



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability, you may graduate from high school with a Regents, Advanced Regents or Local diploma. If you do not meet the requirements for one of these diplomas, you may exit high school with a Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC) or a Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential. The SACC and the CDOS are not diplomas and do not have the same benefits as a diploma.

### DIPLOMA OPTIONS

Graduating with a high school diploma gives you access to college, the military, and trade schools. The two most common diplomas in New York State are the Regents diploma and the Local diploma. For both the Regents diploma and the Local diploma, you must earn 22 credits (44 credits in NYC) in specific courses.<sup>1</sup>

#### REGENTS DIPLOMA

To earn a Regents diploma, you must pass “4+1” exams:

- **Pass 4 Regents exams with a score of 65 or higher.**<sup>2</sup> The required exams are English Language Arts (ELA), one Math, one History, and one Science exam; **AND**
- **Pass 1 other State-approved exam.** You can use an Advanced Placement (AP) or SAT II score, a State-approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) exam, another Regents exam, or the CDOS Commencement Credential as your fifth exam (see pg. 3).

#### LOCAL DIPLOMA

The Local diploma is available to students with disabilities who pass “4+1” exams using the “Safety Net” score requirements or who qualify for a “Superintendent Determination.”

#### Safety Net Options<sup>3</sup>

The Local diploma is available to students with disabilities who pass “4+1” exams using the “Safety Net” score requirements. If you have an IEP, you are automatically eligible for the Safety Net. If you have a Section 504 plan, your 504 plan must say that you are eligible for the Safety Net. The Safety Net options available to you

#### NOTE:

A new CDOS pathway to the Superintendent Determination became available in December 2017 (see pg. 2).

<sup>1</sup> For details on the courses required for a diploma, see: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/rules-for-students/graduation-requirements>.

<sup>2</sup> If you successfully appeal one score of 62-64, you will still earn a Regents diploma. For details about appealing Regents scores, see: [http://advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/regents\\_exam\\_appeal\\_options.pdf](http://advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/regents_exam_appeal_options.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> For frequently asked questions about the Safety Net, see: [www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/safetynet-qa.htm](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/safetynet-qa.htm).

depend on the year you started high school. The chart below lists the requirements to pass your exams under each Safety Net. Unless otherwise noted, you can combine these Safety Net options.

SAFETY NET OPTION	REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL DIPLOMA	ELIGIBILITY
<b>Low Pass Score</b>	Score between 55 and 64 on the required Regents exams.	You must have entered 9 <sup>th</sup> grade in 2005 or after.
<b>Appeal of Low Pass Score</b>	Score a 52, 53 or 54 on up to two of the required Regents exams. To appeal your scores, you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the exams you are appealing at least twice;</li> <li>• Take advantage of academic help at your school in the subjects you are appealing;</li> <li>• Pass the course in the subject you are appealing; and</li> <li>• Get recommended by your teacher or the chair of the department in the subject you are appealing.</li> </ul>	You must be eligible to graduate in January 2016 or after.
<b>Compensatory</b>	Score between 45-54 on 1 or 2 required Regents exams and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For each score between 45-54, score a 65 or higher another Regents exam;</li> <li>• Pass the course in the subjects on which you scored 45-54; and</li> <li>• Have satisfactory attendance during the school year you scored 45-54</li> </ul> You cannot use this option for the ELA or Math exams. You must score 55 or higher on both the ELA and Math Regents exams.	You must have entered 9 <sup>th</sup> grade in 2005 or after.
<b>Regents Competency Test (RCT)</b>	Fail one or more of the required Regents exams, but pass the corresponding Regents Competency Test (RCT). If you use the RCT option, you cannot also use the Compensatory option.	Only available if you entered 9 <sup>th</sup> grade before September 2011.

### **Superintendent Determination *\*\*Updated December 2017\*\****

If you have an IEP, but do not qualify for the safety net options above, you may still be eligible for a Local diploma via a Superintendent Determination. To be considered for a Superintendent Determination, your parent or guardian must make a request in writing to your principal or to the Committee on Special Education (CSE). Your principal or the CSE must forward your request to the superintendent. The superintendent will make the final decision. If your request for a Superintendent Determination is approved, you will graduate with a Local diploma. This option does NOT apply to you if you have a Section 504 plan or if you have been declassified from special education. If you attend a charter school or a private school, your principal has the authority to make a Superintendent Determination.

