

In Texas, there are two ways that students with a disability can graduate with a “regular” diploma under the Foundation High School program like other students.

1. The student demonstrates mastery of the required state standards (district standards if greater) and satisfactorily completed credit requirements for graduation under the Foundation High School Program, and performed satisfactory on required state assessments, unless the ARD committee determines that satisfactory performance on the required state assessments is not necessary for graduation.
2. The student demonstrates mastery of the required state standards (district standards if greater) and satisfactorily completed credit requirements for graduation under the Foundation High School Program, through courses, one or more of which contain modified curriculum and performed satisfactory on required state assessments, unless the ARD committee determines that satisfactory performance on the required state assessments is not necessary for graduation. The student must also successfully complete and meet one of the following conditions:
 - (A) Consistent with the IEP, the student has obtained full-time employment, based on the student's abilities and local employment opportunities, in addition to mastering sufficient self-help skills to enable the student to maintain the employment without direct and ongoing educational support of the local school district.
 - (B) Consistent with the IEP, the student has demonstrated mastery of specific employability skills and self-help skills that do not require direct ongoing educational support of the local school district.
 - (C) The student has access to services that are not within the legal responsibility of public education or employment or educational options for which the student has been prepared by the academic program.
 - (D) The student no longer meets age eligibility requirements.
 - (c) A student receiving special education services may earn an endorsement if the student:
 - (1) satisfactorily completes the requirements for graduation under the Foundation High School Program as well as the additional credit requirements in mathematics, science, and elective courses with or without modified curriculum;
 - (2) satisfactorily completes the courses required for the endorsement without any modified curriculum; and
 - (3) performs satisfactorily as established in the TEC, Chapter 39, on the required state assessments.
 - (d) In order for a student receiving special education services to use a course to satisfy both a requirement under the Foundation High School Program and a requirement for an endorsement, the student must satisfactorily complete the course without any modified curriculum.

Modified curriculum and modified content refer to any reduction of the amount or complexity of the required knowledge and skills in TEKS (TX Essential Knowledge & Skills). Substitutions that are specifically authorized in statute or rule must not be considered modified curriculum or modified content.

Employability and self-help skills referenced above are those skills directly related to the preparation of students for employment, including general skills necessary to obtain or retain employment.

Summary of Performance (SOP) Requirements – Upon graduation, a student must receive a summary of academic achievement and functional performance. This summary must consider, as appropriate, the views of the parent and student and written recommendations from adult service agencies on how to assist the student in

meeting postsecondary goals. Ideally it should provide information describing a student's vocational, employment, academic and personal achievements as well as vocational and employment supports needed by the student. An evaluation must be part of the SOP for students graduating under 2 A, B, and C.

Eligibility to Re-enter the Public School System – For students, who graduate under #2 A, B, or C, the ARD/IEP committee must determine needed educational services upon the request of the student or parent, to resume services. If the ARD committee determines that there is a need for educational services, the student may continue to receive services as long as they meet age eligibility requirements.

Graduation Ceremonies – State law allows students with disabilities currently in special education to participate in a graduation ceremony after four years of high school. The intent is to allow students with disabilities to participate in graduation ceremonies with students they entered high school with four years earlier. It does not matter what grade the student is enrolled in after four years.

The student will receive a certificate of attendance and not a diploma. When an ARD/IEP committee has determined that the student has completed their IEP graduation requirements, they will receive a regular diploma. The student may participate in a second ceremony, if the district's local graduation policy allows a student to participate in two graduation ceremonies.

Students Dismissed from Special Education – A student who is dismissed from special education services prior to graduation must perform satisfactorily on the general assessment instrument or STAAR, as only students receiving special education are eligible to participate in the STAAR-A or STAAR-Alt 2 assessment instruments. ARD/IEP committees should carefully consider whether a student is capable of passing the statewide exit-level assessment before dismissing the student from special education services. An ARD committee should have confidence that a student who is dismissed from special education will be able to successfully complete all of the requirements for high school graduation, including satisfactory performance on the TAKS. This situation can also arise, if parents revoke consent prior to graduation for their child to receive special education services.

Students Enrolling in Secondary Education – Traditionally students with disabilities could enroll in any Texas educational institution (community college, junior college, or four year college/university), trade school or technical institute that would accept them. The Texas legislature in 2007 passed legislation that said students who graduated under the minimum graduation program/plan rather than under the recommended or distinguished programs/plans could not be accepted into Texas public four year colleges/universities. The implementation of this rule was postponed until September, 2008 to give TEA and the universities time to develop regulations. Regulations have not been issued yet and it is not known if there will be any exception for students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities who graduate under the minimum graduation program can attend non-four year public institutions (community college or junior college) and later apply for enrollment at a four year public institution. Parents and students impacted by this rule should monitor the development of the new regulations regarding this law.

More detailed information regarding graduation requirements and procedures can be seen at the TEA special education website at: http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/State_Guidance/Graduation_Guidance



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PATH Project: 1-800-866-4726



PEN Project: 1-877-762-1435



TEAM Project: 1-877-832-8945

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