



Cache County School District

Policy Series 4000: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Policy No. 4900 P6

Staff Implementation Guidelines for the Utah Alternate Diploma and Certificate of Completion

The Cache County School District (CCSD) Board of Education is committed to ensuring every student receives a high-quality, meaningful, and rigorous education aligned with the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) Portrait of a Graduate (focusing on Mastery, Autonomy, and Purpose).

Pursuant to Utah Administrative Code R277-705-5 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), CCSD has formally established the Alternate Diploma option for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SWSCD). The purpose of this document is to establish a standardized district procedure for special education teachers, school counselors, registrars, and school administrators to implement, track, and award the Alternate Diploma while adhering strictly to state guidelines, federal laws under IDEA, and district policy.

Eligibility & Criteria

An **Alternate Diploma or Certificate of Completion** may be awarded to students who are in specialized programs, have an associated Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and/or will be continuing their education in the specialized program post-graduation.

A student may be awarded a **Certificate of Completion** if they meet one of the following criteria:

- 1) The student has a disability and has completed their senior year and is exiting the school system; however, has not met the state and district requirements for graduation, but has met the goals set forth by the student's IEP, or
- 2) The student was enrolled throughout and has completed their senior year, is exiting the school system, has not met the state and district requirements for graduation, and has made a sincere effort to complete high school, as determined by school administration.

The **Alternate Diploma** is **not** an automatic option for all students in special education, nor is it a regular high school diploma or a Certificate of Completion.

To earn an Alternate Diploma in CCSD, a student must meet **all** of the following state criteria:

- 1) **Significant Cognitive Disability:** The student is formally identified through the IEP process as a student with a significant cognitive disability (SWSCD) under R277-705-2(8).
- 2) **Essential Elements Curriculum:** The student accesses grade-level Utah Core Standards through the alternate achievement standards—the **Essential Elements (EE)** for English Language Arts and Mathematics, and the **Extended Core** for Science.
- 3) **1% Alternate Assessment Flag:** The student participates in Utah's statewide alternate assessment (Dynamic Learning Maps - DLM) instead of standard testing (Utah Aspire Plus / ACT) and is flagged as part of the 1% participation threshold in SCRAM/UTREx.
- 4) **Credit Requirements:** The student meets all modified graduation credit requirements (24 credits minimum) in approved content-area courses prior to exiting school at or before age 22.

Core Academic Coursework & Substitution Requirements

Students earning the Alternate Diploma must fulfill a minimum of **24.0 credits**. Course substitutions must remain within the same content area and be selected from the USBE-approved alternative course list.

Coursework Credit Breakdown

Subject Area	Required Credits	Approved Coursework / Substitutions
Language Arts	4.0	3.0 credits from Essential Elements (EE) English 9, 10, 11 AND 1.0 credit from EE English 12 or an approved Applied/Advanced Language Arts course.
Mathematics	3.0	3.0 credits from EE Secondary Math I, II, and III. (Note: EE Secondary Math III may be replaced with an approved applied math course such as Personal Finance or Math Decision Making upon written parent opt-out request).
Science	3.0	2.0 credits from ECS/EE Science foundation courses (e.g., ECS Earth Systems, ECS Biology, ECS Chemistry, ECS Physics) PLUS 1.0 credit from additional EE Science or approved Applied/Advanced Science/CTE courses.
Social Studies	3.0	3.0 credits of EE Social Studies, Geography, World History, U.S. History, and Government.

Physical & Health Ed.	2.0	Health (0.5), Participation Skills (0.5), Fitness for Life (0.5), and PE Elective/Adaptive PE (0.5). (Adaptive PE must be documented on the IEP).
Directed Coursework	3.0	Fine Arts (1.5), Career & Technical Education (1.0), Digital Studies (0.5).
Financial Literacy	0.5	General Financial Literacy or modified equivalent.
Electives	5.5	Supported electives, Work-Based Learning, or Life Skills.
TOTAL CREDITS	24.0	

Operational & IEP Team Procedures

Step 1: Early Planning & PCCR Integration (Grades 8–9)

- 1) Beginning prior to 9th grade (or by age 14), the IEP team—including the parent, student, special education teacher, and school counselor—must discuss high school completion pathways during the Plan for College and Career Readiness (PCCR) and IEP transition planning.
- 2) The team determines whether a regular high school diploma, an alternate diploma, or a certificate of completion is appropriate.

