

## Differences between the Early Graduation Program and “graduating early” Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) 2023-2024

Although the wording is similar, there is a distinct difference between a student who is a participant of the Early Graduation Program (EGP), as provided under [KRS 158.142](#), and a student who “graduates early.”

KRS 158.142 establishes the Early Graduation Program (EGP), an optional program in which a student may receive a high school diploma, Early Graduation Certificate and scholarship award from the [Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority \(KHEAA\)](#) upon successful completion all program requirements in place under [704 KAR 3:305, Section 5 for the academic year in which the student intends to graduate](#), in three (3) academic years or less.

The scholarship award may be used at a Kentucky public two (2) year community and technical college, or a Kentucky four (4) year public or non-profit independent institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

### ***How is “graduating early” different from the EGP?***

704 KAR 3:305(2) defines “graduating early” as a student who is “*awarded a diploma from the district, in under four (4) academic years from the start of grade 9, based upon meeting the minimum credit requirements... and additional requirements as may be imposed by a local board of education.*”

Should the local district choose to offer students the option to graduate early, the student must still meet all state and local [minimum high school graduation requirements](#) **as expected of any traditional four-year high school student**. A student who chooses to graduate early, is **not** a participant of the EGP and is **not** eligible for the EGP Certificate and scholarship award from KHEAA. Those who wish to explore this option must first consult with the school district to see if it is allowable under local board policy.

### ***Are local school districts required to offer the EGP?***

Yes, the EGP must be available to *all* interested students as required in KRS 158.142.

### ***Is a student who wishes to graduate early still required to meet the same minimum high school graduation requirements as a traditional four-year student?***

Yes. A student wishing to graduate early must meet all state and local minimum high school graduation requirements expected of any traditional four-year high school student on an accelerated timeline.

### ***Is the district required to offer students the option to graduate early?***

No. Contrary to the EGP, districts are **not** required to offer this option to students. The decision to allow students to graduate early is at the discretion of the local board of education. Inquiries related to this option should be directed to the local school district.

***What are the EGP student requirements for the 2023-2024 academic year?***

For information related to the requirements for students who intend to complete the EGP in the 2023-2024 academic year, visit the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) [Early Graduation Program webpage](#).

***Is the high school diploma issued upon successful completion of the EGP?***

Yes. Upon successfully meeting all program requirements, students are entitled to a high school diploma issued by their local board of education in addition to the EGP Certificate and scholarship from KHEAA.

***Are EGP students still eligible to receive other scholarships?***

Yes. Students who successfully graduate from the EGP are eligible for all scholarships, grants and awards available to any incoming freshman. The school counselor can assist students with identifying scholarship opportunities and the process for applying.

***Can a student who attends high school beyond three academic years still participate in the EGP?***

No. While a student may enter the program during grades 9, 10 or 11, KRS 158.142 requires that the student meet all program requirements within three academic years of high school or less. Therefore, students in grade 12 cannot participate in the EGP.

***Although a student in grade 12 cannot participate in the EGP, can they graduate early?***

If the local school district offers the option to graduate early, a student may receive their high school diploma prior to the end of their senior year, so long as all local and state graduation requirements expected of all other traditional four-year student have been met.

***Can middle school students interested in the EGP take high school courses that may be credited toward completion of the program requirements?***

Yes, middle school students may be awarded credit toward graduation for high school equivalent courses. Consultation between the school counselor, the middle school student and their family is appropriate for those who demonstrate potential to participate in the EGP upon entering high school.

KRS 158.142(6) states that students pursuing the EGP “may complete selected courses at the middle school level” and further provides that “[e]ach school district is encouraged to provide access to all middle school students to English I and Algebra I courses for high school credit. Access may be provided by each middle school offering the course on-site or by the district providing transportation for students to a central location within the district, to a neighboring school within the district, or to a neighboring school district. The district

may also provide access for the student to take these courses online based on the local board of education policy,” (6).

