

AL HS Diploma

As of 2013, Alabama has only **one** diploma option for all students, including students with disabilities: the Alabama High School Diploma (AHSD). Alabama no longer offers the Alabama Occupational Diploma or the Certificate of Attendance as optional diploma choices to students with disabilities. The AHSD may be awarded with or without career/technical, an advanced career/technical, or advanced academic endorsement.

In another big recent change, Alabama no longer administers the Alabama High School Graduation Exam.

How can students earn the AHSD?

- Students must earn at least 24 course credits in the following areas:

English	4 credits
Math	4 credits
Science	4 credits
Social Studies	4 credits
Career Tech/Foreign Language, or Art	3 credits
Physical Education	1 credit
Health Education	½ credit
Electives	2 ½

- Students who want to graduate with a Career/Technical Endorsement must earn three credits in Career/Technical Education (sequenced program of courses) or two credits in an occupational program plus the Advanced Cooperative Education work-based experience, in addition to the requirements above.
- Students who want to graduate with an Advanced Career/Technical Endorsement must earn one course credit in Algebra II with Trigonometry, three credits in Career/Technical (sequenced program or courses), and take advanced level work in the core curriculum, in addition to the requirements noted above.

Things to remember...

- Local systems have the option to require additional course credits or subjects.
- Career technical endorsements are optional for school systems.

- The GED measures the same basic course content as the AHSGE: Language Arts, Social Studies, Reading, Science and Math — all at approximately a 12th grade level. In addition, the test includes a writing requirement not found on the AHSGE. For more information about the GED, contact the state coordinator for the program at (334) 353-4885 or (334) 353-4886 or visit the program's website at www.acs.cc.al.us.
- Complete a minimum of 270 hours of documented, successful independent paid employment as part of Career/Technical cooperative education in the 12th grade.

Things to remember...

- Students who receive a Certificate can continue their education in the public school system and receive special education services until they turn 21 or receive a regular Alabama high school diploma.

Paths to a High School Diploma

ADAP A Right Not a Favor begin p. 39 and/or ASDE PP (attached)

Staying in High School until 21

ADAP A Right Not a Favor p. 41

Be Ready to Graduate from High School

Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) should graduate from high school with the skills they need to achieve their life dreams, whether those dreams include college or training, a job, living in the community, hanging out with friends, taking part in recreation activities, or attending worship services - in other words, the very things that all students dream of doing. Transition services are intended to prepare a student to meet his or her individual goals.

Need Quick Answers? Click Below

- What are transition services?
- When and how does transition planning begin?
- What does a transition plan look like?
- Does the student participate in transition planning?
- How do school staff and parents participate in transition planning?
- What other agencies participate in transition planning?

KEY

ALSDE – Alabama State Department of Education
ADRS – Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
IDEA -- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
NTAC - National Transition Technical Assistance Center
OCALE -- Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence



IDEA and Transition

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is our nation's federal special education law and requires you, your family, and your school team to plan your goals for after graduation and how you're going to achieve them. These plans are called transition plans.

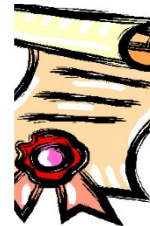


Alabama State Department of Education Transition Services

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) offers many resources that can help you and your family actively participate in building your own transition plan.

Going to College?

The college or university you hope to attend has a disability services office to help you access the supports you need to succeed in school.



The Alabama High School Diploma

There are multiple ways you can earn the Alabama High School Diploma; one size does not fit all!



Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) works with you and your family to help you meet your chosen employment goal.

**CLICK HERE FOR
MORE RESOURCES**

Students with Disabilities

Alabama High School Diploma & Graduation

Alabama State Department of Education
Special Education Services
April 2014

Multiple Pathways to the Same End

General
Education

Regular
Alabama
High School
Diploma

Essentials/Life
Skills

Alabama
Occupational
Diploma
(AOD)

Alternate
Achievement
Standards

Certificate of
Attendance

Alabama
High School
Diploma

Multiple Pathways to the Same End

- **Students with disabilities now have three pathways for earning the Alabama High School Diploma.**
- Students with disabilities may choose between the General Education Pathway and the Essentials/Life Skills Pathway.
- **Core content-area courses for students with disabilities can be General Education courses, Essentials/Life Skills courses, or a combination of both.**
- Movement between the General Education Pathway and the Essentials/Life Skills Pathway is allowed.

Multiple Pathways to the Same End

- Students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the criteria for the Alabama Alternate Assessment are eligible for the Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS) Pathway.