Step 2: IEP Documentation & Course Substitution Forms

- 1) All course modifications, Essential Elements selections, and exemptions must be explicitly documented in the student's IEP Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) and Special Education Services pages.
- 2) **CCSD Substitution Sheet:** A district-approved Substitution Form must be completed annually, signed by the parent/guardian, maintained in the student's cumulative IEP file, and provided to the high school counselor/registrar.

Step 3: Grade Reporting & Transcript Integrity

- 1) High schools must award letter grades or pass/fail marks based on individualized rubrics measuring mastery of Essential Elements.
- 2) **Transcripts:** Per federal privacy laws and state regulations, the student's official transcript and diploma certificate **must not** identify special education classes or indicate that the student is a student with a disability. The diploma conferred during

commencement is a standard high school diploma cover, bearing the same visual dignity as all regular diplomas.

Critical Distinction: FAPE & Post-High Transition

It is vital that all district administrators, counselors, and teachers understand the critical legal distinction regarding the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) obligation:

1) FAPE & DIPLOMA SUMMARY

- a. Regular High School Diploma ==> ENDS FAPE Eligibility
 - b. Utah Adult Secondary Diploma ==> ENDS FAPE Eligibility
 - c. Alternate Diploma (GA) ==> DOES NOT END FAPE (Eligible <22)
 - d. Certificate of Completion ==> DOES NOT END FAPE (Eligible <22)
- 2) **Non-Termination of FAPE:** Awarding an Alternate Diploma **does not end** the district's obligation to provide FAPE. Students who complete their Alternate Diploma coursework at the end of their senior year (12th grade) remain eligible for post-high transition services in CCSD until they age out at age 22 (or July 1 following their 21st birthday).
- 3) **Commencement Participation:** Students working toward an Alternate Diploma are entitled to walk with their 12th-grade graduating class in commencement ceremonies. Walking in commencement does not mean FAPE has ended.
- 4) **Prior Written Notice (PWN):** A Prior Written Notice of Change of Placement is **not required** when issuing an Alternate Diploma if the student is continuing in post-high services, as placement has not terminated. PWN is only required when the student fully exits special education services (e.g., aging out at age 22).

Coding, UTREx, & Cohort Reassignment Guidance

Accurate data entry in UTREx is essential for state reporting and cohort graduation calculations.

UTREx High School Completion Status Codes

1) GA – Graduate Alternate Diploma:

- a. Used on the last enrollment record when a student completes all Alternate Diploma credit requirements.
- b. *Prerequisite:* The student **must** have an active SCRAM record flagged with the **1% Alternate Assessment** flag.
- c. *Calculations:* Included as a graduate in federal 4-year/5-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and SPP/APR Indicator 1.

2) RA – Retained Senior on Path to Alternate Diploma:

- a. Used at the end of 12th grade when a student with a significant cognitive disability is continuing into CCSD post-high transition services to finish Alternate Diploma requirements or transition goals.

- b.** *Function:* Reassigns the student's graduation cohort year forward by one year at a time. Must be reported annually while the student remains in post-high services.
- 3) CT – Certificate of Completion:**
 - a.** Used **only** when a student exits or ages out of CCSD without completing the requirements for a regular or Alternate Diploma.
 - b.** *Warning:* Do **not** code a student as CT during their 12th-grade year if they are returning for post-high transition services. Use RA instead.
- 4) AO – Aged Out:**
 - a.** Assigned when a student reaches maximum age eligibility (age 22) and exits the district.
- 5) Role-Specific Training Protocols**
- 6)** To ensure smooth implementation, CCSD will conduct mandatory annual training modules tailored to specific staff roles:
- 7) School Administrators (Principals & Assistant Principals)**
- 8) Focus:** Policy oversight, graduation ceremony equity, and legal compliance.
- 9) Key Takeaway:** Ensure students earning an Alternate Diploma participate fully in high school commencement without diploma distinction or public disclosure of disability status.
- 10) Special Education Teachers**
- 11) Focus:** Curriculum alignment, Essential Elements instruction, IEP documentation, and assessment.
- 12) Key Takeaway:** Accurately map coursework to USBE-approved Essential Elements, maintain cumulative substitution records, and ensure 1% DLM eligibility criteria are strictly documented in the IEP.
- 13) School Counselors & High School Registrars**
- 14) Focus:** Credit tracking, course coding, PCCR planning, and UTREx reporting.
- 15) Key Takeaway:** Verify that standard transcripts do not display special education markers. Ensure proper application of the RA code for 12th graders moving to post-high programs and the GA code upon diploma completion.

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