

## **CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION VS DIPLOMA**

**A Certificate of Completion**, unlike a high school diploma is not an academic credential. A high school diploma is awarded to students that have met the Michigan Merit Curriculum graduation requirements. A certificate of completion might be given to students with an individual education plan (IEP) that are being taught an alternate curriculum and taking the MI-Access alternate state assessment.

### **More Information on Certificate vs. Diploma**

- Federal law allows special education services until age 21.
- Michigan law allows special education services until age 26.
- A Certificate of Completion does not end entitlement to special education services. Only a regular high school diploma or reaching the age of 26 years old can end special education entitlement.
- The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) does not recognize a "Certificate of Completion". The MDE recognizes only the Michigan Merit Diploma. It is a local district decision regarding whether to offer some type of certificate, also what to call the certificate, and what the criteria is for awarding a certificate.
- A student being assessed with the MI-Access is not likely to be working on a diploma based on the Michigan Merit Curriculum.
- Parents should be thinking about their child's curriculum and high school completion goal as early as possible, even at elementary level.
- A student can still get into a community college with a Certificate of Completion. However, a certification of completion will affect the student's ability to receive financial aid should they decide to enroll in a community college or vocational training program.
- A Certificate of Completion will affect the student's ability to enlist in the US military.
- A Certificate of Completion may affect the student's ability to gain employment where a diploma is a job requirement.
- The student's IEP team determines if he/she will receive a diploma or a certificate of completion.

**A Personal Curriculum (PC)** is a general education tool that allows certain modifications to be made to the requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC). While the law gives the areas in which modifications may be made for certain groups of students, the personal curriculum is there to help make the MMC available to all students. The personal curriculum option lets the board of a school district award a regular high school diploma if the student completes the requirements of the PC.