



Indiana Alternate Diploma Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ serves to provide the most accurate, up-to-date information regarding Indiana's alternate diploma and supersedes all previously issued guidance on this topic. This document also provides clarification surrounding recent legislative changes impacting both the alternate diploma and Indiana's graduation rate calculation.

The alternate diploma is a standards-based diploma available to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (as defined in [511 IAC 7-32-93.5](#)) who participate in the state's alternate assessment and meet the criteria set forth in [511 IAC 6-7.1-10](#). The alternate diploma may not be awarded to any other students aside from those identified as meeting the criteria outlined in [511 IAC 7-32-93.5](#) and for whom a case conference committee has determined the alternate diploma is appropriate.

Please note, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) limits the number of students who may take the alternate assessment to 1% of all tested students in a given subject. **IDOE will be issuing additional guidance in the coming months to support case conference committees (CCCs) in determining whether a student is most appropriately assessed using the state's alternate assessment and eligible for the alternate diploma.**

Alternate Diploma Criteria		
Number	Question	Answer
1	What is a state-defined alternate diploma?	<p>A state-defined alternate diploma is a diploma available to eligible students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) is standards-based and(2) aligned with the state's requirements for the regular high school diploma. <p>Under the federal Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a state has the option to offer a state-defined alternate diploma to an eligible student with the most significant cognitive disability and count the student as a graduate in the state's federal adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) if the student receives the state-defined alternate diploma within the time period for which the state ensures the availability of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under section 612(a)(1) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). (ESEA section 8101(23)(A)(ii)(I)(bb), (25)(A)(ii)(I)(bb); 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(1)(ii),(c)(3),(d)(1)).</p> <p>The State Board of Education (SBOE) has established Indiana's alternate diploma, the requirements for which are set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10.</p>



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

2	What are the state requirements to earn an alternate diploma?	<p>The alternate diploma is available to eligible students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (as defined in 511 IAC 7-32-93.5) for whom a CCC has determined that the alternate diploma is appropriate, as indicated in the student's individualized education program (IEP), and that has taken the alternate assessment.</p> <p>To earn the alternate diploma, a student to whom 511 IAC 6-7.1-10 applies must complete the following in accordance with SBOE rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A minimum of 40 high school credits, applied units, or a combination of high school credits and applied units.• At least one of the following activities aligned with the student's transition goals:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Complete an industry-recognized certification, one year certificate, or state-approved alternative;○ Complete a project-based or work-based learning experience as determined by the CCC;○ Earn a work ethic certificate; or○ Participate in part-time employment or other work-related activities as determined by the CCC.• Beginning with cohort 2023, students develop a transition portfolio that demonstrates the work experience, credentials, or work certificates that the students completed during high school. <p><i>Please see 511 IAC 6-7.1-10 for more detail.</i></p>
3	Who is eligible for the alternate diploma?	<p>Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (as defined in 511 IAC 7-32-93.5) may be awarded an alternate diploma. To be eligible to earn the alternate diploma, a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities must (1) have the alternate diploma identified within their IEP; (2) have participated in the alternate assessment; and (3) have fulfilled all other requirements set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10.</p>
4	What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disability?	<p>The characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disability include the following, as determined by the student's CCC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior;• Requires extensive, repeated, individualized direct instruction and substantial support that is not of a temporary nature; and• Requires substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to achieve measurable gains on the state academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

		<p>Currently, Indiana provides the following guidance to assist CCCs in making determinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation Guidance and Flowchart (English Spanish)
5	Does the alternate diploma provide additional services or opportunities for students?	<p>No additional services are associated with the alternate diploma; however, the alternate diploma does afford students additional opportunities to engage in grade-level, standards-based curriculum while working towards the alternate diploma.</p> <p><i>Pursuing the alternate diploma does not prevent any student with a significant cognitive disability from working towards meeting the requirements for an Indiana diploma.</i></p>

