



# **Indiana Diploma Decisions**

**Information for Hoosier families and  
their students with disabilities**

**2019**

Compiled by the **Southeast Cadre of Transition Leaders** of Indiana, with the support of the:

**[Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center,](#)**

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***Indiana Diploma Decisions* is a reference and guide for Indiana students and families. Please note, however, that changes to requirements, policies, or processes may occur in future years. We will make every attempt to update *Indiana Diploma Decisions* as needed.**

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## Introduction

This guide, for students with disabilities and their families, provides information about diplomas available in Indiana. Knowing about these options will help students and families decide on an appropriate academic course of study--one that leads to a life after high school that builds on a student's strengths, preferences, and interests.

The path to choosing a diploma actually starts in elementary school. The educational program, curriculum, and services a student with a disability receives during the elementary years may affect his/her high school diploma options. Developing good reading and math skills in elementary and middle school, for instance, is essential for future access to higher-level learning and success in high school.

In Grade 8, parents and students who have an IEP begin planning the course of study for high school. They look at course requirements and the types of diplomas available as well as employment and

career options. They also explore the academic and technical career preparation students need to achieve their goals. Beginning in high school, the IEP will specify the type of diploma and the courses needed to earn the diploma.

In Grade 9 and throughout the remainder of high school, at the Transition IEP meeting, the teacher of record (TOR) will review and report about the progress the student is making toward the diploma.

Choosing a diploma is not a decision parents and students will have to make alone. The school and district staff as well as the school counselor will help throughout this diploma decision-making process and through the development of the Transition Individualized Education Program (IEP). Parents and students will review the diploma choice each year at the Transition IEP meeting. Depending upon the circumstances, it is possible to change to a different type of diploma if the case conference committee feels it's the right thing to do.



**Parents:** *Indiana Diploma Decisions* is based on guidelines and policies from the Indiana Department of Education that were established in 2018-2019. Note, the specifics of how some of the new rules and options described in the following pages will affect your student will depend on graduation year. Some testing, graduation pathways, or waiver policies, for instance, will begin with the class entering high school as freshmen in the fall of 2019. Also, some Indiana schools ("early adopters") are choosing to implement new rules earlier than others. Work closely with your case conference team and teacher of record to determine what is available at your school based on your young adult's expected graduation year.



### **Elementary School**

Focus on academic curriculum as well as good reading and math skills. Participate in college/career classroom lessons, complete a career interest inventory.

#### **Grade 8**

Begin planning for high school and review diploma types and requirements. In the IEP, specify which diploma you will pursue (if possible, begin with Core 40 Diploma), and discuss accommodations. Complete graduation plan and four-year course plan.

#### **Grade 9**

Talk with teacher of record every grading period about progress toward diploma. Discuss transition plan and goals with case conference committee. Update graduation plan. Plan to meet Graduation Pathways (for students graduating in 2023 and beyond), including Employability Skills and Postsecondary-Ready Competencies.

#### **Grade 10**

Continue to monitor progress. Discuss transition plan and goals with case conference committee. Review transition plan and goals. Explore career goals with interviews, research, and job shadowing experiences. Take PSAT, check progress toward graduation pathways completion.

#### **Grade 11**

Continue diploma track or, if necessary, select new course of study ("opt out" of Core 40). Review transition plan and goals. Take college entrance exam and/or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).

#### **Grade 12**

Continue to monitor progress. Review transition plan and goals. Submit at least two college and/or job applications. Complete Graduation Pathways.

#### **Graduate with diploma or finish school with Certificate of Completion.**

Students who leave school with a Certificate of Completion can continue to receive special education services in school and work on their Transition IEP goals until the age of 22.

## Glossary of Terms

**Applied Units:** an alternative to credits. Applied units are earned in course(s) when a special education student is accessing course material in an approved, but modified way, and he/she is then assessed by alternate standards.

**ASVAB:** Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, the military's test of mathematics, literacy, and other skills. The ASVAB determines eligibility for enrollment in the military as well as specialty military careers and sign-on bonuses.

**Case Conference:** a meeting of a committee consisting of the student, his/her parent, the teacher of record, a school administrator, and other individuals as needed who can help the student select his/her course of study and diploma.

**Certificate of Completion:** a course of study that aligns curriculum to grade-level standards while meeting the student's goals and transition needs stated in the Transition IEP. A Certificate of Completion is not a diploma.

**Core 40 Diploma:** Indiana's Core 40 is the academic foundation all students need to succeed in college, apprenticeship programs, military training, and the workforce. Graduating with a Core 40 Diploma is a requirement for students attending a 4-year Indiana public college or university.

**Course of Study:** the classes and experiences a student follows in high school. The course of study is based on the type of diploma a student pursues.

**Early Adopters:** Indiana high schools choosing to adopt the Graduation Pathways for classes graduating prior to 2023.

**Employability Skills:** student experiences in Project-Based Learning, Service-Based Learning, or Work-Based Learning. Participating in and completing at least one of these experiences fulfills one of the three Graduation Pathways requirements.

