

# ***Pathways To The Diploma***

***New Mexico  
Public Education Department  
Technical Assistance Manual***



## ***Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities***

Special Education Office  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Revised, Fall 2005

This document will be updated upon issuance of IDEA 2004 regulations.



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**The office of the Secretary of Education would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their assistance in this project.**

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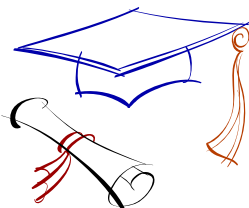
*Dan Farley*, NMPED Educational Consultant

Additional copies of this document can be downloaded from the Public Education Department Web-Site: Pathway's address:

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/transition/tam.pathways.to.diploma.pdf>

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# *Technical Assistance Manual Pathways to the Diploma*

*Our task is to provide an education for the kinds of kids we have, not the kinds of kids we use to have, or want to have, or the kids that exist in our dreams.*

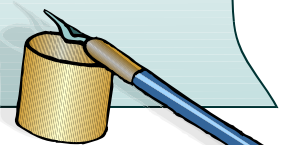
*K.P. Gerlach*

## *History of the Pathways to the Diploma*

The New Mexico Public Education Department's (the Department) Special Education Bureau (SEB) prepared this manual to assist IEP teams in planning a program of study based on a student's post-school goals and graduation requirements. New Mexico is one of many states with a high stakes graduation exam. However, New Mexico is the only state that provides options for students with disabilities to earn a standard diploma. These options, or pathways, enable the IEP team to develop a program of study that is most conducive to preparing a student to achieve his or her post-school goals and maintain the integrity of the high school diploma.

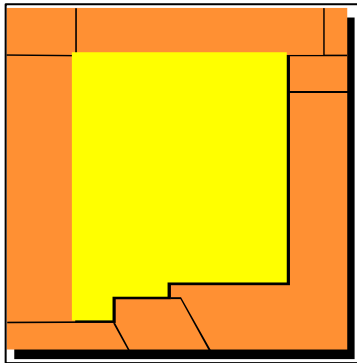
The value of the high school diploma is currently under debate at state and national levels because of the gap between the skills required for graduation and the expectations of employers and higher education. In the past, the high school diploma was valued as an earned document that provided access to employment, training programs, military options, and higher education. Research shows that individuals who receive a diploma run less of a risk of being incarcerated or institutionalized. Diploma recipients became contributors to systems rather than dependents on systems. However, many argue that the value of the diploma has depreciated, due to lowered academic expectations and to social promotions of ill-prepared students. In order to maintain the integrity of the diploma, it is important that all three graduation options for students with disabilities promote high expectations, provide access to the general curriculum, provide a curriculum that is rigorous and relevant, and use evidence based practices that help students with disabilities successfully meet graduation requirements that better prepares them to achieve their post-school goals.

All students must have the opportunity to participate in a rigorous and relevant curriculum that promotes high expectations.



## *Previous State Regulation*

The previous state regulation regarding Individualized Education Program (IEP) graduation read as follows: “Districts shall establish policies for awarding a diploma or certificate of completion in situations where students do not meet graduation requirements. In accordance with local policy, districts may award a diploma to a student receiving special education services upon completion of a planned course of study based upon IEP objectives



in lieu of required criteria for a high school diploma. The student’s IEP team is responsible for recommending to the local school board whether it is appropriate for the student to receive a high school diploma or a certificate of completion. [01-27-85, 10-31-96]”

Prior to, the development of the *Pathways to a Diploma*, there were significant concerns surrounding the issuance of diplomas to students with disabilities. In fact, two local school boards in the state of New Mexico were unwilling to approve the issuance of high school diplomas to students in special education programs after the students’ successful completion of the goals and objectives outlined in their IEPs. As a result, an ad hoc group made up of parents, legislators, special educators, and administrators proposed legislation that would give IEP teams the right to award diplomas based on student attainment of defined goals and objectives. During the 1997 legislative session, a bill recognizing the IEP team’s decisions and recommendations passed both the House and Senate, signifying that the IEP team is most knowledgeable as to student needs and thus best able to make final decisions as to whether a student has indeed earned a diploma. The governor, at that time, vetoed the bill, stating that the State Board of Education (SBE) should address the issue of IEP graduation.

## *OCR Complaint*

In 1997, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) received a complaint alleging the then New Mexico State Department of Education with a discriminatory practice by allowing the local school boards to override IEP team decisions in the area of awarding diplomas to students with disabilities.

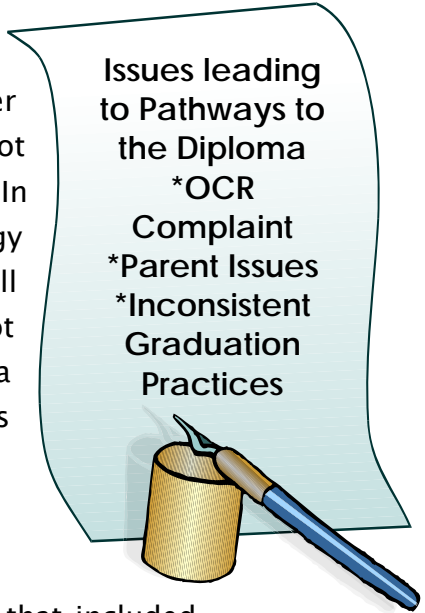


## *Parental Concerns*

Around that same time, parents from around the state also expressed concerns to the Department that there was no consistency with regard to the issuance of the diploma. In some cases, students in special education programs were receiving certificates of completion rather than diplomas. Others were receiving diplomas at age 18 only to find their access to needed transition or support services prematurely terminated. In some cases, the lack of comprehensive transition planning left students without a plan for earning their diplomas or accessing adult services upon graduation. Alarming, the percentage of dropouts, unemployed, and incarcerated youth was found to be much higher among former special education students.

## *Inconsistencies around the State*

In 1997 and 1998, the Department found that inconsistencies prevailed around the state. Some districts issued certificates of completion rather than diplomas to students in full-day special education programs who had good attendance and achieved their IEP goals. Other districts awarded diplomas to students even though they had not completed their IEP goals or earned enough high school credits. In some cases, students with accommodations or assistive technology received certificates of completion even though they had met all the graduation requirements. Finally, some districts would not honor programs of study that originated in other districts and a lack of reciprocity existed between educational settings throughout the state.



**Issues leading to Pathways to the Diploma**  
\*OCR  
Complaint  
\*Parent Issues  
\*Inconsistent Graduation Practices

## *Integrity, Consistency, and Accountability*

In 1997, the Department created the IEP Graduation Task Force that included state consultants, special educators, guidance counselors, parents, advocates, administrators, and state agencies. The Task Force's charge was to address three issues concerning the diploma: integrity, consistency, and accountability. There was a strong desire to maintain the integrity of the diploma by setting and maintaining high standards for students receiving special education services. The Task Force believed that establishing state policy and providing guidance to districts would create consistency in graduation practices across the state for students receiving special education services. It also emphasized the need for higher accountability for the IEP team and the need to allow all students to reach their highest potential regardless of the severity of the disability.

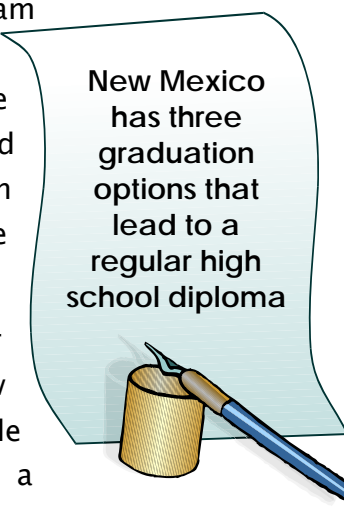
## *The Goal of the IEP Graduation Task Force*

The goal of the Task Force was to bring consistency to graduation requirements and procedures across all schools and agencies under the authority of the SBE and to protect all students, including those students with disabilities. Therefore, the Task Force established the pathways to the diploma. The SBE approved the new state rules with regard to IEP graduation in November of 1998, revised those rules in November 2002, and in July 2005. In April 2003, New Mexico legislators revised graduation requirements for all students. The revised IEP graduation rules, graduation requirements, and guidelines for implementing the pathways are included in this document.

## *Pathways to the Diploma*

For the purposes of this technical assistance manual, a pathway is a planned program of study (courses, IEP goals, objectives, and benchmarks) designed to address the needs of individual students. The IEP team plays a key role in the IEP graduation process. The team should consist of the student, parent, special educator, regular educator, vocational educator, building administrator or designee, transition specialist, related service provider(s), evaluation and/or diagnostic specialist, adult service provider(s), and others per family request. The IEP team determines the most appropriate pathway based upon student needs and impact of the disability. The team must document the rationale for the particular pathway in the IEP, and review and update goals and objectives annually. The IEP team also has the responsibility of verifying that the student achieved all program goals and objectives leading to graduation and receipt of a high school diploma. The initial transition planning process begins at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade IEP by helping students define their courses of study and develop their four-year plans. Students receiving special education services are able to earn their high school diploma by following one of three pathways.

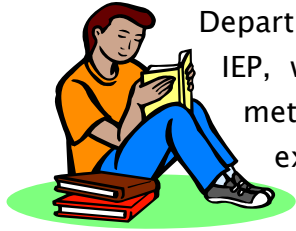
**Standard Pathway**—a program of study based upon meeting or surpassing all requirements for graduation as identified in the New Mexico Standards of Excellence, with or without reasonable accommodations of delivery and assessment methods. In addition, a student must pass all sections of the current state graduation examination(s) administered under standard administration or with state approved accommodations and meet all other standard graduation requirements established by the district. The IEP team selects required courses and electives based on the student's post-school goals, strengths, interests, and needs. **If the IEP team chooses a pathway other than the standard, the team must provide documentation for selecting the career readiness or ability pathway.**



New Mexico has three graduation options that lead to a regular high school diploma



**Career Readiness Pathway**—a program of study based upon meeting the Public Education



Department's Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks as defined in the IEP, with or without reasonable modification of delivery and assessment methods. In addition, a student must take the current state graduation examination(s) under standard administration or with state-approved accommodations and achieve a level proficiency determined by the IEP team. The student must earn at least the minimum number of credits

required by the district for graduation through standard or alternative courses. The IEP team determines the course of study the student will complete. The course of study and the IEP goals must be designed to assist the student in achieving competency in all areas of the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks. The career readiness pathway takes into account the individual student's strengths, interest, career preference, and needs and allows for the substitution of classes as appropriate. The IEP team bases the goals and objectives on the student's needs and the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks (See Appendix A). The team uses the IEP to document mastery of those standards and benchmarks.

**Ability Pathway**—a program of study based upon meeting or surpassing IEP goals and objectives, with or without reasonable modification of delivery and assessment methods, referencing skill attainment at a student's ability level, which may lead to meaningful employment. The IEP team designs the ability pathway to meet the student's needs with IEP goals, objectives, and benchmarks developed to provide the most appropriate program for the student. Typically, IEP teams develop the ability pathway for students with severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities or students with severe mental health challenges. The ability pathway varies from the standard high school graduation requirements. Students on the ability pathway must take either the current state graduation examination(s) or the State's Alternate Assessment and achieves a level of proficiency determined by the IEP team. The IEP team must individualize the ability pathway for each student's needs.

Once the IEP team has identified a pathway and developed an appropriate IEP, the team is required to assess and document student progress and to update goals, objectives, and benchmarks annually or as needed. Any alternative pathway may depart from the standard path only as far as necessary to meet the student's needs as determined by the IEP team. IEP teams ***cannot change a senior's pathway after the 20<sup>th</sup> school calendar day***



except in situations where a senior experiences an unusual medical emergency. All requests for a waiver for special circumstances must be submitted to the New Mexico Public Education Department's SEB for review. **[Emphasis added]**

High schools must maintain an accurate accounting of graduation pathways for students with disabilities. The pathway rules require districts to ensure that 80–100 percent of graduating seniors are on the standard pathway and no more than 10–15 percent of the





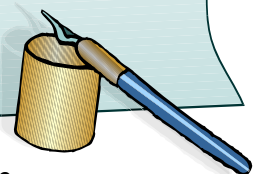
students shall graduate on the career readiness pathway, and no more than 1–3 percent of the students shall graduate on the ability pathway. This rule is in effect beginning with the students in ninth and tenth grade during the 2005–2006 school year. Schools exceeding the maximum percentages will be required to submit a waiver for all students affected to the Public Education Department’s Special Education Bureau for review.

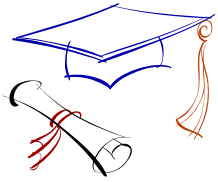
Successful completion of the selected pathway earns the student a high school diploma and the right to participate equally in all graduation activities. The receipt of a high school diploma terminates access to special education services, as does the General Education Development (GED) (*See Appendix B*)

## *Certificate with a Follow-up Plan of Action*

IEP teams may use a certificate when a student has completed the high school portion of his or her education, and is on track for graduation, but the student still has transition or academic needs that must be addressed by school staff and adult service providers working together. In these instances, a student may receive a certificate that entitles him or her to participate in graduation activities and continue toward obtaining the high school diploma based on a plan to implement transition services. The certificate is not a graduation pathway or graduation option for students with disabilities. A certificate of any type *does not end a student’s right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE)*. The certificate with follow-up plan of action allows for assistance with accessing adult services, seeking and maintaining employment, or pursuing post secondary training with support. The follow-up plan of action must be in the form of an IEP and it must identify responsibilities of the student, families, and the school to ensure the student receives a diploma. The student receives the diploma upon successful completion of the IEP goals and transition outcomes.

