

Henderson County Schools

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July 1, 2014

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, Early Graduation will be possible for students who intend to move on an accelerated timeline through high school before the typical four years of high school or age 18.

Further information on Early Graduation:

- Early Graduation is an amendment to 704 KAR 3:305; *Minimum Requirements for High School*.
- Early Graduation is defined as a student meeting the performance criteria outlined in the regulation, and doing so in three years or less from the date of first enrolling in ninth grade.
- The Intent form must be filled out and entered into the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) no later than October 1st of the year the student's declaration. The student status must also be flagged in Infinite Campus (IC).
- Early Graduation students will receive monitoring and counseling to ensure they are on target and on track. Student schedules may be affected by this intent.
- The Intent is not binding; students may revert to regular student status.
- To meet the criteria, students who intend to graduate early must meet proficiency benchmarks for the End -of- Course exams required for state accountability and meet benchmarks for the ACT.
- The state administered ACT may be taken earlier than the junior year as provided by the regulation.

Student Incentives:

1. An Early Graduation Certificate is a one-time scholarship award to be used at a SACS accredited Kentucky two-or four year public or non-profit college.
2. The equivalent of four years of the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) is calculated and administered by KHEAA for students who graduate in three years.
3. Students may enroll in a Kentucky college at least one year early if they meet the requirements of that institution.

If you have questions or need additional information on the Early Graduation Option, please contact your child's guidance counselor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marganna Stanley".

Superintendent

Henderson County Early Graduation Process

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.
- The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) will administer the scholarship; funds will be forwarded directly to the institute of higher education.
- 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 pathway, 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

Middle and High School Counselors will distribute the district letter explaining the criteria, guidelines, requirements, and benefits of the Early Graduation Option.

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

School one-calls will be made to prepare parents for the receipt of the district informational letter.

Parents will be informed during parent meetings. (Freshman Orientation, Home Blitz)

Announcements will be made through local news releases.

All communications will take place by August 1st.

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

Leadership – Letter of recommendation from a club sponsor or community member

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

PLAN: Reading, Math, English

EXPLORE: Reading, Math, English

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. Student may be identified as Gifted/Talented; this is also not a sole indicator of readiness.*
- 8. Students have a desire to succeed and “move on when ready.”*
- 9. Students do not have excessive absences, tardiness or truancies.*

10. *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. Letters of Intent must be submitted before September 15. **(Appendix A)**
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)**
8. Students who submit a Letter of Intent but do not exhibit readiness for the program may re-apply the following year as initiated by the student by submitting another letter of intent.

Progress Monitoring and Support for Early Graduate Students

- The EGC will meet with students enrolled in the Early Graduation Option at least once each nine weeks 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.
- Parents will be notified as concerns are identified.

ACT	
9. The Building Assessment Coordinator will ensure that Early Graduate Candidates have the opportunity to take the ACT.	
Transition Plan for Early Graduates /Students Exiting the Program Before Graduating	
10. 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.	
11. The Early Graduation Committee will review transcripts and determine a pathway to meet high school requirements.	
12. The Early Graduation Committee will seek to place the student in an appropriate pathway that will ensure readiness for college and/or a career.	
Graduation Ceremony Options	
13. Early Graduation students will participate in the graduation ceremony during the year program requirements are complete.	
Diploma Options	
14. Students will receive a diploma from the Henderson County School System.	

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

Early 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. The Signed and completed Intent form is to be uploaded into the student ILP

Date entered into IC _____ Into ILP _____

By (print name and sign) _____

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

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. EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT, End-of-Course)
- Is your child emotionally mature enough to work independently?
- Is your child socially mature and able to participate in classes with students that are older?
- Does your child have clear academic and/or career goals in mind for the future?
- 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, financial, or academic opportunities or events in high school that the student would benefit from by staying four years?
- Does your child have a CTE career pathway that he/she plans to complete to become college/career ready by staying four years in high school?
- Does Early Graduation adequately prepare your child for their academic plan?
- Will your child be willing to forego traditional activities (i.e., prom, banquets, award ceremonies, trips, competitions 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?

Recommended Pathways for Students for Early Graduation—2 Year Program

9 th Grade
English 1** or Advanced English 1
Algebra 1
English 2 or Advanced English 2
Biology or Advanced Biology
World Civilizations or Advanced World Civilizations
Health/PE
Computer Applications

10 th Grade
Chemistry or Advanced Chemistry
Geometry
Algebra 2
English 3 or AP English 3
US History or AP US History
*Elective
*Elective

ASSESSMENTS

9 th Grade			10 th Grade		
Biology EOC			PLAN & ACT		
English 2 EOC			Algebra 2 EOC		
AP Exams (Students who take AP classes)			US History EOC		
EXPLORE			On-Demand Writing		
			AP Exams (Students who take AP classes)		
College Course	ACT Subject Test Area	ACT EXPLORE Benchmark Grade 8	ACT EXPLORE Benchmark Grade 9	ACT PLAN Benchmark Grade 10	ACT Benchmark
English Composition	English	13	14	15	18
College Algebra	Math	17	18	19	22 (19)
Social Sciences	Reading	16	17	18	22 (20)
Biology	Science	18	19	20	23

***Elective Classes**—students may select a career pathway in any CTE area. They can also choose to take extra core or elective classes in the areas of Math, English, Social Studies or Science. They can take classes in Art, Band, or Choir.

****English 1** may be taken in the 8th grade beginning 2014-15.

Each student's pathway will be based on his/her academic plan and future career goals.

Recommended Pathways for Students for Early Graduation—3 Year Program

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
English 1** or Advanced English 1	English 2 or Advanced English 2	English 3 or AP English 3
Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra 2
Integrated Physical Science or Adv. Integrated Physical Science	Biology or Advanced Biology	Chemistry or Advanced Chemistry
World Civilizations or Advanced World Civilizations	American Studies or AP Government	US History or AP US History
PE/Health	*Elective	Humanities
Computer Applications	*Elective	*Elective
*Elective	*Elective	*Elective

ASSESSMENTS

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

***Elective Classes**—students may select a career pathway in any CTE area. They can also choose to take extra core or elective classes in the areas of Math, English, Social Studies or Science. They can take classes in Art, Band, or Choir.

****English 1** may be taken in the 8th grade beginning 2014-15.

Each student's pathway will be based on his/her academic plan and future career goals.