



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: John B. King, Jr.

SUBJECT: Proposed Alternate Credential to Replace the Individualized Education Program Diploma

DATE: June 13, 2011

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Do the Regents support the proposed policy framework for an alternate credential to replace the individualized education program (IEP) diploma for students eligible to take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Review of Policy.

Proposed Handling

This question will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the June 2011 meeting.

Background

This proposed policy emerged from a series of public discussions conducted by the Regents and the Department beginning in 2008 in response to concerns regarding the IEP diploma and a recommendation from the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Future Directions Initiative that students' CTE achievement be included in documentation of a student's readiness for college and career. At their January 2010 meeting, the Board of Regents supported the development of a credential that would document a student's achievement against the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Learning

Standards and be available to all students as a supplement to the regular high school diploma, and, for some students with disabilities, replace the current IEP diploma.

Department staff from the Office of Special Education and the Office of Career and Technical Education continued their review of other state's exiting credentials and sought further public comment to draft a proposed policy framework. Through these discussions, two major recommendations evolved:

1. Because the range of achievement of CDOS Learning Standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities as compared to students who graduate with advanced Regents diplomas is too broad to be addressed in one credential, a separate credential should be developed for the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to address the unique needs of this population of students.
2. The proposal for an optional credential for all students who will be graduating with a regular diploma and for students with disabilities not eligible for NYSAA but not able to achieve a regular diploma should be deferred until the Regents reach decisions on any changes to the high school graduation requirements to ensure clear alignment.

As a result, Department staff recommends policy development in two phases:

- Phase I - Develop a credential as described below to replace the IEP diploma for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are eligible for and participate in NYSAA. The following reflects a projection of the numbers of students, based on cohort year, eligible to leave school with the new proposed alternate credential:
 - 2007 cohort 2767
 - 2008 cohort 2857
 - 2009 cohort 2982
 - 2010 cohort 2743.
- Phase II - Develop a credential, which would be available to all other students, that documents attainment of CDOS standards and acknowledges the successful completion of academic and CTE programs and coursework, including work-based learning experiences.

PHASE I: PROPOSED POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR COMMENCEMENT CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR STUDENTS TAKING NYSAA

The following describes the proposed policy framework for Phase I: the development of the alternate credential to replace the IEP diploma.

- The credential is proposed to replace the current IEP diploma ONLY for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (i.e., students participating in NYSAA). These students are not eligible to exit with a regular diploma.

- The alternate credential would not be considered a regular high school diploma in accordance with State standards or for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) accountability purposes.
- The credential would be awarded in recognition of each student's academic achievement and completion of work-related experiences and attainment of skills and competencies in the areas of career development, integrated learning and universal foundation skills in relation to the State's CDOS Learning Standards.
- These CDOS skills at the alternate achievement level would include, but not be limited to:
 - **Basic Skills** including reading, writing, listening, speaking, math and functional math.
 - **Thinking Skills** such as recognizing a problem and requesting a solution; solving routine problems and less common problems (e.g., contacting 911), understanding cause and effect relationships and generalizing skills across settings.
 - **Personal Qualities** that include competence in self management and initiating and completing tasks and assignments and the ability to plan, organize and take independent action (e.g., follows a schedule, self-regulates during transitions; completes tasks and assignments; personal care skills).
 - **Interpersonal Skills** that lead to teamwork and cooperation (e.g., asking for help when faced with difficult situations; accepting direction; demonstrates appropriate behavior across settings; participates in leisure/recreation activities).
 - **Technology** including such skills as identifying the correct tool/technology to complete a task; using basic tools safely and appropriately.
 - **Managing Information** to access and use information obtained from other people, community resources and computer networks (e.g., uses information to make simple decisions such as responding to safety alarms; accesses/uses information from a variety of sources such as grocery ads, internet uses, menus).
 - **Systems** including skills to navigate the community (e.g., walking, bus); know who to ask for help; adapt to new situations; understand and follow rules.
- Each district would be required to maintain documentation for each student awarded this credential. That documentation would include information on the student's:
 - level of academic achievement;
 - career strengths and interests;
 - participation in work-based learning experiences (including service learning and work-related experiences in the school and community);
 - educational and work readiness experiences and skills, including the student's level of independence and/or specific supports recommended for the student to be able to successfully complete a variety of tasks; and

- other achievements, activities and awards.
- The proposed policy framework and documentation incorporates existing requirements for transition planning and services for students with significant cognitive disabilities. It provides a standardized means for a district to meet its responsibility, as currently required by federal and State regulations, to provide a student with a disability, upon the student's exit from school, with a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance, which must include recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her post-secondary goals¹.

Eligibility and Criteria for Award

To be eligible for and awarded this credential, a student must be a student with a disability, as defined in section 200.1(zz) of the Regulations of the Commissioner, who:

- is eligible to participate in NYSAA; and
- has attended school or has received a substantially equivalent education elsewhere for at least 12 years, excluding kindergarten, or, has completed the school year in which s/he has attained the age of 21; and
- minimally has written documentation of the following:
 - a coordinated set of transition activities pursuant to the student's IEP;
 - the student's experiences and competencies in the areas of career development, integrated learning and universal foundation skills;
 - Level 1 Vocational/Career Assessment; and
 - as appropriate, a New York State Career Plan.

Timeline for Implementation

It is proposed that the credential be available for eligible students who exit school beginning with the 2013-14 school year and thereafter.

Next Steps

With support of the Board, we recommend the following activities as we move forward with this proposed credential:

1. Seek public comment on the proposed policy and related documents.
2. Propose regulations for discussion at the September Board of Regents meeting.
3. Continue to evolve policy for Regents' consideration on the Phase II supplemental credential, in consideration of the Regents discussion on alternative graduation standards and pathways.

¹ 34 CFR §300.305(e)(3); 8 NYCRR §200.4(c)(4)