

THE CHALLENGE: HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



Bridge to the Future IV: Destination: Employment
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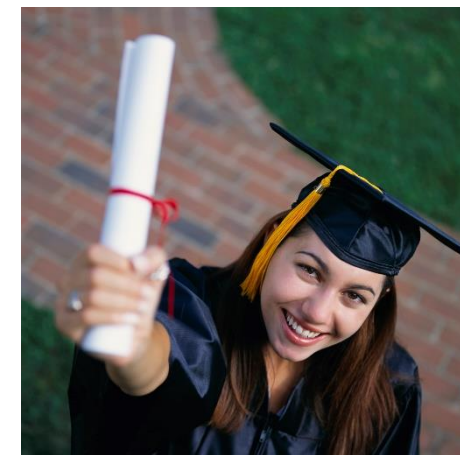


Current Members of Workgroup

Sue Sawyer, CA Transition Alliance, Chair	Barbara Boyd, CA Department of Education, Co-Chair
Cindy Bater, Long Beach Unified School District	Ed Amundson, CTA/NEA/ COP
Eli Gallup, State SELPA,	Joanna V. Della Gatta, Ventura County SELPA
Jovan Jacobs, Stockton Unified School District	Lela Rondeau, Los Angeles Unified School District
Liz Zastrow, Lodi Unified School District	Mark Miller, San Diego Unified School District
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Donna Waddell, Madera County Office of Education	Wendy Aghili, SELPA

The Workgroup goals and priorities

- **Goal: Increase the number of students with disabilities who earn a high school diploma.**
- Submit recommendations to increase the options for these students to earn a diploma to the California Department of Education (CDE)
- Research current practices and policies defined by CDE as the system moves toward all students being general education students first.
- Research current Ed Code to determine what can be utilized when offering new options to students with disabilities.
- Report on the negative impact on the student and their future opportunities if they lack a diploma.



**We Want All Students to Leave School
Prepared for Employment**
Preparation needs to start young!



The Challenge: California Statistics

- **65%** of students with disabilities earn high school diplomas in four years.
- **14%** are classified drop-outs.
- **85%** of non-disabled students earn a diploma.

- How do we increase the number of students with IEPs who earn a diploma?
- How do LEAs reduce drop-out rates and increase graduation rates?

- How does the focus on the diploma impact transition?



Our Suggestion:

More students earning Diplomas + More Pathways to a Diploma =
More Graduates, Fewer Drop-Outs

- Paths to the Diploma- we examined traditional and non-traditional options available to all students.

