

Chapter One
GRADUATION RATE



BALLARD MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2014

Ballard Memorial High School is currently ranked number one for College and Career Readiness in the state, with over 80 percent of students in 2013 being either college- or career-ready, according to KY Department of Education standards.

In partnership with and in service to our community, the mission of Ballard County Schools is to prepare every student to be a successful individual. Our 1,400-plus students not only attend core content courses, but also have rich choices for additional opportunities. We have one high school and an interconnected middle school, one elementary, and one pre-school, located off-campus in LaCenter. A brand-new, state-of-the-art high school opened in January 2006; a new middle school followed in 2007.

Our staff members, certified and classified, all work toward sustaining a positive learning environment with high expectations for all students. Our faculty receives extensive professional development in the areas of differentiated instruction and recognition of diverse learning styles. Ballard County is constantly in the process of analyzing school culture, plus classroom and test data, in an effort to ensure excellence.

Our rural setting and background offer small-town amenities without sacrificing current technological resources. With the opening of our new schools, our upper-level students will have a 2.5 to 1 student-computer ratio. There is an interactive Smart Board in every classroom, where technology is integrated into the curriculum on a daily basis. Our teachers bring Internet-accessible materials to life, enhancing the exposure and realism of many studied subjects. We also offer instruction in many other kinds of software currently used by business and industry.

We begin with 3- and 4-year-olds, and continue offering life-long learning classes through our adult and career education divisions. Our younger students can receive some forms of speech and occupational therapies on-site at their schools. For our older students, we currently offer seven advanced placement classes, nine dual-enrollment classes (in algebra, basic public speaking, English, history and psychology) and 13 dual-credit courses (in auto body, business, communications, computers, culinary arts, health sciences and welding), all in association with West Kentucky Community and Technology College in Paducah. Students can leave high school with a significant number of college credits, or receive certification in several vocational programs, the majority at a discounted tuition cost.

Our purpose at Ballard County Schools is to ensure that every student receives an education based on high academic standards and gets the resources needed to attain success, regardless of socio-economic status, race or gender. Our system is an equal education and employment opportunities institution.

TABLE 1
AFGR FOR BALLARD MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

Ballard County Schools has already implemented a plan to increase its high school graduation rate, as shown by the dramatic 7.5% increase gained in the last three years. The district is confident that it can easily reach 98% by 2022 by continuing its current strategy.

| ACADEMIC YEAR | GRADUATION RATE | METHOD |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 2010-2011 | 86.7 | AFGR |
| 2011-2012 | 88.3 | AFGR |
| 2012-2013 | 94.2 (92.4%) | AFGR (Cohort) |

Source: Kentucky Department of Education

The graduation data from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) for Ballard Memorial High School (BMHS) located in Table 1.1 shows annual gains over a three year period with a 94.2 percent AFGR for the class of 2013. BMHS ranked in the top 10 for graduation rate in the state of Kentucky for 2013. In addition, BMHS was ranked number one in the state for College and Career Readiness points for 2013, having an 80 percent CCR rate.

Below is a list of key strategies that will allow BMHS to sustain and increase the graduation rate:

1. College and Career Readiness

With the ushering in of Unbridled Learning in 2009, the landscape of education in Kentucky changed dramatically: “College and Career Readiness” for all is our battle cry. The process of preparing students for college and career readiness does not begin in high school, but at the earliest stages of a child’s education, whether in preschool or elementary school. The Ballard County Career and Technical Center (BCCTC) and BMHS work together to prepare students, and believe it is vital to provide the following for them:

- *Strong interdisciplinary course work that prepares students for college and careers*
- *Information about career clusters that allow Ballard County students to work in Ballard County, the state of Kentucky, and in a global market*
- *Hands-on experiences that allow students to work in developing skills within a career cluster; or skills that are transferrable to other careers or higher learning*
- *Partnerships with OUR community*

We believe a strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) is instrumental in meeting our community and accountability goals. CTE has moved to the forefront of education in Kentucky.

2. Career Pathways

BMHS and BCCTC currently offer over 10 career pathways to students, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to study within a pathway. All students at BMHS take at least one course within a career pathway, with many completing the pathway of their choice. Career programs include culinary arts, family and consumer science, welding, business communication, business management, multimedia, agriculture and state registered nurse assistant. In addition, the Ballard CTC recently opened an industrial maintenance program.

