

IEP DIPLOMA PROCEDURES

An IEP is intended for a student with the most significant disabilities in recognition of his or her successful achievement of individual educational goals based on the appropriate level of the learning standards as specified in the student's current IEP. An IEP diploma is not a standards based diploma and is not recognized in this State as equivalent to a regular high school diploma. While earning an IEP diploma may be an important milestone for a student, it is a diploma that is not often accepted by employers, the military, institutions of higher education, business/trade schools or apprenticeship programs because it is not based on standardized criteria (successful completion of required courses and achievement on State assessments). Accordingly, a student with an IEP diploma is likely to be significantly limited in his or her post-secondary educational opportunities, employability and earning potential.

Plattsburgh City School District takes steps early in the student's high school career to ensure that the parent and student fully understand the differences between a regular high school diploma and an IEP diploma. Parents are informed that the IEP diploma is intended for a student with very limited cognitive abilities who can not, because of his/her disability, earn a regular diploma. Guidance programs and special education case managers for all students in grades seven to twelve shall inform students and parents about graduation requirements, diploma options and career choices.

At each annual review meeting, the CSE will determine the particular State assessment the student will participate in and, if the CSE recommends an alternative assessment, a statement will be provided in the IEP of why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment. A determination that the student cannot take the regular State assessments and will participate in an alternate assessment (New York State Alternate Assessment) will mean that the student cannot graduate with a regular high school diploma. Therefore, this determination is an important one and will be reconsidered at each annual meeting to review the student's IEP.

Prior to receipt of an IEP diploma, the school district will notify the parent in writing that his or her child's receipt of the IEP diploma does not end the student's right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and that, if the student receives an IEP diploma prior to the end of the school year in which the student turns age 21, the student may continue in his/her high school program until the student has earned a regular high school diploma or until the end of the school year of the student's 21st birthday, whichever may occur earlier. A student who does earn an IEP diploma must have the same opportunity as all students to participate in the school district's graduation ceremonies.

Opportunity to Earn a Regular High School Diploma

Plattsburgh City School District ensures that students with disabilities are provided appropriate opportunities to earn a regular high school diploma. This opportunity is available to students regardless of where the student attends school or who

is providing special education services to the student (e.g., local school district, board of cooperative educational services (BOCES), approved private school, Special Act School District, State-operated or State-supported school).

The following are important factors relating to the opportunity for students with disabilities to earn regular high school diplomas.

1. Students will be enrolled in coursework that leads to a diploma and be provided instruction by teachers highly qualified in the subject area courses being taught.
2. Each student with a disability will receive appropriate special education supports and services to address the effect of the student's disability on participation and progress in the general education curriculum.
3. CSEs, parents and students will understand the relationship between courses of study, a regular diploma and the student's post-secondary goals.
4. Transition planning and activities will be meaningful and motivate the student to work towards a regular diploma.

The attachment to this document provide additional information on the above factors and information to assist school personnel and parents with these important decisions.

Attachment

**Factors Relating To the Opportunity For Students With Disabilities
To Earn Regular High School Diplomas**

1. Students will be enrolled in coursework that leads to a diploma and provided instruction by teachers highly qualified in the subject area courses being taught.

Each student with a disability, with exceptions made for individual students with disabilities who are working to meet the State's alternate performance indicators, must have access to coursework at his/her appropriate instructional level that will lead to a regular diploma. While most students with disabilities will attend general education classes, some students with disabilities are removed from their general education classes for a portion of the day, placed in special classes or placed in separate schools where access to course credit and highly qualified teachers may be limited. In making decisions about special education services and the placement where the IEP will be implemented, CSEs should also consider how those decisions may affect the student's opportunity to earn the credits necessary to graduate with a regular diploma.