<u>Alternate Assessment</u>		
Number	Question	Answer
6	If a CCC determines a change in assessment is warranted after grade 10, can the student take the alternate assessment in grades 11 or 12 to earn the alternate diploma?	<p>Yes. If this occurs, schools must fill out this request form by March 1, 2024.</p> <p>As a reminder, only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (as defined in 511 IAC 7-32-93.5) who a CCC has determined is most appropriately assessed using the alternate assessment should take the alternate assessment.</p> <p>The characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disability who is most appropriately assessed using the alternate assessment include the following, as determined by the student's CCC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior; The student requires extensive, repeated, individualized direct instruction and substantial support that is not of a temporary nature; and The student requires substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to achieve measurable gains on the state academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled. <p>A school must be able to justify the determination that the student is a student with the most significant cognitive disability who is most appropriately assessed using the alternate assessment.</p>



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

7	If a student was unable to take the alternate assessment in grade 10 (due to being out of school for medical/other reasons related to disability), can the student take the assessment in grades 11 or 12?	<p>Students who are eligible to take the alternate assessment who were absent for medical or disability-related reasons during the testing window in grade 10 may take the alternate assessment in grades 11 or 12. Taking the alternate assessment is a requirement to be awarded an alternate diploma.</p> <p>Schools must fill out this form by March 1, 2024, if they have a student identified with the most significant cognitive disability who is eligible for the alternate diploma, as determined by their CCC, and has not taken the alternate assessment in grade 10.</p>
8	If a student meeting the alternate assessment participation requirements participated in the SAT to support the school's effort in assessing less than 1% of students, is the student eligible to receive the alternate diploma?	<p>Students must participate in the alternate assessment to be eligible for the alternate diploma. Students may participate in the alternate assessment in grade 11 or 12 if not taken in grade 10, but only if the CCC determines the student is most appropriately assessed using the alternate assessment.</p>

Accountability (Grad Rate/Reporting)		
Number	Question	Answer
9	How will schools audit this diploma and what data is required?	<p>The requirements an eligible student must meet to earn an alternate diploma are set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10. IDOE's Office of Special Education and Office of Accountability will audit schools' use of the alternate diploma.</p> <p>IDOE will issue additional guidance in the coming months to support CCCs in determining whether a student is most appropriately assessed using the alternate assessment and eligible for the alternate diploma.</p>
10	If a student has already achieved a Certificate of Completion, are they still eligible to receive an alternate diploma?	<p>A student to whom 511 IAC 6-7.1-10 applies who has previously been awarded a Certificate of Completion and has not completed the school year in which they turn 22 years of age is still eligible to earn an alternate diploma if all requirements set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10 are met.</p>



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

11	Will the alternate diploma count towards the federal graduation rate?	A student awarded an alternate diploma will count as a graduate when calculating federal graduation rates.
12	Will the alternate diploma count towards the state graduation rate?	<p>Schools may issue alternate diplomas to each student with the most significant disability who has satisfied the alternate diploma criteria set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10.</p> <p>Pursuant to the limitation set forth in IC 20-32-4-14(c) (effective July 1, 2023), not more than 1% of a school's or school corporation's graduation cohort who receives an alternate diploma may count towards the school's or school corporation's state graduation rate.</p>
13	How do we report this group of students on the Graduate Report?	<p>Schools should report students awarded an alternate diploma as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diploma Type: Alternate Diploma• Diploma Level: Alternate Diploma• Postsecondary Ready Competency: Alternate Diploma• Employability Skill: Whichever of the three the student earned
14	For the student to count as a graduate, does the alternate diploma need to be earned by the end of a student's assigned cohort year?	No, in order to count as a graduate, the student must earn the alternate diploma by the end of the school year in which the student turns 22 years old.
15	Is there a cap on the percentage of students from a school who may receive the Indiana alternate diploma?	<p>No. There is no cap on the percentage of students in a given graduation cohort who may earn and receive the alternate diploma; however, no more than 1% of a school's or school corporation's graduation cohort who receives an alternate diploma may count towards the school's or school corporation's state graduation rate.</p> <p>Please note, participation in the alternate assessment is required to earn the alternate diploma, and the federal ESSA limits the number of students who may take the alternate assessment to 1% of all students tested in a given subject. IDOE will be issuing additional guidance in the coming months to support CCCs in determining whether a student is most appropriately assessed using the state's alternate assessment and eligible for the alternate diploma.</p>



