



## A Parent’s Guide to Testing in Kentucky

In 2009, Kentucky legislators passed Senate Bill 1, which required many changes in the state’s public education system. It included a call for new, more rigorous academic standards and new state tests based on those standards. Senate Bill 1 also called for a more balanced assessment and accountability system focused on student readiness for life after high school.

Two years later, Kentucky became the first state in the nation to adopt the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics. These new standards, known as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, are designed to be more rigorous and aligned with college coursework and the 21st-century skills required in the workplace. They were first taught in the 2011-12 school year, with students set to be tested on them at the end of that school year.

This brochure outlines Kentucky’s state assessments, when they will take them, other tests your child may take and how the results for these tests will be used. Many of these will form the basis for the new Unbridled Learning: College/Career-Readiness for All accountability system.

Our goal is every child proficient and prepared for success, which means college/career-ready when they graduate from high school. I hope you will take the time to review the information here and join us in helping your child succeed and become college/career-ready.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.  
Kentucky Education Commissioner

### Tests Your Child May Take

NOTE: Not all students take all tests.

| TEST  | DESCRIPTION  | DESIGNATION  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS)</b> | This English language assessment for English language learners is tied to the state’s language proficiency standards.  | Mandatory for English language learners only and for federal Title III purposes; not part of state accountability system |
| <b>ACT</b>  | College entrance exam given to all high school juniors; subjects tested are English, mathematics, reading and science.                                       | Mandatory; part of state accountability system<br>Career readiness indicator   |
| <b>ACT WorkKeys</b>   | This job skills assessment measures real-world skills in Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information and Locating Information (other areas also available). | Optional; not part of state accountability system  |

| TEST   | DESCRIPTION   | DESIGNATION   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Advanced Placement Exams</b>                                      | Tests that can be taken upon completion of Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Students earning a score of three or above may qualify for college credit.  | Optional; not part of state accountability system                               |
| <b>Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)</b>            | ASVAB is a multiple-choice test used to determine qualification for enlistment in the United States armed forces.   | Optional; not part of state accountability system<br>Career readiness indicator |
| <b>COMPASS</b>   | These college placement tests are used to evaluate incoming students in reading, writing and math skills.   | Optional; not part of state accountability system<br>Career readiness indicator |
| <b>End-of-Course Exam</b>  | This state test is given to test student content knowledge at the end of courses in English II, Algebra II, Biology and U.S. History. End-of-course results should count for at least 20 percent of a student's final grade.  | Mandatory; part of state accountability system                                  |
| <b>EXPLORE</b>   | EXPLORE is a high school readiness test for 8th graders that measures achievement in English, math, reading and science.  | Mandatory; part of state accountability system                                  |
| <b>Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP)</b> | Tests are given in grades 3-8 to gauge proficiency in reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing. The tests are a blend of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced items and consist of multiple-choice (mc), extended-response (er) and short-answer (sa) items. | Mandatory; part of state accountability system                                  |
| <b>Kentucky Online Testing (KYOTE)</b>                               | This is a Web-based placement exam program that uses standardized tests to measure preparedness for college-level learning.   | Optional; not part of state accountability system<br>Career readiness indicator |

| TEST  | DESCRIPTION  | DESIGNATION   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)</b> | NAEP is given periodically using a sample of schools and students, so not all students take NAEP tests. NAEP has two major goals: compare student achievement in states and track changes in achievement of 4th , 8th and 12th graders over time in mathematics, reading, writing and science. NAEP reports student achievement by grade and student group but does not provide scores for individual students or schools. | Mandatory, if selected; not part of state accountability system |
| <b>PLAN</b>   | PLAN is a college-readiness test for 10th graders that measures achievement in English, math, reading and science.   | Mandatory; part of state accountability system                  |

### Why give state tests?

State tests, such as the K-PREP tests, are given to measure how well students have learned content based on academic standards. EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT tests show whether students are on course to graduate college-ready. Results from these tests are used to determine where students may need help or accelerated learning opportunities and are also used for school and district accountability.

### When are state tests given?

PLAN and EXPLORE tests are given in September. The ACT is administered to all juniors in March. End-of-Course exams are given when coursework is completed in the tested subjects. K-PREP tests are administered in the last 14 days of the school year, which means they may be given at different times in different districts. On-demand writing assessments are administered in the spring of the year for all grade levels.

### When will results be available?

Test results will be available near the beginning of the next school year and reported to parents. Parents will receive an individual report on the achievement of their child compared to school, state and national results, including information that identifies strengths and academic deficiencies. Because the standards on which some tests are based are more rigorous than in the past (to ensure students are competitive), scores may decline in the short term but should show improvement as teachers and students become more comfortable with the standards.

#### Testing Terms

**Criterion-Referenced Test** – a test that determines how well a student has learned a particular set of knowledge and skills, or standards.

**Norm-Referenced Test** – a test that allows comparisons of a student’s performance to the performance of other students.

**On-Demand Writing:** a test in which students are presented with a “prompt” (a question or scenario), then asked to write about that.