**Evidenced-Based Waiver:** a waiver, with specific requirements, for some students that allows them to graduate with a diploma without passing the graduation exam.

**General Diploma:** a diploma with fewer academic requirements than a Core 40 Diploma. A General Diploma may limit options for students wanting to attend Indiana 4-year public colleges; however, they may be able to take classes at Ivy Tech Community College or other 2-year state colleges.

**Graduation Exam Requirement:** a test, usually taken in Grade 10, for students in the graduation classes of 2019-2022. Beginning with the class of 2023, students will meet Graduation Pathways requirements rather than take the graduation exam. (Note: Some Indiana

## Glossary of Terms, *continued*

schools are beginning to use the Graduation Pathways for earlier graduation classes as well.) See also, “Evidence-Based Waiver.”

**Graduation Pathways:** learning and graduation requirement options that students can individualize to align with their post-high-school goals. Successful completion of the three primary graduation pathway requirements enables a student to graduate with either a Core 40 or a General Diploma. Pathways include the study of career interests, academic and technical skills, and employability skills that lead directly to postsecondary education, training, and employment.

**Graduation Pathway Requirements:** a series of requirements students need to complete in order to graduate.

**Portfolio:** a collection of information and materials related to a student’s academic and work-related activities. The transition portfolio includes student information and illustrates learning characteristics, academic skills, and employability skills.

**Postsecondary-Ready Competencies:** requirements students must complete in order to graduate. Postsecondary-Ready Competencies are one of the three Graduation Pathway requirements that a student must complete in order to earn a diploma.

**Postsecondary-Ready Competencies Waiver:** a waiver, with specific requirements, for some students who are not able to complete Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirements.

**Teacher of Record (TOR):** a high school teacher responsible for maintaining documentation, scheduling case conference meetings, and monitoring progress for a student who has a Transition IEP.

**Transition IEP:** an Individualized Education Program that helps students identify and work toward employment, education, and independent living goals for life after high school. The Transition IEP process in Indiana begins at age 14 and takes into account a student’s interests, preferences, strengths, and needs. The case conference committee is responsible for establishing the Transition IEP each year.

## High School Preparation

When students enters high school, they choose a course of study. At that point, students need to be aware of the differences between middle school and high school. These differences can create additional challenges students and their families may not have anticipated. See the chart below for specific issues that may impact a student’s diploma decision.

If a student is concerned about these differences, the student and family should discuss them during the Grade 8 conference. Parents and students can also set up a meeting in high school with the student’s teacher of record, special education department chair, or school counselor.

Issues to Discuss	Middle vs. High School
<b>Passing vs. Earning Credits/Applied Units</b>	Middle school students are “passing” to a next grade. High school students are earning credits or applied units for graduation.
<b>Attendance Requirements for Waiver (if it is needed)</b>	High school students must have 95% or better attendance to qualify for a Postsecondary-Ready Competency Waiver.
<b>Modifications vs. Accommodations</b>	<p><b>Modifications</b> are changes in the content, delivery, or instructional level of curriculum or assessments (IDEA, 2004). Modifications are available to high school students receiving applied units (Certificate of Completion), but are not available to students earning a Core 40 Diploma.</p> <p><b>Accommodations</b> are supports or services that students can use to help them access the general education curriculum. The content the student is expected to learn does not change (Elliott &amp; Thurlow, 2006).</p>
<b>Higher expectations</b>	Many high school courses require more homework and expect students to study for exams without as much guidance or “hand-holding.” Students also have more choices, e.g., optional classes, extra-curricular activities.
<b>Reading</b>	Reading is offered as a class through the middle school years. Typically, reading is not a subject offered in high school, although course-related reading demands increase.



## Course of Study

The course of study students follow in high school is based on the type of diploma (or Certificate of Completion) they pursue. In Indiana, the course of study options are:

- **Core 40 Diploma with Academic Honors,**
- **Core 40 Diploma with Technical Honors,**
- **Core 40 Diploma,**
- **General Diploma, or**
- **Certificate of Completion.**

As previously mentioned, students should begin the discussion about a diploma in elementary school. At the age of 14 or when a student enters Grade 9 (whichever comes first), the IEP will become a Transition IEP, and students begin focusing their goals for adulthood. The Transition IEP identifies ways in which the school and family will work together to support students to achieve these goals.

Students must be invited to participate in each Transition IEP conference. The Transition IEP requires that a student's

goals for employment, education/training, and (if needed) independent living skills be assessed and updated at each annual conference.

The members of the case conference committee (which includes students and their families) work together to decide which diploma option is right for a student. The case conference committee also plans the appropriate course of study that will lead to the selected diploma. The course of study may include:

- general education classes,
- career education classes,
- elective classes, or
- a combination of the above.

The teacher of record is responsible for entering the diploma decision into the Transition IEP, and the teacher will also document any accommodation or modification a student may need to participate fully in their education. This information guides the student's educational program as they enter high school.



**Students:** When you make a diploma decision for the first time, it is important to aim high. In most cases, students should start out on a Core 40 track when they enter Grade 9. Give yourself every opportunity to achieve your best. (See page 18 for more information on why this is so important.)



