

Q and A Regarding Deferment of Graduation

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requires that school districts provide students with disabilities who have an individual educational plan (IEP) a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Prior to this current school year, when a student with a disability graduated from high school with a standard diploma the school district was no longer obligated to provide FAPE and all services ended. During the 2014 legislative session, section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes, (F.S) was amended and the opportunity for **certain students with disabilities** to defer receipt of their standard high school diploma in order to continue to receive services was added.

The statute allows a student to defer the receipt of a standard high school diploma if they have an IEP that prescribes special education, transition planning, transition services, or related services through age 21 **and** are enrolled in an accelerated college credit instruction, industry certification courses that lead to college credit, a collegiate high school program, courses necessary to satisfy the Scholar designation requirements, or a structured work-study, internship, or pre-apprenticeship program.

On Thursday January 29, the notification letter for deferment was mailed to all seniors that are on the standard diploma track. Parents were provided with a copy of phone numbers for each high school. Please use the following information to answer any parent's questions. The Parental Request for Deferral of Standard Diploma High School Diploma form will be forthcoming.

Who is eligible to defer?

The potential to defer receipt of a standard high school diploma applies to any student with a disability, as long as the requirements of s. 1003.4282(10) (c) are met. Students with an IEP that are graduating with a Standard diploma.

What is the criteria for deferring?

Students must have an IEP prescribing special education, transition planning, transition services or related services through the age of 21 **AND** enrolled (accepted) in an accelerated college credit instruction, industry certification courses that lead to college credit, a collegiate high school program, courses necessary to satisfy the Scholar designation requirements, or a structured work-study, internship, or pre-apprenticeship program.

Who decides if the student is eligible for deferment?

The IEP team will determine eligibility for deferral. The benefits of deferring receipt of the high school diploma and the programs available to students who defer will be reviewed with eligible students and their parents during an IEP meeting. This information will also be provided in writing. The decision to accept or defer the standard high school diploma must be made by May 1, 2015. The parent (or the student if over 18 years of age and to whom rights have transferred), must sign a document stating whether or not they wish to defer. Please note that failure to attend the graduation ceremony does not constitute a deferral of the diploma.

The decision to accept or defer graduation must be made by May 1, 2015. The parent or student, if age of majority, must sign the Parental Request for Deferral of Standard High School Diploma stating whether or not they wish to defer.

If the student is 18 or older who signs the Request to Deferral?

The student is age of majority therefore the student will sign the document regarding his educational placement.

Does the deferral form have to be completed each year the student stays after graduating?

No, the request to defer is completed one time. The IEP will prescribe ESE services during the deferral. Once the student meets those requirements or through the age of 21, then FAPE would end.

What type of accelerated college credit does the student need to be enrolled in?

Accelerated college credit is defined by statute as Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement – credit by exam, Early College Admissions, International Baccalaureate, and AICE. Students must meet the eligibility criteria for each of these programs and have a demonstrated need for ESE services which have already been in place.

What is a collegiate high school program?

At minimum, a collegiate high school program is available to eligible public school students in grade 12 (grade 11 is optional)

- Allows eligible students to participate for at least one full school year
- Allows eligible students to earn CAPE industry certification **and** allows eligible students to complete 30 college credit hours through early admission (i.e., full-time dual enrollment, towards an associate or Baccalaureate degree)

What are the requirements for students participating in a collegiate high school program?

Each student participating in a collegiate high school program must enter into a performance contract that must be signed by the student, parent, school district and Florida College System institution. The contract components must include, at a minimum, the schedule of courses by semester, industry certifications available to the student, attendance requirements and course grade requirements.

What are industry certification courses that lead to college credit?

Industry Certification provides students who take a concentrated career and technical education program with an opportunity to earn a guaranteed number of college credits in the Florida College System.

What courses would a student need to take to work toward a Scholar designation?

In addition to meeting the 24-credit standard high school diploma requirements, a student must

- Pass the ELA Grade 11 statewide assessment;
- Earn 1 credit in Algebra II (must pass EOC);
- Pass the Geometry EOC;
- Earn 1 credit in Statistics or an equally rigorous mathematics course;
- Pass the Biology I EOC;
- Earn 1 credit in Chemistry or Physics;
- Earn 1 credit in a course equally rigorous to Chemistry or Physics;
- Pass the U.S. History EOC;
- Earn 2 credits in the same World Language; and
- Earn at least 1 credit in AP, IB, AICE or a dual enrollment course.

A student is exempt from the Biology I or U.S. History assessment if the student is enrolled in an AP, IB or AICE Biology I or U.S. History course **and** the student:

- Takes the respective AP, IB or AICE assessment; and
- Earns the minimum score to earn college credit.

Is there a minimum number of classes that the student must take if they defer?

No. The student can take the courses that needed that are offered during that semester.

What are structured work study, internship, or pre-apprenticeship programs?

Work study, internship and pre-apprenticeship programs provide students the opportunity to further develop the skills necessary to gain employment and independent living skills. Students would be enrolled in an industry certification program, On-The-Job training, ACCESS 18 -22 programs, or Supported Employment.