

The Alternate Diploma



New Hampshire Department of Education

Bureau of Special Education

Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities Together

The Awarding of State Diplomas



- There are laws and rules that determine how diplomas are awarded
- State Laws (RSAs)
- Administrative Rules
- Federal Laws

State Laws Governing Diplomas



- **NH State Law 193-E Adequate Public Education**
 - Outlines the content areas that schools must have in their school approval standards from kindergarten to grade 12
 - Sets the expectation that the standards include the credit requirements necessary to earn high school diploma.
 - Requires that schools demonstrate that they provide adequate education.
 - They can demonstrate that by following the minimum credit requirements for a high school diploma as set forth in the Administration of Minimum Standards in Public Education Ed 306.27(f) and (m)

- RSA 193-E:2-a (A)
- RSA 193-E:3-b

Students May Exit from Special Education



- Students may exit if:
 - Parent/ guardian/adult student refuses services
 - The IEP team, including the parent, determine that the student is no longer eligible
 - Student turns 21
 - Student graduates with regular high school diploma

State Laws Governing Diplomas



- NH State Law 186-C Special Education
- This states that children with IEPs are entitled to attend an approved program which can implement their IEPs and that they are entitled to continue in an approved program until the child has acquired a regular high school diploma or has reached the age of 21 (whichever occurs first) or until the child's IEP team determines that the child no longer requires special education.

➤ RSA 186-C:9

The Awarding of a High School Diploma



- There are administrative rules that establish minimum standards for graduation requirements including credit requirements and content areas.
- School boards must adopt policies for awarding diplomas based on these minimum standards.
- The NHDOE does not award “state” diplomas.

The Administration of Minimum Standards in Public Education ED 306



- Minimum Standards , section Ed 306.27(q)(s) states that students shall demonstrate competencies contained in at least the equivalent of 20 credits to graduate with a regular high school diploma.

The Components of a Diploma



- A diploma must require that students earn a minimum of 20 credits with varying subject areas.
- The content in these subject areas must be standards based.

Graduation Requirements in the Minimum Standards



- The following table from Ed 306.27(t) illustrates the required subjects and credits for high school graduation

Table 306-2 Required Subjects and Credits for High School Graduation

Required Subjects	Credit(s)
Arts education	½ credit
Information and communications technologies	½ credit
English	4 credits
Mathematics	3 credits, including algebra credit that can be earned through a sequential, integrated, or applied program
Physical sciences	1 credit
Biological sciences	1 credit
US and NH history	1 credit
US and NH government/civics	½ credit
Economics, including personal finance	½ credit
World history, global studies, or geography	½ credit
Health education	½ credit
Physical education	1 credit
Open electives	6 credits
Totals	20 credits

Graduation Requirements in the Minimum Standards



- Ed 306.27(u) states that Graduation competencies shall include competencies from the content areas. The following table illustrates the required credits for graduation and graduation competencies.

Table 306-3 Required Credits for Graduation and Graduation Competencies

Required Graduation Competencies by Content Areas	Credit(s)
Arts education	½ credit
Information and communications technologies	½ credit
English	4 credits
Mathematics that encompasses algebra, mathematical modeling, statistics and probability, complex applications of measurement, applied geometry, graphical presentation and interpretation, statistics and data analysis	3 credits,
Physical sciences	1 credit
Biological sciences	1 credit
US and NH history	1 credit
US and NH government/civics	½ credit
Economics, including personal finance	½ credit
World history, global studies, or geography	½ credit
Health education	½ credit
Physical education	1 credit
Open electives	6 credits
Totals	20 credits

Awarding a Diploma in the Minimum Standards

ED 306



NH Ed 306.27(q) states that:

- (1) A school shall award a regular diploma for achievement and demonstration of the graduation competencies;
- (2) A school may award a special diploma that recognizes academic achievement;
- (3) Graduation competencies achieved and demonstrated in adult education, including but not limited to night school, may be used to earn a regular diploma; and
- (4) Students may earn certificates of completion or equivalency diplomas, but these shall not be equal to a regular high school diploma.

