

Understanding Modified Diplomas

This brochure has been developed to assist the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team to determine the type of diploma for which a student is eligible.

This brochure has been written by the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) and the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE).



Additional information related to special education can be found by visiting the WVDE Office of Special Education website at <http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp>

UNDERSTANDING MODIFIED DIPLOMAS

*What teachers, parents
and students need to
know.*

West Virginia Department of Education

Office of Special Education

Need for a Modified Diploma:

Policy 2510: Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs states that county boards of education shall award a high school diploma to every student who completes the standard graduation requirements. An eligible student with disabilities who has been determined by an IEP Team to be unable, even with extended learning opportunities and significant instructional modifications to meet state and county standard graduation requirements may receive a modified diploma.

All students who meet the criteria for the Alternate Assessment are presumed to be pursuing a modified diploma. Eligible students are those who have been determined by an IEP Team to be unable, even with extended learning opportunities and significant instructional modifications, to meet state and county standard graduation requirements.

IEP Team Decision

As stated in Policy 2419: Regulations for the Education of Students with Exceptionalities, beginning with the first IEP to be in effect when a student is sixteen years old (or sooner at the discretion of the IEP team), the IEP team must address postsecondary goals including the type of diploma the student will be working toward. Every effort must be made to include both the parents and the student in this meeting as its primary purpose is to plan the student's postsecondary program.

IEP Team Procedures

The IEP team must carefully review the most recent summative and formative assessment data on the student. In addition, they must look at the student's past history and future expectations on the West Virginia Summative Assessment.

Based upon the review of the data, the IEP Team must carefully consider the following questions:

1. Is the student capable of attaining the West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards?
 - If yes, the student is eligible for a standard diploma
 - If no, proceed to next question
2. Is the student capable of attaining the West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards with instructional modifications and accommodations (pre-teach, re-teach, specialized instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, co-teaching, instructional technology, etc.)?
 - If yes, the student is eligible for a standard diploma
 - If no, proceed to next question
3. Does the student have significant impairment of cognitive abilities and adaptive skills that may require instruction in the Alternate Standards?
 - If yes, the student is eligible for a modified diploma
 - If no, the IEP Team needs to reconsider Question 2 and revise the IEP to better meet the needs of the student

The determination of the student's eligibility for a modified or standard diploma and the student's progress toward this goal is to be reviewed annually by the IEP Team.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does the United States Military accept students who have earned a modified diploma?

A: An applicant who possesses a local or state-issued diploma on the basis of an attendance credential (non-standard diploma) is not to be considered a Tier I high school graduate in the Navy, Army and Marine Corps. Well over 90% of enlistees are Tier I so this greatly reduces the chances of enlistment in these branches. It is important to note that the eligibility requirements may change due to the needs of the United States Department of Defense so students and their parents should check with recruiters to determine if a modified diploma is currently being accepted. It is also important to note that ALL branches of the military require a minimum score of 50 on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT).

Q: Can a student with a modified diploma be accepted into a college?

A: Most four year universities do not accept a modified diploma. A limited number of remedial level community college courses are available to students with a modified diploma; however they are not applicable towards the completion of a degree.

Q: Are students who receive a modified diploma eligible for federal or state financial aid at a postsecondary institution?

A: Students who receive a modified diploma are not eligible for federal financial aid. Limited state and private financial aid and scholarships might be available.

Q: Can a student earning a modified diploma participate in the high school graduation ceremony?

A: Students with disabilities receiving modified diplomas shall be allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies with their same grade classmates and continue with special education eligibility services.

Q: Can a student working toward a modified diploma continue public education to age 21?

A: A student with an IEP who is working on a modified diploma remains entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) through the age of 21.