All students, including those with disabilities, are required to have an annual guidance review. Such reviews, which are conducted either individually or in small groups by personnel certified or licensed as school counselors, focus on each student's educational progress and career plans. School counselors or classroom teachers working in cooperation with school counselors are required to provide information to all students about various career options and required skills. The regulations require that other individual or group counseling sessions be provided to assist students to benefit from the curriculum; to develop and implement postsecondary education and career plans; to address attendance, academic, behavioral or adjustment problems; and to encourage parental involvement. The following shall serve as considerations for the CSE during annual reviews:

- The student's opportunity to graduate with a regular diploma in the development of the IEP, including, but not limited to, enrollment in courses that will lead to a regular diploma; and access to highly qualified teachers in the core academic subject areas;
- The student's present level of performance documents the effect of the student's disability on the student's participation and progress in his or her general education courses and subject areas;
- The CSE discusses, and the IEP documents, the courses of study necessary for the student to achieve his or her post-secondary goals;
- The IEP documents the special education supports and services in consideration of the student's courses of study, including but not limited to:
 - The content of the instruction;
 - Methods of instruction;
 - Instructional materials;
 - The physical environment;

- Behavioral supports and services;
 - The student's ability to demonstrate his/her learning (e.g., assessments and homework); and
 - Where (location) the student will receive the recommended special education services
- The recommended placement will provide the student with credit-bearing courses necessary to earn a regular high school diploma;
 - Annually, the CSE discusses the student's participation and progress in the general curriculum, regardless of the student's placement;
 - The CSE encourages the student to work towards a regular diploma and to remain in school beyond the traditional four years of high school to earn a regular diploma;
 - The CSE informs the student's parent(s) that the student is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) until age 21 even if awarded an IEP diploma prior to that age; and
 - The Plattsburgh City School District provides written notice to the parent prior to receipt of an IEP diploma.

In addition, alternatives to the traditional way of earning credit can provide some students opportunities for completing diploma requirements. These include credit by examination, accelerated course completion, and advanced out-of-school study as well as making-up failed or incomplete courses (credit recovery), independent study, and digital learning (online courses). The credits that students need to earn beyond the core academic requirements may be in music and art programs, occupational programs, and elective academic courses designed by the local school. State-approved work-based learning programs that help students to achieve the State learning standards continue to be an option for earning credit toward graduation, either as electives or as a part of career and technical education programs.

2. Each student with a disability will receive appropriate special education supports and services to address the effect of the student's disability on participation and progress in the general education curriculum.

Each student's IEP, developed and reviewed annually, is the mechanism to ensure that students can participate and progress in the required courses, electives and State assessments leading to a regular high school diploma. The CSE is charged with the responsibility to document in an IEP specific factors and recommendations relating to the student's participation and progress in the general education curriculum and to consider this information as it makes its recommendations for special education programs, services, accommodations and placement.

In considering the effect of the student's disability on his/her ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum, the CSE should specifically consider the unique needs resulting from the student's disability and the relationship of these needs to such factors as:

- the content of the instruction;

- methods of instruction;
- instructional materials;
- the physical environment;
- behavioral supports and services;
- the student's ability to demonstrate his/her learning (e.g., assessments and homework); and
- where (location) the student will receive the recommended special education services.
- Each decision about where a student will receive his/her special education services may impact the student's ability to graduate with a regular diploma. For this reason, the CSE must discuss, and the IEP must specify, the location where each recommended special education service will be provided. Whenever appropriate, the student should be receiving his/her special education services in general education classes.

3. CSEs, parents and students will understand the relationship between courses of study, a regular diploma and the student's post-secondary goals.

The CSE must discuss and document the effect of the student's disability on the student's participation and progress in the general education curriculum. In doing so, the CSE should discuss a student's need for special education specifically in relationship to the courses of study the student will be enrolled in. By understanding the standards in each course the student will need to achieve, the CSE can make specific recommendations that will facilitate the student's access and progress in these classes. Without this understanding, the student's IEP may not be reasonably calculated to provide the student with educational benefit to meet the State's learning standards and his/her post-secondary goals.