A certificate is not a graduation option and does not end a student’s right to FAPE.





## *Guidelines for All Pathways*

The IEP is the overriding document of planning for a student receiving special education and related services to progress through the educational process, up to and including graduation and exit considerations, pursuant to the applicable federal and state laws and rules (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004(20 U.S.C. Sec. 1401 et seq), and the New Mexico Standards for Excellence (6.30.2)). The IEP should be coordinated and developed with a graduation plan, which includes the multi-year program of study for each student who progresses through a high school program. By the end of the eighth grade, each student's IEP must contain a proposed individual program of study for the grades remaining until high school graduation. These multi-year plans are based on the student's post-school goals, thus personalizing learning and providing relevance. These programs of study must be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

- 1) The multi-year plan must:
  - Be a part of all IEPs for students with disabilities in grades 8 through 12
  - Identify by name all course options the student may take in the remaining years until graduation
  - Reflect the student's long-range measurable post-school goals
  - Be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted to address the student's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs
- 2) The IEP team is responsible for developing a multi-year plan that is most conducive to preparing a student to achieve his or her post-school goals.
  - The composition of the IEP team must meet federal and state requirements.
  - When a graduation pathway is proposed, an individual knowledgeable about high school curriculum should be included on the team.
  - The parent(s) and student should be members of this team, and sign to verify and accept graduation plans. (Parent participation is not mandatory if the student is 18 years of age unless the parent has legally retained guardianship.)
  - A building administrator or designee who has knowledge about the student must be a member of the team when an alternative program of study is developed and must be able to verify and accept completed plans for students with disabilities on the career and ability pathways.
- 3) Pathway selection is an IEP team decision. Parents and students must be a part of the decision-making process. The student's graduation needs and personal goals are the **primary considerations** for developing and identifying a pathway. The IEP team must:

- Base all decisions on the student’s strengths, needs, measurable post–school goals, interest, and preferences
  - Begin discussion on graduation plans at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade IEP, including plans for the transition to high school and pathway leading to the diploma (most students with a disability entering ninth grade should be on the standard pathway)
  - **Consider the pathways in the order of the options listed in regulation.** If the IEP team chooses an alternative pathway, the team must
    - justify and document the reasons for doing so in the IEP;
    - provide sufficient documentation as a basis for its initial decision to place a student on a pathway other than the standard pathway;
    - notify parents and students of potential consequences of this decision; and
    - base all decisions on the needs of the student and **not** on the student’s ability to earn required credits or pass the current exit exam
- 4) Assessing and documenting student progress toward graduation is crucial to the overall process. IEP teams must document the following information on the student’s IEP:
- Review and document progress toward graduation on an annual basis for all students in grades 8–12
  - Document skill attainment and progress toward achieving competencies
  - document each student’s progress toward earning required graduation credits and passing the current graduation examination(s)
  - Ensure and document that requirements of the student’s pathway are met
  - Revise the IEP to reflect any changes in the student’s graduation needs and/or plans
  - Identify supports and services that will help students achieve IEP goals and meet graduation requirements
- 5) Transition planning is an important part of the IEP process beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when a student is 16. The IEP team should address the following components of transition planning:
- Coach every student to think about goals for life after high school and develop a long range plan
  - Ensure the IEP contains appropriate measurable post–school goals based upon age–appropriate transition assessments, and that these are updated annually
  - Plan how to make the high school experience relate to each student’s post–school goals
  - Ensure that each student gains the skills and competencies needed to achieve his or her desired post–school goals
  - Identify and link students and families to needed post–school services, supports, or programs before the student exits the school system

- Ensure that the student has necessary evaluations, documents, or reports to facilitate a smooth transition to adult services and/or postsecondary institutions
  - Ensure that all domain areas of transition (instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation) are considered and documented in the IEP, pursuant to the federal statutes and implementing federal and state special education regulations
- 6) Student with disabilities must take the current state graduation and/or exit exam or the state approved New Mexico Alternate Assessment. The IEP must specify:
- Which assessment
  - Are accommodations necessary, if so
  - What accommodations are needed
- 7) IEP teams must determine if the student is eligible for participation in an alternate assessment according to the following criteria:
- The student's past and present levels of performance in multiple settings indicates that a significant cognitive disability is present;
  - The student needs intensive, pervasive, or extensive levels of support in school, home, and community settings; and
  - The student's current cognitive and adaptive skills and performance levels require direct instruction to accomplish acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of skills in multiple settings.
- 8) As a best practice IEP teams should identify strategies that will help the student master skills required to pass the assessment for students on the standard pathway or to achieve the level of proficiency determined by the IEP team for students graduating on the career readiness or ability pathway. The team should also consider identifying who will be responsible for ensuring the completion of the above items.



Note: The NMPED strongly encourages IEP teams to review the 2005–2006 Procedures Manual for guidance on selecting appropriate accommodations.

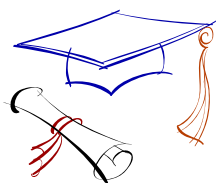
- 9) Additional responsibilities for IEP teams include the following:
- Monitor and report student progress toward meeting IEP goals to parents with at least the same frequency as the reporting schedule for non-disabled students
  - Verify that each student achieved program goals and objectives leading to graduation and receipt of a high school diploma
  - Protect the integrity of the diploma for all students by complying fully with the requirements of the pathways to the diploma

- Ensure that the IEP and Prior Written Notice of Actions Proposed (PWN), given to the parents at the end of each IEP meeting, reflects the students progress toward his or her graduation plans as he or she transitions into high school, and at all points in the process



Note: See the Public Education Department's *Technical Assistance Manual: Developing Quality IEP's* for assistance and forms.

- 10) Pursuant to the IDEA 2004—and state rules, IEP teams must provide each eligible student with a summary of the student's academic achievement, functional performance, and additional recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her post-school goals.
- 11) The Department strongly recommends that building administrators monitor progress of each student with a disability toward graduation plan requirements throughout high school.
- 12) When the exit IEP team meets to review the pathway and the student's progress to determine if the student has fulfilled graduation plan requirements, the building administrator must be included on the team. **The building administrator is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the graduation process.**
- 13) A student graduating under any pathway or receiving a certificate with a follow-up plan of transition must participate equitably in all graduation ceremonies.
- 14) **The least restrictive environment (LRE) principles apply to all graduation pathways, and IEP teams must ensure that the student has appropriate access to the general curriculum.**



## *Additional Guidelines for Standard Pathway*

- 1) The student must:
  - meet or exceed the requirements for graduation based on the Standards for Excellence (6.30.2 NMAC) and Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978;
  - meet all other standard graduation requirements of the district; and,
  - **pass** the current New Mexico graduation and/or exit exam with or without accommodations by obtaining the minimum level of proficiency and/or performance established by the Public Education Department.
- 2) Credits may include courses in which curriculum or instructional accommodations are applied as long as the student achieves the same competencies listed on the graduation requirements.

- 3) The IEP team should look closely at the student's 10<sup>th</sup> grade NMHSCE scores and treat those scores as baseline of performance from which the IEP team identifies strategies to improve a student's skills and enable him or her to pass the current state graduation and/or exit exam. **Steps for teams to follow are:**
- Ensure progress in the general curriculum so that a student can meet the same educational standards that apply to all students.
  - Align goals to the state standards with benchmarks and assessment and focus on helping the student attain the skills needed to achieve standards reflected in assessment.
  - Be sure the student takes practice assessments. A student may know the material but if not familiar with the test format, he or she may have difficulty passing the test.



The SEB strongly encourages the use of the *New Mexico High School Competency Examination Domain Specifications* to help prepare students for the exit exam test format. This document will be on the SEB website in the near future.

- 4) If the student passes the graduation exit exam on the first attempt, the IEP team should work to ensure that the student meets all other requirements for graduation on the standard pathway.
- 5) If the student's transition plan includes accessing services such as special services at the post-secondary level or Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Services the IEP team should determine whether the student requires updated evaluations, reports, or documents to support a smooth and effective transition to the post-secondary setting.



See *Case Studies, Luke's Story*, on page 33 for an example of the standard program of study.





## *Additional Guidelines for Career Readiness*

### *Pathway*

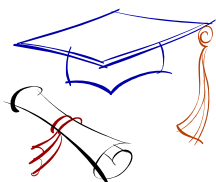
- 1) Completion of the career readiness pathway requires that a student **achieve** his or her IEP goals and objectives based on the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks. (See Appendix A) The five Career Readiness Standards are as follows:
  - Identify student career interests and aptitudes to develop an educational plan that supports personal career goals
  - Utilize and manage resources effectively to produce quality services and products
  - Demonstrate the technological knowledge and skills required for future careers
  - Develop and demonstrate responsible and ethical workplace behaviors
  - Develop effective leadership, interpersonal, and team skills
- 2) The IEP team must consider the standard pathway first. If the IEP team changes the student's pathway from the standard to the career readiness, the team must:
  - Justify and document the reasons for rejecting the standard pathway on the IEP and PWN
  - Provide parents and students with a clear, concise definition of the career readiness pathway
  - Notify parents and students of potential consequences of the choice that may limit the student's post-school options
  - Demonstrate that sufficient documentation and evidence exists to support its decision to place the student on the career readiness pathway
  - Base all decisions on the needs of the student and **not** solely on the student's ability to earn required credits or pass the current exit exam
- 3) To earn a diploma on the career readiness pathway a student must:
  - earn at least the district's required number of credits (the IEP team determines the standard and alternate courses that will make up the student's program of study);
  - achieve competency in all areas of the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks; and,
  - take the current graduation exam and achieve a level of proficiency determined by the student's IEP team.
- 4) The IEP team should document the classes, courses, and/or experiences which will be used to assure that the student achieves the five listed standards as identified in the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks in the student's IEP.



- 5) Districts are encouraged to devise ways to document on the transcript, or other permanent document, the fact that the student has achieved benchmarks and other requirements identified on his or her pathway.
- 6) In the best interest of the student, a high school counselor should be included in the IEP meeting to assist students and other team members in developing the pathway.



*See Case Studies, Angela's Story, on page 34, for an example of the career readiness program of study.*



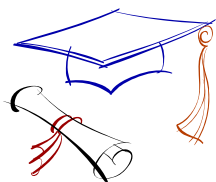
## ***Additional Guidelines for Ability Pathway***

- 1) Under the Ability graduation plan, the majority of the goals and objectives relate to functional life and community skills. The ability program of study was developed for students who have a significant cognitive disability or severe mental health issues.
- 2) To graduate on this pathway, it must be the case that
  - a student has been consistently working toward identified goals, objectives, and benchmarks, developed by the IEP team; and,
  - has achieved a level of success that the IEP team agrees is commensurate with the student's abilities
- 3) The IEP team must consider the standard pathway first. If the IEP team rejects the standard pathway and career readiness pathway the team must:
  - Justify and document the reasons for rejecting the standard pathway and career readiness pathway on the PWN
  - Provide parents and students with a clear, concise definition of the ability pathway
  - Notify parents and students of potential consequences of the choice that may limit the student's post-school options
  - Demonstrate that sufficient documentation and evidence exists to support its decision to place the student on the ability pathway
  - Base all decisions on the needs of the student and **not** on the student's ability to earn required credits or pass the current exit exam
- 4) The student must successfully complete the requirements of the ability pathway and his or her IEP by participating in specially designed programs that meet his or her educational and transition service needs through community-based instruction, transportation, work experience, community participation, recreation and leisure, accessing adult services, independent living skills, etc.

- 5) The IEP team must document student progress toward goals and objectives, referencing skill attainment.
- 6) The student must take either the current state graduation examination(s) administered pursuant to NMSA 1978, Sec. 22-13-1.1(I) or the state-approved alternate assessment, achieving a level of proficiency to be determined by the student's IEP team, and meet all other graduation requirements established by the IEP team.



*See Case Studies, John's Story, on page 35 and Ramona's Story, on page 37 for examples of the ability program of study.*



## ***Establishing a Level of Proficiency***

### ***Career Readiness and Ability Pathway***

- 1) "Target level of proficiency" is a score on the current graduation exam, determined by the IEP team as the proficiency level the student must reach to graduate.
- 2) To establish the target level of proficiency the IEP team must review the student's performance on the **first** attempt, which currently occurs during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of the 10 grade.
- 3) The IEP team must establish a targeted proficiency level on all sections where the student's score falls below the states minimum requirement.
- 4) For the purposes of accountability and reporting, if the score determined by the IEP team falls short of the state's minimum requirement, the district must report the student as a **no pass** on the graduation examination.
- 5) If the student meets the IEP team's determined level of proficiency and the determined level is less than the state's minimum requirement, the student will **not** have the option to move to the standard pathway.
- 6) The IEP must document the target levels of proficiency on the IEP and PWN and outline a plan of action to be taken by both the student and the district to assist the student in meeting the target level of proficiency.
- 7) The IEP team should look closely at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade test scores and identify strategies to improve student's skills to achieve the level of competency determine by the team.

