information system by the school district by October 1 each year.

Hardships

Question: Students in our district are currently allowed to graduate early in hardship cases. Is that still allowed?

Answer: Yes. The district would need to request a waiver from the Kentucky Board of Education in order to have a policy on graduating early from high school due to hardship. In the district policy, "hardship" would be defined and an explanation given of how students would be supported to meet the district's graduation requirements early.

College and Career Readiness

Question: Must students be both college and career-ready to graduate early under this regulation?

Answer: No. This regulation outlines the requirements for college readiness.

Other Questions

Question: Why are an ILP and an ILP-A required in the regulation?

Answer: Language is being changed to include ONLY the ILP for student monitoring. After the intent is declared, families, counselors, schools, and districts should closely monitor and communicate with students to ensure they are meeting the regulation guidelines and are on track.

Question: Will KDE be developing materials to help communicate this new option to students and parents?

Answer: Yes, KDE will develop guidance and communication around this shift in the definition and fulfillment of SB 61 and Early Graduation.

Issues around the two testing benchmarks, EOC and the college readiness exam

Question: Students may take the ACT multiple times but only have one chance to score proficient on the end-of-course (EOC) exams. Is that appropriate?

Answer: The EOC may only be taken once. KDE believes that this interpretation is consistent with maintaining the academic rigor of the program.

Question: Is it fair that the Early Graduation requirements are more demanding than those for a standard diploma?

Answer: The regulation is deliberately designed to be both rigorous and accelerated. The financial incentives exist for those students who take on this challenging pathway and succeed; it is not meant for all students.

Question: If a student does not declare an intention to graduate early, can he/she still graduate early or can he/she change the decision and remain in school?

Answer: Intent to graduate early is not binding. If a student wishes at any time to revert to a standard diploma, or stay for four years, he/she is released with the understanding that financial incentives are waived.

High school courses in middle school

A perceived obstacle to the regulation was the impact of providing high school courses in the middle school by appropriately certified teachers.

SB 61 states that “students pursuing early graduation may complete selected courses at the middle school level. Each school district is encouraged to provide access to all middle school students to English I and Algebra I for high school credit”. Therefore, it is an encouragement and not a requirement. These opportunities could be provided online.