

The High School Diploma

A Discussion of the Standard Diploma and Alternative Diploma, June 2019



Our Challenge: California Graduation Statistics

85% of All Youth earn a high school diploma.

72% of Youth with Disabilities earn a high school diploma

14% of Youth with Disabilities Drop Out of High School.

We formed a Workgroup to do research and make recommendations to the California Department of Education and to local education agencies (LEAs) across the state.

First, the parameters:

Federal Definition of a Diploma

The term “regular high school diploma:”

- (A) means the standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in the State that is fully aligned with State standards, or a higher diploma, except that a regular high school diploma shall not be aligned to the alternate academic achievement standards; and
- (B) does not include a recognized equivalent of a diploma, such as a general equivalency diploma, certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or similar lesser credential, such as a diploma based on meeting IEP goals.
- The vast majority of students with disabilities should have access to the same high-quality academic coursework as all other students in the State that reflects grade-level content for the grade in which the student is enrolled and that provides for assessment against grade-level achievement standards.

-Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation, July 2017

The federal student aid website (www.fafsa.gov) specifies students are eligible for financial aid for college and career schools if they have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development certificate (GED). There is also the option of taking an “ability to benefit” test to qualify without a diploma/GED.

The exception to requiring the diploma or GED is if youth have an **intellectual disability** and are enrolled, or accepted for enrollment in a comprehensive transition and postsecondary (CTP) program for students with intellectual disabilities at an institution of higher education (a college/career school) that participates in the federal student aid programs.

Federal Definition of an Alternative Diploma (51223)

- (bb) all students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in the cohort, as adjusted under clause (i), assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards under section 1111(b)(2)(D) and awarded a State-defined alternate diploma that is—
- (AA) standards-based;
- (BB) aligned with the State requirements for the regular high school diploma; and
- (CC) obtained within the time period for which the State ensures the availability of a free appropriate public education under section 612(a)(1) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(1)); and
- (II) shall not include any student awarded a recognized equivalent of a diploma, such as a general equivalency diploma, certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or similar lesser credential

How are we doing?

Students who have achieved college and career readiness standards, by category:

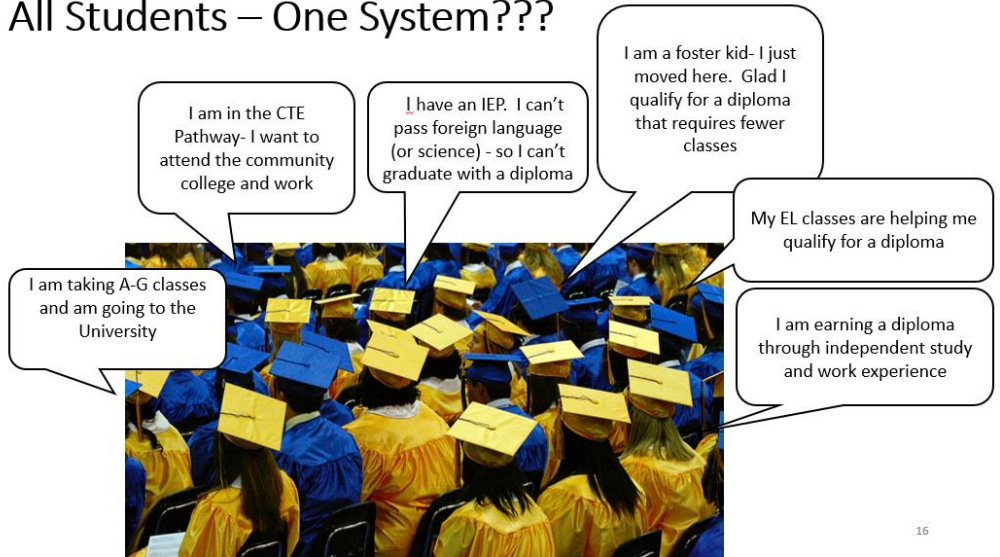
All Students	English Learners	Foster Youth	Students with Disabilities	Homeless
42.4%	14.5%	10.4%	9.2%	23.3%

Only 33% of students who pass A-G courses are eligible to enter the university system directly out of high school. The CSU system admits the top 33% of graduates. The UC system admits the top 9% of graduates.

All Students – One System???

There are Multiple Ways to Earn a Diploma in CA

- Meet State Course Requirements
- Meet University Course Requirements (A-G)
- Gold Seal Merit Diploma
- Career-Tech Pathways
- Alternative means for specific categories of students
- Local Education Requirements



Standard Diploma		Alternative Diploma
A- G	CTE Pathway	State Course of Study
All Youth	All Youth	Currently utilized for Foster Youth, Adjudicated Youth, Children-Military Families Homeless Youth Alternative Ed. Adult Ed Diplomas
		Only for students who have significant cognitive limitations

Why can't we include "students with IEPs if they are unable to meet A-G or participate in CTE Pathway?"

Education Code Citations

Student Groups	Challenges	Methods	Ed Code Legislation (EC)
Career Technical (CTE) Pathway	Include CTE courses as path to a diploma	Meet state diploma requirements with an emphasis on CTE	CTE 51225.3 SB 1123 amendment
Foster Youth Homeless Juvenile Justice leavers Military family members	Students move in a high school setting in grades 11-12 cannot meet LEA requirements.	LEAs are required to exempt students from local coursework requirements for a diploma and utilize state standards	AB 167 Newcomer programs extends exemption to recent immigrants AB 2121
Youth in jeopardy and not thriving in high school	Students fall behind in classes and credits	Calculate credits differently. Allow independent Study Use alternative means to earn a diploma	Alternative education EC 58500 Continuation Ed. EC 44865 Diploma Plus EC 48480 Independent Study EC 51005 Alternative Means to earn a diploma EC 51225.3
Standard Diploma Cohort	Expand time to earn a local graduation diploma to a fifth year for youth in foster care, juvenile court systems, military families Add Newcomers to the list of students	Current law requires Students who are part of the graduation data to complete the diploma in four years.	AB 2121
English Language Learners	Requires students who are English Language Learners to participate in general education		AB 2735 EC60811

California School Dashboard: Career Measures collected for College/Career Indicator
 CTE Pathway Completion
 Leadership / Military Service
 Work Readiness (Strategic Skills) Certificate program completer
 Food Handler Certification program completion
 Pre Apprenticeship Certification Program Completion / and non-certified
 State or Federal Job Program Completion
 Work-Based Learner Completion through WorkAbility or Transition Partnership Program