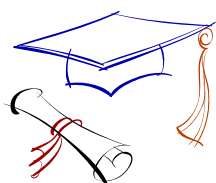
#### **Steps for teams to follow are as follows:**

- The level of competency must be reasonable and based on the student's present level of educational performance in a variety of settings.

- Ensure progress in the general curriculum so that a student can meet the educational standards that apply to all students.
- Align goals and objectives to the state standards with benchmarks.
- Focus on helping the student attain the skills needed to achieve standards reflected in assessment.
- Be sure the student takes practice assessments. A student may know the material, but if he or she is not familiar with the test format, he or she will have difficulty passing the test.
- Ensure that the targeted proficiency score is higher than the score achieved by the student on the first attempt, in order to promote progress.



The targeted level of proficiency is determined after the student's first attempt at the exit exam.



## *Guidelines for Issuing a Certificate with a Follow-up Plan of Action*

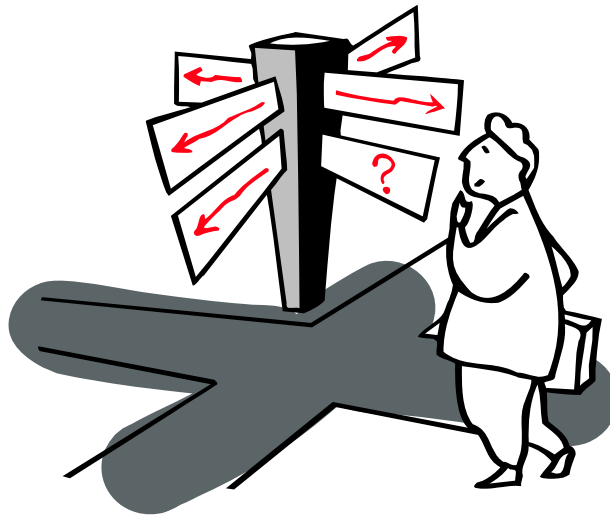
- 1) The IEP team must:
  - Review graduation plans on an annual basis for students in grades 8–12
  - Provide documentation and justification that the issuance of a certificate with a follow-up plan is warranted (See Case Studies on pages 38–40 and Frequently Ask Questions pages 44–53)
  - Evaluate and document on the PWN the student's progress toward meeting diploma requirements for his or her identified program of study
  - Provide PWN that a student will receive a certificate with a follow-up plan of action at least one year prior to graduation ceremonies
- 2) The certificate with a follow-up plan of action
  - Indicates the student has attended four years (or more) of high school
  - **Does not terminate the student's eligibility for special education services**
  - Is not reported as an "exit" on ADS
  - Allows the student to participate equitably in all graduation activities
  - Does not end the student's right to FAPE
  - Allows the student to return to school for additional educational and transition needs

- 3) Before awarding a certificate with the follow-up plan of action, the IEP team must agree to the following:
  - The student's program and instruction have been appropriate
  - The student has maintained realistic efforts to meet IEP goals
  - The student has attended four or more years of high school
  - The student can participate equitably in all graduation activities
  - **The student has a follow-up plan of action in the form of a transition IEP**
- 4) Before awarding a certificate, districts must ensure that the student's certificate has a "follow-up plan of action" as part of the transition plan.
- 5) The follow-up plan of action must outline the responsibility of the district, the student, and the family to ensure the student receives a high school diploma.
- 6) Upon satisfactory completion of the "follow-up plan of action," the student will receive his or her diploma, and be reported as an exited student on ADS.
- 7) A student who does not return to complete the follow-up plan of action will be considered a dropout.

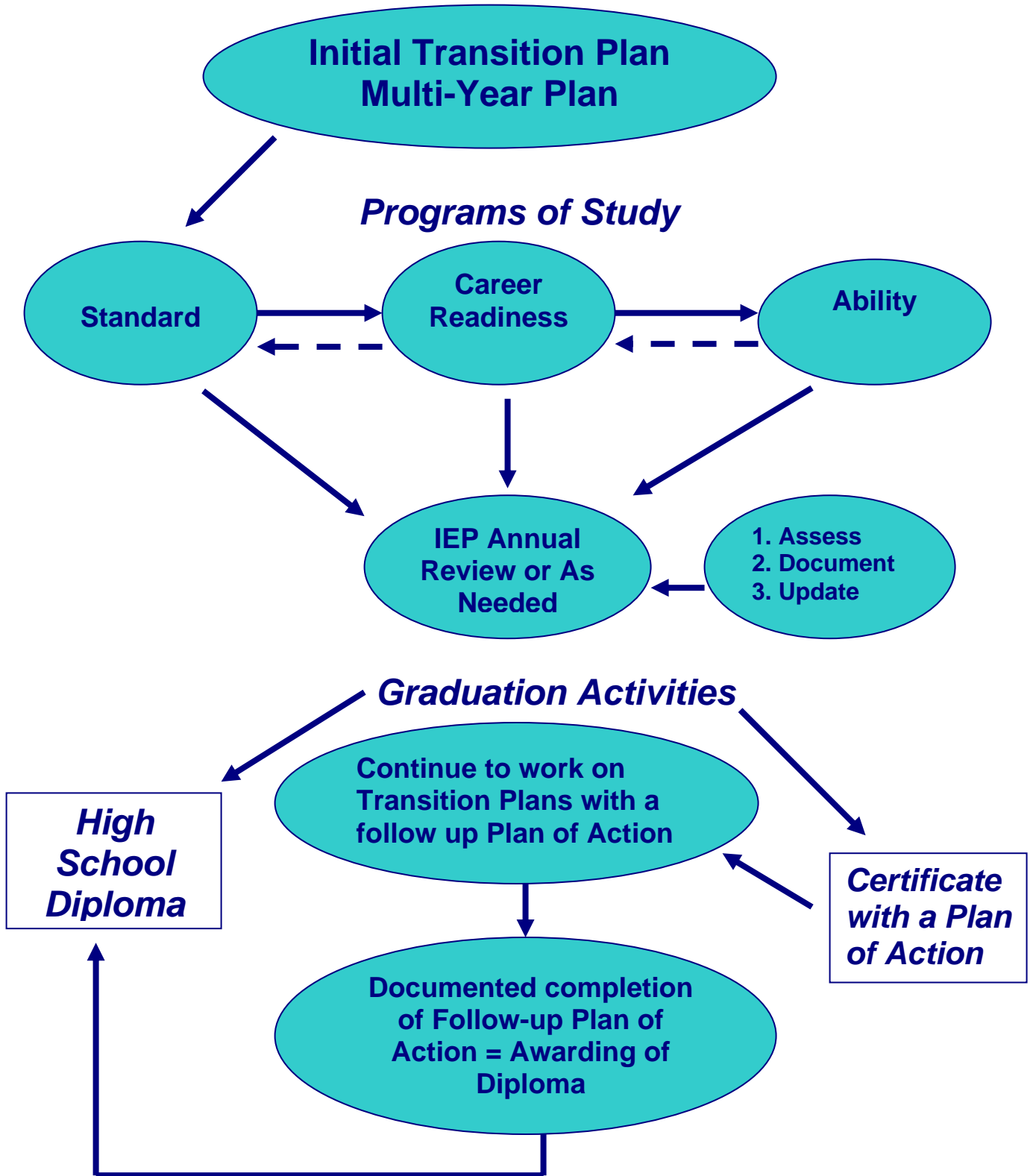


*See Case Studies, Robert's Story, on page 38, Jerry's Story, on page 38, Tommy's Story, on page 39 and Mariah's Story, on page 40, for examples of using the certificate.*

***Pages 1-5 of the current state recommended IEP form will guide IEP teams as they address the issues of long-range planning, identifying student strengths and concerns, transition planning, and pathways.***



# Identifying the Diploma Path



## Pathways to the Diploma Requirements

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is responsible for determining whether the student has completed a planned program of study making him or her eligible to receive a diploma or certificate. Upon completion of a planned program of study that meets the following requirements, the student will be awarded a diploma. The initial transition planning process begins at age fourteen by helping students define their courses of study and develop their four-year plans.

Students receiving special education services are able to earn their high school diploma or certificate in one of three programs of study (Subsection J of NMAC 6.30.2.10 Procedural Requirements for Graduation) GRADUATION PLANS MUST BE PART OF ALL IEP'S. (Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA Graduation Requirements Revised 2005.)

<b>PATHWAY</b>	<b>Basis</b>	<b>HS Competency Exam</b>	<b>Graduation Requirements</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>STANDARD</b>	<p>Meeting or surpassing all district requirements for graduation based on New Mexico Standards for Excellence with or without reasonable modification of delivery and assessment methods</p>	<p>Must pass all sections of the NMHSCE under standard administration or with state-approved accommodations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 units- English</li> <li>• 3 units- Math: <i>For students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2003-2004, at least 1 unit must be equivalent to algebra 1 or higher.</i></li> <li>• 2 units- Science (1 shall have lab component) <i>Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2005-2006 need 3 units</i></li> <li>• 3 units- Social Science (US history &amp; geography, world history and geography, and government and economics)</li> <li>• One-half New Mexico History for students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2005-2006</li> <li>• 1 unit- physical education or other physical activity</li> <li>• 1 unit- communication skills or business education</li> <li>• 9 elective units* <i>Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2005-2006 will need 7.5 elective units</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><i>The IEP team must consider the pathways in the order of the options listed in regulation.</i></b></p> <p><b>If the IEP team chooses a pathway other than the standard, the team must justify and document the reasons for doing so.</b></p> <p><b>Any modified pathway may depart from the standard path only as far as necessary to meet the individual student's needs.</b></p> <p><b>Graduation plans must be a part of all IEPs beginning with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade IEP and at all points thereafter.</b></p>
<b>CAREER</b>	<p>Meeting the SBE's Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks as defined in the IEP with or without reasonable modifications of delivery and assessment methods**</p>	<p>Must take the NMHSCE achieving a level of competency or targeted proficiency as determined by the IEP team.</p>	<p>Earn the minimum number of credits required by the district for graduation. The IEP team determines the standard or alternate courses that will make up the student's program of study.</p>	<p>Must achieve competency in all areas of the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks as determined by the IEP team.</p>

<b>PATHWAY</b>	<b>Basis</b>	<b>HS Competency Exam</b>	<b>Graduation Requirements</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>ABILITY</b>	Meeting or surpassing IEP goals and objectives, with or without reasonable modifications of delivery and assessment methods, referencing skill attainment at a student's ability level, which may lead to meaningful employment.	Must take the NMHSCE achieving a level of competency as determined by the IEP team, or the New Mexico Alternate Assessment if the student meets the participation criteria.	Meet all other graduation requirements established by the IEP team.	<p>Under this graduation plan, the majority of the goals and objectives relate to life and community skills.</p> <p>The ability pathway was developed for students with significant cognitive disabilities or severe mental health issues who are unable to benefit from a standard or career path.</p>

 **The Certificate is not a Pathway to a Diploma. It is awarded to a student who is continuing to work on IEP goals.**

<b>CERTIFICATE</b>	A district may issue a certificate when a student has maintained realistic efforts to meet IEP goals, attended 4 years of high school, and is able to participate equitably in graduation activities.		<p>At least one year before graduation ceremonies, the IEP team must provide PWN stating that a student will receive a certificate.</p> <p>Before awarding a certificate, districts must ensure that every student receiving a certificate has a "follow-up plan of action" as part of the transition plan.</p> <p>The IEP "follow up-plan of action" outlines the measures to be taken by both the student and the district to ensure the student receives his or her diploma.</p>	<p>A certificate does not end the student's right to FAPE.</p> <p>The student is not reported as exited on ADS.</p> <p>If a student does not return to complete the "follow-up plan of action," the district must count the student as a dropout.</p>
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\* Elective units counted toward graduation requirements include: fine arts (music, band, chorus, and art), practical arts, P.E., language other than English, speech, drama, vocational education, mathematics, science, English, R.O.T.C., social science, computer science, health education, American Sign Language, and other electives approved by the State. *School districts should offer Student Service Learning as an elective.*

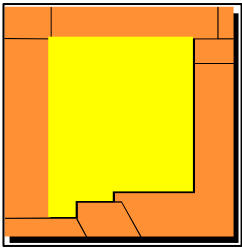
\*\* The Career Readiness Standards and Benchmarks are available through the NM State Department of Education website.

Subsection J (j) of 6:30.2.10 NMAC The IEP team will also determine whether additional evaluations, reports or documents are necessary to support a smooth and effective transition to post-secondary services for a student who will graduate on one of the three pathways. The school will arrange for such information to be provided at no cost to the students or parents.