General Education Pathway

16 Credits

Four years
each of English,
Math, Science,
and Social
Studies

1 Credit

Physical
Education

1/2 Credit

Health
Education

1 Credit

Career
Preparedness

3 Credits

CTE/Foreign
Lang/Arts

2 1/2 Credits

Electives

General Education Pathway

16 Credits
or any CTE

substitute/
equivalent;
AP/IB/
postsecondary
equivalent courses

1 Credit

Physical
Education

1/2 Credit

Health
Education

1 Credit

Career
Preparedness

3 Credits

CTE/Foreign
Lang/Arts

2 1/2 Credits

Electives

Essentials/Life Skills Pathway

16 Credits

Four years each of
ESSENTIALS/LIFE
SKILLS English,
Math, Science,
and Social Studies

1 Credit

Physical Education

1/2 Credit

Health Education

1 Credit

Career
Preparedness

3 Credits

2 CTE &
Workforce
Essentials

2 1/2 Credits

Cooperative
Education
Seminar/Work-
Based Experience
Electives

Essentials/Life Skills

- Formerly known as **Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) courses**.
- LEAs are required to offer Essentials/Life Skills courses.
- **Must be taught by a highly qualified content area teacher.**
- May be taught within a general education course (with two rosters) or as a stand-alone course.
- **If Essentials/Life Skills courses are taught within a general education course there must be differentiated instruction for the different courses.**

Essentials/Life Skills

- **Students with and without disabilities may take Essentials/Life Skills courses.**
- These courses are not appropriate for students who are planning to attend a four-year college.
- **These courses are not accepted by four-year colleges or the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).**
- Students taking these courses may be eligible to attend a community college if they meet the institution's admissions requirements. Community college admissions requirements typically include a minimum ACT score.
- **It is important for each student to pursue the course work that is appropriate for his or her desired post school outcome. Schools must work very closely with students and parents to ensure there is no confusion about the limitations of certain course work and/or pathways.**

Work Component for Students Who Take 4 or More Essentials/Life Skills Courses

- **Any student, with or without a disability, who completes four or more core courses on the Essentials/Life Skills pathway is required to complete the following work component:**
 - Community-Based Work Instruction
 - 2 Career and Technical Education Courses in a Sequence
 - Workforce Essentials or Transition Services II
 - Cooperative Education/Work-Based Experience or Life Skills Occupational Preparation
 - Cooperative Education Seminar

Students Pursuing the Alabama Occupational Diploma

- **Students in the 2010-2011 or later cohort are no longer required to pass the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) in order to earn the Alabama High School Diploma.**
- The exception rule for students with disabilities who pass the graduation exam to be awarded an Alabama High School Diploma is being phased out since the AHSGE is no longer required.
- **Students in the 2009-2010 or earlier cohort must meet the previous graduation requirements and are still eligible for the exception rule related to the Alabama High School Graduation Exam and receiving an Alabama High School Diploma.**
- Students with disabilities in the 2010-2011 or later cohort who meet all requirements for the Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) should be awarded the Alabama High School Diploma.

Alternate Achievement Standards Pathway

16 Credits

Four years each
of AAS English,
Math, Science,
and Social
Studies

1 Credit

Physical
Education or
Adapted PE

1/2 Credit

AAS Pre-
Vocational, AAS
Vocational, AAS
Community Based
Instruction, and/or
AAS Elective
Course; or Electives

1 Credit

AAS Life Skills

3 Credits

AAS Life Skills

2 1/2 Credits

AAS Pre-
Vocational, AAS
Vocational, AAS
Community Based
Instruction, and/or
AAS Elective
Course; or Electives

Alternate Achievement Standards

- **The AAS core content area courses for the Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS) pathway are based on the Alabama Extended Standards.**
- The courses for AAS Life Skills, AAS Pre-Vocational, AAS Vocational, AAS Community Based Instruction, and/or AAS Elective Course are locally developed. Each class/school/LEA is expected to have course syllabi on file and documentation that the students completed the objectives.
- **One of the locally developed AAS Life Skills courses should align to the topics in the Career Preparedness course that other students take. This means it should include content related to Career and Academic Planning, Computer Applications, and Financial Literacy.**

Alternate Achievement Standards

- **AAS courses (and Alabama Extended Standards) may be taught in a variety of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) options. The AAS courses (and Alabama Extended Standards) are not restricted to separate classrooms.**
- Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are in the 2010-2011 or later cohort will be awarded an Alabama High School Diploma if they complete the courses on the AAS pathway, as outlined in the *Alabama High School Diploma Substitute Courses for Students with Disabilities*.

Graduation and Students with Disabilities

- **According to the IDEA students with disabilities who have not earned a regular high school diploma are entitled to services up to age 21.**
- Therefore, the awarding of the Alabama High School Diploma must be deferred for students with disabilities who will remain in school until age 21.
- **It is imperative the IEP Team work with the student and his or her parent(s) to determine the anticipated date of exit for each student with a disability.**

Graduation and Students with Disabilities

- **Awarding the Alabama High School Diploma prematurely would deny a student his or her right to receive services until age 21 and would be considered a denial of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).**
- Graduating with an Alabama High School Diploma is considered a change of placement for a student with a disability. The *Notice of Intent Regarding Special Education Services* must be used to document the proposed change of placement (graduation) to ensure that the student and parent have been fully informed of the proposed termination of services.

Graduation and Students with Disabilities

- If they choose, students who stay in school until age 21 must be allowed to participate in graduation activities with their class. The LEA determines whether the student is given a blank sleeve or a locally developed certificate during the ceremony with their class, but they should not be awarded the diploma until the year of their agreed upon date of exit.
- It is clear LEAs are concerned about the effect deferring the diploma could have on graduation rate.
- The ALSDE is working on a plan to allow an LEA to get credit for students who stay until age 21 or at least identify a way to minimize the effect of deferring the diploma.
- Stay tuned for further details.

Multiple Pathways to the Same End

**FOR QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS,
PLEASE CONTACT SPECIAL
EDUCATION SERVICES**

334.242.8114

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