**Students:** Talk with your counselor and teacher of record to explain how the various diploma requirements match your strengths, interests, preferences, support needs, and goals.

## Core 40 Diploma Options


The Indiana State Board of Education sets the minimum requirements for each diploma type offered in Indiana.

On the graphic below, you will see the requirements for the three types of Core 40 diplomas: Core 40, Core 40 with

Academic Honors, and Core 40 with Technical Honors.

A student's high school counselor and teacher of record can explain how these requirements match the student's strengths, interests, preferences, and support needs.

### Core 40 Diploma Course of Study & Credit Requirements



**INDIANA CORE40**

Effective beginning with students who enter high school in 2012-13 school year (class of 2016).

**CORE40 with Academic Honors** (minimum 47 credits)

Course and Credit Requirements	
<b>English/ Language Arts</b>	<b>8 credits</b> Including a balance of literature, composition and speech.
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>6 credits (in grades 9-12)</b> 2 credits: Algebra I 2 credits: Geometry 2 credits: Algebra II <small>Or complete Integrated Math I, II, and III for 6 credits. Students must take a math course or quantitative reasoning course each year in high school!</small>
<b>Science</b>	<b>6 credits</b> 2 credits: Biology I 2 credits: Chemistry I or Physics I or Integrated Chemistry-Physics 2 credits: any Core 40 science course
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>6 credits</b> 2 credits: U.S. History 1 credit: U.S. Government 1 credit: Economics 2 credits: World History/Civilization or Geography/History of the World
<b>Directed Electives</b>	<b>5 credits</b> World Languages Fine Arts Career and Technical Education
<b>Physical Education</b>	<b>2 credits</b>
<b>Health and Wellness</b>	<b>1 credit</b>
<b>Electives*</b>	<b>6 credits</b> <small>(College and Career Pathway courses recommended)</small>
<b>40 Total State Credits Required</b>	

Schools may have additional local graduation requirements that apply to all students (not required for students with an IEP).

\* Specifies the number of electives required by the state. High school schedules provide time for many more electives during the high school years. All students are strongly encouraged to complete a College and Career Pathway (selecting electives in a deliberate manner) to take full advantage of career and college exploration and preparation opportunities.

\*\*SAT scores updated September, 2017

\*\*\*WorkKeys assessment titles updated, 2018

For the **Core 40 with Academic Honors** designation, students must:

- Complete all requirements for Core 40.
- Earn 2 additional Core 40 math credits.
- Earn 6-8 Core 40 world language credits (6 credits in one language or 4 credits each in two languages).
- Earn 2 Core 40 fine arts credits.
- Earn a grade of a "C" or better in courses that will count toward the diploma.
- Have a grade point average of a "B" or better.
- Complete one of the following:
  - A. Earn 4 credits in 2 or more AP courses and take corresponding AP exams
  - B. Earn 6 verifiable transcribed college credits in dual credit courses from the approved dual credit list.
  - C. Earn two of the following:
    1. A minimum of 3 verifiable transcribed college credits from the approved dual credit list,
    2. 2 credits in AP courses and corresponding AP exams,
    3. 2 credits in IB standard level courses and corresponding IB exams.
  - D. Earn a composite score of 1250 or higher on the SAT and a minimum of 560 on math and 590 on the evidence based reading and writing section.\*\*
  - E. Earn an ACT composite score of 26 or higher and complete written section
  - F. Earn 4 credits in IB courses and take corresponding IB exams.

**CORE40 with Technical Honors** (minimum 47 credits)

For the **Core 40 with Technical Honors** designation, students must:

- Complete all requirements for Core 40.
- Earn 6 credits in the college and career preparation courses in a state-approved College & Career Pathway and one of the following:
  1. Pathway designated industry-based certification or credential, or
  2. Pathway dual credits from the approved dual credit list resulting in 6 transcribed college credits
- Earn a grade of "C" or better in courses that will count toward the diploma.
- Have a grade point average of a "B" or better.
- Complete one of the following,
  - A. Any one of the options (A - F) of the Core 40 with Academic Honors
  - B. Earn the following minimum scores on WorkKeys: Workplace Documents, Level 6; Applied Math, Level 6; and Graphic Literacy, Level 5.\*\*\*
  - C. Earn the following minimum score(s) on Accuplacer: Writing 80, Reading 90, Math 75.
  - D. Earn the following minimum score(s) on Compass: Algebra 66, Writing 70, Reading 80.

Retrieved from <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/core-40-and-honors-diploma-summary-class-2016-updated-june-2018.pdf>

## General Diploma

Indiana requires high school students to obtain a Core 40 Diploma, because a Core 40 Diploma ensures students are prepared for college-level courses. Core 40 also gives students the opportunity to apply to colleges.

There is, however, another diploma option. Students pursuing a General Diploma still need to meet specific academic requirements, but the complete course of study is not as rigorous.

With a General Diploma, students may be able to attend Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College or technical/trade schools, or may be accepted at some private schools, but they will not be eligible to attend any of Indiana's 4-year state schools.

