

## Frequently Asked Questions – Diploma Options

### 1. When should an IEP team discuss diploma options?

An IEP Team or School Team should start discussing diploma expectations with the parent and student early in the student's academic career.

School Districts and Public Charter Schools are required to annually provide information to the parents or guardians of a student taking an alternate assessment of the availability of the Modified Diploma and Extended Diploma and the requirements for the Modified Diploma and the Extended Diploma.

**OAR 581-022-2010(4)(d)**

A student's school team must decide that a student should work toward the Modified Diploma no earlier than the end of the 6th grade and no later than 2 years before the student's anticipated exit from high school. However, a student's school team may formally decide to revise the Modified Diploma decision. **OAR 581-022-2010(4)(c)**

A student's school team may decide that a student who was not previously working towards the Modified Diploma should work toward the Modified Diploma when a student is less than 2 years from their anticipated exit from high school if the documented history of the student has changed. **OAR 581-022-2010(4)(c)**

### 2. Who can get the Modified Diploma (MD)?

Each district or public charter school shall award a modified diploma only to students (regular education or special education) who have demonstrated the inability to meet the full set of academic content standards for a high school diploma even with reasonable accommodations or modifications but who fulfill all state requirements for a modified diploma. A school district or public charter school shall grant eligibility for a modified diploma to a student who has:

- A "documented history" of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers; or
- A documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement. (OAR 581-022-2010)

### 3. Can the MD be earned by either a student with disabilities or a regular education student?

Yes, the MD can be earned by either a student eligible for special education or a regular education student, as long as the student meets the eligibility requirements of the MD.

ORS 329.451 High school diploma; modified diploma; extended diploma; alternative certificate; grade level advancement

(7) A school district or public charter school shall award a modified diploma only to students who have demonstrated the inability to meet the full set of academic content standards for a high school diploma with reasonable modifications and accommodations. To be eligible for a modified diploma, a student must:

(a) Satisfy the requirements for a modified diploma established by the State Board of Education; and

(b) Have a documented history of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers or have a documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement.

*OAR 581-022-1134(3)(a) Except as provided in paragraph (c) or (d) of this section, a SD or PCS shall grant eligibility for a modified diploma to a student who has:*

- (A) A documented history of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers; or*
- (B) A documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement*

#### **4. Who can get the Extended Diploma (ED)?**

To be eligible for an extended diploma, a student must:

- Have a documented history of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers or have a documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement;
- Have a serious illness or injury that occurs after grade eight, that changes the student's ability to participate in grade level activities and that results in the student participating in alternate assessments.
- While in grade nine through completion of high school, complete 12 credits, which may not include more than six credits earned in a self-contained special education classroom (OAR 581-022-2015)

#### **5. Who can get the Alternative Certificate (AC)?**

A School district or public charter school shall award an alternative certificate to a student who does not satisfy the requirements for a high school diploma, a modified diploma or an extended diploma. Each district school board or public charter school shall define criteria for an alternative certificate and shall award an alternative certificate to those students who have met the criteria requirements as described in district school board policies. (OAR 581-022-2020)

#### **6. Why would a student earn the Modified Diploma or Extended Diploma instead of a regular high school diploma?**

A student may not be able to meet the full set of academic content standards, even with reasonable accommodations but may be able to fulfill all requirements for the Modified Diploma or Extended Diploma as described in Oregon Administrative Rules. The Modified Diploma requires 24 units of credit. The Extended Diploma requires 12 units of credit. Credits for the Modified Diploma or Extended Diploma may be earned through modified courses, regular education courses (with or without accommodations or modifications), credit by proficiency, or a combination of the above.

#### **7. Can a student earning the MD, ED or AC participate in the high school graduation ceremony?**

Yes, a student receiving the ED or AC shall be offered the option of participating in the high school graduation ceremony with the members of their class receiving a high school diploma.

In 2005, Illinois passed "Brittany's Law," which requires school districts to adopt policies and procedures to permit students with disabilities who will have completed 4 years of high school to participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a certificate of completion if the student's IEP states that education, transition planning/services or related services will go beyond the student's 4 years of high school. The language of the law can be found here.

The analogous statutes in Oregon are as follows: ORS § 329.451(12)(a)(A) states that a

“student who receives a modified diploma, an extended diploma or an alternative certificate shall: Have the option of participating in a high school graduation ceremony with the class of the student.” OAR §§ 581-022-2020(6) and 581-022-2010(13) reiterate that students receiving an alternative certificate or modified diploma, respectively, “shall have the option of participating in the high school graduation ceremony with members of their class receiving a high school diploma.” Curiously, this provision is not included in the OARs for students receiving extended diplomas (although the ORS requires that the option be available for extended diploma recipients).

## **8. What do School Districts and Public Charter Schools need to know about required consents for diploma options?**

Consent to award a diploma option: A School District or Public Charter School may award the Modified Diploma or Extended Diploma to a student only upon the consent of the parent or guardian of the student *or upon the consent of the adult student or emancipated minor student*. A district or school **must** receive the consent in writing and during the school year in which the Modified Diploma or Extended Diploma is awarded. **OAR 581-022-2010(4)(a)**

A student must finish working toward an **alternative certificate** by the later of:

- Four years after starting grade nine; or
- The student reaching the age of 21 years, if the student is entitled to a public education until the age of 21 years under state or federal law.
- A student may complete the requirements for an alternative certificate in less than four years if the parent/guardian or adult student gives consent.
- The consent may not be used to allow a student to satisfy the requirements for an alternative certificate in less than three years.

