## **KENTUCKY EDGUIDES** | **CORE PROGRAMS 2.3**

# Middle Schools

Most Kentucky students in grades 6, 7, and 8 attend middle schools designed just for those years, but some schools combine other grades, like 5-8 or just 7 and 8, and some districts still offer K-8 schools that may be called elementary schools. The grade configurations in different schools are decided by local boards of education. This EdGuide focuses more on the age of the students than on the exact way their schools are divided up.

#### HOW IS MIDDLE SCHOOL LIKELY TO DIFFER FROM ELEMENTARY?

Starting in the middle grades, students usually change classrooms multiple times each day, going to different teachers for each subject. For students, that means new challenges in following schedules, navigating hallways, managing lockers with keys or combinations, and keeping track of multiple homework assignments each night. Parents encounter the challenges of helping with all that, and also may need new strategies for staying in touch with a larger group of teachers for each child.

*Individual Learning Plans* (ILPs), focused on planning for careers and post-high school education, begin at this age. Kentucky requires each student to develop a first ILP in sixth grade, looking at possible jobs and at coursework to prepare for those jobs. ILPs can and should be revised many times through the middle and high school years as students clarify their interests and develop their skills.

For exceptional children, Individual Education Programs (IEPs continue to be developed and implemented for students with disabilities along with Gifted Student Service Plans (GSSPs) for gifted and talented students.

If K-PREP testing shows that a student is not on track to be ready for college and career, the school must offer *accelerated learning opportunities*. Accelerated learning is "an organized way of helping students meet individual academic goals by providing direct instruction to eliminate student performance deficiencies or enable students to move more quickly through course requirements and pursue higher level skill development." (Kentucky is expected to adopt a new readiness test for grade 8, replacing the Explore test last given in 2014-15, and that test will also be used to identify students for accelerated learning support.)

#### WHAT OPTIONS DO STUDENTS HAVE IN THE MIDDLE GRADES?

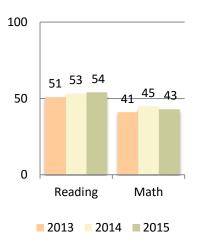
Many (though not all) middle schools allow students to rotate through a series of exploratory classes that let them try out art, instrumental music, industrial arts, foreign languages, and other fields before deciding whether to study those topics more deeply in high school.

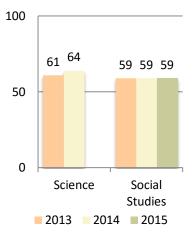
Algebra may be offered to students in grade 8 or even grade 7, as may more formal study of foreign languages.

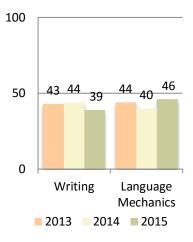
School teams that compete in athletics, debate, and other fields may be available along with a variety of clubs for student interests and service projects. These extracurricular programs allow students to develop skills, practice cooperation and leadership, and contribute to their schools and communities.

## **SEEING RESULTS**

These graphs show the percent of middle school students scoring proficient or higher on K-PREP assessments







#### HOW ARE KENTUCKY MIDDLE SCHOOLS FUNDED?

Kentucky has no funds designated specifically for middle schools, but the statewide SEEK fund combines state and local dollars to cover the major costs, and the work of middle schools is also supported by targeted state and federal funding: see the EdGuides on State Funding and on the SEEK Formula 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.

### LEARNING MORE

Learn more about Individual Learning Plans by visiting <a href="www.education.ky.gov">www.education.ky.gov</a> and searching for "ILP."

Added information on how Kentucky schools serve students can be found in other Kentucky EdGuides offered at <a href="https://www.prichardcommittee.org">www.prichardcommittee.org</a>, including those on:

- Students Who Need Added Support
- Students with Disabilities
- Students Ready for Added Challenge
- Poverty and Nonacademic Barriers to Learning
- Digital Learning and School Technology
- Student Conduct and Discipline
- School Safety