To graduate with less than Core 40, students must complete of the steps in the following formal opt-out process:

1. The student, the student's parent/guardian, and the student's counselor (or another staff member who assists students in course selection) meet to discuss the student's progress.
2. The student, the student's parent/guardian, and the student's counselor (or another staff member who assists students in course selection) review the student's course plan.
3. The student's parent/guardian determines whether the student will have greater educational success by completing the general curriculum or the Core 40 curriculum.

If the student and the team decide to opt-out of Core 40, the student is then required to complete the course and credit requirements for a General Diploma. At that point the team then determines the career/academic sequence the student will pursue.

See the **General Diploma Course of Study & Credit Requirements** graphic, page 12.

## General Diploma Course of Study & Credit Requirements

<b>Course and Credit Requirements (Class of 2016 &amp; Beyond)</b>	
<b>English/Language Arts</b>	<b>8 credits</b> Credits must include literature, composition and speech
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>4 credits</b> 2 credits: Algebra I or Integrated Mathematics I 2 credits: Any math course <i>General diploma students are required to earn 2 credits in a Math or a Quantitative Reasoning (QR) course during their junior or senior year. QR courses do not count as math credits.</i>
<b>Science</b>	<b>4 credits</b> 2 credits: Biology I 2 credits: Any science course <i>At least one credit must be from a Physical Science or Earth and Space Science course</i>
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>4 credits</b> 2 credits: U.S. History 1 credit: U.S. Government 1 credit: Any social studies course
<b>Physical Education</b>	<b>2 credits</b>
<b>Health and Wellness</b>	<b>1 credit</b>
<b>College and Career Pathway Courses</b> Selecting electives in a deliberate manner to take full advantage of college and career exploration and preparation opportunities	<b>6 credits</b>
<b>Flex Credit</b>	<b>5 credits</b> Flex Credits must come from one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional elective courses in a College and Career Pathway</li> <li>• Courses involving workplace learning such as Cooperative Education or Internship courses</li> <li>• High school/college dual credit courses</li> <li>• Additional courses in Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, World Languages or Fine Arts</li> </ul>
<b>Electives</b>	<b>6 credits</b> Specifies the minimum number of electives required by the state. High school schedules provide time for many more elective credits during the high school years.
<b>40 Total Credits Required</b>	
Schools may have additional local graduation requirements that apply to all students	

(Updated Dec., 2011)

Retrieved from <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/general-diploma-requirements-class-2016-final.pdf>, March 2021.

## Certificate of Completion

The Transition IEP case conference committee (which includes the student and the student’s parent or guardian) should select a Core 40 or General Diploma if the student is functioning at grade level with instructional accommodations. The case conference committee should monitor the student’s academic and functional performance and progress.

Students struggling to earn the needed credits required for graduation should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Am I attending school regularly and trying my best to be successful?
2. Am I receiving appropriate accommodations and assistance in school?
3. Am I having social problems that result in disrupted learning?
4. Do I have academic problems and am I struggling to earn course credits?
5. Do I need extensive modifications to learn the curriculum?

If a student answers “yes” to most of these questions, the case conference committee may need to consider a Certificate of Completion rather than a diploma course of study.

The Certificate of Completion can give students educational opportunities in academic areas including career and technical education training, career

exploration, work experiences, independent living skills, and community living skills. Students working toward a Certificate of Completion continue to receive special education services. A certificate offers additional opportunities for students to learn and practice real-world employment and community participation skills.

There are trade-offs with any diploma decision. Students and parents or guardians should keep in mind that while a Certificate of Completion could allow more time for participation in work experiences or career and technical educational training, opportunities for postsecondary education could be very limited.

If a student is not attending school regularly or is not receiving appropriate accommodations and assistance in school (*see questions 1 and 2 in the column at left*), the case conference committee should talk to the student’s teachers or school counselor to find out what supports might be helpful to ensure the student can continue on a diploma track.

Contact Indiana parent training and parent-to-parent information groups such as **IN\*SOURCE** (<http://insource.org>) or **About Special Kids** (<http://www.aboutspecialkids.org>) for additional information on high school accommodations and supports.

*See the **Certificate of Completion Course of Study & Credit Requirements** graphic, page 14.*

## Certificate of Completion Course of Study & Credit Requirements

**Indiana Certificate of Completion  
Course of Study**

Effective with the students who enter high school in 2018-19 school year (Class of 2022)

The Course of Study for the Certificate of Completion is a framework for aligning curriculum to grade level standards while meeting the individual goals and transition needs stated in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

**Minimum total 40 credits/applied units:** It is expected that these requirements are met through enrollment in a combination of general education courses for credit, modified general education courses in which non-credit applied units are earned and special education courses in which non-credit applied units are earned.

<b>English/Language Arts</b>	<b>8 credits/applied units</b> Including a balance of literature, composition, vocabulary, speech/communication
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>4 credits/applied units</b> Including a balance of number sense, expressions, computation, data analysis, statistics, probability, equations and inequalities and personal finance. Student must take a math or applied math course each year in high school.
<b>Science</b>	<b>4 credits/applied units</b> Including a balance of physical, earth/nature, life, engineering and technology
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>4 credits/applied units</b> Including a balance of history, civics and government, geography, economics
<b>Physical Education</b>	<b>2 credits/applied units</b>
<b>Health &amp; Wellness</b>	<b>1 credit/applied unit</b>
<b>Employability</b>	<b>10 credits/applied units</b> Job exploration, work- or project-based learning experiences, employability skills (mindsets, self-management, learning strategies, social, workplace), portfolio creation, introduction to post-secondary options Investigation into opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary programs, work place readiness training to develop employability and independent living skills and instruction in self-advocacy
<b>Electives</b>	<b>7 credits/applied units</b>

**Certificate of Completion Transition Portfolio**

**Students earning a certificate of completion fulfill at least one of the following (aligned with transition goals):**

- 1. Career Credential:** Complete an industry-recognized certification, one-year certificate or state-approved alternative
- 2. Career Experience:** Complete project- or work-based learning experience or part time employment
- 3. Work Ethic Certificate:** Earn a Work Ethic Certificate (criteria to be locally determined)
- 4. Other Work Related Activities:** As determined by the case conference committee

**Assumptions:**

- 1) High Expectations for all students is a shared responsibility.
- 2) General Education courses are accessed whenever appropriate to fulfill the Certificate of Completion course of study.
- 3) Students' IEP goals are aligned with grade level standards/content connectors that drive curriculum and instruction.
- 4) Communication skills, reading skills, and problem solving skills are integrated into all courses.
- 5) Courses can be repeated with new goals if appropriate; more than four years may be needed for completion.
- 6) All courses are driven by the Transition IEP and individual goals of each student.

Draft created on 4.27.16; revised 5.18.16;5.23.16; 5.25.16; 3.31.17,4.19.17, 4.26.17, 5.16.17; 7.28.17

Retrieved from <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/specialed/2017-9-7-final-certificate-completion-course-study.pdf> , March 1, 2021.

## Certificate of Completion, *continued*

### Student Transition Portfolios

Students working toward a Certificate of Completion will now have the opportunity to create a transition portfolio, which can help them capture academic achievements as well as employability skills and experiences. They can then share their portfolio information with postsecondary training programs or potential employers. The portfolio will be an online collection of a student's demographic information, learning characteristics, and academic achievements. It will also feature information and materials related to student participation in employment and work-readiness experiences and activities, including:

- Career interest inventories
- Job shadowing
- Volunteer opportunities
- Job fairs
- Transition fairs
- Vocational or career counseling
- Service learning opportunities

