

Indiana Diploma Decisions

**Information for Hoosier families and
their students with disabilities**

Compiled by the **Southeast Cadre of Transition Leaders** of Indiana, with the support of:

**Center on Community Living and Careers
Indiana Institute on Disability and Community
Indiana University**

Southeast Cadre Members:

Michele Engle, New Albany-Floyd County School Corporation
Kelly Grainger, Greater Clark County School Corporation
Mona Huckleberry, Jennings County Community Schools
Melissa Jones, Ripley Ohio Dearborn Special Education Services
Wendy Ritz, Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation
Jennifer Robinson, Monroe County Community School Corporation\
Paula Teague, IN*Source

With thanks to Lisa Paddock, of IN*SOURCE, and to the Indiana families who provided input.



**CENTER ON COMMUNITY
LIVING AND CAREERS**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Indiana Institute on Disability and Community

© 2015, Center on Community Living and Careers

www.iidc.indiana.cclc

812-855-6508

Adapted from *Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities*, with permission from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, ©2005, State of Florida.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Glossary of Terms	5
1. High School Preparation	6
2. Course of Study	7
3. Core 40 Diploma Options	8
4. General Diploma	9
5. Certificate of Completion	11
6. Diploma Decisions	12
7. End of Course Assessment (ECA) Requirements	13
8. Strategies	16
9. Pros & Cons	19
10. Frequently Asked Questions	20
11. Self-determination & Self-advocacy	21
12. Career Planning	24
Resources	25
References	26



This guide is designed for you, parents of students with disabilities. It provides information about the diplomas available in Indiana. Knowing about these options will help you and your child make decisions about the best course of study to a diploma that matches your child's interests, preferences, strengths and needs for life after high school.

The path to choosing a diploma actually starts in elementary school. The educational program, curriculum, and services your child receives during the elementary years may affect his/her high school diploma options. Developing good reading and math skills in elementary and middle school, for instance, is essential for future access to higher level learning and success in high school.

Near the end of middle school, you and your child will have an opportunity to plan the course of study for high school. The timeline for making a diploma decision varies from student to student and school district to school district. However, discussions around the diploma options will begin at age 14 or when entering 9th grade (whichever comes first), when students begin planning for life after high school. You and your child will make more definitive plans about diploma choices after your child enters high school.

This is not a decision that you will have to make alone. Your school and district staff as well as your school guidance counselor will help you throughout this diploma decision-making process and through the development of the Transition Individualized Education Program (IEP). You will review the diploma choice each year at your child's Transition IEP meeting. Depending upon the circumstances, it is possible to change to a different type of diploma if you, your child, and your case conference team feel it's the right thing to do.

Ask the high school guidance counselor and your child's teacher of record to explain how the various diploma requirements match your child's strengths, interests, preferences, support needs, and goals.

Glossary of Terms

Case Conference A meeting of a committee consisting of the student, his/her parent, the teacher of record, a school administrator, and other individuals as needed who can help the student select his/her course of study and diploma.

Certificate of Completion Enables a student to leave high school with fewer academic requirements and allows more time for taking vocational and life skills courses. Students obtaining a certificate, however, do not receive a high school diploma and have fewer post-school options for employment or training and education.

Core 40 Diploma Indiana's minimum graduation requirement. To graduate with less than a Core 40 Diploma, students must follow opt-out procedures to choose either a General Diploma or a Certificate of Completion. Graduating with a Core 40 Diploma is a requirement for students attending a 4-year, Indiana public college or university.

ECA Waiver An ECA waiver is a process that allows a student who is performing satisfactorily in his Algebra I and English 10 courses, but who may not be able to pass the End-of-Course Assessment for one or both courses, to graduate with a diploma (either Core 40 or General). Students must meet specific requirements to earn an ECA waiver. For more information on ECA waiver requirements, see pages 14 and 15.

End-of-Course Assessment (ECA) Indiana high school students are required to take an ECA exam after taking Algebra 1 (usually in their freshman year) and after taking English 10 (usually in their sophomore year). For more information on ECA requirements, see page 13.

General Diploma A diploma with fewer academic requirements than a Core 40 Diploma. Students receiving a General Diploma must also pass the ECA in both Algebra I and English 10 or meet requirements for an ECA waiver. A General Diploma may limit options for students wanting to attend Indiana 4-year public colleges; however, they may be able to take classes at Ivy Tech Community College or other 2-year colleges in the state.