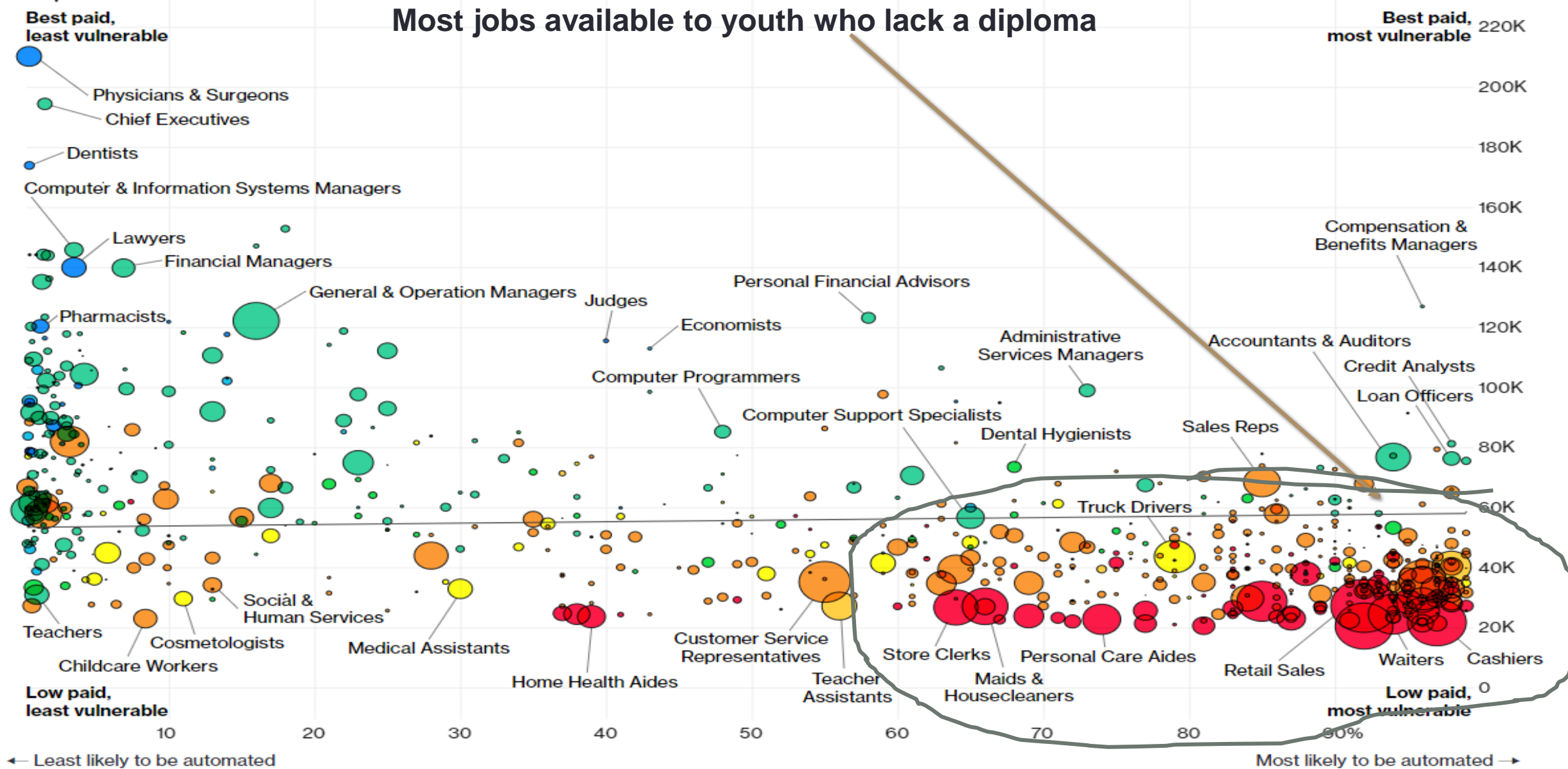


What happens to you when you lack a diploma?

- **The Personal Impact** – loss of confidence and optimism about the future
- Deprivation of the feeling of an accomplishment your peers experience
- Doubts, Negative perceptions of self worth
- You struggle to find employment
- You lack the minimum qualifications for jobs and face employer bias
- You don't qualify for some types of financial aid for post-secondary education
- You don't meet minimum qualifications for post-secondary education and training

You face barriers to achieve successful outcomes and end up in jobs that are in danger because of automation and artificial intelligence

Most jobs available to youth who lack a diploma



ESSA Requires Accountability



Getting to Know the California School Dashboard

The California School Dashboard (<http://www.caschooldashboard.org>) is an online tool designed to help communities across the state access important information about K–12 schools and districts. The Dashboard features easy-to-read reports on multiple measures of school success. The Dashboard is just one step in a series of changes that have raised the bar for student learning, transformed testing, and increased the focus on equity.

10 Indicators of School Success

State Indicators

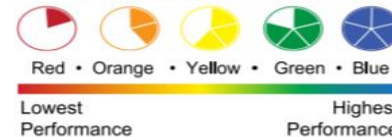
Six state indicators allow for comparisons across schools and districts based on information collected statewide.

- High School Graduation Rate
- Academic Performance
- Suspension Rate
- English Learner Progress
- Preparation for College/Career (CCI)
- Chronic Absenteeism

Results are presented for all districts, schools, and defined student groups (e.g., racial groups, low income, English learners, homeless, foster youth, students with disabilities).

Schools and districts receive one of five color-coded performance levels on each of the six state indicators.

PERFORMANCE LEVELS



Each performance level is represented by (1) a color, and (2) a number of shaded segments. For example, Green will have four segments filled.

The overall performance level is based on both the current performance (status) and change from the previous year (change).

