



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may graduate high school with a Regents, Advanced Regents or Local diploma. Students who do not meet the requirements for a Regents or Local diploma may exit high school with either a Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC) or a Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential. These credentials replace the “IEP Diploma,” which is no longer being offered. The SACC and the CDOS Commencement Credential do not have the same benefits as a diploma.

### DIPLOMA OPTIONS

Graduating with a high school diploma gives students access to college, the military, and trade schools. The two most common diplomas in New York State are the Regents and Local diplomas.

#### Regents Diploma

The Regents diploma is awarded to high school students who earn 22 credits (44 credits in NYC) in different courses<sup>1</sup> and receive a passing score of 65 or higher on 4 Regents exams plus a passing score on 1 other State approved exam. The 4 required Regents exams are: English, one Math, one History, and one Science exam. Students may choose to use an Advanced Placement (AP) or SAT II score, a State approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) exam, an additional Regents exam or the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential as their fifth exam.

#### Local Diploma

##### ***Safety Net Option***<sup>2</sup>

The Local diploma is available to students with disabilities with IEPs or Section 504 accommodation plans who earn 22 credits (44 credits in NYC) in specific courses and meet specific “safety net” testing requirements. For students with Section 504 accommodation plans, their plans must specify that they are eligible for the Local diploma. The “safety net” options available to students depend on the year in which students started high school. The different “safety net” options are described in the chart below.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on which course credits are required for a Regents diploma, see: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/531C5296-BC35-43E0-BD29-2D7E29BAB2C7/0/AcpolicySVD.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For frequently asked questions and answers about these options, see: [www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/safetynet-qa.htm](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/safetynet-qa.htm).

SAFETY NET OPTION	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY
<b>Low Pass Score</b>	Student can graduate with a score between 55 and 64 on the required Regents exams.	For students with IEPs or 504 plans who entered grade 9 in 2005 or after.
<b>Appeal of Low Pass Score</b>	<p>Students who score between 52 and 54 on up to two required Regents exams are eligible to appeal their scores if they meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have taken the exam(s) they are appealing at least twice;</li> <li>• Have taken advantage of academic help at their school in the same subject(s) as the exam(s) they are appealing;</li> <li>• Have earned a passing course grade in the same subject(s) as the exam(s) they are appealing; and</li> <li>• Be recommended by their teacher or chair of the department in the same subject(s) as the exam(s) they are appealing.</li> </ul>	Available to students who are eligible to graduate in January 2016 and after.
<b>Compensatory</b>	<p>Student scores between 45-54 on 1 or 2 Regents exams and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scores higher than 65 on one or more other Regents exams;</li> <li>• Receives a passing grade for the course in which he or she received a Regents exam score of 45-54; and</li> <li>• Has satisfactory attendance in accordance with school policy.</li> </ul> <p>Students cannot use this compensatory option for the English or Math Regents exams. Students must score at least a 55 on both the English and Math Regents exams. Students using Regents Competency Tests cannot use this option.</p>	For students with IEPs or 504 plans who entered Grade 9 in 2005 or after.
<b>Regents Competency Test (RCT)</b>	Student fails one or more of the required Regents exams, but passes corresponding Regents Competency Tests (RCT). Students who use the RCT option cannot also use the compensatory option.	The RCTs have been phased out and are only available to students with disabilities who entered grade 9 between 2001 and September 2010.

### **Superintendent Determination**

Students with IEPs who do not qualify for the safety net options may still be eligible for a Local diploma via a Superintendent Determination. In order to graduate under this option, a student with an IEP must:

1. Score a minimum of 55 on the math and ELA Regents exams (or successfully appeal a score of 52-54);
2. Sit for and fail the other exams required for graduation; and
3. Pass Regents-level courses corresponding to the failed exams.

For each of the exams that the student fails, the superintendent will review the student's performance in the corresponding course. The superintendent must consider the student's final course grade as well as the work he/she completed during the year, such as projects, class work, quizzes, and tests.