Transition IEP A special Individualized Education Program that helps a student work toward employment, education, and independent living goals that he/she has for life after high school. The Transition IEP process begins in Indiana at age 14 and takes into account a student's interests, preferences, strengths, and needs. The case conference committee is responsible for establishing the Transition IEP each year.

1

High School Preparation

As your child enters high school and you begin choosing a course of study, you'll need to be aware of the differences between middle school and high school. These differences can create additional challenges that you and your child had not anticipated. See the chart below for specific items that may impact your child and his/her diploma decision.

Issues to Discuss	Middle vs. High School
Passing vs. Earning Credits	Middle school students are "passing" to a next grade. High school students are earning credits for graduation.
End of Course Assessment	High school students must pass End of Course Assessments (ECAs) in algebra and English to earn a Core 40 or General diploma, <u>or</u> they must meet specific requirements for an ECA waiver. There are multiple opportunities to take the ECA prior to graduation, but if a student does not pass the ECA, he/she must take the test each time the exam is offered in order to qualify for an ECA waiver.
Attendance requirements	High school students must have 95% or better attendance to qualify for an ECA waiver.
Modifications vs. Accommodations	Modifications are changes in the content, delivery, or instructional level of curriculum or assessments that result in lowering the expectation and standards for a student. (IDEA, 2004) Modifications may be limited if your high school student is on a Core 40 diploma track. Accommodations are supports or services that students can use to help them access the general education curriculum. The content the student is expected to learn does not change. (Elliott & Thurlow, 2006)
Higher expectations	Many high school courses require more homework and expect students to study for exams without as much guidance or "hand-holding." Students also have more choices, e.g., optional classes, extra-curricular activities.
Reading	Reading is offered as a class through the middle school years. Typically, reading is not a subject offered in high school, although course-related reading demands increase.

2

Course of Study

The course of study your child follows in high school is based on the type of diploma he/she pursues. In Indiana, the diploma choices are:

- Core 40 with Academic Honors Diploma,
- Core 40 with Technical Honors Diploma,
- Core 40 Diploma,
- General Diploma, or
- Certificate of Completion.

As previously mentioned, you and your student should begin the discussion about a diploma in elementary school. At the age of 14 or when your student enters the 9th grade (whichever comes first), the IEP will become a Transition IEP and begin focusing on your child's goals for adulthood. The Transition IEP identifies ways in which the school and family will work together to support your child to achieve these goals.

Your child must be invited to participate in each Transition IEP conference. The Transition IEP requires that your child's goals for employment, education/training, and (if needed) independent living skills be assessed and updated at each annual conference.

The members of the case conference committee (which includes you and your child) work together to decide which diploma option is right for your child. The case conference committee also plans the appropriate course of study that will lead to the selected diploma. The course of study may include:

- general education classes,
- career education classes,
- elective classes, or
- a combination of the above.

Your student's teacher of record is responsible for entering the diploma decision into the Transition IEP, and the teacher will also document any accommodation or modification your student may need to participate fully in his/her education. This information guides your child's educational program as she/he enters high school.

When you make that diploma decision for the first time, it is important to aim high! Give your child every opportunity to achieve his or her best. (See page 18 for more information on why this is so important.)

3


Core 40 Diploma Options

The Indiana State Board of Education sets the minimum requirements for each diploma type offered in Indiana.

On the graphic below, you will see the requirements for the three types of Core 40 diplomas: Core 40, Core 40 with Academic Honors, and Core 40 with Technical Honors.

Ask your high school guidance counselor and your child's teacher of record to explain how these requirements match your child's

strengths, interests, preferences, and support needs.



Effective beginning with students who enter high school in 2012-13 school year (class of 2016).

Course and Credit Requirements	
English/ Language Arts	8 credits Including a balance of literature, composition and speech.
Mathematics	6 credits (in grades 9-12) 2 credits: Algebra I 2 credits: Geometry 2 credits: Algebra II <small>Or complete Integrated Math I, II, and III for 6 credits. Students must take a math course or quantitative reasoning course each year in high school.</small>
Science	6 credits 2 credits: Biology I 2 credits: Chemistry I or Physics I or Integrated Chemistry-Physics 2 credits: any Core 40 science course
Social Studies	6 credits 2 credits: U.S. History 1 credit: U.S. Government 1 credit: Economics 2 credits: World History/Civilization or Geography/History of the World
Directed Electives	5 credits World Languages Fine Arts Career and Technical Education
Physical Education	2 credits
Health and Wellness	1 credit
Electives*	6 credits <small>(College and Career Pathway courses recommended)</small>
40 Total State Credits Required	

Schools may have additional local graduation requirements that apply to all students.
* Specifies the number of electives required by the state. High school schedules provide time for many more electives during the high school years. All students are strongly encouraged to complete a College and Career Pathway (selecting electives in a deliberate manner) to take full advantage of career and college exploration and preparation opportunities.

