

DIPLOMA OPTIONS ADVOCACY MAP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Navigating Education Choices: The Value of the Standard Diploma

In the journey of education, there's strength in choosing aspirations that align with your child's unique potential. Opting for a Standard Diploma opens doors to diverse post-graduation paths. Let's explore the significance of this choice, fostering inclusivity and understanding that every student's journey is distinct.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In shaping your child's educational journey, it's crucial to begin with the end in mind. Decisions made as early as elementary school can profoundly impact postsecondary options. While the Standard Diploma may seem like a lofty goal for some, we encourage you to consider it as a reachable aspiration whenever possible. Being informed early is key.

As early as elementary school, you'll encounter decisions about assessments and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP). Here's why this decision point is so critical:

- 1. Building Foundations:** Early choices lay the foundation for academic success. Assessments guide tailored learning plans, ensuring your child receives the support needed to excel.
- 2. Verified Credits Matter:** The Standard Diploma hinges on verified credits earned through assessments. Early consideration ensures your child is on the right track to meet these crucial requirements.
- 3. Diverse Postsecondary Opportunities:** By aiming for the Standard Diploma, your child can gain a broader range of postsecondary opportunities, including community college, career pathways, and beyond.

Critical Decision: Assessment Options and Their Relationship to Diploma/Long-Term Goals

When: 3rd Grade

Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP): If a child participates in the VAAP, they will not be able to obtain a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. He or she may receive an Applied Studies Diploma.

Participation in the VAAP should only be considered after the SOL participation has been discussed and all possible accommodations have been fully examined. Failure to pass the SOL assessments does not provide justification for VAAP participation.

It is critical that parents understand that agreeing to modifications of a child's curriculum means that their child will not be receiving the same instructional content as his peers. This means that the child will not be adequately prepared to take standardized assessments (such as SOL assessments) that lead to verified credits. Without these verified credits, the child will be unable to earn either a Standard or an Advanced Studies Diploma.

An Applied Studies Diploma is not equivalent to a Standard Diploma, and it may not qualify a child for post-secondary opportunities for which a regular high school diploma is required, such as higher education, financial aid, and some employment opportunities.

Advocating against your child's participation in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) while pursuing a standard diploma goal involves effective communication, collaboration with the school, and a clear understanding of your child's abilities and needs. Here's a guide to help you advocate for your child:

- 1. Understand Your Child's Abilities:** Have a comprehensive understanding of your child's strengths and challenges. Document specific areas where your child excels and may not require an alternative assessment.
- 2. Review Academic and Career Plan Portfolio (ACPP):** Clearly define your child's long-term educational goals. If a standard diploma is the target, discuss why it aligns with their aspirations and future plans. This can be documented and supported by exploration, assessments and activities that align with ACPP requirements.
- 3. Engage in Open Communication:** Schedule a meeting with your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to discuss your concerns about VAAP participation. Emphasize your child's capabilities and express the desire for a standard diploma.
- 4. Provide Documentation:** Offer any relevant documentation, such as recent assessments, teacher observations, or external evaluations, that showcase your child's ability to meet standard curriculum expectations.
- 5. Explore Accommodations:** Inquire about accommodations that can support your child in participating in regular assessments. Emphasize the importance of tailored support to help them succeed in a standard curriculum.
- 6. Discuss Postsecondary Goals:** Clearly articulate your child's postsecondary goals and how a standard diploma aligns with those aspirations. Discuss the potential limitations of an alternative assessment in achieving these goals.
- 7. Request a Team Decision:** Advocate for a team decision rather than a unilateral one. Collaborate with the IEP team to make a collective, informed choice that considers your child's best interests.
- 8. Seek External Support:** If needed, seek support from external professionals, such as educational advocates or specialists, to reinforce your case during discussions with the school.
- 9. Explore State Regulations:** Familiarize yourself with state regulations regarding alternative assessments and standard diploma requirements. This knowledge will empower you in discussions with the school.
- 10. Maintain a Positive Tone:** Approach discussions with a positive and collaborative tone. Emphasize your commitment to your child's success and the shared goal of preparing them for a standard diploma.

Remember, effective advocacy involves collaboration and ongoing communication with the school. By actively participating in the decision-making process and providing a well-supported case, you can work towards aligning your child's educational path with their goals for a standard diploma.

Key Decision Points Standard Diploma Elementary to Middle