In order to be considered for the Superintendent Determination, the student's parent or guardian must make a request in writing to the public school principal or Committee on Special Education (CSE). The principal or CSE will then forward the request to the superintendent. If a student is found eligible for graduation based on the superintendent's determination, he/she will graduate with a Local diploma. Note that this option does NOT apply to students with Section 504 plans or students who have been declassified from special education.

Also note that principals of charter schools and private schools have the authority to make a Superintendent Determination.

For more information, see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/superintendent-determination-of-graduation-with-a-local-diploma.htm>.

## NON-DIPLOMA OPTIONS

Students with IEPs who are unable to earn a Regents or Local Diploma may graduate with one of two credentials created by the State: (1) the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential; or (2) the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC). These credentials replace the “IEP Diploma,” which is no longer offered. Both the CDOS Commencement Credential and the SACC are **NOT** the same as a regular high school diploma. The CDOS Commencement Credential and the SACC **CANNOT** be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools.

### Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential

The Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential is a certificate that is intended to indicate a student’s readiness for entry-level jobs. A student who receives a CDOS Commencement Credential can also earn a Regents or Local diploma or can complete high school with a CDOS Commencement Credential only. Students who are pursuing a Regents or Local diploma may substitute a CDOS Commencement Credential for one of the five exams required to graduate.

Students can earn the CDOS Commencement Credential in one of two ways:

(1) The student must complete all of the following:

- Complete and annually review a career plan that documents career interests, strengths and weaknesses, career goals, and coursework or learning experiences to help the student achieve those goals;
- Complete four 54-hour units (216 hours total) of work-based learning, CTE courses, or other career planning activities, including at least 54 hours of supervised work-based learning, such as:
  - Internships, job shadowing, or service learning
  - Courses that are part of an approved CTE sequence
  - Advisory focused on career planning
- Have an employability profile completed by his or her school that shows that the student has mastered the CDOS standards; OR

(2) The student must earn one of several nationally recognized work readiness credentials. Examples of these nationally recognized credentials include:

- SkillsUSA Workforce Ready Employability Assessment: [www.workforcereadysystem.org/assessments.shtml](http://www.workforcereadysystem.org/assessments.shtml)
- National Work Readiness Credential (NWRC): [www.workreadiness.com/](http://www.workreadiness.com/)
- ACT National Career Readiness Certificate: [www.act.org/products/workforce-act-national-career-readiness-certificate/](http://www.act.org/products/workforce-act-national-career-readiness-certificate/)
- CASAS Workforce Skills and Certification System: [www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/WSCS](http://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/WSCS)

For more information on the CDOS Commencement Credential, visit:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/2016-memos/cdos-graduation-pathway-option.html>.

For more information about how a student's work on a CDOS Credential aligns with transition planning visit:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/CDOScredential-att6.htm>

## **Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC)**

The SACC is available only to students with severe disabilities who take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). Students may exit high school with a SACC upon reaching the end of the school year in which the student turns 21, or after at least 12 years of schooling (not including kindergarten) if the student or his/her parent or guardian wishes. Students receive a certificate along with a Student Exit Summary, which documents the following:

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

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

## **CHOOSING A GRADUATION OPTION FOR YOUR CHILD**

By the time your child turns 15, his or her IEP should include a transition plan. The transition plan should address graduation options for your child. If your child is 15 or older and you have not had a meeting with your child's school to create a transition plan, you should request one from your child's school.

You may want to consider graduation options for your child even before he or she turns 15—as soon as he or she starts high school. You may contact your child's IEP team to have this conversation. For more information on transition planning, visit:

[http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/transition\\_guide.pdf](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/transition_guide.pdf).

Remember, the SACC and the CDOS Commencement Credential are NOT high school diplomas. The credentials CANNOT be used to apply to college, the military or trade schools. All students with disabilities have the right to remain in school until they receive a Regents or Local diploma, or until the end of the school year in which they turn 21, whichever comes first.

**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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