CORE40 with Academic Honors

(minimum 47 credits)

For the Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma, students must:

- Complete all requirements for Core 40.
- Earn 2 additional Core 40 math credits.
- Earn 6-8 Core 40 world language credits (6 credits in one language or 4 credits each in two languages).
- Earn 2 Core 40 fine arts credits.
- Earn a grade of a "C" or better in courses that will count toward the diploma.
- Have a grade point average of a "B" or better.
- Complete one of the following:
 - A. Earn 4 credits in 2 or more AP courses and take corresponding AP exams
 - B. Earn 6 verifiable transcribed college credits in dual credit courses from priority course list
 - C. Earn two of the following:
 1. A minimum of 3 verifiable transcribed college credits from the priority course list,
 2. 2 credits in AP courses and corresponding AP exams,
 3. 2 credits in IB standard level courses and corresponding IB exams.
 - D. Earn a combined score of 1750 or higher on the SAT critical reading, mathematics and writing sections and a minimum score of 530 on each
 - E. Earn an ACT composite score of 26 or higher and complete written section
 - F. Earn 4 credits in IB courses and take corresponding IB exams.

CORE40 with Technical Honors

(minimum 47 credits)

For the Core 40 with Technical Honors diploma, students must:

- Complete all requirements for Core 40.
- Earn 6 credits in the college and career preparation courses in a state-approved College & Career Pathway and one of the following:
 1. Pathway designated industry-based certification or credential, or
 2. Pathway dual credits from the lists of priority courses resulting in 6 transcribed college credits
- Earn a grade of "C" or better in courses that will count toward the diploma.
- Have a grade point average of a "B" or better.
- Complete one of the following,
 - A. Any one of the options (A - F) of the Core 40 with Academic Honors
 - B. Earn the following scores or higher on WorkKeys: Reading for Information – Level 6, Applied Mathematics – Level 6, and Locating Information - Level 5.
 - C. Earn the following minimum score(s) on Accuplacer: Writing 80, Reading 90, Math 75.
 - D. Earn the following minimum score(s) on Compass: Algebra 66, Writing 70, Reading 80.

Retrieved from <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/core-40-and-honors-diploma-summary-class-2016.pdf> , October 1, 2014.

4 General Diploma

Indiana requires high school students to obtain a Core 40 Diploma. That's because a Core 40 Diploma ensures that students are prepared for college-level courses; it gives them the opportunity to apply to colleges within the state.

There is, however, another diploma option. Students pursuing a General Diploma still need to meet specific academic requirements and pass the End-of-Course Assessments (or obtain an ECA waiver, see pages 14-15), but the complete

course of study is not as rigorous.

With a General Diploma, students may be able to attend Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College or technical/trade schools, or may be accepted at some private schools, but they will not be eligible to attend any of Indiana's four-year state schools. For this reason, students choosing a General Diploma must formally "opt-out" of the Core 40 curriculum. To complete the opt-out process, you'll need to:

- meet with your student, his/her guidance counselor (or another high school staff person who assists with course selection) to review your student's progress;
- review your student's graduation plan and course of study; and
- decide whether your student will be better served by the Core 40 or the general curriculum.

For more information on the specific course of study required for a General Diploma, see the Department of Education's information sheet on the next page.

Indiana General High School Diploma

The completion of Core 40 is an Indiana graduation requirement. Indiana's Core 40 curriculum provides the academic foundation all students need to succeed in college and the workforce.

To graduate with less than Core 40, the following formal opt-out process must be completed:

- The student, the student's parent/guardian, and the student's counselor (or another staff member who assists students in course selection) must meet to discuss the student's progress.
- The student's Graduation Plan (including four year course plan) is reviewed.
- The student's parent/guardian determines whether the student will achieve greater educational benefits by completing the general curriculum or the Core 40 curriculum.
- If the decision is made to opt-out of Core 40, the student is required to complete the course and credit requirements for a general diploma and the career/academic sequence the student will pursue is determined.

