

# Elementary Schools

Most Kentucky elementary schools serve students in kindergarten through grade 5, with some including preschool students and students through grade 6 or grade 8.

## WHEN DO KENTUCKY CHILDREN START SCHOOL?

Kentucky defines school readiness as meaning that “each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child’s success and ability to be **ready to grow, ready to learn & ready to succeed.**”

Most Kentucky children start school when they are five (or four if they will turn five by October 1), but parents have the choice of not having them start until they are six (or five if they will turn six by October 1). Starting with the 2017-18 school year, those rules will change, so that students will be allowed to attend if they will be five by August 1 and required to attend if they will be six by August 1. In addition, parents may petition to allow a younger child to start school if an evaluation determines the child’s school readiness.

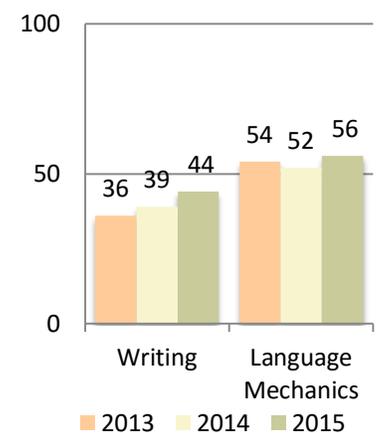
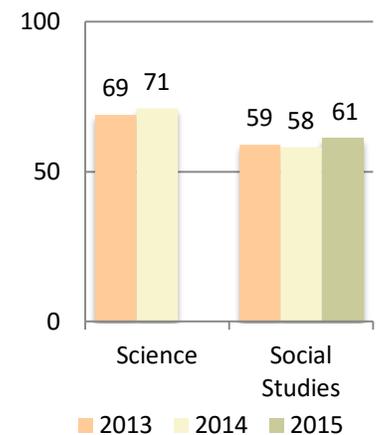
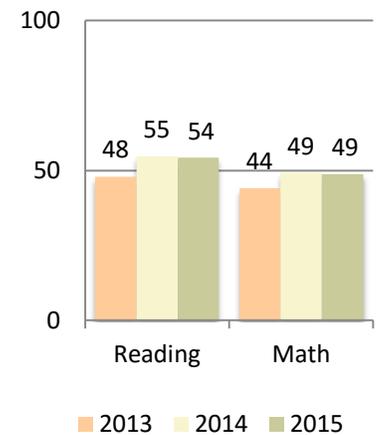
## HOW DOES THE PRIMARY PROGRAM SERVE STUDENTS IN GRADES K-3?

Until students are ready for fourth grade, they participate in the state’s **primary program**. While many schools find it convenient to describe children as being in kindergarten or grades 1, 2, and 3 during those years, students should be able to develop at the pace that fits each child’s unique learning needs. State law lists the following critical attributes of primary school:

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTE	WHICH MEANS....
DEVELOPMENTALLY-APPROPRIATE PRACTICES	Teaching in ways children learn best according to their age and development
MULTIAGE AND MULTIABILITY CLASSROOMS	Having children of different ages and abilities work together, being grouped and regrouped as needed to help them all grow and learn
CONTINUOUS PROGRESS	Allowing children to work and progress at their own pace
AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT	Documenting what students actually learn and do in their day-to-day activities
QUALITATIVE REPORTING METHODS	Letting parents know what students know and can do in a way that focuses on the growth and development of the whole child
PROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK	Ensuring that teachers and other staff members collaborate to help students learn
POSITIVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT	Involving parents in positive ways to support student learning

## SEEING RESULTS

These graphs show the percent of students scoring proficient or higher in the first two years of K-PREP assessments



For five-year-olds, **half-day programs or full-day programs** may be available: the state provides half-day funding but some districts find ways to fund a longer program. If an individual five-year-old has developed the academic and social skills taught in kindergarten, that child can move to a full-day program and the district can receive full-day funding to help with the resulting costs.

**Reading, mathematics, and writing** are foundational subjects in these early years, and students also learn **science, social studies, arts and humanities, practical living** (including health and physical education), and **career studies. Global competency and world languages** are receiving increasing attention, including a program review that checks each school's offerings each year.

**Response to Intervention or "RTI"** is a statewide strategy required for the primary years. Response to intervention calls for schools to organize instruction by setting up tiers of response that start with a core program that will be effective for most students. Students' work in the core program is monitored continuously, and if evidence shows that a particular student needs different or additional approaches, teachers provide supplemental support and then intensive intervention if needed. For example, a student who consistently struggles with the core program (tier 1) may receive some added opportunities (tier 2) and then if that support is not enough, move to more intensive support (tier 3). ("Kentucky System of Intervention" and "KSI" are related terms, describing an approach to RTI implementation shared by the Kentucky Department of Education.)

During their primary school years, students may be checked for possible learning disabilities, inclusion in the Primary Talent Pool, or both. The EdGuides on Students with Disabilities and on Gifted and Talented Students provide more information on these possibilities.

At the end of primary, students take K-PREP statewide assessments that check their progress toward meeting state standards in reading and mathematics. The Statewide Assessment EdGuide offers more detail.

## WHAT CHANGES WHEN STUDENTS MOVE TO GRADES 4 AND 5?

In the upper elementary grades, students continue to develop their knowledge and skills. Reading increasingly becomes a skill they use to learn other subjects, and writing increasingly becomes a process they use to develop their understanding and share it with others. Mathematics, science, social studies, arts and humanities, practical living, and career studies continue to be part of the curriculum.

Continuous progress is not a legal requirement once students reach fourth grade, but most schools and districts have policies that call for differentiated instruction, which means varied approaches to meet the varied learning needs of a full range of students. Many now describe their approaches as fitting Response to Intervention or Kentucky System of Interventions (RSI or KSI) approaches. Students can be identified as gifted and talented starting in fourth grade.

Students in these grades take K-PREP statewide reading and math assessments. Fourth graders are also assessed in science and language mechanics and fifth graders are assessed in social studies and writing.

## HOW ARE KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FUNDED?

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## LEARNING MORE

Learn more about the Kentucky System of Interventions by visiting [education.ky.gov](http://education.ky.gov) and searching for "KSI."

Added information on how Kentucky schools serve students can be found in other Kentucky EdGuides offered at [www.prichardcommittee.org](http://www.prichardcommittee.org), including those on:

- Students Who Need Added Support
- Students with Disabilities
- Students Ready for Added Challenge
- Student Behavior and Discipline

Kentucky has no funds designated specifically for elementary schools, but the statewide SEEK fund combines state and local dollars to cover the major costs, and the work of elementary schools is also supported by targeted state and federal funding: see the EdGuides on SEEK and on State Funding for more information. In 2013, Kentucky schools had an average of \$9,266 in state and local revenue per student, clearly below the national average of \$11,254.