Additionally, [KRS 158.622\(3\)\(b\)](#) requires each school district to accept for credit toward graduation the completion of high school course requirements, an advanced placement (AP) or a high school equivalent course taken by a student in grades 5, 6, 7 or 8 if that student attains performance levels expected of high school students in that district as determined by achieving a score of "3" or higher on a College Board AP examination or a grade of "B" or better in a high school equivalent course.

***What is the purpose of the EGP intent form?***

704 KAR 3:305(5)(1)(a) provides that students interested in participating must notify the school principal by submitting the [intent form](#) at the beginning of grade 9, or as soon as the intent is known. The form must be received by the school within the first thirty (30) instructional days of the academic year in which the student intends to graduate. All EGP intent forms are kept at the local level for record keeping. Schools and districts are not required to submit these forms to KDE.

***How is funding affected by the EGP versus “graduating early”?***

For the year an EGP student graduates, a district receives one-half (1/2) of the average statewide per pupil guaranteed base funding level for Support Educational Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding purposes. The remaining one-half (1/2) of state funding is deposited in the KHEAA Early Graduation Scholarship Trust Fund.

SEEK funding for all students is based on prior year Average Daily Attendance (ADA). [KRS 157.360\(2\)](#) provides that “[e]ach district shall receive an amount equal to the base funding level for each pupil in average daily attendance in the district in the previous year, except a district shall receive an amount equal to one-half (1/2) of the state portion of the average statewide per pupil guaranteed base funding level for each student who graduated early under the provisions of KRS 158.142.”

***Must students meet certain GPA requirements in order to qualify for participation in the EGP?***

No.

***Must EGP students submit the postsecondary admissions application that is required under the program to one of the qualifying options supported by KHEAA?***

704 KAR 3:305(5)(3)(d) requires the “[c]ompletion of one (1) postsecondary admissions application that may be used at a Kentucky public two (2) year community and technical college or a Kentucky four (4) year public or non-profit independent institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in which the student is interested in applying.”

Therefore, students are not required to **submit** their completed admissions application. However, it is

recommended and encouraged that the school counselor support the student in taking the additional step to officially submit the completed application to the postsecondary institution of their choice.

***Can a student complete the EGP and graduate in December?***

This decision is left to the discretion of the local district policy. Districts should consider that the scholarship award from KHEAA may not be available until the fall of the upcoming academic year. Schools should contact [KHEAA](#) for additional information.

If a student in grade 12 graduates in December, the student is still not eligible to participate in the EGP as all program requirements must be met in three academic years or less.

***What if a student participating in the EGP moves to another Kentucky school district?***

Prior to transferring schools, the school counselor should collaborate with the new school district to review the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP), specific to the EGP requirements, and discuss actions to ensure the student is able to complete the program and graduate within the same academic school year as indicated on the student's intent form.

***Can students in the EGP transfer to a different state and remain in the program?***

No. The EGP, established under KRS 158.142, is a state law and available to Kentucky students only.

***What if a student completes the EGP but would like to rejoin their original cohort for senior year and delay receipt of their high school diploma?***

Once a student receives a high school diploma, the district is no longer *obligated* to provide any additional educational services. However, if a school district agrees, the student could forgo having the diploma issued and return for their senior year of high school. It is important that the school counselor communicate to the student that by doing so they forfeit the EGP Certificate and associated EGP scholarship award from KHEAA.

***May students use qualifying scores on the Kentucky Online Testing (KYOTE) benchmark in place of the ACT?***

No. 704 KAR 3:305(5) requires the use of a college readiness exam (i.e., ACT). KYOTE is a college placement exam. The law states that EGP students shall, "... meet the college readiness exam benchmarks provided under [13 KAR 2:020](#) for placement in credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation." CPE recognizes the ACT as the required assessment for placement in postsecondary programs. Additionally, KHEAA does not award scholarships based on KYOTE scores or other college placement exams.

***What is required of school counselors in supporting EGP students?***

School counselors are responsible for following the established district policy in the development and monitoring of the ILP specific to EGP students to ensure successful completion of all program requirements. For additional information, visit the KDE [Early Graduation Program webpage](#).