3. Counseling Model

The BMHS counseling department is designed to focus on student academics, social and personal growth, and career development. The success of the counseling department is dependent on the counselor’s ability to be responsive to each student’s needs. BMHS added a college and career counselor position in 2012 to support these efforts.

Each student at BMHS has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to assist him/her in preparing for the future. As part of the ILP process, students complete career skill and interest inventories, set academic and career goals, and create and maintain a resume. The ILP process also allows students to connect with post-secondary institutions and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

Counselors conduct an annual forensic audit of student transcripts, identifying students who are struggling or who need additional support. In addition, the Persistence to Graduation Tool is utilized in conjunction with the audit, ensuring at-risk students are not overlooked. Students not on track to graduate, or students struggling in a traditional educational setting, receive individual assistance and help to determine their path to graduation. Counselors utilize a flexible counseling model that allows students to complete high school and decrease the number of students dropping out.

4. Postsecondary Institution Partnerships

Demonstrating relevance in their course work is important to high school students, and helps ensure that they graduate on time. Postsecondary relationships provide connections for students to ease the transition to life after high school. BMHS has partnered with Western Kentucky Career and Technical College (WKCTC) and Murray State University (MSU), resulting in the Class of 2013 graduating with over 1,350 college credit hours. BMHS also has established a program with WKCTC that allows students to graduate from high school with an associate of arts degree.

BALLARD COUNTY SCHOOLS AWARDED 2014 PUBLIC EDUCATION ACHIEVES IN KY (PEAK) AWARD

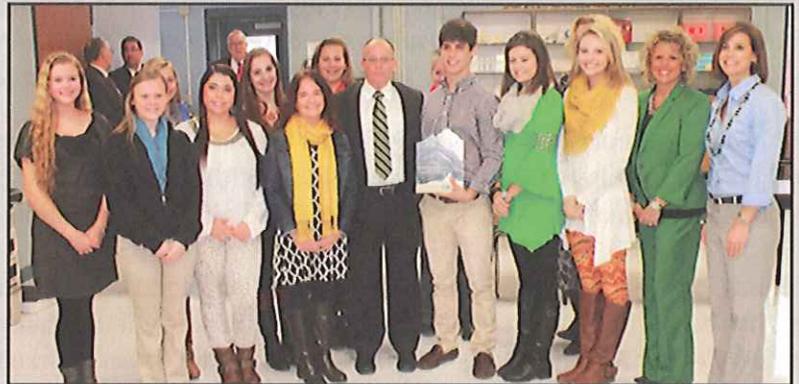
The Kentucky School Board Association awarded Ballard County Schools' with the Public Education Achieves in Kentucky (PEAK) award on December 2, 2014. It's only given to two schools in the state every year.

The school went from being 34% college and career ready to 86 % in three years. As for their graduation rate, it's gone from 86.5% in 2011 to 94.2 % in 2013. School leaders took a hard look at the way they were preparing students for their future and made some serious changes, particularly at the district's Career and Technical Center.

They aligned the curricula with a college and career framework; provided each student with individualized counseling, using an Individual Learning Plan; required seniors to take at least one college course; hired a second counselor who focused on college and career readiness and conducted a forensic audit of each student's transcript; forged a partnership with Murray State University and West KY Community and Technical College; created professional learning communities among instructors who were tasked with analyzing data and keeping up with student progress; and changed the daily class structure to a seven-period day to give students more opportunities to take dual-credit courses.

Since those changes have been put in place:

- Ranked No. 1 for college and career readiness points in the state in 2013 and 2014.
- 86% of students were college and career ready in 2014, an increase of 52 points since 2011.
- Graduation rates improved from 88.3% in 2012 to 94.2% in 2013, which was in the top 6 % in the state.
- The 88-person class of 2013 graduated with more than 1,350 college credit hours, an increase of 27%
- Of the 417 students enrolled in career tech programs, 120 passed KOSSA exams or industry certifications in 2013.



Ballard Memorial High School Principal David Meinschein is shown with members of the school's Student Ambassadors group who led a tour of the buildings for visiting Kentucky School Board Association representatives.