The general education teacher on the CSE should bring information on course expectations and State assessments to the CSE meeting. In this way, the CSE can discuss the student's disability in the context of his or her courses of study. In addition, the general education teacher should assist in the determination of appropriate positive behavioral interventions and supports and other strategies for the student; and supplementary aids and services, program modifications and supports for school personnel to address the student's disability needs.

For each student with a disability beginning with the first IEP to be in effect when the student turns age 15, and younger if determined appropriate, the IEP must identify the courses of study the student will take in that year to prepare the student to meet his/her post-secondary goals. Identification of courses should include the student's general education classes as well as any other courses (such as career and technical education classes) the student would be taking.

4. Transition planning and activities will be meaningful and motivate the student to work towards a regular diploma.

For students with disabilities, the process of transition planning is extremely important. If done appropriately, the student is involved in the CSE meeting to discuss transition planning. This gives the student the opportunity to see the relationship between courses of study and achieving his/her post-secondary goals. This process, which engages the student and family to identify the support the student will need through instruction and other transition activities, often helps motivate students to stay in school and work toward a regular diploma.

Career Plan and Career Zone

The New York State (NYS) Career Plan documents an individual's skills, abilities, interests and experiences with respect to career exploration and preparation and is available for those in kindergarten through adulthood. It aligns with the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Standards, is designed to add relevance and meaning to learning experiences across subject areas and is an excellent graduation planning tool for all students. Students in grades 6-12 can create individual Career Plans with the "My Portfolio" tool found at the New York State Department of Labor's CareerZone web site. CareerZone is an online tool that assists individuals to assess their skills and interests, and provides information on over 800 different careers, including the education and skills necessary for success in those careers. It also includes a resource section for students, parents, guidance counselors, and educators, including lesson plans cross walked to the 28 New York State Learning Standards.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) Programs

All students, including students with disabilities, are required to have access to and can benefit from participation in career and technical education (CTE) and other work experience programs. Work-based learning (WBL), offered in collaboration with schools and employers, provides students with structured learning experiences and the opportunity to develop broad, transferable skills for postsecondary education and the workplace. A quality WBL program can make school-based learning more relevant by providing students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real world situations.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Skills Achievement Profile

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Skills Achievement Profile is a tool specifically designed for students with disabilities who will receive an IEP diploma and who will be participating in CTE coursework. The Profile documents a student's attainment of career and technical knowledge and skills; work-related skills and certification or licenses; and relates directly to the student's individual Career Plan. It provides documentation of a student's employability skills based on industry standards and can provide important information to a potential employer about a student's skills.

Student Exit Summary (SES)

School districts are required to provide each student with a disability summary of his/her academic achievement and functional performance, which must also include recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her post-secondary goals. This summary, referred to in NYS as the Student Exit Summary (SES), must be provided prior to school exit for a student whose eligibility for special education services terminates due to graduation from secondary school with a regular diploma or who exceeds the age eligibility for FAPE. This includes students exiting school with a Regents, local, or IEP diploma. It is recommended that students exiting with a High School Equivalency Diploma be provided with this summary as well.

The SES should be developed to be a useful and relevant document that summarizes individual student abilities, skills, needs and limitations and provides recommendations to support successful transition to adult living, learning and working. As such, the SES will help the student better understand the impact of his/her disability and articulate individual strengths and needs as well as supports that would be helpful in post-school life. It should also assist the student in establishing eligibility for reasonable accommodations and supports in postsecondary settings, the workplace and the community and to aid the student in accessing adult services as appropriate.

Summary

The Plattsburgh City School District aims to provide the best education available to ensure a bright and successful future for district students. In doing so, it is recommended that all students seek, and all educators encourage, a curriculum that places students on track for a general high school or regents diploma. The IEP diploma will only be awarded to those students who cannot, due to the severity of their disability, achieve a regular diploma.

Should any parent seek more information, or like to meet with District administrators or CSE Chairs regarding the above information, please feel free to contact the District office.

Adopted: December 9, 2010