High School Graduation Rate

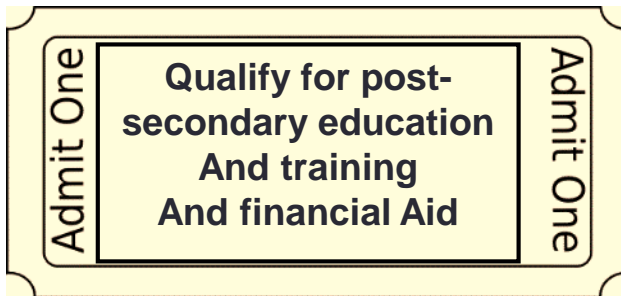
Results for defined student groups including youth with disabilities, racial groups, low income, English Learners, Foster Youth

The lack of a diploma is a barrier to employment and post-secondary education

A Diploma is a Ticket!



90% of employers prefer to hire youth with a diploma
30% of jobs are low skilled and susceptible to automation
66% of jobs require a diploma **and** post-secondary education and training.



Colleges and Universities entry criteria includes a high school diploma
FASFA eligibility requires a high school diploma or a GED type diploma

Federal Definition of the High School 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.

Diploma Options Available Today in California

- **CDE State Diploma** defines the minimum statewide course requirements to earn a high school diploma (Ed. code *EC 51225.3*.)
- **Golden Seal Merit Diplomas** - Based on high school diploma requirements defined by the local education agency and performance in classes, grades and test scores
- **Local Education Agencies High School Diploma** - Based on state standards + local standards
- **Diploma Plus diplomas** for students ages 15-19, who have not experienced success in traditional high schools settings. They may participate in drop out- re-enrollment programs.
- **High School Proficiency Exam** is equivalent to a diploma- this may change based on new federal guidelines
- **Adult Education Diplomas**- based on minimum state criteria for a diploma

Note: California has approved the use of three **high school equivalency tests** (GED®, HiSET®, and TASC™) for the purpose of receiving a California High School Equivalency Certificate, which does not meet the federal guidelines for a diploma

CA Diploma Course Requirements

EC 51225.3 states that all pupils receiving a diploma of graduation from a California high school must have completed all of the following courses:

	State	CTE Path	CSU*	UC*
English	3	3	4	4
Math	2	2	3	3
Science	2	2	2	2
Social Science	3	2	2	2
Visual / Performing Art	1		1	1
Foreign Language			2	2
Career Technical		2	1	1
PE	2	2	----	----
CSU and UC have different course descriptions for required classes				

These student populations may qualify for a diploma using state diploma requirements or alternative means.

- Foster Youth
- Military Family member
- English Language Learner
- Alternative Ed. Participant
- Homeless youth
- Adjudicated youth

*****CA Course Requirements also states*****

The local governing board of the LEA with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study, which may include:

- Practical demonstration of skills and competencies**
- Supervised work experience or other outside school experience**
- Career technical education classes offered in high schools**
- Courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs**
- Interdisciplinary study**
- Independent study**
- Credit earned at a postsecondary institution**
- Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils, parents, and the public.**

High School Graduation Requirements

As schools focus on College Readiness, increasing numbers of LEAs are requiring all students to take the A-G courses that are required to enter the University of California as freshmen.

- But A-G courses alone do not meet entry requirements. They also need:
 - GPAs that place students in Top 9% (UC) or 33% (CSU) of class,
 - Test scores (ACT, SAT),
 - Coursework,
 - Special Talents and Achievements
- **Community colleges do not require a Diploma or A-G courses.**

Does A-G Make Sense for Everyone?

The majority of students with disabilities who transition to college transition to the community college. The need to prepare for the University system limits their opportunities to engage in career-technical classes, work experience, and is inconsistent with their post-secondary education goals.



LEAs define graduation requirements for students. BUT - There are exceptions.....

- Foster Youth are exempt from local standards and qualify for a state diploma if they move into an LEA too late to meet local standards
- English Learners are offered instruction accommodations that include differentiated instruction, universal design, multi-tiered system of support. Students with IEPs may be offered modifications which suggest the goal is changed versus the teaching strategy used to achieve the goal.
- Alternative Education students (defined as students who fail to thrive in general education and are in jeopardy of not earning a diploma) are offered different strategies to calculate credits, earn credit through work experience and/or independent study
- **BUT** students with IEPs are required to meet LEA high school diploma requirements – or are offered a certificate of completion.