School Board Policies in the Minimum Standards



- Ed 306.04 states that the local school board shall adopt and implement policies and procedures to include:
- (13) Providing alternative means of earning credit toward a high school diploma or equivalent such as extended learning opportunities, and distance education to meet the requirements of RSA 193:1, (h) until July 1, 2015;
- (14) Providing alternative means of demonstrating achievement of identified graduation competencies toward the awarding of a credit for a high school diploma or equivalent such as extended learning opportunities, career and technical education courses, and distance education no later than July 1, 2015 to meet the requirements of RSA 193:1, (h);
- (15) How a credit can be earned, as provided in Ed 306.27(e) until July 1, 2015;
- (16) How a credit used to track achievement of graduation competencies can be earned no later than July 1, 2015, as provided in Ed 306.27(e);
- (25) Graduation competencies consistent with RSA 193-C:3 that students are expected to demonstrate for graduation in content areas
- (26) Graduation competencies consistent with RSA 193-C:3 that students are expected to demonstrate for graduation no later than July 1, 2015, that encompass multiple content areas outlining the knowledge, skills and work-study practices necessary for success in colleges and careers.
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Assessment Standards



- ESSA requires that all states assess all public elementary and secondary students.
 - The assessments must be based on achievement standards.
 - To meet this requirement, NH uses the “New Hampshire Statewide Assessment”.
 - The Statewide Assessment measures student progress in the areas of English Language Arts/Writing and Mathematics.

Alternate Assessment



- States may adopt alternate content standards and alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
- Many states have adopted alternate content standards and assessments

- http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_28463-410070--,00.html
- <http://www.maine.gov/doe/alternate/>
- https://education.alaska.gov/regs/filed/nonstandardized_manual_2009.pdf

New Hampshire's Alternate Assessment



- New Hampshire uses the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) as an alternate assessment. This assessment measures yearly student progress. The test provides it's own standards that align with the NH Statewide Assessment.
- The IEP team, including the parent, make the determination that taking the DLM is appropriate for the student.
- The DLM uses assessment standards called “essential elements”

Every Student Succeeds Act



- The “Every Student Succeeds Act” is a federal education law that includes a provision that allows school boards to create a policy that would give some students with IEPs the ability to earn an Alternate Diploma as long as it is “standards based”

Another Option for the Diploma



- Districts may choose to award the Alternate Diploma once they have adopted a policy in accordance with the federal law in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- ESSA SEC. 8101(a)(23)

Who is it for?



- The Alternate Diploma may be awarded to students who:
 - Have significant cognitive disabilities and
 - Participate in the Alternate Assessment
 - These may be students who would have otherwise been granted a Certificate of completion

It is NOT for students with Section 504 plans or students without IEPs

Who decides which students are awarded this diploma?



- Once a school district had adopted a policy the determination to award the Alternate Diploma is the responsibility of the IEP team, including the parent.

Benefits



- The Alternate Diploma would provide students who may have ordinarily earned a Certificate of Attendance with the option to earn a diploma.
- Students who earn a diploma are counted by the state in a graduation rate. Students who earn the Certificate of Attendance are not.
- Therefore, students who earn the Alternate Diploma may be counted in the graduation rate.

Of Note



- Students with IEPs who earn an Alternate Diploma may not be prevented from working towards meeting the requirements for the regular high school diploma. Earning this diploma does not exit a student from special education. This means that being awarded the Alternate Diploma does not end a student's eligibility for special education.
- It does not substitute for a regular high school diploma

Resources



- Every Student Succeeds Act

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-114publ95/pdf/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

- New Hampshire Education Standards, New Hampshire General Court

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/state_agencies/ed300.html

- NHDOE Technical Advisory

https://www.education.nh.gov/standards/documents/nhdoe_tech_advisory_alternate_diploma.pdf