The Northeast Regional Education Cooperative in collaboration with the Public Education Department's Special Education Bureau developed the Pathways Matrix.





## *New Mexico Rules and Statutes*

### NMAC 6.30.2.10 Procedural Requirements

#### **J. Graduation requirements**

- (9) Receipt of diploma or certificate: Governing principles that will guide the development, program of study, and the granting of a diploma or using a certificate with a follow up plan of action in the form of an IEP for students with disabilities receiving special education services are as follows:
- (a) The individualized education program (IEP) team is responsible for determining whether the student has completed a planned program of study, based on the student's interest, preferences, needs, and long-term educational or occupational goals, making him/her eligible to receive a diploma or certificate. The student will be awarded a diploma upon completion of a planned program of study that meets the following requirements:
  - (b) A student may be awarded a diploma (Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978) using any of the following programs of study. All IEP team discussions points and decisions identified herein, including the identification of the student's pathway, must be documented on the student's IEP and the Prior Written Notice (PWN) of proposed action.
    - (i) A standard program of study is based upon meeting or surpassing all requirements for graduation based on New Mexico Standards for Excellence with or without reasonable accommodations of delivery and assessment methods. In addition, a student must pass all sections of the current state graduation examination(s) administered pursuant to Section 22-13-1.1(I) NMSA 1978 under standard administration or with state-approved accommodations and meet all other standard graduation requirements of the district.
    - (ii) A career readiness program of study is based upon meeting the public education department's (PED's) Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks as defined in the IEP with or without reasonable accommodations of delivery and assessment methods. In addition, a student must take the current state graduation examination(s) administered pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section 22-13-1.1 (I) under standard administration or with state approved accommodations and achieve a level of competency pre-determined by the student's IEP team; earn the minimum number of credits required by the district for graduation, these credits can be standard or alternative courses as determined by the IEP team; and achieve competency in all areas of the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks as determined by the IEP team.

- (iii) An ability program of study is based upon meeting or surpassing IEP goals and objectives, with or without reasonable accommodations of delivery and assessment methods, referencing skill attainment at a student's ability level, which may lead to meaningful employment. The ability program of study was developed for students who have a significant cognitive disability or severe mental health issues. In addition, a student must take either the current state graduation examination(s) administered pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section 22-13-1.1 (l) under standard administration or with state-approved accommodations, or the state-approved alternate assessment. The student must achieve a level of competency pre-determined by the student's IEP team, for the current graduation examination or the state-approved alternate assessment, and meet all other graduation requirements established by the IEP team.
  - (iv) At the end of the eighth grade, each student's IEP must contain a proposed individual program of study for grades 9 through 12. The program of study must identify by name all course options the student may take and must reflect the student's long-range post-secondary goals. This program of study must be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted to address the student's interests, preferences, and needs. The IEP team must document each student's progress toward earning required graduation credits and passing the current graduation examination(s).
  - (v) Pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act at 20 USC 1414(c)(5)(B), a district shall provide each student with a disability who graduates or reaches the maximum age for special education services after July 1, 2005, with a summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting the child's postsecondary goals.
- (c) To establish a level of proficiency for the current graduation examination or the state-approved alternate assessment, IEP teams must review the student's performance on the first attempt and establish a targeted proficiency on all sections that are below the state's minimum requirement. This regulation applies only to those students who will graduate on the career readiness or ability programs of study. Students graduating on the standard program of study must meet the state's minimum requirements on all sections of the graduation examination. For those students who meet participation criteria for the New Mexico Alternate Assessment, IEP teams must set targeted levels of proficiency based upon previous performance on the test, if the student has previously been administered the New Mexico Alternate Assessment. If the student achieves an advanced level of overall performance on the state-approved alternate assessment, the IEP team must

- arrange for the student to participate in the general graduation examination and identify appropriate accommodations that the student may require.
- (i) IEP teams must document the targeted levels of proficiency on the IEP and the PWN, outlining the plan of action to be taken by both the student and the district to ensure the student will meet the targeted levels of proficiency.
- (d) Departures from the standard program of study for students receiving special education must be considered in the order of the options listed in subparagraph (b) of paragraph (9) of subsection J of 6.30.2.10 NMAC. Any modified program of study may depart from a standard program only as far as is necessary to meet an individual student's educational needs as determined by the IEP team. A building administrator or designee who has knowledge about the student must be a member of the team when an alternative program of study is developed.
- (i) Districts must document changes from the standard pathway on the PWN, IEP teams must identify the reasons for changing the student's pathway, provide parents with clear concise definitions of the career readiness or ability pathway, and notify parents and students of the potential consequences that may limit the student's post-secondary options.
  - (ii) IEP teams shall not change a senior's program of study from the standard to the career readiness or from the career readiness to the ability, after the 20<sup>th</sup> school day of the senior year, except in situations where seniors experience unusual medical emergencies. Waivers for special exceptions must be sent to the PED Special Education Bureau for review. IEP teams may change a student's pathway from the ability to the career readiness program of study, or from career readiness to the standard program of study if the student meets the graduation requirements of that program of study.
  - (iii) Districts shall maintain as accurate accounting of graduation pathways for students with disabilities and ensure that 80–100 percent of graduating seniors are on the standard pathway and no more than 10–15 percent of the students shall graduate on the career readiness pathway, and no more than 1–3 percent of the students shall graduate on the ability pathway. Districts exceeding the above maximum percentages must submit a request for a waiver to PED Special Education Bureau for review on each student affected.
- (e) A student who receives special education services may be granted a certificate with a follow-up plan of action when:
- (i) the IEP team provides sufficient documentation and justification that the issuance of a certificate with a follow-up plan of action for an individual student is warranted.
  - (ii) at least one year before graduation, the IEP team provides PWN stating the student will receive a certificate with a follow-up plan of action.

- (iii) the district ensures that prior to receiving a certificate, the student has a follow-up plan of action that is a part of transition planning before awarding a certificate.
- (iv) the IEP team has outlined measures to be taken by both the student and the district to ensure the student receives a diploma.
- (f) A student who does not return to complete the follow-up plan of action will be considered as a dropout.
- (g) A student who receives a certificate is eligible to continue receiving special education services until receipt of a diploma or until the end of the academic year in which the student turns 22.
- (h) Graduation plans must be a part of all IEPs:
  - (i) at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade or age 14 and concurrent with the development of the 4 year course of study.
  - (ii) when a student returns to a school after an extended absence, and if an IEP program of study may have been developed but needs to be reviewed.
  - (iii) at any subsequent time when evaluations warrant the need for a modified program of study.
- (i) Graduation plans must be a part of all of all IEPs and annual reviews and must follow the student in all educational settings. Receiving institutions that fall under the PED jurisdiction will recognize these graduation plans, subject to revision by new IEP teams, if appropriate, to meet a student's changing needs.
- (j) At the exit IEP meeting the IEP team will review the student's transition plan and confirm and document that all district requirements for graduation under the final IEP have been satisfied. A building administrator who has knowledge about the student must be a member of this team, and sign specifically to verify and accept completed graduation plans, goals and objectives, pursuant to sub-paragraphs (i) (ii) and (iii) of subparagraph (b) of paragraph (9) of subsection J of 6.30.2.10 NMAC or plans for a certificate and follow-up program pursuant to subparagraph (e) of paragraph (9) of subsection J of 6.30.2.10 NMAC. The IEP team will also determine whether additional evaluations, reports, or documents are necessary to support a smooth and effective transition to post-secondary services for a student who will graduate on one of the three pathways. The school will arrange for such information to be provided at no cost to the students or parents. The students who are determined as eligible to receive the diploma through an alternate path shall be submitted to the local superintendent and the local school board by using the students' identification numbers. This information shall be treated as confidential in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- (k) The receipt of a diploma terminates the service eligibility of students with special education needs.

- (l) All diplomas awarded by a school district must be identical in appearance, content, and effect, except that symbols or notations may be added to individual student's diplomas to reflect official school honors or awards earned by students.
- (m) The provisions of subparagraph (9) of subsection J of 6.30.2.10 NMAC become effective for students graduating in 2006 and future years, except that the provision of subparagraph (9)(d)(iii) becomes effective with 2005–2006 students entering the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
- (n) Excuses from physical education: The physical education graduation requirement may be waived by the state secretary of education, based upon a request by the local superintendent with documentation from a licensed medical doctor, osteopath, certified nurse practitioner with prescriptive authority, or chiropractor, that the student has a permanent or chronic condition that does not permit physical activity. A student with a disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act may also be eligible to request this waiver when appropriate medical documentation is provided in the individualized education program (IEP).

### **6.31.2.11 EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

**E. Participation in Statewide and District-wide Assessments.** Each local educational agency and other public agencies when applicable shall include all children with disabilities in statewide and district-wide assessment programs. Students with disabilities may participate

- (1) in the appropriate general assessment in the same manner as their non-disabled peers. This may include the use of those adaptations to the test setting that are deemed appropriate for the student;
- (2) in the appropriate general assessment with appropriate accommodations in administration, if necessary. LEAs shall use the current guidance by the Department on accommodations as specified in a student's IEP; and/or
- (3) in alternate assessments provided that they are identified as students with significant cognitive disabilities for whom the State's alternate assessments are developed. Students must meet the state's established participation criteria for participation in an alternate assessment. The IEP team must agree and document that the student is eligible for participation in an alternate assessment according to the following participation criteria:
  - (a) the student's past and present levels of performance in multiple settings (i.e., home, school, community) indicates that a significant cognitive disability is present

- (b) the student needs intensive, pervasive, or extensive levels of support in school, home, and community settings
  - (c) the student's current cognitive and adaptive skills and performance levels require direct instruction to accomplish the acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of skills in multiple settings (home, school, community)
- (4) Each public agency shall collect and report performance results in compliance with the requirements of 34 CFR Sec. 300.139 and any additional requirements established by the Department.

**K. Statewide accountability program.** All public schools shall participate in the statewide accountability system which includes the following:

- (1) The statewide student assessment system: All public school students, with the exceptions indicated below, shall participate in the New Mexico Achievement Assessment Program which includes a reading assessment in grades 1 and 2, norm-referenced standardized testing in grades 3 through 9, writing assessment in grades 4 and 6, and the New Mexico high school competency examination (NMHSCE) in grade 10. Exceptions:
- (a) Language exemptions: Students who have limited English skills as determined by the local education agency's language assessment instrument may be exempted from the statewide testing program, provided such exemptions are reported to SDE.
    - (i) Language exemptions for grades 1–9: The educational achievement in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies of all students in grades 3 through 9 who have been exempted from the statewide testing program for limited English language skills must be assessed with a standardized test in a language appropriate for each student. If an appropriate test does not exist for a particular language, then educational achievement must be assessed by each student's teacher(s). Determination of mastery may involve the following: classroom, school, or district tests; and systemic teacher observation.
    - (ii) Language exemptions for grades 10–12: For students with limited English language skills, who are exempted from the NMHSCE, the district should implement alternative assessment methods to determine mastery of content standards.
- (2) Students With Disabilities: Students with disabilities who receive special education and related services shall participate in all statewide and district-wide assessments of student achievement or in state-approved alternate assessments. Pursuant to Subsection E of 6.31.2.11 NMAC and 34 CFR Sec. 300.347(a)(5), the individualized

education programs (IEPs) for such students shall specify which assessments each student will participate in and what if any accommodations or modifications in administration are needed to enable the student to participate. The IEPs for students who will not participate in a particular statewide or district-wide assessment shall explain why that assessment is not appropriate for the student and how the student will be assessed using current state-approved criteria, methods and instruments.

- (3) Waiver of the New Mexico high school competency examination for other students: With the approval of the local board of education, the local superintendent may request written approval from the state superintendent to award a diploma to a student who has not passed the competency examination and who is not covered under subparagraph (b) of paragraph (1) of subsection K of 6.2.30.10 above regarding students with disabilities. The district must document student attainment of required competencies through an alternative assessment procedure.

### ***Sec. 22-13-1.1 NMSA 2004 Graduation Requirements***

- A. At the end of grades eight through eleven, each student shall prepare an interim next steps plan that sets forth the coursework for the grades remaining until high school graduation. Each year's plan shall explain any differences from previous interim next-step plans, shall be filed with the principal of the student's high school and shall be signed by the student, the student's parents or guardian and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with the coursework planning for the student.
- B. Each student must complete a final next-step plan during the senior year and prior to graduation. The plan shall be filed with the principal of the student's high school and shall be signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student.
- C. An individual education program that meets the requirements of Subsections A and B of this section and that meets all applicable transition and procedural requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for a student with a disability shall satisfy the next-step plan requirements of section for that student.
- D. A local school board shall ensure that each high school student has the opportunity to develop a next-step plan and is reasonably informed about:
  - (1) curricular and course options;
  - (2) opportunities available that lead to different post-high-school options; and
  - (3) alternative opportunities available if the student does not finish a planned curriculum.