All Students – One System???

I am taking A-G classes and am going to the University

I am in the CTE Pathway- I want to attend the community college and work

I have an IEP. I can't pass foreign language (or science) - so I can't graduate with a diploma

I am a foster kid- I just moved here. Glad I qualify for a diploma that requires fewer classes

My EL classes are helping me qualify for a diploma

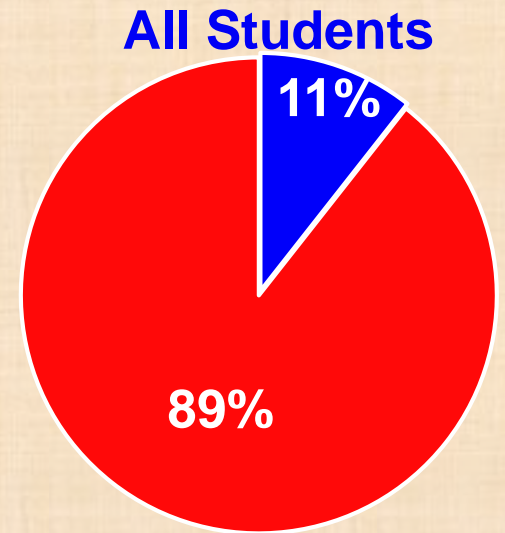
I am earning a diploma through independent study and work experience



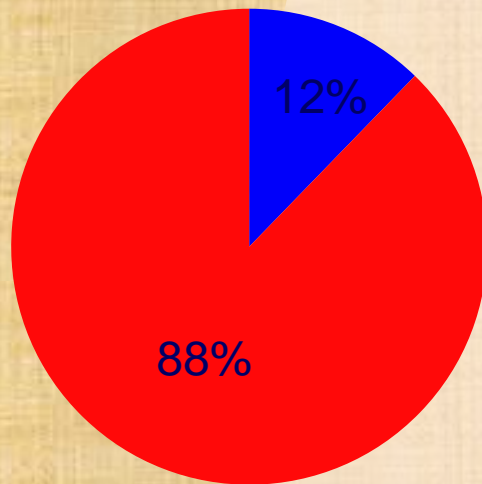


TOM TORLAKSON
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

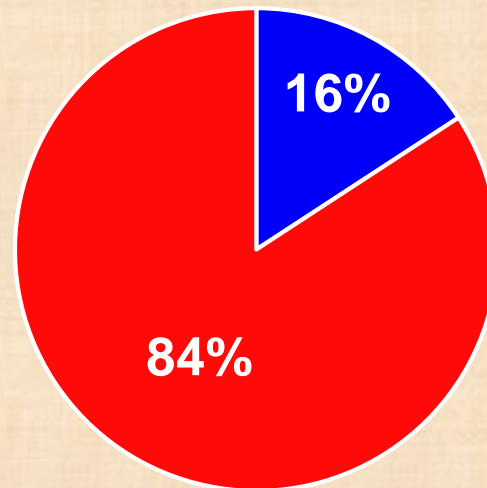
Students with Disabilities in the Local Control Funding Formula Student Groups