Course and Credit Requirements (Class of 2016 & Beyond)

English/Language Arts	8 credits
	Credits must include literature, composition and speech
Mathematics	4 credits
	2 credits: Algebra I or Integrated Mathematics I 2 credits: Any math course General diploma students are required to earn 2 credits in a Math or a Quantitative Reasoning (QR) course during their junior or senior year. QR courses do not count as math credits.
Science	4 credits
	2 credits: Biology I 2 credits: Any science course At least one credit must be from a Physical Science or Earth and Space Science course
Social Studies	4 credits
	2 credits: U.S. History 1 credit: U.S. Government 1 credit: Any social studies course
Physical Education	2 credits
Health and Wellness	1 credit
College and Career Pathway Courses	6 credits
	Selecting electives in a deliberate manner to take full advantage of college and career exploration and preparation opportunities
Flex Credit	5 credits
	Flex Credits must come from one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional elective courses in a College and Career Pathway • Courses involving workplace learning such as Cooperative Education or Internship courses • High school/college dual credit courses • Additional courses in Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, World Languages or Fine Arts
Electives	6 credits
	Specifies the minimum number of electives required by the state. High school schedules provide time for many more elective credits during the high school years.

40 Total Credits Required

Schools may have additional local graduation requirements that apply to all students

Retrieved from www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/curriculum/general-diploma-requirements-classof2016.pdf,
December 30, 2014.

5 Certificate of Completion

The Transition IEP case conference committee (which includes you and your child) should select a Core 40 or General Diploma, if your child is functioning at grade level with instructional accommodations. The case conference committee should monitor your child's academic and functional performance and progress.

If your child is struggling to earn the needed credits required for graduation, ask

yourself the following questions:

- Is my student attending school regularly and trying his/her best to be successful?
- Is he/she receiving appropriate accommodations and assistance in school?
- Is he/she having academic or social problems or failing classes?
- Is he/she needing extensive modifications to learn the curriculum?

If you answered “yes” to all of these questions, the case conference committee may need to consider a Certificate of Completion rather than a diploma course of study.

The Certificate of Completion can give your student educational opportunities in functional academic areas including vocational training, career exploration, work experiences, life skills, and community living skills while he/she continues to receive special education services. A certificate offers additional opportunities for students to learn and practice real-world employment and community survival skills.

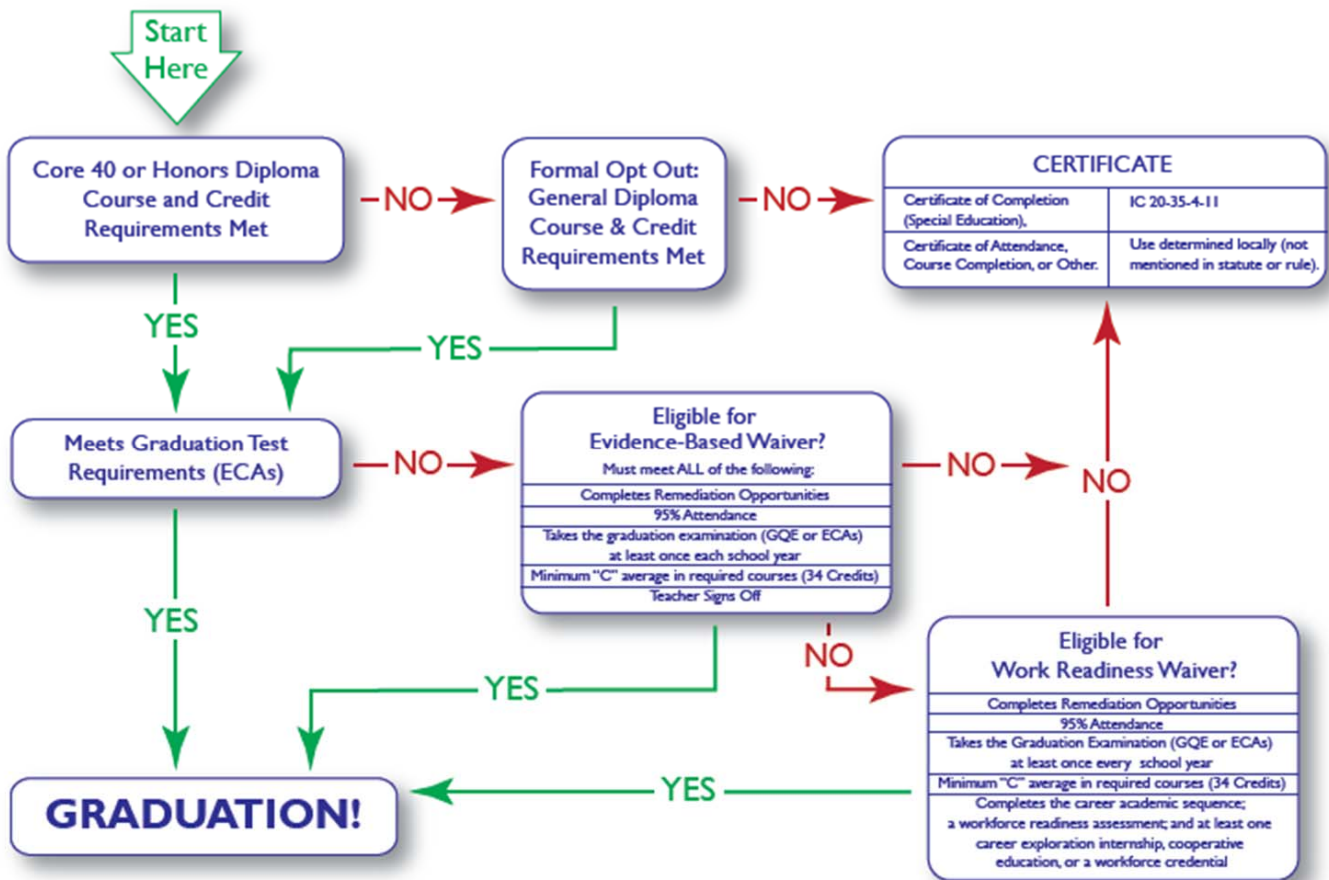
There are trade-offs with any diploma decision you make. You and your student should keep in mind that while a Certificate of Completion could give your child more time to participate in work experiences or vocational training, opportunities for postsecondary education could be very limited.

