

## Considerations for Course of Study:

Examine CA state standards, CLCS graduation requirements and define a course of study for learners with IEPs earning a Certificate of Completion.

Learners with IEPs have a right to specialized education services until the semester they turn 22 to complete their designated course of study for either diploma or certificate pathways.

Learners can earn a “diploma” wherein their official transcript will explicitly list credits earned with modified curriculum as such, while still completing either the CLCS determined standards, or the 13 required state standards for graduation. A Certificate of Completion would be an alternate pathway in which a learner would have access to any classes offered on either CLCS campus that they can take pass/fail, with additional coursework to support their lives post CLCS in order to prepare them for their next program. The decision to consider an alternate path will depend on factors related to the learner’s academic abilities, post-graduation plans, and other elements related to but not limited to independent living, services or program enrollments.

### Areas to consider when choosing pathways:

- Learner goals upon completion of high school
- Education/training, employment, independent living
- Academic history in general and special education
- Test data: statewide testing scores, reading level
- Curriculum/course descriptions as related to district graduation requirements
- Attendance
- Behavior

### Breakdown of consideration areas:

- **Learner goals upon completion of high school**
  - During completion of the learner’s transition plan is the team aware and in agreement of the learner’s goals pertaining to:
    - Post secondary education and/or employment plans:
      - Immediate enrollment to a 4 year college or university after completion of HS program to obtain a Bachelor's degree
      - Immediate enrollment to a 2 year college to obtain an Associates degree or professional/vocational certification OR transfer to 4 year program for continued education

- Immediate enrollment to a 2 year college to complete professional certification program, OR complete continued education coursework like SAS Specialty Programs and classes
  - Immediate enrollment into a vocational program
  - Immediate enlistment into a branch of military service (diploma or GED required)
  - Eventual enrollment in a 2 year college of professional program that may continue on to future education pursuits (no plans within a year of graduation)
  - Immediately planning to enter the workforce (Will have a job within a month of graduation or already working in last year of HS program)
  - Continuing on to a workability or support program in another district or state program
  - No distinct plans for after HS graduation
  - Independent living plans:
    - Plans to enroll in housing plan at college or university (temporary)
    - Plans to acquire independent living arrangements (permanent)
    - Plans to stay at home while attending college or professional program (temporary)
    - Military Service enrollment (temporary)
    - Plans to live independently/foster release
    - Plans to live in subsidised housing due to disability
    - Parents retaining conservatorship of learner past age 18 will live at home indefinitely
- Academic history in general and special education
  - Learner's ability to complete coursework both standard and modified
    - Continued need for subject remediation
    - Learner accessibility to coursework
  - Learners history of academic placement or recommendations
    - Inclusion
    - Special Day Class
    - Counseling Enriched Classroom
    - Half or partial day enrollment
- Test data
  - Statewide testing scores
  - Reading level

- Math skills
- Curriculum/course descriptions as related to district graduation requirements
  - Has a learner completed coursework previously from a sheltered, SDC, CEC or CTE classroom?
  - Incoming learner transcript history
  - Credit recovery history
- Attendance
  - Truancy
  - Home Hospital
  - Gaps in enrollment
- Behavior
  - Referral history
  - Suspension/Expulsion
  - Manifestation documentation
  - Rehabilitation program enrollment

## Proposed CLCS Certificate of Completion Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to develop a non-diploma pathway to graduation allowing learners with Individualized Education Plans (“IEP”) who have deeply impactful cognitive, perceptive, or otherwise potentially typical life limiting disabilities, to earn a Certificate of Completion (“COC”) from Community Learning Schools (Nea CLCS/ACLC) based on federal and state mandates/legislation and California Department of Education (“CDE”) requirements. By developing a pathway that requires the same number of minimum state course requirements, learners with disabilities can earn verification of school enrollment and engagement. Not all learners in California public schools are able to meet graduation requirements. California public school learners have the option to pursue a non-diploma track that will earn an alternative form of certification that will permit participation in graduation and graduation related activities.

