

Early Graduation Guidance

Information for Students, Parents, Schools and Districts



Early Graduation is a deliberate pathway for students in grades 9-11 who wish to move on when ready, receive a diploma from the district and be eligible for acceptance into Kentucky public universities and non-profit independent colleges and universities. The pathway provides a financial scholarship, known as the Early Graduation Certificate, to support this action. Students participating in the pathway must meet the requirements set forth by [704 KAR 3:305](#) including those listed below.

- Students must notify the school principal within the first 30 days of the school year in which they intend to graduate.
- Students must enter the Early Graduation pathway prior to October 1 of the year in which they intend to graduate early.
- Students must graduate in three years or less. Students exceeding three years do not qualify for the incentives identified with Early Graduation.
- Students must take and achieve ACT benchmarks as designated by the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE).
- Students must take and score proficient on all required End-of-Course Assessments (EOCs). *To meet this requirement, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) will provide EOCs for those students participating in the Early Graduation pathway during the 2017-18 school year.*

The following topics should be discussed and considered by students, parents and school personnel prior to declaring an intent to participate in the Early Graduation pathway:

All children are unique, so as you think about Early Graduation; there are many factors which could affect the student's and/or parent's decision to pursue this pathway.

- Social/emotional maturity
- Future goals and aspirations
- Student's desire to take multiple Advanced Placement (AP) or dual credit courses in high school
- Financial readiness to support college tuition
- Student's ability to complete the requirements for Early Graduation within three years or less
- Participation in local events traditionally determined by grade classification (i.e. prom attendance, valedictorian, Governor's Scholar programs, etc.)



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General Questions

- 1. When did the Early Graduation regulation go into effect?**

The regulation took effect the 2014-15 academic year.
- 2. Does my district offer Early Graduation?**

Yes, Early Graduation is an accelerated pathway identified by Kentucky law and the opportunity is available to all Kentucky students in all districts.
- 3. Why is there a need for an Early Graduation pathway?**

The intent of the statute is to create an accelerated pathway for students to be afforded the opportunity to graduate in three years or less from high school.
- 4. How is Early Graduation different from leaving mid-year as a senior?**

Early Graduation refers to the legislative action which was enacted in 2014-15. A student must be in grades 9, 10 or 11 in order to qualify. The Early Graduation pathway does not apply to a student in grade 12 who leaves early in his or her fourth year. Therefore, any senior who leaves mid-year will not be eligible for the Early Graduation Certificate and the financial scholarship it provides.
- 5. What if I have moved to Kentucky from another state and want to graduate early (after the October 1 deadline)?**

If you apply for Early Graduation later than October 1, you will not be able to receive the Early Graduation Certificate during the same academic year. However, you may be eligible for graduation assuming all of the requirements have been met. If you graduate early but do not qualify for the Early Graduation Certificate, you are not eligible for the financial scholarship tied to the pathway.
- 6. What if I am homeschooled or in private school? Can I graduate early?**

While you may be eligible to graduate early if you meet all of the requirements, you would not be entitled to the financial scholarship tied to the Early Graduation Certificate. [704 KAR 3:305](#) establishes the minimum requirements for entitlement to a high school diploma for Kentucky public schools. This regulation does not apply to current home-school or private school students.
- 7. What if I intend to graduate early, but change my mind and want to stay in high school?**

The *Letter of Intent* is not binding. You may choose to remain in high school. Once you exit the Early Graduation pathway, you are no longer eligible for the Early Graduation Certificate. Schools/districts, please note that the student should also be unflagged in Infinite Campus (IC) – see guidance on data entry.
- 8. Are there any other considerations beyond the Early Graduation requirements that I should consider prior to enrolling in the Early Graduation pathway?**

If you intend to enroll in a postsecondary institution, you should also complete the pre-college curriculum as required by CPE included in [13 KAR 2:020](#). CPE defines “pre-college curriculum” to mean the completion of:

 - the Kentucky minimum high school graduation requirements or other approved course of study established in [704 KAR 3:305](#);
 - and two (2) units of a single world language or demonstration of a world language proficiency.



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9. What considerations should be made for middle school students?

Middle school students may accumulate high school credits. For instance, some students may elect to take Algebra I for high school credit. Students should consult their local school district to determine what high school credits are available at the middle school level.

10. Who must sign the *Letter of Intent*?

The *Letter of Intent* requires student, parent/guardian, principal and superintendent signatures to be considered valid. It is recommended that Early Graduation participants and families have an initial meeting with counselors to determine eligibility. After starting the program, students, parents and counselors will meet regularly to assess progress. Full use of the individual learning plan (ILP) is also required by the regulation.

11. Do I get a diploma when I participate in Early Graduation?

Yes, you are entitled to a high school diploma issued by your local board of education.

12. I am a high school senior. Can I receive an Early Graduation Certificate?

No, only students in grades 9, 10 or 11 qualify for the Early Graduation pathway.

13. I attend the Kentucky School for the Blind or the Kentucky School for the Deaf. Can I participate in Early Graduation?

Yes, Early Graduation is an opportunity available to all Kentucky public school students.

14. What if I complete Early Graduation and leave in December of my junior year?

The Early Graduation Certificate funds may not be available until the fall of the year you graduate. You should contact the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) to see how graduating in December would affect your Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) earnings.

15. What if I intend to graduate early and move to another school in the district before I finish?

You should make sure that your new school receives and enters the *Letter of Intent* into Infinite Campus. Prior to moving schools, conversations should take place notifying the school of your Early Graduation placement as well as arranging for an accelerated pathway in your new school.

16. I am moving out of state before graduating early. Will this transfer to another state?

No, Early Graduation is a pathway for Kentucky students. It is not applicable in other states.

17. What if I complete Early Graduation, receive my diploma and then change my mind. Can I return to high school?

Once you receive a high school diploma, your district is no longer obligated to provide any additional educational services. However, if a school district agrees, you could forgo having the diploma issued at the end of the three years and return for classes during the fourth year. However, by doing so you forfeit the Early Graduation scholarship. You would then be eligible for graduation and a diploma at any time during your fourth year, but again would not be entitled to a scholarship.



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18. What is the Early Graduation Certificate? When do I get the scholarship?

The term “Early Graduation Certificate” means the financial scholarship attached to the Early Graduation pathway for students who sign a *Letter of Intent* and successfully complete the proficiency criteria to graduate early. The “Early Graduation Certificate” or scholarship is awarded by KHEAA. Questions about funding should be directed to KHEAA at (800) 928-8926.

19. Am I eligible for other scholarships when I complete Early Graduation?

You may be eligible for other scholarships as you are eligible for all scholarships, grants and awards available to any incoming freshman. Contact the postsecondary institution you plan to attend when intent is declared to determine scholarship deadlines.

20. Do I fill out a FAFSA the year my student graduates or wait a year?

You should complete the FAFSA as early as possible the year before your student plans to attend college in order to take advantage of any scholarships or institution funding.

For questions about state required assessments for Early Graduation, you should contact the [Kentucky Department of Education’s Office of Assessment and Accountability](#).