



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities

All students with IEPs have the right to stay in school until they get a Regents diploma, Advanced Regents diploma or Local diploma, or until they turn 22, whichever comes first.

If you are a student with a disability, your IEP must include a transition plan by the time you turn 15. The transition plan should talk about your options for completing high school. If you are 15 or older and have not had a meeting to create a transition plan, your parent should request one from your school.

Even before you turn 15, you may want to begin considering your graduation options as you plan for high school. Contact your IEP team to have this conversation. For more information on transition planning, visit: www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/transition_guide.pdf.

DIPLOMA OPTIONS

A high school diploma gives you access to college, the military, and trade schools. The two most common diplomas in New York State are the Regents diploma and the Local diploma. **To get a Regents or Local diploma, all students must earn 22 credits (44 credits in NYC) in specific courses.**¹

REGENTS DIPLOMA

To earn a Regents diploma, you must pass “4+1” exams:

- **Pass 4 Regents exams with a score of 65 or higher.**² The required exams are English Language Arts (ELA), one Math, one History, and one Science exam; **AND**
- **Pass 1 other State-approved exam.** You can use an Advanced Placement (AP) score, a State- approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) exam, another Regents exam, or the CDOS Commencement Credential as your fifth exam (see pg. 3).

CHANGES DURING COVID-19:

If you planned to take a Regents exam from **June 2020 to January 2022**, you may be eligible for a COVID-19 exemption to the exam. To learn more, check out this [tip sheet](#).³

If you passed a Regents course and took the Regents exam in that subject between **June 2022 and August 2023**, you can appeal scores of 50-64, instead of the usual 60-64, and still earn a Regents Diploma. You do not need to (1) take the exam twice, (2) take advantage of academic help at your school, or (3) get a recommendation in order to qualify.

¹ For details on the courses you need, see: www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/rules-for-students/graduation-requirements.

² If you successfully appeal one score of 60-64, you will still earn a Regents diploma. For details about appealing Regents scores, see: http://advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/regents_exam_appeal_options.pdf

³ The U.S. History Regents exam was also cancelled in June 2022, though not due to COVID-19. If you were supposed to take that Regents exam, you are eligible for a Regents exemption.

LOCAL DIPLOMA

The Local diploma is available to students with disabilities who pass “4+1” exams using the “Safety Net” score requirements or who qualify for a “Superintendent Determination.”

Safety Net⁴

The Local diploma is available to students with disabilities who pass “4+1” exams using one the “Safety Net” score requirements. If you have an IEP, you are automatically eligible for Safety Nets. If you have a 504 plan, your 504 plan must say that you are eligible for Safety Nets. The chart below lists the score requirements for each Safety Net. Unless otherwise noted, you can combine these Safety Net options.

SAFETY NET	REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL DIPLOMA
Low Pass Score	Score between 55-64 on the required Regents exams.
Appeal of Low Pass Score	Score a 52, 53 or 54 on up to two of the required Regents exams <i>and</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the exams you are appealing at least twice;• Take advantage of help at your school in the subjects you are appealing;• Pass the course in the subject you are appealing; <i>and</i>• Get recommended by your teacher or the chair of the department in the subject you are appealing.
Compensatory	Score between 45-54 on up to two of the required Regents exams <i>and</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For each score between 45-54, score a 65 or higher on another Regents exam; <i>and</i>• Pass the course in the subjects on which you scored 45-54; <i>and</i>• Have satisfactory attendance during the school year you scored 45-54 You cannot use this option for the ELA or Math exams.

Superintendent Determination

If you have an IEP,⁵ but do not pass your Regents exams using the Safety Nets above, you may still be eligible for a Local diploma via a Superintendent Determination. To get a Superintendent Determination you must:

1. Pass the Math and ELA Regents exams with scores of 55+ (or successfully appeal scores of 52-54); OR
2. Earn a CDOS Commencement Credential (see pg. 3); Attempt all exams required for graduation; and
3. Pass Regents-level courses in the subjects of the failed exams.

How to Request a Superintendent Determination

Your parent or guardian must make a request in writing to your principal or to the Committee on Special Education (CSE). Your principal or the CSE must forward your request to the superintendent. For each exam you fail, the superintendent will review your performance in the related course. The superintendent should consider your final course grade and the work you completed during the year, such as projects, class work, quizzes, and tests. The superintendent will make the final decision. If your request for a Superintendent Determination is approved, you will graduate with a Local diploma.

⁴ For frequently asked questions about the Safety Net, see: www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/safetynet-qa.htm.

⁵ This option does NOT apply to you if you have a Section 504 plan or if you have been declassified from special education. If you attend a charter school or a private school, your principal has the authority to make a Superintendent Determination.

NON-DIPLOMA OPTIONS

Students with IEPs who are unable to earn a Regents or Local diploma may leave school with one of two credentials: (1) the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential; or (2) the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC). These credentials replaced the “IEP Diploma,” which is no longer offered. On their own, the CDOS and SACC credentials are **NOT** high school diplomas and **CANNOT** be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools.

I. Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential

The CDOS Commencement Credential is a certificate meant to show your readiness for entry-level jobs.⁶

CDOS Credential Uses

- *Any student working toward a Regents or Local diploma may substitute the CDOS for their 5th exam (see pg. 1).*
- *Any student who has already met graduation requirements may add the CDOS as an endorsement to their diploma.*
- *Students with IEPs unable to pass Regents exams may use the CDOS to get a Local diploma using the Superintendent Determination (see pg. 2).*
- *Students unable to meet graduation requirements may exit high school with a CDOS Commencement Credential only. Remember: on its own, the CDOS Commencement Credential is **NOT** a high school diploma and **CANNOT** be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools.*

You can earn a CDOS Commencement Credential in one of two ways:

(1) Complete all of the following:

- **Annual career plan** that documents your career interests, strengths and weaknesses, career goals, and coursework or learning experiences to help you achieve those goals;
- **216 hours (4 credits)** of work-based learning, CTE courses, or other career planning activities, including at least 54 hours (1 credit) of supervised work-based learning, such as:
 - Internships, job shadowing, or service learning (e.g. SYEP; TOP)
 - Courses that are part of an approved CTE sequence
 - Advisory focused on career planning
- **Work skills employability profile** completed by your school that shows you have mastered CDOS standards;
- **Exit Summary** completed by your school if you have an IEP

OR

(2) Earn one of the nationally-recognized work readiness credentials. Examples include:

- [SkillsUSA Workforce Ready Employability Assessment](#)
- [National Work Readiness Credential \(NWRC\)](#)
- [ACT National Career Readiness Certificate](#)
- [CASAS Workforce Skills and Certification System](#)

To learn more about the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), Training Opportunity Program (TOP) and other work-based learning programs that can count toward a CDOS credential, see [AFC's Internships, Vocational & Transition Services Tip Sheet](#)

⁶ Students who are assessed using the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) are not eligible for a CDOS Commencement Credential.

2. Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC)

The SACC is available only to students with significant disabilities who take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). You may exit high school with a SACC after at least 12 years of school (not including kindergarten), if your parent wishes. If you get a SACC, you have the right to stay in school until the end of the school year in which you turn 22.

When you leave school with a SACC, you will get a certificate and Student Exit Summary describing:

- Your skills, strengths, and interests;
- Your level of achievement of the New York State CDOS standards; and
- Your level of academic achievement as measured by the NYSAA.

For more information on the SACC, visit: www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/SACCMemo.htm.

Still have more questions?

Please call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline

Monday through Thursday • 10 am to 4 pm 1-866-427-6033 (toll free)

This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. This fact sheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

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