- E. The secretary of public education shall:
- (1) establish specific accountability standards for administrators, counselors, teachers and school district staff to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop a next-step plan;
  - (2) promulgate rules for accredited private schools in order to ensure substantial compliance with the provisions of this section;
  - (3) monitor compliance with the requirements of this section; and
  - (4) compile such information as is necessary to evaluate the success of next-step plans and report annually, by December 15, to the legislative education study committee and the governor.
- F. Successful completion of a minimum of twenty-three units aligned to the state academic content and performance standards shall be required for graduation. These units shall be as follows:
- (1) four units in English, with major emphasis on grammar and literature;
  - (2) three units in mathematics, at least one of which is equivalent to the algebra one level or higher;
  - (3) two units in science, one of which shall have a laboratory component, provided, however, that with students entering ninth grade beginning in the 2005–2006 school year, three units in science shall be required, one of which shall have a laboratory component;
  - (4) three units in social science, which shall include United States history and geography, world history and geography, and government and economics;
  - (5) one-half unit in New Mexico history for students entering the ninth grade beginning in the 2005–06 school year.
  - (5) one unit in physical education or other physical activity;
  - (6) one unit in communication skills or business education, with major emphasis on writing and speaking and that may include a language other than English; and
  - (7) nine elective units and seven and one half elective units for students entering the ninth grade in 2005–2006 school year that meet the state board content and performance standards. Student service learning shall be offered as an elective.
- G. The department shall establish a procedure for students to be awarded credit through completion of specified career technical courses for certain graduation requirements.
- H. Final examinations shall be administered to all students in all classes offered for credit.
- I. A student shall not receive a high school diploma who has not passed a state graduation examination in the subject areas of reading, English, math, writing, science and social science. The state graduation examination on social science shall include a section on the constitution of the United States and the constitution of New Mexico. If a student

exits from the school system at the end of grade twelve without having passed a state graduation examination, he shall receive an appropriate state certificate indicating the number of credits earned and the grade completed. If within five years after a student exits from the school system he takes and passes the state graduation examination, he may receive a high school diploma.

J. As used in this section:

- (1) “final next–step plan” means a next–step plan that shows that the student has committed or intends to commit in the near future to a four–year college or university, a two–year college, a trade or vocational program, an internship or apprenticeship, military service or a job;
- (2) “interim next–step plan” means an annual next–step plan in which the student specifies post–high–school goals and sets forth the coursework that will allow the student to achieve those goals; and
- (3) “next–step plan” means an annual personal written plan of studies developed by a student in a public school or other state–supported school or institution in consultation with the student’s parent or guardian and school counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student.

K. The secretary of public education may establish a policy to provide for administrative interpretation to clarify curricular and testing provisions of the Public School Code.  
[Chapter 22 NMSA 1978]

***Section 22-13-1.2. HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULA AND END-OF-COURSE TEST ALIGNMENT.***—High school curricula and end–of–course tests shall be aligned with the placement test administered by two– and four–year public post–secondary educational institutions in New Mexico. The department shall collaborate with the commission on higher education in aligning high school curricula and end–of–course tests with the placement test.



## *Federal Statutes*

### *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA): Transition Services*

The 2004 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) outlines the responsibility of districts to provide transition services to students with disabilities.

#### **PL 108-446 Section 602 (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1402) Transition Services**

(34)The term “*transition services*” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—

- (A) is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
- (B) is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and
- (C) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

#### **PL 108-446 Section 614 (d) (1)(A)(i) (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i))Individualized Education Programs. Content of IEP**

- (l) beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, and updated annually thereafter—
  - (aa) appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills;
  - (bb) the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and
  - (cc) beginning not later than 1 year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child’s rights under this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under section 615 (m)

## Case Studies

### *Standard Program of Study: Luke's Story*



Luke is a 17 year-old boy with a specific learning disability (SLD) in the areas of reading and written language. He receives minimal special education services in the resource room for language skills. By the end of 10th grade, Luke was on schedule for graduation and stated an interest in wildlife management and forestry. Luke's mother supported and encouraged his interest in college and requested that he take an agriculture class. He is on a standard program of study with electives in agriculture, mechanics, animal science, and principles of technology. Luke passed all but the language arts and science subtests of the New Mexico High School Competency Exam (NMHSCE). During his junior year, Luke was able to pass the language arts subtest but not the science subtest. At his annual review IEP meeting at the end of his junior year, the team discussed possible strategies for helping Luke to attain the skills he needed to pass this subtest. Luke and his IEP team decided that Luke would work for 30 minutes a day over the summer on some general science software using a laptop provided by the school. Luke will contact a designated school administrator who will be at school all summer and can monitor Luke's progress and answer any questions that he may have. Luke's teachers are using the *New Mexico High School Competency Exam Domains Specification* as a guide for developing tests so that Luke and his peers can become more familiar with the testing format of the NMHSCE.

Luke's career interests and vocational skills are addressed through participation in elective classes and other school activities including the Transition Fair, College and Career Day at the high school, and the annual Job Fair at the branch college. Luke plans to volunteer in the New Mexico Rails-to-Trails project in the summer. Because he is a member of Future Farmers of America (FFA), Luke will volunteer to help at the county fair next fall. He will earn credits needed for graduation based on the standard program of study, develop his leadership skills, continue academic success in his classes, take the science subtest of the NMHSCE, and continue to advocate for himself with teachers, counselors, employers, and at annual IEP reviews.

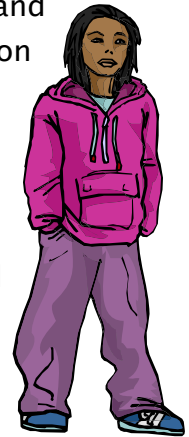


## Luke's Four-Year Plan

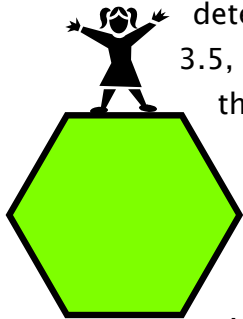
9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Pre-Algebra	Algebra	Geometry	Environmental Sci
Biology	Life Science	Animal Science	Agriculture
Health/Government	World History	Principles of Tech I	Principles of Tech II
US History	Small Engines	Weight Training	Team Sports
Physical Ed	Communication Skills	Auto Mechanics I	Auto Mechanics II

### *Career Readiness Program of Study: Angela's Story*

Angela is an 18 year-old student with a specific learning disability dropped out school second semester of her junior year. She returned to school in what should have been her senior year but she had not earned the number of credits needed for senior status. The IEP team including Angela and her mother met to review and revise her IEP. Angela had received moderate support through special education services including support and services in general education classes. Her IEP indicated she did well in hands on interactive settings but struggled in courses involving lectures and note taking even when receiving appropriate supports and accommodations. She passed the language arts and reading subsections of the NMHSCE. Discouraged with her school status Angela was on the verge of not returning to school. She discussed her interest in eventually working with children as an educational assistant but realized this would not be possible without a high school diploma.



The IEP team worked to develop a plan that would help Angela experience success in school and to prepare her for the transition from high school to the world of work and future training. Angela and her IEP team discussed and identified her career interests, academic needs, and transition outcomes. The IEP team determined that due to Angela's high levels of frustration with school, her lack of concentration in certain classes, and the possibility that she was considering not returning to school the standard program of study was not appropriate to meet her needs. The team determined that Angela required a program of study that would address her interest and provide educational opportunities for her to be successful in school. The IEP team provided a clear and concise description of the career readiness program and identified both positive and negative consequence. Angela's IEP emphasized academics needed for further training after high school, vocational, and career readiness skills needed for eventual employment as an educational assistant. In addition, Angela participated in a summer Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program at an elementary school working as an educational assistant and in a co-op program at a kindergarten during the following school year. She also received work-study credit for



working in a childcare center on weekends. The IEP team reviewed Angela’s present level of educational performance and her scores on the NMHSCE. She passed the language arts and reading sections of the test. Her scores on the remaining subtests were as follows: written composition 2, science 130, math 150, and social studies 125. Based on Angela’s previous score, her present levels of academic achievement and functional performance the team determined that Angela could achieve the following scores: written composition 3.5, science 145, math 165, and social studies 135. The team identified strategies that would help Angela achieve these scores. Some of the strategies included identifying academic classes that would help with the written composition and math scores, practice assessments to help Angela become familiar with the test format, and a self-paced computer software program for the science and social science areas.

Angela received a high school diploma based upon completion of a career readiness program of study comprised of the number of credits, through standard and alternative courses, required by her school district. Her summer co-op and work-study experience substituted for some of the high school graduation requirements. She met and/or exceeded the NMHSCE scores established by her IEP team, participated in all high school graduation ceremonies, received a high school diploma, and continued full-time employment with the school district as an educational assistant in a kindergarten program.

### Angela’s Four-Year Plan

9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
General Math	Applied Math	Consumer Math	Parenting II
Life Science	Biology	Parenting I	Ceramics
Physical Education	US History	Chorus	Co-op
Health/Government	Communication Skills	Life Skills	Work Study
Keyboarding	Art	Co-op	Work Study

### Ability Program of Study: John’s Story

John is a 20 year-old student with a moderate intellectual disability receiving homebound services due to complex medical issues. The last time John attended school for a full day he was in 7th grade. Primary concerns expressed by the parent included John’s lack of academic and social skills and opportunity for social interaction with peers. The IEP team convened to discuss the parent’s concerns and to develop an appropriate program for John. Discussion centered on John’s transition outcome needs including career interests, employability skills, functional academic development, and social contact with peers.



The team considered the standard and career readiness programs of study and determined that an ability program of study would be the most appropriate for John based on the complexity of the medical issues, limited contact with peers, and his low functioning level. The team documented this decision in the IEP and prior written notice of actions proposed. Previous vocational assessment had revealed John’s interest and ability in using computers. Computer usage was included in the transition plan as both an area for vocational training and means for communicating with peers while not at school. It was also determined that John would participate in the school resource program on a limited basis as health permitted. John’s illness and homebound situation prevented him from taking the state exit exam in previous years. The IEP team recommended that the school petition the Department requesting permission for John to take the exam at home over a two day period if he was unable to attend school due to his illness.

John’s IEP addressed functional academics, communication skills, personal health needs, realistic vocational training, and development of recreation and leisure skills. The homebound teacher helped John learn to use computer software for academic skill development and to access the Internet and e-mail for communication and recreation. The homebound teacher also helped John explore the possibility of performing work activities at home using the computer. John received high school credit toward graduation based on his completion of prescribed activities. John participated in the NMHSCE with accommodations and obtained these scores on the exit exam: written composition 1.5, written language 65, math 90, social science 76, reading 55, and science 61.



As a result of the individually developed program, John was able to participate in limited activities with peers at school, explore career options for home computer usage, develop computer skills and establish a relationship with an appropriate adult service provider that would continue to serve his needs after graduation. John earned his high school diploma through an ability program of study developed for his unique needs. He participated in the high school graduation ceremony with his peers.

### John’s Four-Year Plan

9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
Reading for Meaning	Communication Skills	Applied Communications	Email/Internet Usage
Functional Math	Functional Math	Applied Math	Personal Health
Health	Life Skills	Social Skills I	Social Skills II
Keyboarding	Internet Access	Computer Graphics I	Computer Graphics II
Career Awareness	Career Exploration	Work Experience I	Work Experience II
Email Usage	Email Usage	Work Experience I	Work Experience II



## *Ability Program of Study: Ramona's Story*

Ramona is a 15 year-old student with multiple disabilities. She has cerebral palsy, which significantly limits her motor functioning in all four limbs, and needs assistance with feeding, personal care, and getting around in her wheel chair. She has very limited cognitive ability and is non-verbal. Her IEP team completed a referral for an assistive technology evaluation to determine if she is able to use a simple communication device.

Ramona appears alert and responds by making sounds and moving her arms when other students talk to her. She enjoys listening to music and having the educational assistant escort her in the hallways when other students are changing classes. She is social and likes to interact with other students in the classroom. She can become frustrated when trying to



make her needs known or if directed to do something she does not want to do.

Ramona requires a variety of related services to benefit from her program. She currently receives speech, physical and occupational therapy, and adapted physical education. She participates in a community-based instruction program in which students learn basic independent living skills and participate in a community outing once a week.

The IEP team met during an annual review to discuss Ramona's needed transition services. It was determined that

she would benefit from a vocational evaluation to determine interests, abilities, and to help determine level of need and direction for vocational training and supported employment. The social worker reviewed Ramona's status on the Developmental Disability (DD) Waiver waiting list and made recommendations to the family on how to access respite care in the home.

The IEP team discussed high school graduation and agreed that because of Ramona's limited verbal skills and limited cognitive ability that both a standard and career readiness program of study would not be appropriate to meet Ramona's needs. Ramona's IEP team outlined an ability program of study that would provide instruction to develop independent living, communication, self-care, and social skills. She would be expected to participate as much as possible while being paired with others students as needed for certain activities. The instruction would occur both on the school campus and in the community. They recommended that Ramona's therapies occur individually or in small groups, and integrated into daily activities as much as possible. The IEP team completed the IEP addendum for determining eligibility for the New Mexico Alternate Assessment and determined that Ramona was eligible to take the alternate assessment.



