

Kentucky

2016 College- and Career-Readiness Policies and Practices

The Southern Regional Education Board has long emphasized the critical need to strengthen students' readiness to succeed after high school. SREB's recommendations to improve readiness (SREB.org/Readiness) cover standards, assessments, transitional courses, postsecondary placement and remedial education. To support states' efforts, SREB compiled information through interviews of P-16 education agency staff and review of numerous documents to determine state progress as of fall 2016 on the recommendations. This state profile summarizes selected findings for each of the five areas. SREB plans to update this information annually.

Standards

Does the state have statewide college- and career-readiness standards in reading, writing and mathematics? Do K-12 and postsecondary education agree on the same standards?

Kentucky adopted statewide college- and career readiness standards — the Kentucky Academic Standards — in reading, writing, mathematics and science effective fall 2010 for all K-12 schools. Senate Bill 1 (2009) established an opportunity to implement a statewide college readiness agenda by revising core content standards through a collaborative effort of the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education.

Readiness Assessments

How does the state assess high school students' readiness? What are the options for students who do not meet them?

Since 2008-9, state law has required a series of diagnostic assessments to assess college readiness. The ACT is required in 10th grade. The Kentucky Department of Education considers students who meet the ACT benchmarks in mathematics, reading or English to be college ready in that subject area; these students are guaranteed placement into a credit-bearing course in that area without the need for remediation at any public college or university in the state. The Department of Education suggests that Kentucky high school seniors who have not met ACT benchmarks in mathematics, reading or English take the college readiness math exam, reading exam or writing exam, respectively, following the completion of a transitional course or some other targeted intervention in each area.

Transitional Courses and Interventions

Does the state require transitional readiness courses or other interventions for students who are not ready to succeed in college-level courses?

State policy requires that schools statewide provide interventions such as transitional coursework that help underprepared students improve their skills. Senate Bill 1 (2009) requires high school students who do not meet college- and career-readiness standards to enroll in an intervention program in their senior year or between the junior and senior year. K-12 and postsecondary educators developed middle and high school curriculum frameworks, aligned to college and career standards, for intervention in reading, writing and mathematics. Students may take the ACT Compass or use the Kentucky Online Testing placement system to demonstrate readiness after they complete an intervention program. Kentucky educators developed test components for KYOTE exams, which are driven by the standards and aligned with college-readiness learning outcomes. High school intervention courses carry credit; the math course can be a core credit, but English and reading can only be counted as elective credit. English interventions may not replace English 4. Schools continually utilize data to assess student progress.

Postsecondary Placement

How do institutions place a student who is not ready for college-level work? Are the same standards, assessments and qualifying score levels applied statewide or systemwide? Are multiple criteria and measures used in placement decisions?

Kentucky legislation requires placement examinations using 11th grade ACT test scores. Postsecondary education agencies and institutions completed and implemented college readiness indicators in fall 2012 and revised them in 2015 to include scores from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the GED exam. Each public postsecondary institution has a set of placement standards; some colleges are piloting measures such as GPA and resiliency assessment scores. Community colleges have the option, in a pilot program, to use GPA. Postsecondary standards and assessments are equivalent to 11th-grade college-readiness testing for credit-bearing coursework.

Literacy qualifying scores are based on ACT or SAT benchmarks determined by statewide student success data in credit-bearing content courses with 75 percent of students with passing grades. Four-year institutions and colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System use the same qualifying score levels. KCTCS colleges also may use Wonderlic and TABE A assessments. Placement content requirements and qualifying scores vary for different majors. Assessment and placement exams and skills used by all public postsecondary institutions are available at CPE.KY.gov.

Kentucky has a robust data collection system. College readiness work teams and the college readiness indicator work team receive reports from the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education to use in decision-making regarding benchmark scores and to monitor student progress. Successful completion of credit-bearing coursework is the typical measure to determine the effectiveness of the placement process; other reports follow students into the workforce. Institutions report persistence and graduation data for all students.

Remedial and Developmental Education

Are there state or system policies for remedial and developmental education in colleges? What curricular and support paths are available for students? Is corequisite instruction—an academic course taken in conjunction with another course—required or optional? How do institutions and the state monitor student progress? What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these interventions?

Legislation dictates that students never have to take a non-credit course. All public postsecondary institutions accept ACT, SAT, Compass and KYOTE exam scores as indicators of readiness and placement into credit-bearing courses without remediation. Individual institutions can offer additional exams to make placement decisions for students who enter without meeting readiness benchmarks. Individual institutions decide if a student is required to take free-standing, separate developmental or remedial education. Multiple placement results help determine the kind and level of support that students need. Students who do not meet readiness benchmarks must receive academic support; they often take a second placement assessment. Students not ready are placed in coursework based on the institution's placement guidelines. Academic support can be in the form of corequisite coursework (college credit-bearing coursework that includes additional class sessions, labs, tutoring, mentoring, advising and progress-monitoring), placement in developmental education, bridge programming, boot camps or other programming designed by the college or university. Kentucky CPE provided incentive funding to develop and implement corequisite courses on all campuses. Studies on corequisite support systems are underway, using students' success in the corresponding credit-bearing course as the measure.

Kentucky's data collection system allows monitoring of student progress at both state and local levels. Institutions closely monitor completion of credit-bearing courses, persistence, and graduation for all students who do not meet readiness benchmarks. KCTCS colleges monitor placement policies and record placement scores in the statewide student database for tracking and reporting.