



# Ready Kentucky:

## Building Employer Support for Student Success





Dear Kentucky Employer:

Here is a way you, as an employer, can help students in your local community.

Business support for education has always been essential for Kentucky. The 1990 passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act was perhaps the strongest example of this, when employers helped lead the fight for critical reforms in our schools. Again in 1997 with higher education, employers stepped up and demanded changes.

Kentucky is once again at a critical place, and the need for business support is greater than ever. That is why we are asking you to join us in helping spread the word about important changes now underway in our schools.

The state has adopted tough, new academic standards that are designed to get students ready for both college and career. If Kentucky is going to have economic growth in today's global economy, we've got to prepare our students better.

Because the standards are more challenging, the tests that students take are tougher, and test scores could be lower when results are released later this year. If scores are lower, some people may push Frankfort and your local school board for a return to the easier standards. That makes it vitally important that Kentucky's employers and the people who work for them speak out about the importance of staying the course with our new system.

We are sending you this information kit, thanks to a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in the hope that you will use some or all of these tools to let your employees know about the new standards and their importance for Kentucky. The packet includes several items, in both hard-copy and electronic versions, designed for use in your company newsletter, e-mail messaging and other communications venues. We're also including a brochure that explains Kentucky's new standards, and you can order more copies of that if you want to share it with others in your workplace or community.

We hope you find these information tools useful and that you will be able to use them in your business communications. And let us know if you have questions or suggestions on ways we can get the word out.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry Holliday". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

Terry Holliday  
Commissioner  
Kentucky Department of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Adkisson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Dave Adkisson  
President/CEO  
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce



# Suggestions for a Letter to the Editor


*Please consider sending a letter to your local newspaper to show your support for the hard work our schools are doing to better prepare students for college and career.*

*Here is an example of a message you could share.*

## **To The Editor:**

This is an important time for our local schools, and we want to encourage everyone in our community to join us in supporting the important work underway in classrooms. Students and teachers are working with new, tougher academic standards that require higher levels of learning to better prepare students to succeed, whether they go on to college or enter the workforce after graduating from high school.

This is hard work – but work that must be done if our students, community and state are to prosper in an economy that is becoming more global by the minute. We congratulate our teachers and students for tackling this challenge and want them to know they have the support of their community in building a better future for us all.





# Local Schools Taking It to the Next Level

*For possible use in your newsletter*

## **SCHOOLS IN OUR COMMUNITY**

– and those across Kentucky – are working to meet the challenges of a new set of learning standards that mean harder work but promise greater rewards for both students and the state as a whole.

Right now, these tougher standards spell out what students must learn in math and English/language arts, and new standards for science and other subjects are expected soon.

What is particularly promising for our business and other employers is that the standards are focused on preparing students for both college and the workplace. Experts have been saying for years that students coming out of high school need to have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills – whether they plan to go on to college or try to find a job right away. But it has taken a while for that research to be translated into classroom reality, and that is what is happening now.

The standards also are benchmarked to those in other countries to improve our students' ability to find good jobs and succeed in a globally competitive workplace and to strengthen the nation's position in the global arena.

This is an important step for our schools, especially in light of the bleak projections that state education officials make about what will happen if nothing changes. They say an estimated 25% of our current 8<sup>th</sup> graders won't graduate from high school. That's more than 12,000 students who will lack the skills to get good-paying jobs.

Of those currently in high school, only 34% now have the knowledge and skills they need to go on to college or the workplace without additional, costly classes or training.

The bottom line for all of Kentucky is clear, and our business is joining others across the state to express support for our schools and the harder work they are doing.

Because the work is hard, there could come a time when some people push for a return to an easier system. That is when it will be important for all of us to stand up for the future and make sure our schools stay the course with Kentucky's new standards.







# Talking Points

*This information could be used as a paycheck stuffer or as talking points for a quick meeting with your employees.*

## Did You Know?

- Our schools are working to better prepare students to succeed in either the workplace or college by using tougher learning standards in the classroom and testing students on those standards.
- This means harder work for students and teachers, but it also holds great promise for helping students find good-paying jobs.
- This is important for our business and others across the state because, to compete in a knowledge-based global economy, we must improve the skills of our students and workforce.
- Without these changes, Kentucky schools will fail to graduate enough students with the knowledge and skills they need to have a chance at a successful life.
- More information is available online at the following sites: [achieve.org/achieving-common-core](http://achieve.org/achieving-common-core); [readykentucky.org](http://readykentucky.org); [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org); [pta.org](http://pta.org); [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov) and others.