### *Certificate: Robert's Story*

Robert is a 19 year-old student with multiple disabilities. He has been receiving maximum special education services through full day participation in a program that focuses on the development of functional academics, employability, vocational training, and independent living skills. He has been in a high school setting for four years and has completed his outlined IEP goals, objectives, and benchmarks. He is on target for meeting his graduation requirements. However, he has not attained all transition outcomes stated in the transition plan. The IEP team met to discuss Robert's needs, it recommended that Robert receive a certificate, signifying the end of his "high school" education, and that he be allowed to participate in all graduation activities. The team developed an IEP follow-up plan of action that focused on the attainment of transition outcomes in the appropriate domain areas.



The team documented its projected date of completion in the IEP. Robert would earn his high school diploma upon completion of his transition outcomes.

#### Robert's Five-Year Plan

9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	12+
Functional Academics I	Functional Academics II	Life Skills in the Community	Recreation and Leisure	Community Ed and Support Services
Independent Living	Life Skills	Employability Skills	Job Club	Accessing Adult Services
CBI Job Exploration I	CBI Job Exploration II	Transitional Work-Study	Work Study	Supported Employment

### *Certificate: Jerry's Story*

Jerry is a 17 year-old young man in the 12th grade with a specific learning disability and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). There have been four IEP meetings held in the past year to address his attendance. Without appropriate attendance, Jerry will not be able to graduate. Jerry's IEP does have the appropriate supports and services identified to help him with his learning disability and ADHD while in class, and he was on track to graduate on a standard course of study. The IEP team determined the ADHD was the cause of the attendance problem and developed a behavior intervention plan (BIP) to address Jerry's needs. The school offered to have Jerry escorted to each class, but the parent and student declined the offer. The school offered to provide



special transportation that would pick Jerry up at his home and an educational assistant would meet Jerry at the bus stop; the parent and student also chose to decline this offer. Because the student and parent refused to accept the school’s accommodations for the ADHD-related attendance problem, the IEP team determined that Jerry was not eligible to receive a certificate and could not participate in the graduation ceremony. The team agreed that Jerry would continue the standard program of study, attend summer school, and return to school for the fall semester.

### Jerry’s Five-Year Plan

9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	12+
English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12	English 12
Basic Math	Pre-Algebra	Algebra I	Geometry	Geometry
Biology	Life Science	Vocational Agriculture I	Vocational Agriculture II	Communication Skills
Health	World History	US History	Government	Team Sports
Study Skills	Study Skills	Study Skills	Weight Training	Auto Mechanics II
Physical Education	Introduction to Computers	CAD I	Auto Mechanics I	Woodshop

### *Certificate: Tommy’s Story*

Tommy is a 17 year-old young man in the 12th grade with a specific learning disability and attention deficit disorder. An IEP meeting held 30 days prior to graduation found Tommy to be ineligible for graduation due to lack of credits and poor attendance.



Tommy’s IEP team conducted a manifestation determination and determined that the attendance problem was due to his ADHD. The team discovered that during the student’s four years in high school the IEPs did not address his attendance difficulties. Tommy’s IEP team determined that his program was not appropriate. The IEP team developed a plan to rectify the situation. With an appropriate follow-up plan of action, Tommy will receive a certificate, participate in all graduation ceremonies, and complete his credits through compensatory service over the summer. Tommy will not be returning to the high school in the fall because he will receive his diploma before the end of summer.

### Tommy’s Four-Year Plan

9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	Summer
English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12	English 12
Basic Math	Pre-Algebra	Algebra I	Geometry	Geometry
Biology	Life Science	Voc agriculture I	Voc agriculture II	
Health	World History	US History	Government	
Study Skills I	Study Skills II	Study Skills III	Weight Training	
Physical Education	Computer I	CAD I	Auto Mechanics	

## *Certificate using Extended School Year: Mariah's Story*

Mariah is a 21 year-old young woman with multiple disabilities receiving maximum special education services and related services in the areas of speech, occupational and physical therapy. She participated in some general education classes for the purpose of stimulation and social skill development. Mariah was due to complete her high school program because she was reaching maximum age for services under IDEA and had earned the required number of credits to graduate. Mariah was on an ability program of study that focused on developing skills in the areas of independent living, self-care, and community participation. Mariah has been on the waiting list for the DD waiver since age 16. She has a case manager from the Department of Health (DOH), receives social security, and Medicaid and Medicare benefits. The school provided resources to assist the parents in applying for guardianship; however, the parents did not complete the application process. The DOH case manager reported that the provision of related service from community agencies would not start for several months, creating a gap in needed services for Mariah. The IEP team reviewed documentation regarding regression/recoupment and progress toward goals and objectives, and determined eligibility for extended school year (ESY) in the areas of speech, occupational, and physical therapy. This would bridge the gap in related services between school and adult services.



The team recommended that Mariah participate in the graduation activities and receive a certificate. The follow-up plan included receipt of the diploma at the end of her ESY program. The IEP team will continue to send parent information regarding community services and resource groups that may be able to assist in the purchase of equipment and identify special programs or opportunities available in the community.



**I am late for an IEP meeting and I have all this assessment information!**

## *The High School Transcript*

- This educational record remains on file for 90 years.
- This document should be clear to any reader.
- There should be no distinguishing titles such as “special education” on course names.
- Schools may need to develop course offerings (including title and number) that are broad enough to include New Mexico Standards and Benchmarks supporting the career readiness and ability programs of study. The Department recommends the Course Classification System published in the Accountability Data System Information Manual. The Department reviewed these course classifications for non-discriminatory language.
- When evaluating educational activities for the purpose of awarding credit, one should utilize flexibility and creativity in terms of assessments and documentation. Many courses interchange with community-based or related service activities (i.e., speech therapy or journalism can be substituted for communication skills credit; a mentorship at a local news station might be used as a fine arts elective). Building administrators and high school counselors should be involved in this process.
- In addition to using the New Mexico Standards and Benchmarks as a foundation, student performance on the New Mexico High School Competency Exam may serve as supporting validation of the student’s skills. The IEP team needs to assess the application of the student’s knowledge and skill base as it relates to life situations such as employability, community involvement, and independent living.



# *Glossary Of Terms*

## **Ability Pathway:**

Is a program of study for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to benefit from a standard or career readiness program of study. On the ability pathway, a student typically works toward goals, objectives, and benchmarks identified within the IEP that relate primarily to employability and independent living skills and/or community participation. The student will earn a high school diploma once he or she meets the goals, objectives, and transition outcomes plan outlined in the IEP.

## **Alternate Assessment:**

An instrument used in gathering information on the standards based performance and progress of students whose disabilities preclude them from valid and reliable participation in general assessments. Alternate assessments measure the performance of a relatively small population of students who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, with or without accommodations as determined by the IEP team.

## **Certificate with a follow-up plan of action:**

A certificate states that a student has maintained realistic efforts to meet IEP goals, attended four years of high school, and is able to participate equitably in graduation activities. A certificate does not end the student's right to a FAPE and the student is not reported as exited on ADS. The awarding of a certificate requires the IEP team to develop a follow-up plan of action addressing transition needs of the student. The student may continue to receive special education services based on the follow-up plan developed by the IEP team. Services may continue, if needed, until the end of the school year in which the student reaches the age of 22.

## **Diploma:**

A student receives a standard high school diploma upon completion of any of the three programs of study as outlined. Wording and visual appearance shall be the same in all instances.

## **Graduation IEP:**

The IEP process in which data is gathered and presented to the IEP team for review and to document the student's completion of the requirements outlined in the chosen program of study.

## **Follow-Up Plan of Action:**

An IEP detailing actions or steps needed in order for a student to progress toward completion of graduation requirements based on the chosen pathway. This should include, at a minimum:

- Goals, objectives, or benchmarks;
- Other agency involvement;

- Time lines;
- Related services;
- A plan for periodic assessment of the progress toward graduation.

**Original IEP/Graduation:**

The first IEP that addresses the high school program of study will typically be a transitional IEP held prior to the student entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Prior Written Notice of Actions Proposed (PWN):**

One of two kinds of notices required in connection with an IEP meeting. The IEP team provides this type of notice to parents at the conclusion of an IEP meeting. The **PWN** identifies all actions proposed and if proposed items were accepted or rejected and the reasons for doing so.

**Pathway:**

A program of study which outlines a planned series of courses determined by the IEP team to meet the student's needs. A student's parents must sign the individualized program of study for students in grades 9 through 12. The IEP team develops the program of study based on the student's long-range plans, interests, preferences, strengths, and areas of concern. (See 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978)

**Transfer of Rights:**

Under New Mexico law, a person's age of majority begins on the first instant of his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. A person who has reached the age of majority is an adult for all purposes not otherwise limited by state law. A guardianship proceeding under the Probate Code is the only way an adult in New Mexico can legally be determined to be incompetent and have the right to make his or her own decisions taken away. Public agencies and their IEP teams are not empowered to make such determinations under New Mexico law. Accordingly, when a student with a disability reaches 18 and does not have a court-appointed guardian, all rights accorded to parents under IDEA and New Mexico laws and regulations transfer to the student. Each annual IEP review for a student who is 16 or older must include a discussion of the rights that will transfer to the student upon the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and, as appropriate, a discussion of the parents' plans for obtaining a guardian before that time. In addition, each student's IEP beginning not later than when the student turns 17 must include a statement that the student and parents have been informed of the rights that will transfer to the student at age 18.



# Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions and answers are intended to provide school districts with an overview of some of the basic requirements for implementing the Pathways to the Diploma for students with disabilities in New Mexico.

**Index of Questions** (Answers follow on pages 47 to 53)

- Question 1:** *If a student on a career readiness or ability pathway finally passes the NMHSCE with the IEP team's adjusted score(s), does the registrar put "pass the NMHSCE" on the transcript?*
- Question 2:** *What should IEP teams do if the student does not attain the level of proficiency determined by the IEP team as appropriate for the student?*
- Question 3:** *Can the IEP team lower the determined scores a second time?*
- Question 4:** *How many times does the student have to re-test?*
- Question 5:** *Do IEP teams set scores by subtest or composite score?*
- Question 6:** *How "low" should the team go when setting targeted levels of proficiency?*
- Question 7:** *Will the Department set guidelines recommending a scoring matrix for teams to follow (ie, 150 = 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level)?*
- Question 8:** *The regulations say the IEP team may recommend additional evaluations, reports or documents for students on the career readiness or ability pathway to be able to access post-secondary programs. Does that also apply for students on a standard pathway?*
- Question 9:** *Will the NMHSCE continue after next year? How will the regulations apply to the new state tests?*
- Question 10:** *Are there any classes that students on a career readiness or ability pathway must take (i.e., P.E.)?*
- Question 11:** *If a student is on a standard pathway and yet, due to his or her disability, can NOT pass Algebra, should the IEP team change the pathway to the career readiness pathway?*
- Question 12:** *What qualifies as an equivalent to the Algebra 1 level requirement?*
- Question 13:** *Does the Algebra 1 requirement apply for all students currently in high school?*
- Question 14:** *If a student takes the NMHSCE in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and does not pass all subtests, but the IEP team determines that the student's scores accurately reflect the student's competency level, does the student have to retake the test?*
- Question 15:** *When is it appropriate to use a certificate?*



- Question 16:** *Do students who complete the career readiness or ability pathway receive a certificate of completion?*
- Question 17:** *Who should attend IEP meetings when decisions involve changing a student's pathway?*
- Question 18:** *Can the career readiness pathway be use with students in the gifted program?*
- Question 19:** *What about students on the career readiness or ability pathway who have low skills but do not meet required participation criteria for the New Mexico Alternate Assessment?*
- Question 20:** *Can the IEP team decide that a student takes the New Mexico Alternate Assessment without considering the participation criteria?*
- Question 21:** *How many times should students who meet the eligibility criteria take the New Mexico Alternate Assessment?*
- Question 22:** *How many credits do students with disabilities have to earn to graduate?*
- Question 23:** *How should the IEP team document that a student on a career readiness pathway has met the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks?*
- Question 24:** *If a senior student on the standard path meets all graduation requirements but does not pass the NMHSCE before graduation, can he or she receive a certificate?*
- Question 25:** *Sec. 22-13-1.1 (I) states that students who have met all graduation requirements except passing all subtest of the current exit exam the student can exit high school with a certificate of course work completed and has five years to pass the exam and receive a diploma. Does this apply to students with disabilities?*
- Question 26:** *The new rules set percentage scores for each of the pathways. Does this apply to all students in high school during the 2005-2006 school year?*
- Question 27:** *The new state rules requires IEP teams to document that the student will receive a certificate with a follow-up plan of action, at least one year before graduation. If IEP teams fail to document the use of the certificate does this prevent IEP teams from using this option with eligible students who did not meet graduation requirements?*



**Question 1:** *If a student on a career readiness or ability pathway finally passes the NMHSCE with the IEP team's adjusted score, does the registrar put "pass the NMHSCE" on the transcript?*

**Answer: No.** IEP teams do not have the authority to override the State's established minimum required passing score on the NMHSCE. New Mexico state regulations currently require a minimum of 175 on each subtest. For the purpose of public reporting and accountability, only those who achieve the Department's established minimum level of proficiency will be reported as having passed the test. Students on the Career Readiness or Ability path are required to achieve a level of proficiency that is determined by the IEP team. If the targeted proficiency is lower than the State's minimum requirement the student is reported as "not passed." Districts must report all students who do not achieve the 175 or higher as a no pass. Students who do not pass the NMHSCE at the State's minimum required score or higher cannot graduate on the standard pathway.