## In what grades are state tests given?

| Grade               |                | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th                               | 10th | 11th | 12th |
|---------------------|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|
| 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 | English II     |     |     |     |     |     |     | Taken when courses are completed. |      |      |      |
|                     | Algebra II     |     |     |     |     |     |     |                                   |      |      |      |
|                     | Biology        |     |     |     |     |     |     |                                   |      |      |      |
|                     | U.S. History   |     |     |     |     |     |     |                                   |      |      |      |
| ACT Family          | EXPLORE        |     |     |     |     |     | X   |                                   |      |      |      |
|                     | PLAN           |     |     |     |     |     |     |                                   | X    |      |      |
|                     | ACT            |     |     |     |     |     |     |                                   |      | X    |      |

\* 1. Editing/Mechanics 2. On-Demand 3. Editing/Mechanics and On-Demand

## Is there any testing before 3rd grade?

Yes. Each school that enrolls primary students (those in grades kindergarten through 3) must use diagnostic assessments that measure readiness in reading and mathematics. The schools may use commercial products, use district-developed products and procedures or develop their own diagnostic procedures, but they must be developmentally appropriate. The results are used to inform teachers and parents/guardians of each student's skill level.

## What happened to tests in arts and humanities and practical living/career studies and the writing portfolio?

Instead of assessing student performance as previously done, schools conduct annual Program Reviews in these areas. Other Program Reviews will be added for K-3 programs and world languages. These reviews, which are done by school personnel, are designed to show whether schools are:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning for all students in all programs
- ensuring all students have equal access to the skills that will assist them in being productive citizens
- allowing students to demonstrate understanding beyond a paper-and-pencil test
- ensuring a school-wide integration of the program skills across all content areas

## Are students tested on writing?

Yes, Writing is tested in grades 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11. Writing portfolios may be used as instructional tools, but are no longer mandated as part of the accountability system.

## What kind of responses will students be asked to provide?

It depends on the test. Multiple-choice questions have one or more introductory sentences followed by a list of response options. Students are asked to select the correct answer among several alternatives. Constructed-response describes any type of item where students must develop or build a response to a question or prompt and include short answer and extended response types.

## Will my special needs child be tested?

Yes. Students identified with educational disabilities are assessed. Some students with disabilities will take the assessment without accommodations, some with accommodations and some through an Alternate Assessment process.

## What is the Alternate K-PREP?

The Alternate K-PREP serves 1% of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These disabilities may require an alternate means of participation in Kentucky's statewide assessment to demonstrate achievement. The Alternate Assessment is designed to address the needs of the students by allowing greater depth of adaptations, modifications and alternative modes of participation.

## Can accommodations be used?

For students with disabilities, most accommodations included on a student's current IEP, 504 Plan or Program Services Plan are permissible. However, these accommodations must have been used regularly in instruction and assessment during the school year. Check the KDE website, [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), for more specific information regarding accommodations.

Kentucky promotes a balanced system that uses various types of assessments:

- **Formative assessment** is a process of collecting lots of data (observations, quizzes, homework, tests) about a student to help students with learning. The goal is to gain an understanding of what students know (and don't know) in order to make changes in teaching and provide students with meaningful, specific feedback they need to improve the quality of their learning.
- **Summative tests** (K-PREP, end-of-course exams and AP exams) are assessments *of* learning given at the end of instruction to determine what was learned. These assessments are used to evaluate students' performance against content standards.
- **Interim or benchmark tests** (PAS, MAP, Learning Checks and GRADE) are aimed at collecting information for the classroom, school or district and are given at set intervals. They are often used to predict success on summative tests, find gaps in students' learning or evaluate a program.

## Tips for Test Success

- Know when tests are scheduled and keep up with results.
- Don't schedule appointments, trips or other interruptions during testing.
- Encourage your child to review beforehand and do his/her best on testing day.
- Remind your child of the importance of reading directions carefully and not rushing through a test.
- Review results with your child. Praise success and talk about what can be done for areas in need of improvement
- Remind your child about the importance of test scores now and the impact they can have on his or her future.

For more information on standards, assessments or accountability check out the KDE website, [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) and click on the Unbridled Learning logo on the left side of the page. Look for *A Parent's Guide to Accountability* for an explanation of Unbridled Learning and how we hold schools and districts accountable for educating Kentucky's children.

## Tips for Student Success in School

- Let your child know you think education is important.
- Make sure your child gets a good night's rest and eats a good breakfast.
- Set a daily study time.
- Discuss homework with your child. Stress responsibility for doing the work and check to see that assignments are completed.
- Keep track of your child's progress throughout the year. Praise success. Talk with your child's teacher about any areas of concern.
- Encourage your child to ask questions at home or in class.
- Read to your child.
- Encourage your child to read and write independently.
- Look for ways to make learning part of everyday activities.

Subscribe to the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE's) *Parent Info* e-newsletter. It's delivered to your inbox twice a month and is filled with Kentucky education news, information and strategies parents need to know. Sign up on the Parents and Families page on the KDE website, [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov).