



Fact Sheet

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OPTIONS OFFERED IN OTHER STATES

PREPARED BY THE RESEARCH DIVISION
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU

JUNE 2012

Background

In 2011, the Nevada Legislature considered Senate Bill 116, which would have required the State Board of Education to adopt regulations for an adjusted adult diploma for those who do not earn a diploma via their Individualized Education Program (IEP). As a result of that discussion, the Senate Committee on Education requested the Legislative Committee on Education review the types of high school diplomas offered in other states.

Summary of Findings

National surveys reveal that states offer a variety of diploma options for students with and without disabilities. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) reports that standard diplomas are offered in all 50 states, with 37 of them allowing students to meet course work requirements with proficiency credit.

In addition to the standard diploma, the most common types of diplomas include:

- Honors/College Prep Diploma: Awarded in 19 states (including Nevada) to those who complete additional course work, take certain tests, achieve high test scores, and/or graduate with a minimum grade point average (GPA).
- Technical Diploma: Awarded in 11 states (including Nevada) to those who complete greater numbers of units in certain subject areas, complete a series of courses in a technical field, attain certain scores on technical assessments, or obtain technical certification before completing high school.
- IEP/Special Education Diploma: Awarded in 10 states (including Nevada) for special education students in which graduation requirements are set forth in the IEP.
- Certificates of Attendance or Achievement: Awarded in 26 states (including Nevada) to students who do not have the grades or other requirements (such as passing high school exit exams) needed for a diploma, but who have completed a set number of classes or met sufficient attendance.
- Other: Examples include: (a) an adjusted or modified diploma for those who complete a less rigorous course of study; (b) a workforce readiness diploma to demonstrate a basic skill set; (c) an abbreviated diploma for those who meet certain criteria in a shorter period of time; (d) a “European-model” diploma for those who complete a portion of their high school curriculum in a community college; and (e) endorsements or certificates of completion for honors or technical programs as part of the standard diploma.

For students with disabilities, the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) found a variety of allowances made for receiving a standard diploma (some states offer no allowances). They include: (a) reducing the number of required credits; (b) providing alternate courses used to earn required credits; (c) lowering performance criteria; (d) permitting the IEP team to make adjustments (this is the most common allowance); and (e) granting extensions. (*Revisiting Graduation Requirements and Diploma Options for Youth with Disabilities: A National Study*, National Center on Educational Outcomes, Technical Report 49, 2007).

When asked if other states offer the adjusted adult diploma contemplated in S.B. 116, ECS staff were unaware of any states to offer this option. Texas has raised its upper compulsory age to 26 years and implemented flexibility to accommodate older students who may have jobs, families, and other responsibilities. Florida has recently established a two-year Adults with Disabilities Workforce Education Pilot Program to make scholarships available to students with disabilities aged 22 to 30 years, who are receiving instruction in a private school to meet state-set high school graduation requirements, and who receive “supported employment services” (i.e., employment provided in an integrated work setting with earnings paid on a commensurate basis and for which continued support is necessary for job maintenance).

STATE	OPTIONAL DIPLOMAS OFFERED					
	Standard Diploma	Honors/College Prep Diploma	Technical Diploma	IEP/Special Education Diploma	Certificate of Attendance and/or Achievement (in lieu of diploma)	Other
Alabama*	■	■	■			■ ^{1,2}
Alaska	■				■Both	
Arizona*	■					■ ³
Arkansas	■					
California*	■	■			■Both	■ ⁴
Colorado	■			■	■Attendance	■ ⁵
Connecticut*	■					■ ³
Delaware*	■				■Achievement	
Florida*	■			■	■Attendance	■ ^{1,6}
Georgia*	■	■	■	■	■Attendance	
Hawaii	■	■			■Attendance	
Idaho	■					
Illinois*	■				■Attendance	
Indiana*	■	■	■		■Attendance	
Iowa	■				■Both	
Kansas*	■				■Both	
Kentucky*	■	■	■		■Achievement	
Louisiana*	■	■	■		■Achievement	■ ¹
Maine*	■					
Maryland*	■					
Massachusetts	■	■	■			■ ⁷
Michigan*	■					
Minnesota*	■					
Mississippi*	■			■		■ ¹
Missouri*	■	■			■Attendance	
Montana	■					
Nebraska*	■				■Both	
Nevada*	■	■	■	■	■Attendance	■ ⁸
New Hampshire*	■				■Attendance	
New Jersey*	■					
New Mexico	■			■		
New York*	■	■	■	■		
North Carolina*	■	■	■		■Achievement	
North Dakota	■					
Ohio*	■	■	■			
Oklahoma*	■					■ ⁹
Oregon*	■				■Both	
Pennsylvania	■	■				
Rhode Island*	■				■Achievement	
South Carolina	■					
South Dakota	■	■				
Tennessee*	■			■	■Attendance	■ ^{6,10}
Texas*	■	■			■Achievement	
Utah*	■					
Vermont*	■					
Virginia*	■	■	■	■	■Both	
Washington*	■	■				
West Virginia*	■			■		■ ⁹
Wisconsin*	■				■Both	■ ¹
Wyoming*	■	■			■Both	

*State has policy on awarding proficiency-based credit to meet course work requirements by demonstrating subject-area proficiency.

¹ Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Wisconsin offer career or occupational diploma with less rigorous and/or fewer credits required.

² Alabama offers diploma with Credit-Based Endorsement for those who do not pass one or more subtests of the graduation exam.

³ Arizona and Connecticut allow students to go directly to community college after Grade 10 for special high school diploma.

⁴ California provides a certificate of completion for students who finish a technical program.

⁵ Colorado authorizes districts to grant a postsecondary and workforce readiness endorsement.

⁶ Florida and Tennessee allow students to complete high school in three years by earning fewer but more rigorous credits with higher GPA.

⁷ Massachusetts allows Local Education Agencies to offer alternative diplomas.

⁸ Nevada offers Career and Technical Education Endorsement.

⁹ Oklahoma and West Virginia allow local boards to offer honors/college preparatory curriculum option.

¹⁰ Tennessee requires students to choose college prep or technical track toward the standard diploma.

Sources:

1. *Diploma Options, Graduation Requirements, and Exit Exams for Youth with Disabilities: 2011 National Study*, NCEO, Technical Report 62, 2011;
2. *Revisiting Graduation Requirements and Diploma Options for Youth with Disabilities: A National Study*, NCEO, Technical Report 49, 2007; and
3. *Standard High School Graduation Requirements: 50-State Survey*, Education Commission of the States (2007).