**Question 2:** *What should IEP teams do if the student does not attain the level of proficiency determined by the IEP team as appropriate for the student?*

**Answer:** IEP teams should have high expectations for all students and set realistic goals for student achievement. The team must look closely at scores on each subtest and the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance when determining the level of proficiency that the student is expected to attain on each subtest. Based on a student's disability and present levels it is highly probable that the expected level of proficiency will not be the same for each subtest. It is the responsibility of the IEP team to identify and document the strategies, interventions, accommodations, and supports that will be provided for the student to achieve the determined competency level. The team should revisit the determined level of proficiency and make adjustments based on the needs of the student, student effort on the second attempt, and the level of support provided by the district.

**Question 3:** *Can the IEP team lower the determined scores a second time?*

**Answer: Yes.** IEP team members must realize that the high school exit exam is a high stakes test in New Mexico with important consequences attached to the results for students, teachers, schools, districts, and/or states. The IEP team may lower the scores if: the school, student, and family met all responsibilities outlined in the IEP to ensure that the student would reach the targeted level of proficiency; and, the IEP team has reviewed scores from the first attempt, compare them to the second attempt, reviewed the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, and reviewed other evaluations and assessments. Based on the results of these factors, the IEP team should determine if

scores the team selected were or were not appropriate for the student's ability level and make adjustments as needed.

**Question 4:** *How many times does the student have to re-test?*

**Answer:** Students on the career readiness and ability pathway should take the current exit exam at least twice and more if needed to meet the determined level of proficiency. The IEP team **cannot** determine a level of proficiency before the student takes the test the first time. IEP teams need to look at student progress each testing period and note progress or lack thereof, determine if the student's program is appropriately designed to assist the student in reaching the determined level of proficiency, and if that proficiency level is a realistic score for the student to attain.

**Question 5:** *Do IEP teams set scores by subtest or composite score?*

**Answer:** The IEP team must set a level of proficiency for each subtest. The targeted level of proficiency for each subtest will vary depending on the student's areas of strength, course of study, and the needed accommodations.

**Question 6:** *How "low" should the team go when setting targeted levels of proficiency?*

**Answer:** The IEP team must base the determined level of proficiency on the student's baseline level of performance on the first attempt, the student's present levels, and the student's performance on other assessments to establish realistic levels of proficiency for an individual student.

**Question 7:** *Will the Department set guidelines recommending a scoring matrix for teams to follow (ie, 150 = 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level)?*

**Answer: No.** The Department will not establish guidelines that will put students in categories for the purposes of determining pathways or test scores. IEP teams must base all decisions on the individual needs of students.

**Question 8:** *The rules say the IEP team may recommend additional evaluations, reports or documents for students on the career readiness or ability pathway to be able to access post-secondary programs. Does that also apply for students on a standard pathway?*

**Answer: Yes.** The 2005 State rule changes effective July 29, 2005 require IEP teams to determine whether additional evaluations, reports, or documents are necessary to support a smooth transition to post-secondary services for a student who will graduate on one of the three pathways.

**Question 9:** *Will the NMHSCE continue after next year? How will the regulations apply to the new state tests?*

**Answer:** The NMHSCE is the current high school exit required for graduation. In the event of this test being replaced, all pathway requirements and guidelines will apply to graduation exit exams, regardless of changes.

**Question 10:** *Are there any classes that students on a career readiness or ability pathway must take (i.e., P.E.)?*

**Answer: Yes.** Physical education or other physical activity is a requirement for all pathways. Any modified pathway may depart from the standard path only as far as necessary to meet an individual student's educational needs. However, Paragraph 9 (j) of Subsection J of 6.30.2.10 NMAC (Excuses from physical education) allows districts to request a waiver by providing required medical documentation to support the request. A student with a disability may also be eligible for this waiver. The IEP team must document appropriate medical information in the student's IEP.

Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2005–2006 will be required to complete one-half unit in New Mexico history. Until further clarification this class should be considered as a required course.

**Question 11:** *If a student is on a standard pathway and yet, due to his or her disability, can NOT pass Algebra, should the IEP team change the student's pathway?*

**Answer: No.** The IEP team must base the selection of a pathway on the needs and long-range goals of the student and should not base decisions to change pathways solely on the student's ability to earn required credits or pass the current exit exam. If the student's long-range goals require him or her to complete the standard pathway, IEP teams must identify strategies and interventions to support the student in passing Algebra 1 and/or the current exit exam.

**Question 12:** *What qualifies as an equivalent to the algebra 1 level requirement?*

**Answer:** The New Mexico State Department of Education Legislative Education Study Committee provided the following guidance. "Every credit-bearing high school mathematics course must be based on the New Mexico Mathematics Content Standards, Benchmarks and Performance Standards. Algebra I content establishes the threshold for the high school content."

**Question 13:** *Does the Algebra I requirement apply for all students currently in high school?*

**Answer: No.** The algebra I, or its course equivalent, requirement applies to students who were in 9<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2004–2005 school year. Under current interpretation students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade during 2005–2006 when they graduate must have algebra I and geometry or algebra II. Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2006–2007 when they graduate must have algebra I, geometry, and algebra II. Districts have the latitude to design math courses that align with the New Mexico math standards.

**Question 14:** *If a student takes the New Mexico High school Competency Exam (NMHSCE) in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and does not pass all subtests, but the IEP team determines that the student's scores accurately reflect the student's level of proficiency, does the student have to retake the test?*

**Answer: Yes.** We recommend that most students take the test a minimum of two times. IEP teams should document on the IEP and Prior Written Notice of Action Proposed expected levels of proficiency for each subtest and the supports needed to help the student reach those expected levels. Accepting a student's performance on the first attempt implies that a student is not going to progress in the general curriculum and will not gain additional skills over the next two years in high school. We strongly recommend that most students be encouraged to pass the NMHSCE, or, at minimum, improve their scores from year to year.

**Question 15:** *When is it appropriate to use a certificate with a follow-up plan of action?*

**Answer:** The IEP team is responsible for making the decision to use a certificate with a follow-up plan of action, which allows a student to participate equitably in graduation activities with his or her peers. Page four of the current State Recommended IEP and page 18 in the *Pathways to the Diploma* technical assistance document identify five questions that IEP teams must answer. The IEP team can base decisions regarding issuing a certificate with a follow-up plan of action on whether the student's program and/or instruction was, or was not appropriate. If the IEP team determines that a certificate is appropriate, there must be a follow-up plan that addresses transition in the form of an IEP. *A certificate does not end the student's right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).* The student is not reported as exited on ADS. If the student does not return to fulfill the requirements of the IEP, the district must report him or her as a dropout.

**Question 16:** *Do students who complete the career readiness or ability pathway receive a certificate of completion (not to be confused with a certificate with a follow-up plan of action)?*

**Answer: No.** Students who are on a career readiness or ability pathway must receive a regular high school diploma. See 6.30.2.10 (j)(9)(b) NMAC. The transcript will reflect the program of study, not the diploma. The Department has not recognized the use of a certificate of completion for students with disabilities since 1999. A certificate does not end the student's right to FAPE. IEP teams can use a certificate with a follow-up plan of action in the form of an IEP. The plan must outline the responsibilities of all parties to ensure the student earns a high school diploma.

**Question 17:** *Who should attend IEP meetings when decisions involve changing a student's pathway?*

**Answer:** The composition of the IEP team must meet federal and state requirements. When a graduation pathway is proposed, an individual knowledgeable about high school curriculum must be included on the team. Paragraph J(9)(j) of 6.30.2.10 NMAC requires that a building administrator who has knowledge about the student must be a member of the exit IEP team, and sign specifically to verify and accept completed graduation plans, goals, and objectives. IEP teams must protect the integrity of the diploma for all students, and the responsibility for insuring the integrity of the graduation process and the diploma rests with the building administrator.

**Question 18:** *Can the career readiness pathway be used with students in the gifted program?*

**Answer: No.** State regulations (NMAC) specifically state that the pathways are for IDEA eligible students with disabilities. Although gifted students are not eligible for consideration under the pathways, careful planning of their program should take place by the time they are in middle school if not before. Where the student has demonstrated an ability or career interest above the traditional programming options, the IEP team should consider alternative classes that will meet the spirit of the requirements for graduation and at the same time continue to challenge the student.

**Question 19:** *What about students on the career readiness or ability pathway who have low skills but do not meet participation criteria for the New Mexico Alternate Assessment?*

**Answer:** If the student is not eligible to take the Original New Mexico Alternate Assessment, they must participate in the NMHSCE testing with appropriate accommodations. The IEP

team determines the levels of proficiency, interventions, and the accommodations needed by the student.

**Question 20:** *Can the IEP team decide that a student takes the Original New Mexico Alternate Assessment without considering the participation criteria?*

**Answer: No.** The SEB website has the participation criteria for 2005–2006. Sections 612 (d)(1)(A)(vi)(bb)(AA)–(BB) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) now requires IEPs for students participating in alternate assessments based upon alternate achievement standards to include a “statement of why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and, the particular assessment selected is appropriate for the child.” The participation criteria for the New Mexico Alternate Assessments have become rule in the State of New Mexico. Sections 6.31.2.11(E)(3)(a)–(c) of the New Mexico Administrative Code now require that IEP teams “agree and document that the student is eligible for participation in an alternate assessment according to the following criteria: (a) the student’s past and present levels of performance in multiple settings (i.e., home, school, community) indicate that a significant cognitive disability is present; (b) the student needs intensive, pervasive, or extensive levels of support in school, home, and community settings; and, (c) the student’s current cognitive and adaptive skills and performance levels require direct instruction to accomplish the acquisition, maintenance and generalization of skills in multiple settings (home, school, community).

**Question 21:** *How many times should students who meet the eligibility criteria take the Original New Mexico Alternate Assessment?*

**Answer:** Eligible students take the Original New Mexico Alternate Assessment in grade 10 and beyond, when necessary as an alternate to the NMHSCE. Teachers can use the results from each year to identify goals, program needs, and student growth.

**Question 22:** *How many credits do students with disabilities have to earn to graduate?*

**Answer:** The state requires successful completion of a minimum of 23 units aligned to the state academic content and performance standards. However; as of July 29, 2005 students on the standard pathway must meet all graduation requirements established by the district and students on the career pathway must earn the minimum number of credits required by the district.

**Question 23:** *How should the IEP team document that a student on a career readiness pathway has met the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks?*

**Answer:** The IEP team uses the IEP to document mastery of the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks. The IEP team bases the goals and objectives on the student’s needs and

the Career Readiness Standards with Benchmarks. Additionally, the IEP should document student progress in classes that may address those standards with benchmarks. School districts are encouraged to devise ways to document on the transcript, or other permanent document, the fact that the student achieved benchmarks and other requirements identified on his or her pathway.

**Question 24:** *If a senior student on the standard path meets all graduation requirements but does not pass the NMHSCE before graduation, can he or she receive a certificate with a follow-up plan of action?*

**Answer: Yes.** The IEP team must develop a certificate with a follow-up plan of action. The IEP team must develop an IEP that outlines responsibilities of the district, student, and family to ensure the student will earn the high school diploma. The student must return the following year to complete work on the standard pathway. The IEP must describe those goals and objectives for the following year, the student may be given a certificate with a follow-up plan of action so that he or she may participate in graduation activities along with peers. The student would not be reported as exited on ADS. If the student does not return in the fall, the student would be reported as a drop out.

**Question 25:** *Sec. 22-13-1.1 (l) states that students who have met all graduation requirements except passing all subtests of the current exit exam can exit high school with a certificate of course work completed, and have five years to pass the exam and receive a diploma. Does this apply to students with disabilities?*

**Answer: No.** A certificate does not end a student with disability's right to FAPE. IEP teams and districts are vulnerable if they choose to exit students with disabilities without providing services to ensure they earn a high school diploma. Students with disabilities who receive a certificate and do not return the next school year are considered dropouts.

**Question 26:** *The new rules set percentages for the number of students participating in each of the pathways. Does this apply to all students in high school during the 2005-2006 school year?*

**Answer: No.** This rule is effective beginning with students entering 10<sup>th</sup> grade beginning with the 2005-2006 school year and future years.



**Question 27:** *The new state rules require IEP teams to document that the student will receive a certificate with a follow-up plan of action, at least one year before graduation. If IEP teams fail to document the use of the certificate does this prevent IEP teams from using this option with eligible students who did not meet graduation requirements?*

**Answer: No.** The intent of this rule is to ensure that IEP teams look closely at the student's graduation status, especially one year before graduation, and determine if the certificate with the follow-up plan of action is an option that should be considered based on the student's current graduation status. If the IEP team failed to provide notice one year prior to graduation this does not prevent the team from using the certificate with a follow-up plan of action if they discover during the senior year that a student will not meet graduation requirements. The decision to use the certificate with a follow-up plan of action must be made in an IEP meeting. It is important that both the student and family are present. All members must agree that the student meets the criteria listed on page 18 guideline number three.



# ***Appendices***

## **A Career Readiness Content Standards and Benchmarks**

## **B New Mexico GED Testing Program Policies and Procedures**



## **6.30.2.21 NMAC CONTENT STANDARDS—CAREER READINESS**

- CONTENT STANDARD 1:** Students will identify their career interests and aptitudes to develop an educational plan which supports personal career goals.
- BENCHMARK 1: K–4:** Students will identify places that people work and explain what they do. **BENCHMARK 2: K–4:** Students will explain how work helps people obtain food, shelter, and clothing.
- BENCHMARK 3: K–4:** Students will demonstrate an awareness of the importance of academic success to achieve personal success.
- BENCHMARK 4: 5–8:** Students will explore areas of interest and possible career choices.
- BENCHMARK 5: 5–8:** Students will understand the structure and function of business ownership in the United States, New Mexico, and local economies.
- BENCHMARK 6: 5–8:** Students will explain the connection between academic skills and career options by identifying education and training requirements.
- BENCHMARK 7: 5–8:** Students will identify careers of personal interest based on identified aptitudes and interests.
- BENCHMARK 8: 9–12:** Students will analyze and evaluate personal interests and aptitudes for proper course selection and career choices.
- BENCHMARK 9: 9–12:** Students will participate in activities to explore the free enterprise system.
- BENCHMARK 10: 9–12:** Students will write, evaluate, and revise a career plan consistent with career interests, aptitudes, and abilities.
- BENCHMARK 11: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate job acquisition skills by completing a resume.
- BENCHMARK 12: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate marketable skills for entry into a postsecondary education or training program or a chosen career field.

**CONTENT STANDARD 2: Students will utilize and manage resources effectively to produce quality services and products.**

**BENCHMARK 1: K-4:** Students will set short-term goals and complete the goals within an appropriate length of time.

**BENCHMARK 2: K-4:** Students will demonstrate responsibility in the use of time, space, and materials to complete assignments.

**BENCHMARK 3: K-4:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between goal-setting processes and the allocation of time, money, material, and human resources.

**BENCHMARK 4: 5-8:** Students will identify and prioritize goals relating to school and home. **BENCHMARK 5: 5-8:** Students will determine the education and training requirements for careers identified as possible areas of interest.

**BENCHMARK 6: 5-8:** Students will prepare a budget, including a revenue and expenditure report, to support a planned school project.

**BENCHMARK 7: 9-12:** Students will maintain a personal management system which includes goals, identifies required resources, prioritizes activities, and evaluates progress toward achievement of goals within a specified timeline.

**BENCHMARK 8: 9-12:** Students will as a member of a working team, assess knowledge and skills within the group, delegate responsibilities, and evaluate team performance.

**BENCHMARK 9: 9-12:** Students will prepare a budget and make cost and revenue forecasts to support a simulated business enterprise which designs and markets a product or service developed by the student(s).

**CONTENT STANDARD 3: Students will demonstrate the technological knowledge and skills required for future careers.**

**BENCHMARK 1: K-4:** Students will use age appropriate tools, instruments, and equipment found in the home and classroom.

**BENCHMARK 2: K-4:** Students will demonstrate basic use of the computer in classroom activities.

- BENCHMARK 3: K–4:** Students will identify the many uses of technology in our personal lives, society, and the work environment.
- BENCHMARK 4: K–4:** Students will use common tools, instruments, and equipment to perform hands–on activities to design products to solve problems within the school.
- BENCHMARK 5: 5–8:** Students will describe ways in which tools, instruments, and equipment are used to solve problems, extend human capabilities, and provide for the needs of society.
- BENCHMARK 6: 5–8:** Students will demonstrate basic computer operation skills in a variety of applications to access and organize information.
- BENCHMARK 7: 5–8:** Students will describe ways in which technology has created changes in our personal lives, society, and the world of work.
- BENCHMARK 8: 5–8:** Students will design a class product or process to solve an identified problem and explain the benefits that will result if the product or process is used.
- BENCHMARK 9: 9–12:** Students will explain how technology is used in communications and the arts; engineering, industry, and science; health and human services; and business and marketing.
- BENCHMARK 10: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate knowledge of advanced computer operations used to design, develop, and maintain products and services.
- BENCHMARK 11: 9–12:** Students will analyze and evaluate advanced technological systems used within the various career fields and identify the knowledge and skills required for advanced training or employment.
- BENCHMARK 12: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate advanced technological knowledge and skills required for entry into career fields of interest.
- CONTENT STANDARD 4:** **Students will develop and demonstrate responsible and ethical workplace behaviors.**
- BENCHMARK 1: K–4:** Students will define and identify positive behaviors, conduct, and social manners.
- BENCHMARK 2: K–4:** Students will interact appropriately with other students.

- BENCHMARK 3: K–4:** Students will apply and demonstrate good study and work habits.
- BENCHMARK 4: K–4:** Students will demonstrate and comply with rules, regulations, and policies of school and community.
- BENCHMARK 5: K–4:** Students will demonstrate understanding of the importance of safety in the school and community.
- BENCHMARK 6: 5–8:** Students will demonstrate positive behaviors, conduct, and social manners for school, work, and community.
- BENCHMARK 7: 5–8:** Students will demonstrate goal direction, self-discipline, and task commitment in the completion of assignments.
- BENCHMARK 8: 5–8:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior and its importance in human relationships and society.
- BENCHMARK 9: 5–8:** Students will demonstrate safe work practices and explore safety issues related to the school, community, and workplace.
- BENCHMARK 10: 9–12:** Students will analyze and integrate positive behavior, conduct, and social manners with the school, workplace, and community.
- BENCHMARK 11: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate ability to work cooperatively to accomplish objectives.
- BENCHMARK 12: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate a high level of effort and perseverance toward goal attainment, both individually and as a team member.
- BENCHMARK 13: 9–12:** Students will demonstrate appropriate and legal behaviors necessary to obtain and maintain employment.
- BENCHMARK 14: 9–12:** Students will investigate, analyze, and apply safety standards related to the school, community, and workplace.
- CONTENT STANDARD 5:** **Students will develop effective leadership, interpersonal, and team skills.**
- BENCHMARK 1: K–4:** Students will identify differences between individual and group decisions and accomplishments.
- BENCHMARK 2: K–4:** Students will interact positively with other students.
- BENCHMARK 3: K–4:** Students will work cooperatively as a team member to achieve identified goals.

- BENCHMARK 4: K-4:** Students will recognize the importance of and participate in leadership roles.
- BENCHMARK 5: 5-8:** Students will explore the positive and negative implications of teamwork.
- BENCHMARK 6: 5-8:** Students will recognize that individual differences affect school and workplace behavior.
- BENCHMARK 7: 5-8:** Students will demonstrate teamwork skills through the demonstration of effort, sharing of ideas and suggestions, resolving conflicts, and handling peer pressure.
- BENCHMARK 8: 5-8:** Students will assume leadership roles in team settings.
- BENCHMARK 9: 9-12:** Students will identify and utilize individual interests, aptitudes, and skills with the group to accomplish goals.
- BENCHMARK 10: 9-12:** Students will analyze how individual differences impact the school and work setting.
- BENCHMARK 11: 9-12:** Students will demonstrate ability to work with others from diverse backgrounds.
- BENCHMARK 12: 9-12:** Students will demonstrate leadership within a group through effective communication, ability to motivate team members, and effective delegation of responsibility.



# ***NEW MEXICO GED TESTING PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES***

## **Question 1: *What are the GED Tests?***

**Answer:** Purpose and Policy:

- ❖ The Tests of General Educational Development (GED) measure knowledge in five different areas: [writing](#), [social studies](#), [science](#), [interpreting literature and the arts](#), and [mathematics](#). An important feature of the GED Tests is an essay that documents your ability to write and communicate effectively. The battery of five GED Tests takes 7 hours and 35 minutes to complete.
- ❖ The GED Tests are standardized and normed using a national stratified random sample of graduating high school seniors. In order to pass the tests, the GED candidate must demonstrate a level of skill that meets or surpasses that demonstrated by approximately 67 percent of graduating high school seniors.
- ❖ The GED Testing Service (a program of the not-for-profit American Council on Education) develops the policies and procedures for the administration of GED Testing.
- ❖ Official GED Testing Centers operate under the joint supervision of the GED Testing Service and the New Mexico Public Education Department.

## **Question 2: *Who can take the GED?***

**Answer:** Eligibility Requirements for GED Testing:

- ❖ GED Tests can be administered only to persons who have not graduated from an accredited high school or received a high school equivalency certificate or diploma; and who are not currently enrolled in a regular high school; and who meet the state's minimum age requirement.
- ❖ The minimum age is 16. Individuals under the age of 18 are required to obtain and submit a completed Underage Verification Form indicating parental consent and local district approval. Individuals residing at a NM Juvenile Correctional or Juvenile Residential facility are eligible for testing at age 16 with parental consent and the recommendation from the authorized correctional official. New Mexico residency is not a requirement for testing.
- ❖ All GED candidates must present two (2) forms of identification; one must be government-issued photo identification (e.g., driver's license, state-issued ID, U.S. Passport) and must indicate name, date of birth, and signature. The second form of identification must verify two of the following: name, date of birth, social security number or signature.



**Question 3:** *What do I get if I pass the GED Tests?*

**Answer:** Title of credential issued:

- ❖ Upon successfully completing the GED Tests, the *New Mexico High School Diploma* is issued only to New Mexico residents. Residency is verified with a valid New Mexico Driver's License or a valid New Mexico Non-Driver's License (New Mexico ID).

**Question 4:** *What is a passing score?*

**Answer:** Minimum Test Score Requirements:

- ❖ A minimum standard score of 41 on each test in the battery and an average standard score of at least 45 on the tests in the battery are required to pass the GED in New Mexico.
- ❖ Testing with the Spanish-language version is available in some locations. The score requirement for the Spanish version is a standard score of 40 on each test battery and an average standard score of at least 45 on the tests in the battery. Additionally, a standard score of 40 is required on Test 6, English Proficiency. The score requirements for the Spanish version will only be used until December 31, 2003. The 2000 series Spanish version will begin January 1, 2004 and will be equivalent to the current English version of the GED Test. Scoring will be the same as the English version. All Spanish GED tests need to be completed before December 31, 2003. They cannot be combined with the new 2000 series Spanish version in the year 2004.

**Question 5:** *If I fail to pass the GED, when can I re-test?*

**Answer:** Requirements for re-testing:

- ❖ A person can take the GED Tests no more than three (3) times in a contract year (August 1 – July 31). Specific subject matter preparation is highly recommended and strongly encouraged prior to re-testing.
- ❖ Test scores expire three (3) years from the date of initial testing.
- ❖ All Spanish test scores from the current 1988 Series GED Tests will expire on December 31, 2003.
- ❖ Scores on the new Spanish 2004 GED Tests may not be combined with partial scores earned on previous series of the GED Tests.

**Question 6:** *Where and when can I take the GED?*

**Answer:** GED Official Testing Centers:

- ❖ Application must be made at one of the Official GED Testing Centers located throughout New Mexico. Check with the testing center nearest you for specific dates, times, and locations or the web site:

<http://www.sde.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/ged/testingcenters.html>

**Question 7:** *How much does it cost to take the GED?*

**Answer:** Testing fees:

- ❖ Fees vary from testing center to testing center and are subject to change. Check with the testing center nearest you for specific costs.
- ❖ Fees for re-testing also vary. Check with the individual testing centers for specific costs.

**Question 8:** *Are Special Accommodations for GED testing allowed?*

**Answer:** Applying for Special Accommodations:

- ❖ Special accommodations for testing are available for eligible candidates and are determined on an individual basis.
- ❖ Application for Special Accommodations for GED testing must be made at the Official GED Testing Center where the candidate wishes to take the test.

**Question 9:** *Can I get a copy or duplicate of my original New Mexico High School Diploma?*

**Answer:** Policy for issuance of credential:

- ❖ Only one *New Mexico High School Diploma* is issued to New Mexico residents upon successfully completing the GED Tests.
- ❖ New Mexico does not issue duplicate diplomas, but does issue additional official transcripts upon request.

**Question 10:** *How do I get a copy of my transcripts?*

**Answer:** Transcript Policy and Procedures:

- ❖ For an Official Transcript, a person must obtain and submit a completed GED Transcript Request Form to the NM GED Testing Office. Telephone requests are not accepted.
- ❖ Transcript requests require a minimum of two weeks to be processed.
- ❖ There is no fee for transcripts.
- ❖ The NM GED Testing Office maintains records only for candidates who have successfully completed the GED Tests. If a person has not completed the GED Tests, a transcript must be requested from the Official GED Testing Center where the exam was administered.