The consent must be written and must clearly state that the parent/guardian or adult student is waiving the 4 years to complete the requirements for an alternative certificate.

A copy of all consents must be sent to the district superintendent. **OAR 581-022-2020(4)(a)**

The School District should document the receipt of written consent and place the consent in the student’s file.

## **9. Can an IEP Team or school team change the decision as to what diploma option the student will be working toward?**

Yes, an IEP or school team may change the decision as to what diploma option a student will work toward. The team may determine at any time that the student should work toward a more rigorous option (e.g., change from modified to regular or extended to modified) as long as the student meets any criteria associated with the new diploma type. A team may determine that a student working toward a more rigorous option should pursue a less rigorous option (e.g., change from regular to modified or modified to extended) only if the student meets the eligibility criteria for that option.

## **10 When does the School District determine modifications in Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) cut score for a modified diploma?**

Throughout a student’s high school career, a school district should be using other assessment measures to make informed decisions about academic progress and potential need for targeted instruction. If there is a clear pattern or trend that shows a student is not making progress despite focused instruction and/or remediation, then a school district should consider other options. In addition to the student’s assessment

performance, a School District should consider the student's grades in other core content classes. The best time to make this decision varies because of student learning styles and other environmental factors.

**11. For the Modified Diploma, does the district implement the plan two years before the student's expected graduation date?**

A school team must decide no later than 2 years before the student's anticipated exit from high school, if the student will work toward the Modified Diploma.

*OAR 581-022-2010(4)(c)* A student's school team shall decide that a student should work toward a modified diploma no earlier than the end of the 6th grade and no later than 2 years before the student's anticipated exit from high school.

**However, if a student is working toward a regular diploma and the IEP team or school team decides circumstances have changed for the student in the last two years of high school, then the IEP Team or school team may revise their decision, at any time, and allow the student to work toward the Modified Diploma. The circumstances necessitating this change should be documented.**

*OAR 581-022-2010(4)(e)* A student's school team may formally decide to revise a modified diploma decision.

The reverse is also true. If the student is working toward the Modified Diploma and the IEP team or the school team decides the student can be successful at working toward a regular diploma, then the Team should document the reasons for the change and allow the student to work toward a regular diploma. Remember, to receive a regular diploma all credits must be taken under standard conditions without modifications. In these situations, the student may have to re-take and pass courses that were previously taken under modified conditions.

*OAR 581-022-2010(3)(b)* A School District or Public Charter School may not deny a student who has the documented history the opportunity to pursue a diploma with more stringent requirements than a modified diploma for the sole reason that the student has the documented history.

**12. How do the credit requirements vary for the MD as compared to a regular diploma?**

Academic Subject	Credits Required for Graduation with the Modified Diploma	Credits Required for Graduation with the Oregon Diploma
English/Language Arts	3	4
Mathematics	2	3
Science	2	3
Social Sciences	2	3
Physical Education	1	1
Health	1	1
Second Languages/ The Arts/Career and Technical Education (CTE)	1	3
Electives	12	6
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>

**13. What are the required Essential Skills?**

The Nine Essential Skills are cross-disciplinary skills that students should be developing across grades K- 12.

For students first enrolled in Grade 9 in 2010-2011 or later, three of the Essential Skills are graduation requirements:

- Read and comprehend a variety of text
- Write clearly and accurately
- Apply mathematics in a variety of settings

For more information go to: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/essentialskills/Pages/default.aspx>

**14. Are modifications allowed in the demonstration of the Essential Skills?**

Information provided in this answer is taken from the 2016-17 Essential Skills & Local Performance Assessment Manual – Section 6 [http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/essentialskills/Documents/es\\_localperformanceasmt\\_manual.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/essentialskills/Documents/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf)

A student seeking a Modified Diploma must meet the Essential Skills requirement. He or she may use the Essential Skills assessment options and achievement standards described in Section 3.0 Essential Skills Assessment Options to demonstrate proficiency on the Essential Skills. Table 13, Essential Skills Assessment Modifications for Students Seeking Modified Diploma describes which of these assessments may be modified and the requirements associated with these modifications. In addition to the Essential Skills assessment options and achievement standards described in Section 3.0 Essential Skills Assessment Options, a student seeking a Modified Diploma may also use the Oregon Extended Assessment to demonstrate the Essential Skills. The achievement standards for the Essential Skills on the Extended Assessment are included in Table 14. Extended Assessment Achievement Standards and Expectations for Essential Skills. Achievement standards on the Extended Assessment may not be modified.

Table 13. Essential Skills Assessment Modifications for Students Seeking Modified Diploma

	<b>Students on an IEPs or 504 Plan</b>	<b>Students not on an IEP or a 504 Plan</b>
<b>Assessment Options that May be Modified</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Samples (two required)</li> <li>• Statewide Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Samples (two required)</li> </ul>
<b>Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The modifications must be in accordance with the assessment decision made by the student’s IEP or 504 team and documented in the IEP or 504 Plan.</li> <li>• Before administering an assessment using a modification, a student’s IEP or 504 team must inform the student’s parent that the use of a modification on an assessment will result in an invalid assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The modifications must be same as the modifications the student received during instruction in the content area to be assessed and in the year in which the Work Sample is administered.</li> <li>• The modifications must be approved in advance by the student’s school team responsible for monitoring the student’s progress</li> </ul>

**15. Will the MD be accepted by the military?**

Some branches of the military may accept the MD. Acceptance depends on the current needs of the military; however, criteria may change frequently. Students and their parents should check with military recruiters to determine if the MD is currently being accepted. All branches of the service have minimum scores required for entry on a placement test called the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).