

# Diploma Options

## DIPLOMA OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING DISABILITY

Earning a diploma is a huge rite of passage that should be experienced by everyone, and all students should be on track for a diploma. ODE and FACT Oregon are making it a priority to raise the number of diplomas earned by students experiencing disability and lowering the number of certificates issued. Under current policy, Oregon has the following diploma options:

- Standard Oregon Diploma
- Modified Oregon Diploma
- Oregon Extended Diploma

### ***Standard Oregon Diploma***

All students are eligible to pursue the standard Oregon Diploma. Many students experiencing disability should be able to obtain a standard Oregon Diploma with the support of appropriate accommodations and high expectations. To earn a standard Oregon Diploma, students need to successfully:

- Complete the 24 credit requirements
- Demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills (suspended through 2023-24 school year)
- Meet the personalized learning requirements

### ***Modified Oregon Diploma***

The modified Oregon Diploma denotes that the student has taken courses that have been modified. By definition, a “**Modified Course**” means a course that has been systematically changed or altered for a student only after reasonable alternative instruction strategies (e.g., accommodations, remediation) have been tried, and students are unable to meet the full set of academic content standards even with reasonable accommodations. A modified Oregon Diploma also requires 24 credit hours.

Notes:

- The school cannot make a unilateral or one-sided decision about the student working toward a modified rather than standard diploma. Seeking a modified Oregon Diploma requires parental consent and adult consent when the student reaches age 18.
- Even though that consent must be in writing during the year the student is graduating, discussion about diploma options should start much, much earlier. Decisions about classes the student will be taking in middle school and in early high school can affect the diploma trajectory in which a student is placed. A student’s school team must decide that a student should work toward the modified Oregon 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.
- Currently, the modified Oregon Diploma serves as a “regular high school diploma” because it is considered “substantially similar” to the standard Oregon Diploma and enables recipients to pursue federal financial aid.
- Students who are experiencing disability and receive the modified Oregon Diploma continue to be entitled to receive FAPE.

### ***Oregon Extended Diploma***

The Oregon Extended Diploma is given to students who have not been able to meet the full set of standards even with reasonable modifications and accommodations. This decision requires parental consent in writing during the year the student is awarded the diploma. However, it would be wise to discuss diploma decisions much earlier. This should be part of the yearly IEP transition meetings starting much earlier than the year the student will be graduating.

- The Extended Diploma requires 12 credits.
- No more than six of these credits may be earned in a self-contained special education classroom.
- To acquire those 12 credits, schools must provide the appropriate resources in order for students to reach this goal.

### **Alternative Certificates**

A school district or public charter school shall award an alternative certificate to a student who does not satisfy the requirements for a standard Oregon Diploma, a modified Oregon Diploma, or an Oregon Extended Diploma. Each district school board or public charter school governing board with jurisdiction over high school programs shall define criteria for an alternative certificate and shall award an alternative certificate to those students who have met the requirements as described in district school board policies.

A student shall have the opportunity to meet the requirements of 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 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.
- Each school district must annually provide the number of consents obtained to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- The consent may not be used to allow a student to satisfy the requirements for an alternative certificate in less than three years.

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 (i.e., change from modified to standard or extended to modified or standard) if the student meets any criteria associated with the new diploma option. 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. *OAR 581-022-2010(4)(e)*

A student can change from a modified Oregon Diploma to a standard Oregon Diploma, but should be made aware that all courses/credits required for graduation with a standard Oregon Diploma must be taken under standard conditions without modifications. All other courses can be modified if a student has successfully completed the requirements for a standard Oregon Diploma, the school district must award the standard Oregon Diploma to the student. *OAR 581-022-2010(7)*