The U.S. Department of Education states, “...certificates of completion are used for learners with IEPs who have not met state graduation requirements but still want to participate in graduation ceremonies with their class.” Additionally, state-defined alternate diplomas are permitted to be offered under the Every Learner Succeeds Act (ESSA), Pub. L. No. 114- 95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education concerning eligibility states: “Only a Learner with the most significant disabilities is eligible for a State-defined alternate diploma, and only if the Learner has taken the State’s alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards under section 1111(b)(2)(D) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (“ESEA”) and met any other State-defined requirements. (ESEA section 8101(23)(A)(ii)(I)(bb), (25)(A)(ii)(I)(bb); 34 C.F.R. § 200.34(c)(3))”

### State Standards for Graduation with a Diploma-

The ability to graduate from a CLCS site program is currently under the approval of either the Board of Directors in the case of a Learner from the general education population or the IEP team on behalf of learners with Special Education Service plans. The state mandated high school graduation course requirements in California include a set of 13 minimum courses required under the California Education Code, in addition to other coursework adopted by the Local Education Agency (“LEA”). Ed. Code §51225.3 provides that all pupils receiving a diploma of graduation from a California high school must have completed all of the following courses, while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive. Unless otherwise specified, each course shall have a duration of one school year:

1. Three courses/years in English
2. Two courses/years in mathematics, including one year of Algebra I (EC Section 51224.5)
3. Two courses/years in science, including biological and physical sciences
4. Three courses/years in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography, a one-semester course in American government and civics, and a one-semester course in economics
5. One course/year in visual or performing arts, foreign language, and career technical education. For the purpose of satisfying the minimum course requirement, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language
6. Two courses/years in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of EC Section 51241
7. Other coursework adopted by the local governing board of the LEA.

However, learners and families who are considering opting for a COC should consider the following limitations may and/or will apply:

1. A COC is not equivalent to a high school diploma or GED graduation equivalency test; it verifies school attendance only.
2. A COC is not usually accepted at higher institutions of learning; most colleges and trade schools require a high school diploma or its equivalent for entrance. California Community colleges do not require a high school diploma for entry.
3. The Armed Services limits the number of COC and GED candidates allowed to enlist in the military each year (between 1% and 10% depending on the branch) and the minimum requirements for the Armed Forces Qualification Test are higher for COC holders as opposed to those with high school diplomas.
4. A COC may affect the Learner's ability to gain employment where a high school diploma is a job requirement.
5. To be eligible to receive federal Learner aid, a Learner must have either a high school diploma or a GED. The California Education Code (EC) § 51225.3 specifies a minimum set of courses to meet state requirements to graduate from high school and receive a diploma.

The governing boards of LEAs have the authority to supplement the state minimum requirements at the local level. CLCS will ensure that its COC pathway has an effective, research based curriculum that includes life skills. Curriculum will be provided at a Learner's independent level with access to grade level general education curriculum and standards. The total number of credits required for a Learner who is working towards a certificate of completion is 130 credits.

If a Learner with an IEP is able to complete the prescribed courses in: ELA, math, science, social studies, PE, and transition/functional skills curriculum, a COC may be awarded by CLCS if the Learner has completed the following requirements:

1. Satisfactory completion of 130 credits of a prescribed alternative course of study as identified on the Learner's IEP
2. Satisfactory achievement of the Learner's IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP Team
3. Satisfactory high school attendance, participation in the instruction prescribed in the Learner's IEP, and achievement of transition goals and objectives.
4. Satisfactory participation in state testing, or alternative equivalents at least once for the duration of high school

Learners with disabilities who qualify for a COC are eligible to participate in one graduation ceremony and any school activity related to graduation in which learners of similar age without disabilities would be eligible to participate. Completing the COC requirements and exiting high school with that certificate does not terminate Free Appropriate Public Education ("FAPE") eligibility and does not serve to exit a Learner from special education. Learners who receive a COC may decide to return to high school and can do so through the age of 22. There are two events that end the school's responsibility to a Learner with a disability:

1. Learner earns and receives a high school diploma
2. Learner turns 22

A Learner less than age 22, who earlier decided to exit school with a COC, can then change their mind and return to school until the end of the school semester of their 22nd birthday or until they earn a diploma, whichever occurs first. Given that the aforementioned is based on an IEP team recommendation, the IEP team must provide the parent/guardian of a minor Learner with Prior Written Notice (PWN). The IEP team will issue notice to the parent/guardian/adult Learner via the Special Education Information System form of its proposed action regarding the recommended course of study pathway prior to an IEP meeting. Federal law requires schools to provide "specially defined instruction, and related services, at no cost to parent/guardian, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability." The law requires schools to provide disabled learners with these special supports from age 3 until age 22, or until they graduate from high school.