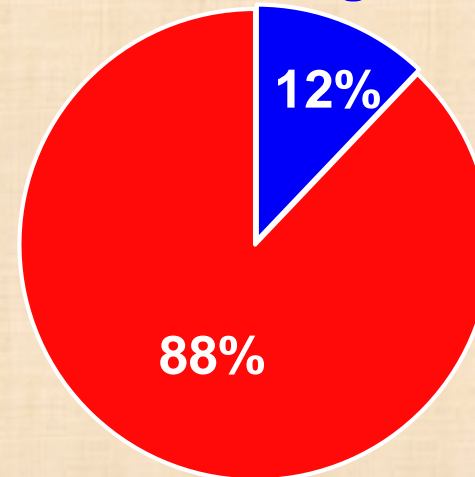
Homeless



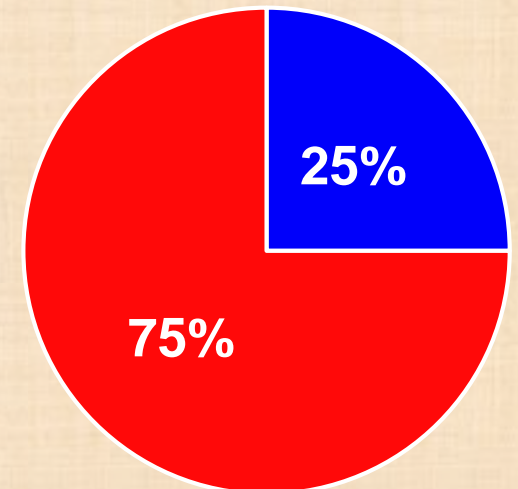
English Learners



**Socioeconomically
Disadvantaged**



Foster Youth



Source CALPADS data 2016—17
Total Student population = 6,228,235

Blue= Students with IEPs
Red= Students without IEPs

Ed Code Citations Related to Diploma

Student Groups	Challenges	Methods	Ed. Code
Foster Youth who cannot meet LEA diploma standards	Students move in a high school setting in grades 11-12 cannot meet LEA requirements.	LEAs are required to base the diploma standards on state standards and waive additional LEA requirements	AB 167
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 defined in Ed Code 51225.3	Alternative Ed 58500 Continuation Ed 44865 Diploma Plus 48480 Independent Study 51005
Career Technical Education	Need to include CTE in graduation standards	CTE course of study	CTE 51225.3 SB 1123 amendment

Ed Code Defines Potential Accommodations

Challenges	Strategies used for some students	Related Education Code
Course Completion	Credit Recovery	Alternative Ed 58500
	Methodology to calculate credits	Independent Study 5100
		Continuation Ed 44865
		Diploma Plus 48480
Options instead of A-G coursework	Career-Technical Education graduation coursework	CTE 51225.3 SB 1123 amendment
	Diploma regulations for Foster Youth	AB 167
	Meet State Diploma Standards	State Requirements 51225.3
	Earn a diploma through Adult Education	
Modify Curriculum	Teaching: universal design, differentiated instruction	ELD 60207
Assessment	Accommodations	Title 5 Regulations

Legal Issues: Meeting Diploma Requirements

- A student who graduates from high school with a regular diploma is no longer eligible for special education and related services (34 C.F.R. 300.102(a)(3); Ed Code 56026.1)
- An LEA is obligated to issue a diploma when any student meets regular graduation requirements, and withholding a diploma to meet procedural requirements of the IDEA would be discriminatory. (see Runkel and Anonymous)
- When a student meets graduation requirements, an LEA must only provide the student and parents with adequate notice of graduation and the rights available upon termination of education consistent with the general notice requirements of 34 C.F.R.300.503
- Neither achievement of IEP goals, nor academic proficiency at a 12th grade level is required for graduation with a regular high school diploma. (34 C.F.R. 300.102(a)(3)(iii))

Every Student Succeeds Act

- Only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should receive alternative diplomas and only if they have taken the state's alternative assessments.
- No more than 1% of students graduating in a state should receive an alternative diploma.
- California Goals:
 - 90% of students should graduate with a regular high school diploma.
 - Students working towards a certificate of completion should:
 - ✓ Have significant cognitive impairments.
 - ✓ Take Alternative assessments
 - ✓ Be unable to demonstrate subject matter competence in diploma track classes, even with differential proficiency standards, accommodations and modifications to the courses and curriculum required to do so.

Certificate of Completion is Not a Diploma

- We recognize that every student will not earn a diploma.
- A statewide survey of LEAs conducted by the state SELPA Transition Committee verified that the certificate of completion is being given to students as alternative to the diploma.
- ESSA stipulates students with severe cognitive disabilities may qualify for an alternate diploma if they participate in standards-based alternative assessments.
ESEA section 8101(43)(B); 34 C.F.R. § 200.34(c)(2)

NOTE:

- There are no student performance expectations related to the certificate.
- It has little to no value in post-school environments
- There is a need to define the certificate and set expectations for academic standards, a transition portfolio and/or industry certifications.

