



COVID-19 Guidance for Schools

Updated: February 11, 2021

Decisions Regarding Promotion or Retention

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is sensitive to the fact that the period of extended hybrid and/or remote learning resulting from the COVID-19 emergency presents many challenges not evident in traditional in-person classroom instruction. Educators will need to continually assess where student academic knowledge gaps exist in order to design effective Tier 1 instruction and targeted intervention during this emergency and afterwards.

The KDE also is offering guidance on how educators can monitor student learning through the formative assessment process in the 2020-2021 school year. Local support should address both student social and emotional learning and academic transition and success, as learning gaps or other issues resulting from extended hybrid and/or remote learning do not automatically trigger retention.

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Legal Basis

The following Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRSs) and Kentucky Administrative Regulation (KAR) establish that the local school or district is responsible for proper placement and awarding of credits to students.

- [KRS 158.140](#) establishes that any promotions or credits earned in attendance in any approved public school are valid in any other public school to which a pupil may go, but **the superintendent or principal of a school, as the case may be, may assign the pupil to the class or grade to which the pupil is best suited.** This statute also ensures that upon successful completion of all state and local board requirements students shall receive a diploma indicating graduation from high school.
- [704 KAR 3:305](#) places the responsibility on the school district to determine the standards for awarding credit toward a high school diploma from that district/board of education.
 - Section 3. (1) For students entering grade nine (9) on or before the first day of the 2018-2019 academic year, each student in a public school shall have a **total of at least twenty-two (22) credits** for high school graduation. (2) **Those credits shall include the content standards as provided in the Kentucky Academic Standards, established in 704 KAR 3:303 and KAR Chapter 8.**
 - Section 7. (1) A local board of education **may award credit toward high school graduation for satisfactory demonstration** of learning based on content standards described in the Kentucky Academic Standards, established in 704



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- KAR 3:303 and 704 KAR Chapter 8, and a rigorous performance standards policy established by the local board of education.
- Section 7. (2) A local board of education **shall award credit toward high school graduation based on: (a) A standards-based Carnegie unit credit that shall consist of at least 120 hours of instructional time in one (1) subject; or (b) A performance-based credit based on standards, regardless of the number of instructional hours in one (1) subject.**
 - [KRS 160.345](#)(3)(b) indicates local school boards shall adopt policies related to school-based decision making, including “assessment of individual student progress, including testing and reporting of student progress to students, parents, the school district, the community, and the state.”

Therefore, the number of awarded credits – based on the local assessment of student progress as seen in the assignment and reporting of grades – determines proper student placement. Final decisions as to promotion or retention rests with school authorities as set forth in KRS 158.140; however, no student may be retained without prior consultation with the parents.

Based on the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework, schools and districts should have systems in place for early identification of students chronically absent or who may be “at-risk.” The local leadership team is encouraged to analyze student data to look for root causes of absenteeism and/or barriers to attendance or learning and then implement and monitor tiered interventions prior to any retention. The KDE urges local education agencies to be innovative in how they serve students in an environment that best meets individual student needs and to plan for targeted interventions that may be needed in the spring to accelerate student learning to avoid the need for retention.

Local Considerations

- How is the formative assessment process being utilized in Tier 1 classroom instruction to monitor student learning in the in-person, hybrid and/or remote learning environment?
- What process is in place for identifying students who may need acceleration?
- Is there a systematic process in place for delivering interventions to students who need targeted interventions and support?
- In terms of student engagement, what data are available to help identify the root causes of absenteeism and/or barriers to attendance or learning?
- What steps can be taken in the spring to support students who may be at risk of being retained?
- If students are not retained, what system will be in place in the fall of 2021 to support successful student transition?

Supporting Resources



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Teaching and Learning PL Series: [Eliciting Evidence of Learning](#)

- Comprehensive, Balanced System of Assessment – September 2020
- Understanding Formative Assessment – October 2020
- Clarifying and Sharing Learning Goals and Success Criteria – November 2020
- Eliciting Evidence of Learning – December 2020

Module supports include a facilitator’s guide, accompanying PowerPoint (PPT), KDE webinar, teacher collaboration activity guide and PPT and family guide.

[The Distance Learning Playbook Study Learning Plan and Resources](#) – January 2021

Self-paced asynchronous study allows educators to dig deeper into a hands-on guide focused on preparing and delivering effective and impactful distance learning experiences.

Participants take a closer look at evidence-based strategies teachers can utilize in the virtual setting, spanning topics from teacher-student relationships, clarity, instructional design and assessment.

[The Assessment Playbook for Distance and Blended Learning](#) – Online Spring 2021 Study

Self-paced study gives educators across the state an opportunity to dig deeper into how to assess what students have learned in the distance learning setting. This playbook empowers teachers with the decision-making tools needed to gauge the impact of instructional strategies regardless of the learning setting.

The study includes a robust “playlist” of distance learning assessment tools that teachers can mix and deploy to match every learning intention as well as information on how to evaluate the impact of teaching on student learning and how assessment can guide teaching moves.

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