

Frequently Asked Questions on the new Kentucky Accountability System

Why did the reporting of scores have to change?

Legislation enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2009 mandated new, more rigorous academic standards and new state tests.

Standards are simply what students are expected to learn as they move from grade to grade through school. They help set clear, consistent expectations for students, parents and teachers and build student's knowledge and skills. Kentucky's new standards—benchmarked intentionally to better prepare students to succeed in a global economy—require students to show they have a deeper understanding of subjects.

Currently Kentucky students are being taught mathematics and English/language arts under new, more challenging standards that are designed to improve their preparation for college and career.

The state tests were given for the first time in 2012 and reflect the performance of both students and schools in meeting the requirements of the higher, more rigorous state standards.

Not only has the bar been raised for student achievement, we now are able to use the information for comparison of districts and schools across the state and to have a more balanced system by assessing multiple times in varied ways to provide a more accurate picture of student achievement.

Why are our test scores lower this year?

Test scores are now calculated on a 0-100 point scale. In past years, the state has used a 0-140 point scale to calculate scores. Now that the scale has dropped to 0-100 points, the reported percentage of proficient and distinguished student scores has dropped as well.

Are our scores better than last year? How do we know?

We can't compare scoring higher or lower than last year because the scores can't be compared to last year. Comparing scores this year and last year would be like comparing food and clothing.

What does this mean for our students, schools, and/or district?

The impact for our students, school and district is that the scores are counted in multiple areas.

- Achievement, Gap, Growth for elementary students,
- Achievement, Gap, Growth and College and Career Readiness (EXPLORE) for middle school students, or

- Achievement, Gap, Growth, College and Career Readiness, and Graduation Rate for high school students.

What exactly are the multiple areas being reported?

1. Achievement is points calculated from content areas of reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing. Grades 3-8, 10 and 11.
2. Gap calculation is the percentage of proficient and distinguished scores from the five content areas of students represented in the non-duplicated gap groups. (Non-duplicated gap means a student is counted only one time for scoring proficient or distinguished and the student is in two or more of the following groups: low-income, racial/ethnic minorities, special education and Limited English proficiency (LEP).)
The gap is the difference between the highest performing students and the lowest performing students.
3. Growth in reading and mathematics (percentage of students at typical or higher levels of growth as compared to their peers across the state); growth of students from one year to the next in reading and mathematics.
4. College Readiness is measured by the percentage of students meeting benchmarks in three content areas (reading, English and mathematics) on the EXPLORE for 8th grade. (middle school)
College and Career Readiness is measured by ACT benchmarks, college placement tests, and career measures. (High school)
Or another way to put it is: Are the students ready to graduate and go forward to college and career using the measures noted to determine readiness.
5. Graduation Rate is the percentage of students that graduate in four years.

What are ways to assist my child in being successful?

Every child in school has the opportunity to excel. In order for this to occur, you are urged to become familiar with:

- Infinite Campus Parent Portal—this checks attendance, grades, behavior and other student information
- Kentucky Department of Education website—this provides current information on school and district work, information on accessing standards, and much more.
<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/>

Parents/Guardians may also:

- Initiate consistent communication with your child’s school teachers and principal regarding your child’s academic progress.
- Access the school and district report cards located on the KDE website or links available from the district website.
- Access the district website for current information related to school and district activities and initiatives. www.murray.kyschools.us

- Contact the teacher, counselors, principals, and/or district administrators for more information. See district website for contact information.

How may I find out more?

Below are links to sites with information related Unbridled Learning accountability:

Kentucky Chamber Foundation

<http://www.education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/E1682B12-BB83-4998-8874-2061C997FE1F/0/StandardsBrochure61512.p>

Parent's Guide to Accountability

<http://www.education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2EFE5A99-87B3-4D8C-81ED-8BC3229324F6/0/ParentsGuideAccountability082812.pdf>

Kentucky Department of Education Unbridled Learning Resources page

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Commissioner+of+Education/Unbridled+Learning/>

Video with Commissioner Holliday explaining the new accountability system—good explanation with visuals (about 23 minutes)

mms://video1.education.ky.gov/On-Demand2012/Assess_Account_9-19-2012.wmv