# Suggestions for an E-Mail Message

*An e-mail message to share with your employees about Kentucky's new academic standards*

The parent members of our team probably know this already, but we wanted to be sure all of you were aware of some exciting new developments underway in our schools. These changes hold great promise for creating a more highly skilled workforce and for giving our students, community and state a better foundation on which to build a strong economic future.

At the center of it all are new standards that require students to learn at much higher levels than in the past. The work is harder – in the classroom and on the tests students take – but the result will be better student preparation for college and the workplace.

Our business is supporting this development and will be reaching out to our community schools to find out ways we can help. Meanwhile, if you want to know more, we can schedule a presentation that will provide additional information. Please let us know if you're interested in doing that. Or, if you want to look into this on your own, some good online resources include: [achieve.org/achieving-common-core](http://achieve.org/achieving-common-core); [readykentucky.org](http://readykentucky.org); [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org); [pta.org](http://pta.org); [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov) and others.

*Thank you.*





# Sample Test Questions

Here are some examples of the types of questions Kentucky students encounter as they are tested on the new academic standards.

## IN 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE MATHEMATICS (no calculator allowed)

An expression is shown below.

$$6m + 5p^3 = 1$$

What is the value of the expression when  $m = \frac{1}{3}$  and  $p = 2$ ? Show your work.

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## 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE WRITING:

### Temperance and Choices

Aristotle was a Greek thinker who lived from 384 to 322 B.C. He wrote books on a variety of topics in science and philosophy. His book *The Nicomachean Ethics* explores the question of how people should live.

Aristotle discusses a variety of questions raised by the very complex topic. One of the questions he raises is, "Why do people do things?" He considers the goals people have: happiness, pleasure and so on. Then he considers whether each of these goals is worthwhile.

Aristotle concludes that pleasure is often a good thing. He explains that some pleasures come from doing good things, like eating the right amount of food. Other pleasures come from doing bad things, like eating too much food.

Aristotle describes three different types of people. He points out that Person A gets pleasure from doing good things. Other people get pleasure from doing bad things. Of these people, Aristotle mentions two types.

Person B eats too much food because he gets pleasure from it. Person C would also get pleasure from eating too much food. However, this person controls himself and eats the right amount of food even though he would prefer to eat more.

In Aristotle's system, both Person A and Person B eat the right amount of food. Person A eats the right amount of food by nature. Person B eats the right amount of food by choice.

### Writing situation:

Your class has just finished reading "Temperance and Choices" and will be discussing which kind of person demonstrates more admirable qualities—Person A, Person B or Person C.

### Writing directions:

Write an explanation you will present to your class about which person possesses more admirable qualities. Use information from the passage in your explanation.



# Tools to Use

This information kit includes the following elements that we hope you will find a way to incorporate into your communications.

- **ReadyKentucky: Building Employer Support for Student Success Fact Sheet/FAQs** – to provide an overview and address some frequently asked questions about the new standards initiative. [This also includes a link to a 7-minute video on the topic.](#)
- **Local schools taking it to the next level** – a sample article for possible use in an in-house newsletter.
- **A sample e-mail** that offers a quick message for your employees.
- **Paycheck stuffer/talking points** – a short list of key points about the work underway in Kentucky schools.
- **Examples of the questions** that students answer on the new state exams.
- **Examples of the new standards** and what they specifically require.
- **A sample message for a letter to the editor.**
- **Information on ReadyKentucky** and how to request a presentation for your community.







# Examples of Kentucky's New Standards



Kentucky's new academic standards define what students should learn as they move from kindergarten through high school graduation. These comprehensive standards require deeper levels of learning than in the past and are designed to prepare students to succeed in both college and career.

More information about the standards, currently in place for mathematics and English language arts, can be found at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

Here are a few examples of what students are expected to learn at different levels. In each case, the standard is one of several that apply to the subject and grade level indicated.

## Grade 1 Mathematics

Represent and solve problems involving addition and subtraction

Use addition and subtraction within 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g. by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.

## Grades 9-10 Writing

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a) Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b) Develop claims(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
- c) Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- d) Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- e) Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

## High School Algebra

Understand the relationship between zeros and factors of polynomials

Know and apply the Remainder Theorem:

For a polynomial  $p(x)$  and a number  $a$ , the remainder on division by  $x - a$  is  $p(a)$ , so  $p(a) = 0$  if and only if  $(x - a)$  is a factor of  $p(x)$ .