Changing Expectations for Student Outcomes

Employment First

“If you can work, you have a right and a responsibility”

Integrated Work Environments, Competitive Wages

- Skills required for the current job market
- Access to post-secondary education and training
- Degrees / Certificates / Short term training
- Can we help students who are not diploma-bound prepare for their future?
- Supports work opportunities for youth with IDD

Students exit special education when....

A student with a disability may only be exited from special education under the following three conditions:

If, after the completion of a special education evaluation, it is determined that the student is no longer a student with a disability;

Upon a student's graduation from high school with a regular high school diploma; or

Upon the student exceeding the maximum age for receiving special education services.

Authority: 34 C.F.R. § 300.306(a)(1); 34 C.F.R. § 300.102(a)(3)(i); 34 C.F.R. § 300.101(a); and Minn. Stat. § 125A.03

The term "regular high school diploma" does not include an alternative degree that is not fully aligned with the state's academic standards, such as a certificate or a general educational development credential (GED). As used in 34 C.F.R. § 300.305(e)(2),

Authority: 34 C.F.R. § 300.102(a)(3)(iv)

Employment First Implications

If transition is preparing for the next environment **and** the next environment for students with IDD is shifting from sheltered environments to inclusion in the community and competitive work environments...

- How are expectations impacted? How are IEP goals impacted?
- What do students need to know and do to be prepared?
- How does the certificate of completion impact opportunities?

Recent Reports and A Supreme Court Ruling

- **Tell Us All Students Need the Opportunity to Learn Academic Standards**
- Ask the question, “if 85-90% of students with IEPs have average intelligence or higher why are only 65% earning the standard high school diploma?”
- Are all students granted the opportunity to learn academic standards?
- Are teachers adequately trained in the elements of universal design and MTSS?
- Report: **Almost All Students with Disabilities are Capable of Graduating. Here's Why They're Not** Hechinger Report, October 2017
- Supreme Court Ruling: *Endrew F. v Douglas County School District Re-1* 12/17

Lessons Learned from LEAs with Graduation Rates Above 80%:

LEA leadership is committed for diplomas for all and multiple pathways to employment and post-secondary education/training.

Example: A-G Path to the University **Or** a CTE Pathway

Leadership supports staff development that provides teachers with an understanding of universal design, differentiated instruction, accommodations.

LEA defines common standards for all students.

LEA encourages early intervention and credit recovery.

LEA recognizes standards-based modified curriculum as meeting course requirements.

LEA recognizes that the certificate of completion is not equivalent to the diploma.

More Lessons: We Need to Start Early

- Currently, transition begins at age 16, **it should begin in early childhood.**
- Discussions regarding diploma vs. certificate start in 7th grade.

(How do these discussions impact expectations?)

- Early experiences in school impact student readiness for high school.
- We begin to teach skills that are the foundation for transition early:
Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking



How do the words “You Won’t Get a Diploma” impact a Student’s resilience?





MYTH: Students with IEPs cannot earn a diploma.

FACTS:

65% of students with disabilities currently earn a diploma

90% of students with IEPs have average to above average intelligence- they need accommodations and teaching using elements of universal design



MYTH: Some students do not need a diploma.

FACT:

90% of Employers in national surveys conducted in 2017 state it is their preference to hire youth with diplomas. Most on-line applications ask whether the job seeker has a diploma.

As we prioritize Employment First we need to examine our expectations for students with specific disabilities.

**MYTH:**

If we focus on earning a diploma,
we cannot focus on IDEA mandates for transition

FACT:

Earning a diploma requires that students achieve academic standards that are needed for graduation **and** for success in the workplace.

The goal of earning a diploma informs the course of study requirements of transition services. It impacts the students post-school outcomes.



MYTH: It would be unfair to students who don't need to use accommodations to give diplomas to students who need accommodations. Some students do not "earn" the diploma.

Definition of Unfair (Webster Dictionary): treating people in a way that favors some over others

Who is treated unfairly?



MYTH: Students with IEPs need a life skills, functional academics curriculum.