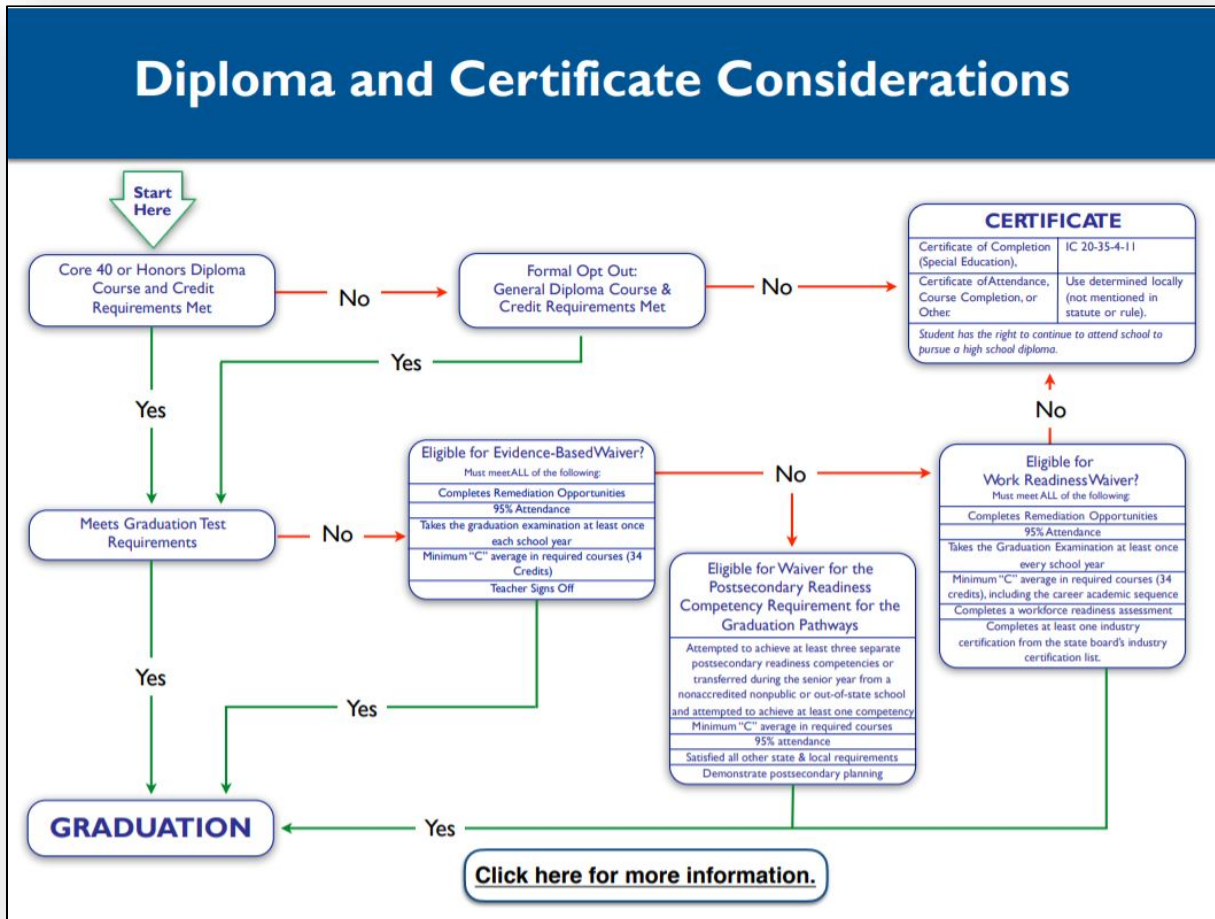


**Teachers:** The Indiana Department of Education has created support materials for developing **transition portfolios for all secondary students** receiving special education. Find “Transition Portfolio Guidance 2019-2020,” from the Office of Special Education, at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eqpW\\_aOQzgl1iy4R957WpPGPyn7oWpbBDaxZc7syFXQ/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eqpW_aOQzgl1iy4R957WpPGPyn7oWpbBDaxZc7syFXQ/edit).

You will be able to use the portfolio as a summary of performance, since it will be a repository of academic and employability achievements and skills as well as a compilation of information about a student's support needs. Options for maintaining and storing portfolio information include Indiana Career Explorer, a Google Sites template, Naviance, and the Indiana Career Information System. More information and training on the opportunities and uses for portfolios will be available during the 2019-2020 school year.

## Diploma Decisions

The Indiana Department of Education provides a decision tree for students, families, teachers, and guidance counselors to help them as they work together to make diploma decisions.



Retrieved from <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/diploma-and-certificate-considerationskey.pdf>, January 31, 2019. For more information, see the [Academic Guidance page on the Indiana Department of Education website](#).



## Graduation Requirements

### Graduation Exam Requirement

Students graduating in the years 2019-2022 must take and pass an exam that tests their abilities and knowledge in English/language arts and mathematics. This exam, often referred to as the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) is the ISTEP+10 assessment. Students usually take this test in their sophomore year of high school. Passing the test is required for the Core 40 and General Diploma. (See page 18 for information about the Evidence-Based Requirement and

*Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirement waivers.*)

Beginning with the class of 2023, individualized Graduation Pathways and requirements will take the place of the graduation exam. Some schools are implementing Graduation Pathways for classes scheduled to graduate before 2023. Check with your school to see if they are an early adopter.

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### Graduation Pathways

All students in the class of 2023 (those who will be freshmen in the fall of 2019) will have the opportunity to individualize their learning and graduation requirements. This allows students to choose a course of study and graduation requirements that fit with their postsecondary goals, which might include work, college, and/or training. There are three Graduation Pathway requirements:

- **A high school diploma**
- **Employability Skills, when students experience** one or more of the following:
  - Project-based learning
  - Service-based learning
  - Work-based learning
- **Postsecondary-Ready Competencies**, which include at least one of:
  - Honors diploma

- ACT or SAT
- ASVAB
- State- and industry-recognized credential or certification
- Federally-recognized apprenticeship
- Career-technical education concentrator
- AP/IB/Dual Credit/Cambridge International courses or CLEP exams
- Locally created pathway

For more information on Graduation Pathways, see the Indiana Department of Education web page <https://www.doe.in.gov/graduation-pathways>. Some schools are implementing Graduation Pathways for classes scheduled to graduate before 2023. Check with your school to see if they are an early adopter.

## Requirement Waivers

A waiver allows a student to bypass some graduation requirements if the student has met certain conditions. There are two types of waivers for students who are eligible and who complete the specified requirements.

### Evidence-Based Requirement Waiver

In certain circumstances, students graduating between 2019-2022 may be eligible for a waiver if they cannot pass the graduation exam (ISTEP+10). A waiver can only be granted if a student does **all** of the following:

1. retakes the graduation exam in grades 11 **and** 12. A student who does not take the exam all three years will not be eligible for the waiver.
2. maintains a “C” or better grade point average in courses required for graduation.
3. maintains a school attendance rate of 95% or better during the student’s time in high school. (Excused absences are not counted against a student’s attendance rate.)
4. obtains a written recommendation from her/his teacher in the subject area not passed.

