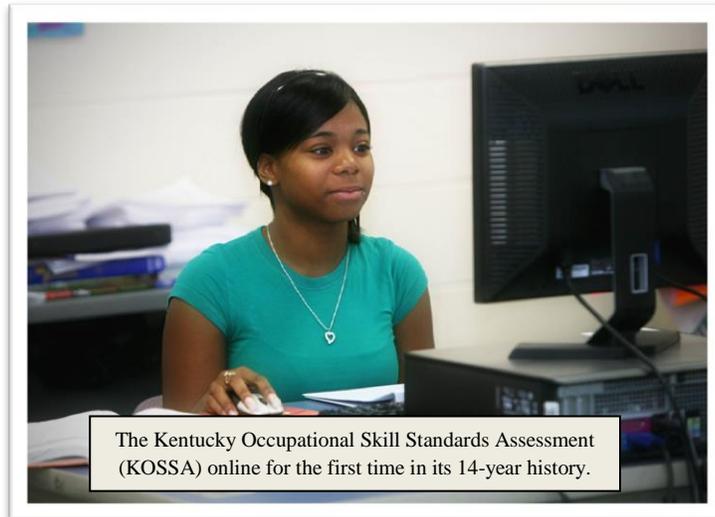


## KOSSA Testing Going Online

Testing plays an integral role in determining how well students have retained classroom information and is an essential component in achieving college- and career-readiness goals, according to Pam Moore with the Office of Career and Technical Education.

“Making it more readily available and allowing more students to have access to these various tests only makes sense in reaching these goals,” she added.



That idea served for the basis of taking the Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessment (KOSSA) online for the first time in its 14-year history. KOSSA is the only assessment developed in the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and is used as one of the components to measure career readiness.

KOSSA was developed to match industry standards and is endorsed by

business and industry as a benchmark for what a student needs to know to get a job in a particular field. In fact, business leaders collaborated with Career and Technical Education (CTE) leaders to develop the test, and business leaders also assist CTE in updating tests.

“Collaboration with business and industry partners ensures that we are addressing the needed technical skills for specific pathways but also ensuring students leave high school with the foundational academic and employability skills that are essential to success in any career or postsecondary education opportunity a student pursues,” said Moore.

She added that this system is based upon clear and concise standards identified by employers across the state, which culminates in a performance-based training and assessment system.

“Skill standards provide a common language, goals and reference points for employers, students and educators,” Moore said.

She added that with these commonalities, educators are better able to design curricula to meet industry needs.

“Students have a better understanding of what they must know and be able do in order to prepare for careers, and employers have in place an efficient system for recruiting and evaluating potential employees,” Moore said.

## The online transition

With the transition from a paper/pencil test to an online environment, there have been some changes in the assessment for this school year. Associate Commissioner Dale Winkler said the changes to KOSSA during this transition have been based on the recommendations of business and industry partners and educators to better meet the goal of preparing students for 21st-century careers.

“The business and industry partnership with CTE in general, and especially with the KOSSA assessment, has proven to be invaluable in our efforts to give students

the most up-to-date information as we move toward our college- and career-readiness goals,” he said.

Those changes include:

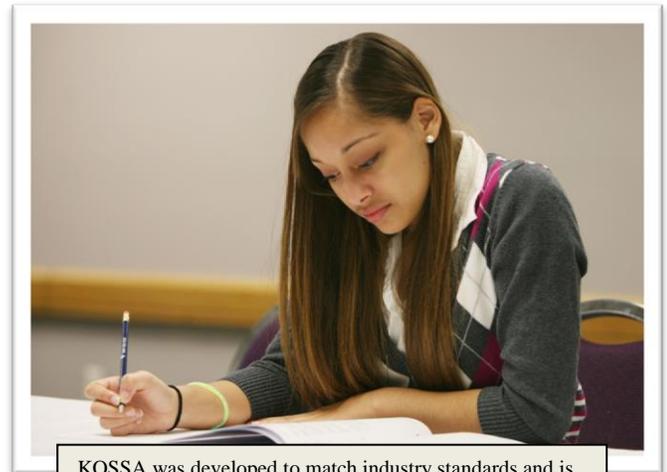
- Addressing common academic and employability skills across all KOSSA areas.
- Modeling a test format recognized by business and industry groups for valid state and national certifications
- Mirroring the assessment after others used in the Unbridled Learning accountability system.

Transitioning to the online system has multiple benefits for students, schools and for accountability reporting:

- more complete and accurate data for federal and state reporting
- more robust reporting of student-, school- and state-level data
- detailed feedback for students on strengths and areas of improvement related to chosen career pathway
- better identification of gaps in curriculum and instruction
- shorter turnaround time on reporting results to schools and students

## From a business perspective

Carl Wicklund of Wagstaff Inc., an aluminum casting manufacturer based in Spokane, Wash., is the plant manager for the company’s Hebron, Ky., facility. He has been instrumental in providing recommendations for the manufacturing portion of the KOSSA assessment. Wicklund



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Moving KOSSA to this online system will provide school leaders and teachers with individual student and school data that is more detailed than it was in the past.

said any assessment that can help students understand and learn the opportunities that exist for them has got to be a huge benefit.

“In the ’90s we heard a lot from the government about being a service economy, and it kind of took away from the manufacturing side, but now all of a sudden there’s all these manufacturing jobs, and really good-paying jobs, so there is opportunity for these students,” he said.

Wicklund added that with all the new technology in industry, there is a need for students to have a lot of different talents, knowledge and disciplines, and they need the core skills to move forward.

He also said that, for once, manufacturing, as well as other job careers have credence at the high school level, and to know of new technologies used in these jobs,

students need to begin learning about them in high school as well as learning in relationship to what is needed locally. Students need to begin learning in high school about the new technology used in local manufacturing jobs as well as other locally industries.

“You have to have an assessment tool that reflects the local needs,” said Wicklund. “There are certain needs in some areas that don’t necessarily cross paths in all areas. So you need to be able to tailor that assessment.”

He pointed out that while there are some national industries in Kentucky, there is a huge number of smaller industries, and if those businesses are going to stay around, they have to be supplied with well-qualified workers.

While KOSSA is a component of Kentucky’s accountability system for college- and career-readiness, Moore said she believes it is more important to consider the value of KOSSA in preparing students as they transition from high school.

“Moving KOSSA to this online system will provide school leaders and teachers with individual student and school data that is more detailed than it was in the past,” she said. “They will be able to look at student performance based on mastery of specific standards identified by business and industry as essential for success in today’s workplace.”

With this transition, Moore said she sees a couple of benefits. First, teachers will have data to support instructional practices that are working well and identify gaps in curriculum and instruction, and secondly, students will receive feedback on personal strengths and areas of improvement in their chosen career and technical education career pathway.