

Graduation Requirements for Identified Special Education Students

All students receiving special education services will receive a regular high school diploma at the completion of their secondary program if they meet graduation requirements of the state and school district, or as specified on their IEP. A regular high school diploma does not include an alternative diploma that is not fully aligned with the State's academic standards, such as a certificate or GED (34CFR300.102 Federal Register, August 14, 2006, P. 46763). A modified or differentiated diploma or certificate will not be used for students receiving special education services. The term "regular high school diploma" means the same diploma as is awarded to non-exceptional students and shall not include certificates of completion or other certificates, or a general education development credential (GED) K.A.R. 91-40-2(9)(5).

If the student has completed the required courses for graduation, but the IEP team determines the student still needs additional special education and related services, the student may continue to receive the needed special education services on the IEP through the school year in which the student turns 21 (understanding that the school year is defined in Kansas as beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30th). The district's obligation to provide special education services ends a) when the student meets graduation requirements and receives a regular high school diploma, b) at the end of the school year in which the student reaches age 21, or c) an evaluation shows that the student is no longer eligible for special education services (K.A.R. 91-40-10(9)(1) and (2)).

When the student enters high school, progress toward graduation must be monitored annually and recorded on an official transcript of credits K.A.R. 91-40-2(9)(4). In addition, a course of study will be outlined by the student's IEP team beginning in the 9th grade. The course of study will define all of the classes needed in order for the student to potentially meet the state and districts required courses for graduation in 4 years, or whether to elect to consider an alternative graduation plan to be covered over the next 4 years or longer, depending on the decision made by the IEP team members. For students who will continue in special education services beyond the time of their age of appropriate peers, the team may also want to consider whether the student will participate in graduation ceremonies with age appropriate peers or upon completion of their entire program. Students can only participate in the graduation ceremony one time during their high school career. Students electing to graduate with their age appropriate peers will not receive their official diploma until they have met all state and district requirements.

Students with exceptionalities who meet graduation criteria must be afforded the same opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies as students without exceptionalities, even if the IEP team determines that additional special education and related services will continue after the student has met all of the required credits for graduation (in such cases the official diploma will not be awarded at the ceremony). A student may require services until age 21 to meet IEP goals, because he or she has not obtained all of the

required credits for graduation. In either case however, the student may be allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies with his/her classmates.

No re-evaluation is required prior to exiting a student due to graduation (K.S.A. 72-986(1)(2); 34 C.F.R. 300.305(e)(2). However, before the student completes the last semester of high school in which he/she is expected to graduate, the district must provide the student (if over age 18) and the parents with Prior Written Notice of the Proposed Discontinuation of Services at the end of the school year. The Prior Written Notice will clearly state that the student will no longer be entitled to receive special education services from the district after graduation. Parental consent is not required when a student graduates with a regular diploma (K.A.R. 91-40-27(a)(3); 34 C.F.R. 300.102(a)(3)(iii).