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### Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirements Waiver

A student graduating in 2023 or later (or those from early adopter schools—see *page 17*) may receive a waiver from the Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirements if:

1. the student was unsuccessful in completing a Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirement by the conclusion of the student’s senior year. This includes a student who was in the process of completing a competency at one school that was not offered by the school to which the student transferred; **and**
  2. the student attempted to achieve at least three separate Postsecondary-Ready Competencies; **or**
  3. if a student transfers to a school during the senior year from a non-accredited, non-public school, or an out-of-state school, and the student:
    - a. attempted to achieve at least one Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirement; and
    - b. was unsuccessful in completing the attempted Postsecondary-Ready Competency.
- To receive a waiver, the student must:
1. maintain at least a “C” average, or its equivalent, throughout the student’s high school career in courses comprising credits required for graduation;

## Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirements Waiver, *continued*

2. maintain a school attendance rate of at least 95%. (Excused absences are not counted against the student’s attendance rate.);
3. satisfy all other state and local graduation requirements beyond the Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirements; **and**
4. demonstrate postsecondary planning, including:
  - a. college acceptance;
  - b. acceptance in an occupational training program;

- c. workforce entry; **or**
- d. military enlistment;

This postsecondary planning must be approved by the principal of the student’s school.

Find the latest information on the Postsecondary-Ready Competency Requirements Waiver at:  
<https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/ways-meet-gqe-or-grad-pathways-req-2018-19-final.pdf>.

## The Importance of Aiming High

**It is important for students to begin Grade 9 on a Core 40 track.** Freshmen who try for a Core 40 Diploma can always switch to another course of study later if necessary. It’s more difficult, however, for a sophomore or junior student who has been pursuing a Certificate of Completion or General Diploma to then decide he/she wants to earn a higher level diploma. There is often not enough time to earn the necessary credits.

If a student is struggling, though, he/she can “opt out” of Core 40 and choose to pursue a General Diploma or Certificate of Completion. Most students should wait until their junior year of high school before they make the decision to opt out. Students and their families can make the decision sooner, however, if necessary and if the case conference committee agrees with the decision.

## Career Planning

An important reason for carefully making a diploma decision is the impact it can have on a young adult's future career options. Students will learn about different careers and job choices during middle and high school. Schools typically offer career and technical education, work-study, and employment experiences that enable students to learn about various types of jobs and develop skills necessary to be an effective employee.

The additional activities listed below may help students learn more about careers and their educational requirements:

- Career interest inventories
- Job shadowing
- Volunteer opportunities
- Job fairs
- Transition fairs
- Vocational or career counseling
- Service learning opportunities

Different jobs are suited for different people. Young adults should think about the training and essential skills a job requires to help determine if it is going to be a good match. Understanding their abilities, strengths, preferences, interests, and needs will help determine which diploma is required for the career a student wants.

### Career Planning Resources

- ◆ **Indiana Career Explorer** <https://indiana.kuder.com/landing-page>  
Indiana Career Explorer is a free website available to Indiana students, parents, and teachers for planning, exploration, and skills assessment.
- ◆ **Naviance** <https://www.naviance.com/>  
Some school districts may choose to pay for the use of this online college and career readiness resource. Although access to Naviance is only available to school personnel, schools can share information from the site with students and their families.

## Strategies for Deciding on a Diploma

The key to making the best diploma choice is to match a student's strengths and long-term goals with the diploma option. The diploma is useful when it meets the needs of the student.

Use the following strategies to help ensure a good match between a student and the diploma option. Review all available information regarding progress, including:

- School records (for example: classroom tests, standardized tests, teacher observations, progress monitoring, and work samples)

- Current and prior Transition IEPs
- Formal assessment data
- Teacher and/or related staff reports
- Input from the student and their parent or guardian about the student's goals for further education, employment, and adult living

Create a realistic picture of the student's abilities, interests, and likely postsecondary goals for employment and education/training.



**Parents:** Ask questions to understand how your student is performing at school, both academically and socially.

- How has your student performed in general education classes?
- What do your student's recent test scores indicate?
- What does your student want to do after high school for employment and education/training?
- Which diploma will help your student reach his/her desired goals?

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### Using Post-High-School Goals to Compare Diploma Options

Students who want to attend college or who have a particular career goal can explore the diploma options in light of those postsecondary opportunities. Students should ask themselves: "Will this diploma or certificate help me get to my goal?"

Using the table on the next page, students can determine which

postsecondary goal, from the left-hand column, fits with their goals. In each row, a check marked box means earning a diploma or Certificate of Completion could help a student attain the postsecondary goal listed in the left-hand column. Note that the goals listed are for the State of Indiana. Requirements will vary at community colleges and four-year universities in other states.