If you answered “no” to the top two questions above, talk to your student and his/her teachers or the school guidance counselor to find out what supports might be helpful to ensure your student can continue on a diploma track. You might also contact Indiana parent training and parent-to-parent information groups such as **IN*Source** (<http://insource.org>) or **About Special Kids** (<http://www.aboutspecialkids.org>) for additional information on high school accommodations and supports.

6 Diploma Decisions

The Indiana Department of Education has provided a decision tree for students, families, teachers, and guidance counselors to help them as they make diploma decisions.

Indiana Diploma and Certificate Considerations



Retrieved from <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/curriculum/diplomamatrix2.pdf>, October 1, 2014.

7 ECA Requirements

Students in Indiana must demonstrate a basic understanding of English/language arts and algebra in order to obtain a Core 40 or General Diploma. The three ways that students may demonstrate their knowledge of the required subjects are explained here.

1. Pass the English 10 and Algebra I End-of-Course Assessments (ECAs).

Students take the Algebra I ECA at the end of their freshman year. They take the English 10 ECA in their sophomore year. Students on a Core 40 or General Diploma track who do not pass the test on their first try, take remediation courses and retake the ECA every year in high school or until they pass both tests.

2. Fulfill the requirements of the ECA evidence-based waiver.

A student may be academically capable of completing the educational course requirements necessary for a high school Core 40 diploma but, because of his/her individual learning needs, may not be able to pass the End-of-Course Assessment (ECA). This does not mean that he/she cannot get a Core 40 diploma. An example of this scenario is in the box below.

Adam was finishing his senior year. He had followed the four-year plan for graduation and completed the necessary course requirements for the Core 40 diploma. However, he had only passed one of his ECAs. Since he had not passed both assessments, he would have to meet the requirements of the ECA waiver process. Adam worked with his guidance counselor and IEP team to be sure he had the appropriate documentation and had fulfilled the requirements necessary for the evidence-based waiver.*

* Specific requirements are explained on p. 14.

7 ECA Evidence- based Waiver

As shown in the preceding example, if your child does not pass the ECAs for both algebra and English/language arts, he/she may still achieve a Core 40 or General diploma by completing the requirements outlined below for the evidence-based waiver.

For each ECA subject area your child did not pass, he/she must:

- Take the ECAs at least one time during each subsequent school year.
- Complete any remediation offered each year by the school to prepare for the ECA retests.
- Maintain a school attendance rate of 95% or better over the course of his/her high school career (excused absences are not counted against your attendance rate).
- Have at least a "C" average, over the course of your child's high school career, in the courses required for graduation.
- Satisfy any other state and local graduation requirements.
- Get a written recommendation from the teacher(s) in the subject area(s) not passed, as well as recommendation from the school principal, and evidence that the academic standards have been met, whether through other tests or classroom work.