To earn a local diploma under this option, you must:

1. **EITHER** pass the Math and ELA Regents exams with scores of 55 or higher (or successfully appeal scores of 52-54) **OR** earn a CDOS Commencement Credential (see pg. 3); **AND**
2. Sit for and fail the other exams required for graduation; **AND**
3. Pass Regents-level courses in the subjects of the failed exams.

For each exam you fail, the superintendent will review your performance in the related course. The superintendent should consider your final course grade and the work you completed during the year, such as projects, class work, quizzes, and tests.

# NON-DIPLOMA OPTIONS

Students with IEPs who are unable to earn a Regents or Local Diploma may leave school with one of two credentials: (1) the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential; or (2) the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC). These credentials replaced the “IEP Diploma,” which is no longer offered. On their own, the CDOS and SACC credentials are **NOT** high school diplomas and **CANNOT** be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools.

## Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential

The CDOS Commencement Credential is a certificate that is meant to show your readiness for entry-level jobs. It is possible to complete high school with a CDOS Commencement Credential only. But, on its own, the CDOS Commencement Credential is **NOT** a high school diploma and **CANNOT** be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools.

Even though the CDOS Commencement Credential is not a diploma, it can be used to earn a Local or Regents diploma. You can substitute a CDOS Commencement Credential for the fifth exam required to graduate with a Regents or Local diploma (see pg. 1). You can also use the CDOS to apply for a Local Diploma using the Superintendent Determination (see pg. 2). Students who are assessed using the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) are not eligible for a CDOS Commencement Credential.

You can earn a CDOS Commencement Credential in one of two ways:

(1) Complete all of the following:

- Complete and annually review a career plan that documents your career interests, strengths and weaknesses, career goals, and coursework or learning experiences to help you achieve those goals;
- Complete 216 hours of work-based learning, CTE courses, or other career planning activities, including at least 54 hours of supervised work-based learning, such as:
  - Internships, job shadowing, or service learning
  - Courses that are part of an approved CTE sequence
  - Advisory focused on career planning
- Have an employability profile completed by your school that shows you have mastered CDOS standards;

**OR**

(2) Earn one of the nationally-recognized work readiness credentials. Examples include:

- SkillsUSA Workforce Ready Employability Assessment: [www.careeressentials.org/assessments](http://www.careeressentials.org/assessments)
- National Work Readiness Credential (NWRC): [www.workreadiness.com/](http://www.workreadiness.com/)
- ACT National Career Readiness Certificate: [www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/workkeys-for-educators/nrc.html](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/workkeys-for-educators/nrc.html)
- CASAS Workforce Skills and Certification System: [www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/WSCS](http://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/WSCS)

**NOTE:** If you are using the CDOS to qualify for the Superintendent Determination during the 2017-18 or 2018-19 school years, your principal may be able to award a CDOS Credential even if you have not met all of the requirements above. For details, see [www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1217p12a1.pdf](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1217p12a1.pdf).

## Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC)

The SACC is available only to some students with significant disabilities who take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). You may exit high school with a SACC after the end of the school year in which you turn 21, or after at least 12 years of school (not including kindergarten), if you or your parent wishes. If you leave school with a SACC, you will get a certificate and a Student Exit Summary describing:

- Your skills, strengths, and interests;
- Your level of achievement of the New York State CDOS standards; and
- Your level of academic achievement as measured by the NYSAA.

For more information on the SACC, visit: [www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/SACCMemo.htm](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/SACCMemo.htm).

## CHOOSING A GRADUATION OPTION

By the time you turn 15, your IEP must include a transition plan. The transition plan should talk about your graduation options. If you are 15 or older and have not had a meeting to create a transition plan, your parent should request one from your school.

Even before you turn 15, you may want to begin considering your graduation options as you plan for high school. Contact your IEP team to have this conversation. For more information on transition planning, visit: [www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/transition\\_guide.pdf](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/transition_guide.pdf).

Remember, all students with disabilities have the right to remain in school until they get a Regents or Local diploma, or until the end of the school year in which they turn 21, whichever comes first.

**Still have more questions?**  
**Please call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline**  
Monday through Thursday • 10 am to 4 pm  
1-866-427-6033 (toll free)

*This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. This fact sheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.*

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