***Are there changes to the EGP requirements for students who enter the program in the 2024-2025 academic year (or later)?***

Yes. Any student who chooses to enroll in the EGP for the **2024-2025 academic year and beyond** must meet all state and local graduation requirements specified under 704 KAR 3:305, Section 5, **including the successful completion of a performance-based project, portfolio, or capstone**, which shall be required of all EGP students, beginning July 1, 2024, (7).

704 KAR 3:305, Section 5(6) provides that “[b]y July 1, 2024, each local board of education shall establish a policy requiring high schools to determine performance descriptors and evaluation procedures for an EGP performance-based project, portfolio, or capstone, required for students who intend to complete the EGP beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year.”

***Are there any resources available to schools and districts as they prepare for implementing the performance-based requirement for the 2024-2025 academic year?***

Yes. In order to support local schools in implementing the 2024-2025 performance-based requirement, the KDE has developed [Early Graduation Program Performance-Based Requirement Implementation Guidance for Schools](#) and a [sample performance-based rubric](#) for school leaders, counselors and other staff who are responsible for determining performance descriptors and evaluation procedures for the EGP performance-based project, portfolio, or capstone **prior to its implementation in the 2024-2025 academic year.**

***Are EGP students who intend to graduate during the 2023-2024 academic year required to complete the performance-based project, portfolio or capstone?***

No. This requirement applies only to those students who intend to complete the EGP in the 2024-2025 academic year and beyond.

***What is a continuity of services plan and who does it impact?***

704 KAR 3:305, Section 1(1) defines the continuity of services plan as “*a plan that outlines the ways in which a student will receive access to essential services that will end if the student graduates early.*”

The continuity of services plan, as described under 704 KAR 3:305(11), is required for any student seeking to participate in the EGP or graduate early who receives services deemed essential by the local school district. The continuity of services plan is required for “all students identified as a [homeless child](#) pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 11434, a [migrant child](#) pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 6399, or youth engaged in [foster care](#) pursuant to KRS 620.020(5).”

**Prior to graduation**, a school-based mental health services provider (defined under [KRS 158.4416](#)) must have meaningful consultation with the student on the creation of a continuity of services plan.” This should include topics that will help make informed decisions, such as educational plans, employment, financial stability, health, family, living arrangements, transportation and peers. Additionally, the completion of a

transition plan for children aging out of foster care, as described by 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(H), shall also “meet the requirements [of the continuity of services plan] for children aging out of foster care, as described by 42 U.S.C.675(5)(H),” (704 KAR 3:305, Section 11(3)).

***What special considerations are needed to fully support students who require a continuity of services plan?***

The KDE encourages districts to collaborate with the child, their case worker, and any other supportive adult (e.g., a teacher, counselor, coach, or other meaningful person in the child’s life), in the development of the continuity of services plan. Each plan should be carefully tailored to meet the unique needs of each student. While there is no state mandated template for the completion of this plan, school leaders may consider reviewing the [Child and Family Services Plan](#) guidance document produced by the Department for Community Based Services’ (DCBS) Division of Protection and Permanency as well as the US Department of Education’s [Foster Care Transition Toolkit](#).

[Contact SEA Foster Care](#) for questions related to a school’s obligations towards foster care youth. The KDE [Migrant Education webpage](#) or [Homeless Children and Youth webpage](#) provides more information on these topics. For questions related to a student’s case worker and/or the Commonwealth’s obligations towards foster care youth, please contact the [DCBS Independent Living](#) mailbox.

For questions related to the EGP regulatory requirements provided in 704 KAR 3:305, Section 5, contact policy advisor Sarah Peace at [sarah.peace@education.ky.gov](mailto:sarah.peace@education.ky.gov).

For support in implementing or participating in the EGP, contact comprehensive school counseling coordinator, Damien Sweeney, at [damien.sweeney@education.ky.gov](mailto:damien.sweeney@education.ky.gov).