7

ECA Work-readiness Waiver

3. Fulfill the requirements of the ECA work-readiness waiver.

For students who do not pass the ECAs, the final option to earn a diploma is to complete the necessary steps for an ECA work-readiness waiver. In the box below, you can read an example of when this waiver may be pursued.

John was a senior completing his final semester. He had met the academic requirements for a General Diploma and had good attendance. He had taken the ECA several times, however, he had not passed either test. John had completed a 2-year vocational training program in welding and obtained a 1-year industry certification. John worked with his guidance counselor and IEP case conference committee to complete the steps necessary for him to meet the ECA work-readiness waiver.

To receive an ECA work-readiness waiver, a student must meet all of the following criteria:

- The ECAs for algebra and for English/language arts must be retaken at least one time during each subsequent school year. (If the student has passed one test but not the other, he/she need only retake the test each year for the failed subject.)
- Complete any remediation offered each year by the school to prepare for the ECA retests.
- Maintain a school attendance rate of 95% or better over the course of his/her high school career (excused absences are not counted against the attendance rate).
- Have at least a "C" average, over the course of his/her high school career, in the courses required for graduation.
- Satisfy any other state and local graduation requirements.
- Complete the course and credit requirements for a General Diploma, including the career academic sequence; a workforce-readiness assessment; and at least one industry certification that appears on the state board's approved industry certification list, which must be updated annually with recommendations from the Department of Workforce Development.

8

Strategies

The key to making the best diploma choice is to match your student's strengths and long-term goals with the diploma option. The diploma is useful when it meets the needs of your son or daughter.

The following strategies can be used to help insure a good match between your child and the diploma option.

- Review all available information regarding your child's progress, including:
 - School records (for example: classroom tests, standardized tests, teacher observations, progress monitoring, and work samples)
 - Prior IEPs and Transition IEPs
 - Formal assessment data
 - Teacher and/or related staff reports
 - Input from you and your son or daughter, including his or her goals for further education, employment, and adult living
- Create a realistic picture of your child's abilities, interests, and likely postsecondary goals for employment and education/training.
- Ask questions! Understand how your child is performing at school, both academically and socially.

- How has your child performed in general education classes?
- What do your child's recent test scores indicate?
- What does your child want to do after high school for employment & education/training?
- Which diploma will help your child reach his/her desired goals?

8

Strategies

Make sure you and your student actively participate in the diploma decision. Being prepared for a Transition IEP case conference meeting will allow you to provide critical information that educators may not know.

Before the Conference, discuss with your child what he/she likes and his/her interests. Identify what activities your child prefers outside of school. Talk about your child's strengths in school. Pinpoint school struggles and challenges.

During the conference, be comfortable asking questions and sharing information. Share your views regarding your child's future goals and encourage your child to share his/her views. Be prepared to discuss:

- What type of career your child wants.
- What advanced education or training will be needed for a career.
- How he/she will spend his/her leisure time and engage in social relationships after high school.
- What type of support your child will need to be successful.

This information will help the case conference committee to think about which diploma is needed to achieve your child's postsecondary goals.

After the conference, talk to your child about the conference. Communicate with the teacher if you have questions or concerns. Be prepared to follow-up with your child on any referrals to adult agencies, such as Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services, (VRS) which may be able to assist your child to attain his or her desired post-school outcome. Always ask questions to clarify information you do not understand (Conversation Cues, 2012).



Strategies

If you are not completely sure which diploma is the right one for your child, review data such as student performance, progression on goals, and present levels of academic and functioning skills.

Sometimes the diploma choice is obvious to the members of the Transition IEP case conference committee. In other situations, the decision may not be so clear. In those cases you and the other members of the case conference

committee may also use rating scales, questionnaires, and additional instruments to help committee members review critical factors that affect the diploma decision. These information tools are not meant to provide the final answer, but they often help point the way.

Choosing between Diploma Options

Most parents and caregivers wait until high school to make the choice between the various types of diplomas. It can be made sooner if necessary and if the case conference committee agrees to the decision. However, it is usually in high school that your student will have a clearer picture of what he/she would like to do following graduation.

The Transition IEP case conference committee reviews the requirements and creates an individualized graduation plan for your student. This plan can outline what he/she should learn and do in terms of his/her employment and community competencies to earn a diploma or Certificate of Completion.