**“Will This Diploma Help Me Reach My Goal?”**

Postsecondary Goal	Description	Core 40 Diploma	General Diploma	Certificate of Completion
<b>Training for a Career</b>	Special career training or apprenticeship	✓	✓	
<b>Training for a Technical Career</b>	Career-specific vocational training leading to accreditation or certification	✓	✓	
<b>2 year College Degree</b> (e.g., associate’s degree from Ivy Tech Community College)	College offering associate degrees and certificates	✓	✓ (College may require placement testing and remedial courses prior to enrollment in for-credit courses.)	
<b>4 year College Degree</b> (e.g., bachelor’s degree or higher)	College or university that offers bachelor’s degrees and beyond.	✓		
<b>Military</b>	Possible for young adult with acceptable ASVAB scores; must meet all other military requirements.	✓	✓ (Options may be limited depending on ASVAB scores.)	
<b>Non degree Experience on a College Campus</b>	Short-term experience on a college campus to gain employment, independent living, and self-advocacy skills; available only on some Indiana campuses.			✓

## Before, During, & After the Case Conference

Students and their parents or guardians should actively participate in the diploma decision. Being prepared for a Transition IEP case conference meeting will allow students and parents to provide critical information educators may not know.

**Before the conference**, parents and students should discuss the student's interests and likes. Identify what activities the student prefers outside of school. Talk about strengths in school. Pinpoint school struggles and challenges.

**During the conference**, students and parents or guardians should feel comfortable asking questions and sharing information. Students should share their views regarding their future goals. Be prepared to discuss:

- type of career the student wants.
- advanced education or training the student will need for a chosen career.
- leisure time and social relationships after high school.
- type of support the student will need to be successful.

This information will help the case conference committee think about which diploma the student needs to achieve their postsecondary goals.

**After the conference**, students and parents or guardians should talk about the conference. Discuss any questions or concerns with the teacher. Be prepared to follow-up with any referrals to adult agencies, such as the Indiana Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, (BRS) which may be able to support students in attaining their desired postsecondary goals. Always ask questions to clarify information you do not understand (Conference Conversation Cues, 2012).

If you are not completely sure which diploma is the right choice, review data such as student performance, progression on goals, and present levels of academic and functioning skills.

Sometimes the diploma choice is obvious to the members of the Transition IEP case conference committee. In other situations, the decision may not be so clear. In those cases, a student may need further formal assessments, which may include rating scales, questionnaires, and additional instruments. These tools may not provide the final answer, but they often help guide the student toward an appropriate diploma. The student and her/his parents or guardians should review this information each year with the case conference committee.

## More Indiana Transition & Diploma Resources

You'll find additional resources and fact sheets regarding transition and the types of diplomas offered in Indiana on the websites of the Indiana Department of Education and its partners.

- ◆ **21st Century Scholars** <https://scholars.in.gov/>
- ◆ **Article 7 Module: Transition:** <https://www.aboutspecialkids.org/training/online-training-article-7/>
- ◆ **Indiana Career Explorer** <https://indiana.kuder.com/landing-page>
- ◆ **Indiana Certificate of Completion** <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/coc>
- ◆ **Indiana's Graduation Requirements** <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/indiana-graduation-requirements>
- ◆ **Indiana's Opt-Out Process for Indiana's New Graduation Requirements** <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/opt-out-process-07-11-2017.pdf>
- ◆ **Indiana's Roadmap for Student Success** <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/indianas-roadmap-student-success-updated-2018.pdf>
- ◆ **Navigating the Course: Finding Your Way Through Indiana's Special Education Rules** <http://www.m-gsd.org/document-library/monroe-gregg-school-district-documents/special-education/464-navigating-the-course/file>
- ◆ **Transition to Adult Life** <http://insource.org/resources/transition-to-adult-life/>



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: What is a diploma?**

**A:** A diploma signifies that a student has completed their high school career by taking courses, earning the required credits, meeting the required academic standards, and meeting graduation requirements. Please visit <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/indiana-graduation-requirements> for more information.

### **Q: What is a Certificate of Completion?**

**A:** A Certificate of Completion is a document awarded to a special education student who has opted out of the diploma path but completes the public school educational program prescribed in their Transition IEP. Please visit <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/coc> for more information.

### **Q: Can a student who has graduated with a General Diploma or Certificate of Completion attend college in Indiana?**

**A:** Indiana's public 4-year colleges and universities require that students have at least a Core 40 Diploma. Ivy Tech Community College and some private colleges in the state accept applicants who have graduated with a General Diploma. These community colleges may have additional requirements, such as remedial coursework or additional placement exams. Contact the college admissions office and talk to them about their requirements and entrance criteria. You may also want to talk with the college's office of disability services.

### **Q: Are there college or university opportunities for students who have received a Certificate of Completion?**

**A:** There are some non-degree programs at several Indiana college and university campuses for students who will be receiving a Certificate of Completion in Indiana.

Please visit <http://www.thinkcollegeindiana.org/pse-program-listings.php> for more information.

### **Q: If a student receives a Certificate of Completion, can he/she return to high school and earn a diploma?**

**A:** Students with IEPs can receive special education services until they turn 22 years of age. Students who receive a Certificate of Completion may later decide to return to high school and earn a diploma, but, depending upon their age, they may not be eligible to participate in special education. Case conference teams would need to consider the number of credits previously earned toward a diploma. For instance, if a 21-year-old student only has 10 credits toward a diploma, it would be extremely difficult for them to complete the remaining, required 30 credits in time to earn a General Diploma.

## References

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Portions of this guide were adapted from “Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities,” with permission from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, ©2005, State of Florida.





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