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

Course of Study/Applied Units		
Number	Question	Answer
16	If students are allowed to return after earning an alternate diploma, what is the expectation for the curriculum?	<p>Schools should continue to provide grade-level standards-based instruction for students in a manner consistent with the student's IEP even if the student has already met the requirements for an alternate diploma.</p> <p><i>Pursuing the alternate diploma does not prevent any student with a significant cognitive disability from working towards meeting the requirements for an Indiana diploma.</i></p>
17	Will the alternate diploma course of study be the same as the certificate of completion course of study?	<p>No. The alternate diploma course of study requirements are set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10 and can also be found here.</p> <p>Further, IDOE no longer provides a course of study related to the certificate of completion as this is a locally-determined offering.</p>

Article 7 (Special Education Rules/Funding)		
Number	Question	Answer
18	Are students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who have earned the alternate diploma allowed to return to school after earning the diploma?	<p>The student would continue to be eligible to receive a free appropriate public education through the school year in which the student becomes 22 years old pursuant to 511 IAC 7-33-2(a).</p> <p><i>Pursuing the alternate diploma does not prevent any student with a significant cognitive disability from working towards meeting the requirements for an Indiana diploma.</i></p>
19	If a student graduates with an alternate diploma, does the student's special education eligibility end?	<p>No. Receipt of an alternate diploma does not end a student's eligibility to continue to receive special education and related services. A student who has earned an alternate diploma continues to be eligible to receive a free appropriate public education through the end of the school year in which the student becomes 22 years old. <i>See</i> 511 IAC 7-33-2(a).</p>



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

Physical Diploma

Number	Question	Answer
20	Are there seals for alternate diplomas?	Yes, seals will be made available to schools to provide to students who earn the alternate diploma.
21	Do schools order an alternate diploma from their regular vendor?	Alternate diplomas may be ordered through Herff Jones.

Certificate of Completion

Number	Question	Answer
22	Can schools still award locally-developed certificates such as a certificate of completion?	<p>Yes. School corporations may award locally-developed certificates, such as a certificate of completion, to students who meet the requirements established by the school corporation. A locally-developed certificate is not considered an Indiana diploma nor an alternate diploma, and a student awarded a locally-developed certificate is not considered a graduate for purposes of determining a school corporation's or school's graduation rate under IC 20-26-13 or 511 IAC 6.2-10 unless that student has met the graduation requirements set forth in IC 20-32-4. <i>See</i> 511 IAC 6-7.1-11.</p> <p>Further, IDOE no longer provides a course of study related to the certificate of completion as this is a locally-determined offering.</p>
23	How should corporations determine the difference between alternate diploma and locally-developed certificate earners?	<p>An alternate diploma is a state-recognized credential for which a student must have met the requirements set forth in 511 IAC 6-7.1-10. A locally-developed certificate, such as a certificate of completion, is not a state-recognized credential, and the requirements are determined by the school corporation awarding the certificate.</p>



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

Other

Number	Question	Answer
24	Will the alternate diploma change eligibility to participate in IHSAA or unified sports?	The IHSAA provides a basic guide for athlete eligibility that, along with their contact information, can be found here .
25	How will schools report the alternate diploma in their local student information system (SIS)?	Schools will report the alternate diploma in the same manner as they report all other diploma types. Schools should work with their IT department to ensure reporting is available.

For alternate diploma information, please contact IDOE's [Office of Special Education](#).

Version: UPDATED 2023.07.11