As mentioned previously, ***when you review the diploma decision for the first time, it is important to aim high. Give your child every opportunity to achieve his or her best.*** Why? Because freshmen who try for a Core 40 diploma can always switch to another course of study later. It's more difficult, however, for a sophomore or junior student who has been pursuing a certificate or General Diploma to then decide he/she wants to earn a higher level diploma. There's often not enough time to earn the necessary credits.

9

Pros & Cons

When discussing the diploma options with your child and the Transition IEP case conference committee, it is important to know the pros and cons of each. Below are some of the most common issues that are discussed regarding the various options. Note that the pros and cons listed are for the state of Indiana. Requirements will vary at community colleges and four-year universities in other states.

Diploma Type	Pros	Cons
Core 40 Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Recognized by employers. + Accepted by technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges if high school course work meets minimum admission requirements. + Accepted by military, if age requirement and Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) scores are met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ More demanding coursework. ☒ More homework. ☒ Not as much time available for vocational training, work experiences, or functional life skills.
General Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Accepted by technical schools and community colleges if high school coursework meets minimum admission requirement. Students may take community college placement test and be admitted to remedial or credit courses at a state community college, as appropriate. + May be recognized by employers. + Accepted by the military, if age requirement and ASVAB scores are met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Not accepted by four-year colleges or universities. ☒ May not be recognized by some employers. ☒ Participation in General Diploma coursework may limit time or opportunity to participate in some transition activities.
Certificate of Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Provides exit document that may be useful for entering postsecondary schooling or gaining employment. + Provides another exit option for students not meeting the requirements of a Core 40 or General diploma. + Allows students time to gain hands-on experiences and develop needed skills for life after high school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Not a high school diploma. ☒ Not accepted by four-year colleges. ☒ Not accepted by community colleges (may allow provisional enrollment or enrollment in career certificate programs). ☒ Not accepted by the military. ☒ May not be recognized by employers.

10 Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *What is a diploma?*

A: A diploma signifies that a student has completed his/her high school career by taking and passing required courses, meeting the required academic standards, and meeting graduation requirements. All students pursuing a diploma must meet these requirements. Please visit <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/indianas-diploma-requirements> for specific information.

Q: *What is a Certificate of Completion?*

A: A student working toward his/her IEP goals is generally eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion. A Certificate of Completion is not an academic credential. There are no state course or grade requirements necessary to earn a Certificate of Completion.

Q: *Can a student who has graduated with a General Diploma or Certificate of Completion attend college in Indiana?*

A: Indiana's public four-year colleges and universities now require that students have at least a Core 40 Diploma. Ivy Tech Community College and some private colleges in the state accept student applicants who have graduated with a General Diploma. These community colleges may have additional requirements such as remedial coursework or additional placement exams. Contact the college admission's office and talk to them about their requirements and entrance criteria. You may also want to talk with the college's office of disability services.

Q: *If a student receives a Certificate of Completion, can he/she return to high school and earn a diploma?*

A: Students with IEPs can attend high school until they turn 22 years of age or have earned a high school diploma, whichever occurs first. Students who receive a Certificate of Completion may later decide to return to high school and earn a diploma. Case conference teams would need to consider the number of credits previously earned toward a diploma. For instance, if a 21-year-old student only has 10 credits toward a diploma, it would be extremely difficult for he/she to complete the remaining, required 30 credits in time to earn a General Diploma.

11

Self-Determination & Self-Advocacy

Making an informed choice about a diploma is essential for the long-term success of your child. It's equally important for your child to be actively involved in this decision, as well as in the development of the goals contained in the Transition IEP. Your child's interests, strengths, preferences, and support needs should be driving the course of study, postsecondary and annual goals, services, and activities. Therefore, self-determination and self-advocacy are important skills for your child to develop as he/

she enters middle and high school.

Self-determination is knowing about yourself—your interests, preferences, strengths, and your support needs—and believing that you are a capable and effective person (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer, 1998).

Self-advocacy is making your own decisions, learning and understanding your personal rights, and having the necessary communication and leadership skills to share your interests, strengths, preferences, and needs with others. (Retrieved from www.NSTTAC.org, October 1, 2014).

Helping your child increase his/her self-determination and self-advocacy skills will give him/her a better chance at creating their own educational plan. In addition, these skills may help increase your child's interest and investment in his/her education.

Transition IEP meetings are an ideal environment to implement and practice these skills. Your child should be speaking, providing information, giving feedback and generating ideas. In the meeting, your child can share his/her hopes and dreams through videos or pictures and can even lead the conference and the discussion! Self-determination and self-advocacy skills will ensure that the Transition IEP supports your student in pursuing his/her dreams.