# Building Employer Support for Student Success

## Facts & FAQs

Top-flight schools that educate students to become successful citizens and productive workers have topped the wish list of Kentucky employers for many years. The state has made significant progress, but that forward movement has been frustratingly slow at times. Meanwhile the world has been changing – and the competition for jobs and economic growth has been heating up at an accelerating pace.

Now, there are important changes underway in Kentucky's schools that hold great promise for creating a more highly skilled workforce – one that is better equipped to meet the needs of employers at home and around the globe. At the center of these changes are new, tougher standards that require students to learn at much higher levels than in the past. They are designed to better prepare students to succeed in both college and the workplace. Kentucky and 46 other states have adopted these standards, helping ensure consistency of student learning from state to state

Employer support for this work – and the positive results it will produce – is critical to moving Kentucky in the right direction.

### What are standards and why are they important?

- Standards – descriptions of what students need to learn by the end of a school year – help ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and the workplace. They help set clear, consistent expectations for students, parents and teachers and build students' knowledge and skills. Specific examples of the standards are included in this information kit.

### Why does Kentucky need to improve students' preparation for college and career?

- Because the skills of our workforce are disconnected from the skills employers need now and will need in the future.
- To compete in a knowledge-based global economy, we must improve the academic performance of our students. The way things stand now, if we don't do something different, too many students will drop out of high school or graduate unprepared for adult success, and our workforce problems will only increase.
- State education officials estimate that about 25% of our current 8<sup>th</sup> graders won't graduate from high school. That's more than 12,000 students who will be competing for the 8% of available jobs that don't require a high school diploma – and those jobs most likely will not pay a living wage.
- Of those currently in high school, only 34% now meet college and career readiness measures. That means Kentucky employers won't have a supply of workers with the skills needed for the jobs available.

### What does it mean to be college and career ready?

- High school students must score at a specific level on certain tests or hit career academic and technical benchmarks.
- The tests that indicate college readiness include the ACT, COMPASS (Computer-Adaptive Placement Assessment and Support System) and KYOTE (Kentucky Online Testing).
- Tests that indicate career readiness include the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, the ACT Work Keys, the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment and industry certificates.

### Why should employers support this new work in Kentucky schools?

- Because of the effect it will have on their bottom line. The reality is that Kentucky must do a better job of creating a highly skilled workforce. That is the only way to ensure economic growth – and the competition from around the world is getting tougher every day. The state has a great reputation for a strong work ethic, but it comes up short too often in education and skills development.

### What can employers do to show their support?

- Inform your employees about the new developments in Kentucky schools and the importance of supporting students, teachers and schools.
- Reach out to schools to find ways to help students understand the real-world demands of the modern workplace.
- Encourage your civic groups to learn more about the work now underway in schools. Visit [readykentucky.org](http://readykentucky.org) to schedule a free presentation in your community.
- Speak up publicly – at civic groups, through letters to your local newspaper and other ways – if people start advocating a return to the older, easier system.

More information about the new standards and what they mean for Kentucky and the nation is available at several online sites: [achieve.org/](http://achieve.org/); [achieving-common-core](http://achieving-common-core.org/); [readykentucky.org](http://readykentucky.org/); [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org/); [pta.org](http://pta.org/); [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov) and others.

A quick overview of this work and what Kentucky employers think about it is available online in a 7-minute video. You can view or download the video from [kychamber.com](http://kychamber.com). For a copy of the video on DVD, contact [ahiller@kychamber.com](mailto:ahiller@kychamber.com).



# ReadyKentucky is ready to come to your community!

Helping Kentuckians understand the new academic standards that will prepare students for college and career success is the goal of ReadyKentucky.

This information-sharing program is an initiative of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and working in partnership with the Kentucky Chamber Foundation.

The program is free of charge. Knowledgeable presenters are available to visit community groups, civic clubs and employee gatherings to provide details about the new standards, where they came from, what they require and what schools and communities can expect in the future.

To find out more, or to request a ReadyKentucky presentation in your community, visit:

[www.prichardcommittee.org/readykentucky/](http://www.prichardcommittee.org/readykentucky/).

**ReadyKentucky**  
*Building on progress for student success*