FACT: The students who are provided a course of study that focuses on functional skills or life skills may not be offered the opportunity to learn academic standards, which impacts their employment and post-secondary education opportunities.



MYTH: A certificate means the same thing as a diploma.

FACT: Diplomas are a ticket to work and financial aid for education.

The certificate is meaningless in the “next environments” (work and post-secondary education and training)



MYTH: Students may meet the LEA graduation standards, but it is okay to hold the diploma so we can continue provide them support and services.

FACT: Legally, it is required that the student is given the diploma when they have earned it. It cannot be withheld. We can't add additional requirements for graduation for a specific group of students. Students who earn alternative diplomas may stay in school.

However, it is important to make sure the students are prepared for transition by starting early. It is also important that students are linked to adult services for a seamless access to services. Local Partnership Agreements are beneficial to everyone.



Myth: If students are offered accommodations, the standard is modified – or lowered

Fact: An Accommodation allows the student with the disability, or the English Learned to demonstrate mastery of the standard.

A few Examples of Accommodations: For more information: www.askjan.org

Enlarged print

More time or quiet space to take a test

Braille

Check out the accommodations on your tablet or Kindle.

Modification: Is a term referencing assessment. It changes the standard to be achieved.

Recommendations:

Create a Roadmap to a Diploma for Students with Disabilities

Utilize the Roadmap for EL Learners as a model.

- **Students with disabilities are general education students first.** Allow alternatives for specific student populations to apply to all students.
- Invest in teacher training in the areas of universal design, differentiated instruction and accommodations.
- Encourage school leadership to find multiple paths to earn a diploma for all students
- Provide information, resources and training to key stakeholders



Recommendations: Remove Barriers

- Current practice is to put students on certificate vs diploma track in the 7th or 8th grade. It is too early to make that choice.
- The Accounting Manual stipulates some CTE funding is not allowed to be expended for students with IEPs.
- Increase inclusion of students with disabilities in career-pathway programs.
- Research verifies exposure to career-technical classes, work-based learning and work experience significantly enhances the transition to employment.
- Encourage students to take dual-enrollment courses.
- Include students with disabilities in work experience classes that provide school credit for work experience and work-based learning.



Recommendations: Certificate of Completion

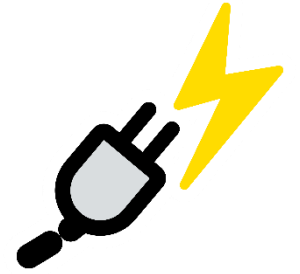
- Define the certificate and who is eligible to earn it in California Ed Code
- **In the rare instance** when a student cannot earn a diploma, make the certificate of completion meaningful in the “next environment.”
- Current practice is that the certificate is proposed in middle school and does not reflect skills – only seat time

Options:

- Stackable credentials that meet industry standards
- Transition Portfolio that demonstrates assets, attributes
- Employment Resume that summarizes skills, talents, employment skills, attributes that lead to employment

Our Recommendations

Use the Power of the IEP



- Start Transition Early
- Align high school graduation requirements with post-secondary goals.
- Define the course of study related to post-secondary goals and include dual enrollment classes.
- Define annual goals that are standards based and aligned with student's post-secondary employment goals.
- Teach using principles of Universal Design, Differentiated Instruction, MTSS.
- Align transition services in IEP to Pre-Employment Transition Services.
- List support services available for credit recovery, and accommodations for remediation and/or access to courses available on the internet.
- Identify support services that include transition support services that are available after students leave high school.

Q&A

Resources cited in this presentation

- California Department of Education (CDE) website: Data Quest [Dashboard.org](#)
- California Education Code and Accounting Manual www.cde.ca.gov
- National Research Center: Achieve, www.achieve.org
- National Center for Educational Statistics www.nces.ed.gov
- Diploma Counts 2015, 2016 Education Week www.edweek.org
- National Longitudinal Transition Study [www. https://nlts2.sri.com](http://www.https://nlts2.sri.com)
- Report: Don't Call Them Drop Outs www.americaspromise.org
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition www.transitionta.org
- Interviews and surveys with administrators, workgroup members