

DIPLOMA OPTIONS ADVOCACY MAP SECONDARY (MIDDLE & HIGH)

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.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

It is most important that as students transition from elementary to secondary education, they are on the right diploma track to meet their post-secondary goals. If a student participates in the VAAP, she/he will not be able to obtain a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. He or she may receive an Applied Studies Diploma. In addition, it will be harder for students to switch from an applied studies diploma to a standard diploma than if a student were to be on a standard diploma track and move to an applied studies diploma track.

Critical Decision: Understanding diploma options and their relationship to post-secondary goals

When:

Children with disabilities have access to three different diploma options. The diploma that the student will work toward is determined by the IEP Team. Parents often set goals for their children while they are very young. It is okay to dream big. In fact, your high expectations will be a major factor in your child's success.

- The Advanced Studies Diploma requires students to have 26 credits (5 verified). This diploma is Virginia's highest diploma and requires students to complete three years of a foreign language and advanced math classes. This is the best diploma for children wishing to attend a four-year college.
- The Standard Diploma requires students to have 22 credits (5 verified). Although a student can attend a four-year college with this diploma, it is more suitable for students wishing to attend a community college or start a career after graduation.
- The Applied Studies Diploma is only available to students identified as having a disability who complete the requirements of their individualized education programs (IEPs), but do not meet the requirements for the diplomas above. The Applied Studies Diploma is not available for students with 504 Plans.

Critical Decision: Understanding assessment options and their relationship to diplomas/long-term goals.

When:

If your student wants to earn a standard diploma or an advanced studies diploma, they must take the Standards of Learning (SOL). If they have difficulties with passing an SOL assessment, there are alternatives. Students with an IEP can utilize testing accommodations and/or utilize special credit accommodations to obtain a diploma. The student's IEP or 504 Plan must specify any credit accommodations applicable for them to utilize the accommodation to earn the diploma.

Credit accommodations will not negatively impact their chances of earning a Standard or Advanced Studies diploma. A full list of credit accommodations and alternate assessments may be found here:

- [Substitute Tests for Verified Credit | Virginia Department of Education](#)
- [Credit Accommodations for Students with Disabilities | Virginia Department of Education](#)
- [Credit Accommodations At A Glance](#) (Downloadable from the linked page).

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.

Questions to ask the school:

- How do the decisions that we are making in middle school about my child's participation in state assessments relate to the diploma options that will be available to her?
- What are the key factors I should consider in making decisions about diploma options?
- When is the latest point at which I will be able to change my mind about my child's diploma option?
- How do transition planning and diploma options align?
- Does my child need support from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services and/or the Department of the Blind and Visually Impaired?
- How do I participate in Transition Planning?
- How does my student participate in their transition planning?
- How can credit accommodations help my child earn a Standard or an Advanced Studies Diploma?
- What courses can my child take in middle school that will count for high school credit?
- If my child does not do well on the middle school course that counts for high school credit, what procedure can I follow to make sure the grade doesn't appear on the high school transcript?
- What is an industry certification and is my child required to earn one?
- What are the key steps we should be following as a team to assist with my child's successful transition from high school to post-school goals?
- What should be included in my child's transition plan?
- What if my child changes his mind about what he wants to do?
- What are the Pre-ETS services and opportunities that are available to my child?

Key Decision Points Standard Diploma Middle to High School