11 Self-Advocacy Resources

Your child's self-advocacy skills will be essential for his/her long-term success in college, on the job, and in life. Research has shown that students with self-advocacy skills have better postsecondary outcomes in employment and education (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

Below are online resources that may be helpful to you, your child, and teachers.

Student

Tips for Teens: Use Your IEP Meetings to Learn How to Advocate for Yourself

<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c149.pdf>

Be Your Own Best Self Advocate

<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c116.pdf>

Disability Rights (video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6n3uFdXo2Y>

Parent

A Tool Kit to Assist with Advocacy Skills

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/family-support-tool-kits>

How to help your child learn to be a good self advocate

<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c95.pdf>

Teacher

ME! Lessons for Teaching Self Awareness and Self Advocacy

<https://www.ou.edu/content/dam/Education/zarrow/me/ME!%20Lessons%20and%20Materials.pdf>

It's Not Easy

<https://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/its-not-easy.html>

Whose Future is it Anyway? (Evidence-based curriculum)

<https://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/whos-future-is-it-anyway.html>

Keeping it Real: How to get the supports you need for the Life you Want (English & Spanish versions)

http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/projects/keep_real_more.html

11 Resources for Sharing

Many teachers have found a number of creative online resources to help students share their interests, strengths, preferences and support needs during case conferences.

Below are just a few examples of free online presentation tools and apps your student may enjoy using.

Animoto	<u>animoto.com</u>
Educreations	<u>educreations.com</u>
Goanimate	<u>goanimate.com</u>
Haiku Deck	<u>haikudeck.com</u>
Live Binders	<u>livebinders.com</u>
Makebeliefs Comix	<u>makebeliefscomix.com</u>
Picfont	<u>picfont.com</u>
Prezi	<u>prezi.com</u>
Toondoo	<u>toondoo.com</u>
Voki	<u>voki.com</u>
Wordle	<u>wordle.net</u>

12 Career Planning

A big reason for carefully making a diploma decision is the impact it can have on your child's eventual career options. Your child will learn about different careers and job choices during middle and high school. Schools typically offer work study and vocational experiences that enable students to learn about various types of jobs and develop skills necessary to be an effective employee.

Here are some additional activities that may help your child learn more about careers and their educational requirements:

- Career interest inventories
- Job shadowing
- Volunteer opportunities
- Job fairs
- Transition fairs
- Vocational or career counseling
- Service learning opportunities

Different jobs are suited for different people. Your child should think about his/her abilities, strengths, and interests as well as the training and essential skills required of the job to help determine if a job is going to be a good match. This information will help impact and determine what diploma or skill sets are necessary for the life that your child wants.

Indiana Diploma Resources

Additional resources and fact sheets regarding the types of diplomas offered in Indiana may be found on the websites of the Indiana Department of Education and its partners.

Below are links you may find helpful as you research your child's options.

Indiana's Diploma Requirements

<http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/indianas-diploma-requirements>

Indiana's Opt-Out Process for Indiana's New Graduation Requirements

Indiana Code 20-32-4-7,8,9,10

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/curriculum/scopt-outprocess1.pdf>

What Are Your Education Options?

<http://www.in.gov/learnmoreindiana/2435.htm>

Navigating the Course: Finding Your Way Through Indiana's Special Education Rules

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/specialed/navigatingthecourse.pdf>

References

- Conversation cues [Brochure]. (2012). Center on Community Living and Careers, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community. Bloomington, Indiana. Retrieved from http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/cadre/conversation_cues_with_doe.pdf
- Elliott, J. L. & Thurlow, M. L. (2006). *Improving test performance of students with disabilities...On district and state assessments* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Field, S., Martin, J., Miller, R., Ward, & Wehmeyer, M. (1998). Self-determination for persons with disabilities: A position statement of the Division on Career Development and Transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 21, 113–128.
- Indiana Department of Education, Office of Special Education. (August 2014). Indiana State Board of Education Special Education Rules. Title 511, Article 7. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/specialed/art-7-english-august-2014-update.pdf>
- Teaching Self-determination Skills to Students with Disabilities (n.d.). National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center. PowerPoint presentation retrieved from www.nsttac.org
- Wehmeyer, M. & Schwartz, M. (1997). Self determination and positive adult outcomes: A follow-up study with mental retardation and learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 245-255.

Portions of this guide were adapted from *Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities*, with permission from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, ©2005, State of Florida.