Multiple Pathways to the Same End

- General Education
  - Regular Alabama High School Diploma

- Essentials/Life Skills
  - Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD)

- Alternate Achievement Standards
  - Certificate of Attendance
Students with disabilities now have three pathways for earning the Alabama High School Diploma.

Students with disabilities may choose between the General Education Pathway and the Essentials/Life Skills Pathway.

Core content-area courses for students with disabilities can be General Education courses, Essentials/Life Skills courses, or a combination of both.

Movement between the General Education Pathway and the Essentials/Life Skills Pathway is allowed.
Students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the criteria for the Alabama Alternate Assessment are eligible for the Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS) Pathway.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Credits</td>
<td>Four years each of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Credit</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 Credit</td>
<td>Health Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Credit</td>
<td>Career Preparedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td>CTE/Foreign Lang/Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 Credits</td>
<td>Electives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Education Pathway

16 Credits

Four years each of English, Math, Science and Social Studies

1 Credit

Physical Education

1/2 Credit

Health Education

1 Credit

Career Preparedness

3 Credits

CTE/Foreign Lang/Arts

2 1/2 Credits

Electives

or any CTE substitute/equivalent; AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses
Essentials/Life Skills Pathway

16 Credits
- Four years each of **ESSENTIALS/LIFE SKILLS** English, Math, Science, and Social Studies

1 Credit
- Physical Education

1/2 Credit
- Health Education

1 Credit
- Career Preparedness

3 Credits
- 2 CTE & Workforce Essentials

2 1/2 Credits
- Cooperative Education Seminar/Work-Based Experience Electives
Essentials/Life Skills

- Formerly known as Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) courses.
- LEAs are required to offer Essentials/Life Skills courses.
- Must be taught by a highly qualified content area teacher.
- May be taught within a general education course (with two rosters) or as a stand-alone course.
- If Essentials/Life Skills courses are taught within a general education course there must be differentiated instruction for the different courses.
Students with and without disabilities may take Essentials/Life Skills courses.

These courses are not appropriate for students who are planning to attend a four-year college.

These courses are not accepted by four-year colleges or the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Students taking these courses may be eligible to attend a community college if they meet the institution's admissions requirements. Community college admissions requirements typically include a minimum ACT score.

It is important for each student to pursue the course work that is appropriate for his or her desired post school outcome. Schools must work very closely with students and parents to ensure there is no confusion about the limitations of certain course work and/or pathways.
Any student, with or without a disability, who completes four or more core courses on the Essentials/Life Skills pathway is required to complete the following work component:

- Community-Based Work Instruction
- 2 Career and Technical Education Courses in a Sequence
- Workforce Essentials or Transition Services II
- Cooperative Education/Work-Based Experience or Life Skills Occupational Preparation
- Cooperative Education Seminar
Students in the 2010-2011 or later cohort are no longer required to pass the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) in order to earn the Alabama High School Diploma.

The exception rule for students with disabilities who pass the graduation exam to be awarded an Alabama High School Diploma is being phased out since the AHSGE is no longer required.

Students in the 2009-2010 or earlier cohort must meet the previous graduation requirements and are still eligible for the exception rule related to the Alabama High School Graduation Exam and receiving an Alabama High School Diploma.

Students with disabilities in the 2010-2011 or later cohort who meet all requirements for the Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) should be awarded the Alabama High School Diploma.
## Alternate Achievement Standards Pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16 Credits</th>
<th>1 Credit</th>
<th>1/2 Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four years each of AAS English, Math, Science, and Social Studies</td>
<td>Physical Education or Adapted PE</td>
<td>AAS Pre-Vocational, AAS Vocational, AAS Community Based Instruction, and/or AAS Elective Course; or Electives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>1 Credit</th>
<th>3 Credits</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAS Life Skills</td>
<td>AAS Life Skills</td>
<td>AAS Pre-Vocational, AAS Vocational, AAS Community Based Instruction, and/or AAS Elective Course; or Electives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The AAS core content area courses for the Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS) pathway are based on the Alabama Extended Standards.

The courses for AAS Life Skills, AAS Pre-Vocational, AAS Vocational, AAS Community Based Instruction, and/or AAS Elective Course are locally developed. Each class/school/LEA is expected to have course syllabi on file and documentation that the students completed the objectives.

One of the locally developed AAS Life Skills courses should align to the topics in the Career Preparedness course that other students take. This means it should include content related to Career and Academic Planning, Computer Applications, and Financial Literacy.
AAS courses (and Alabama Extended Standards) may be taught in a variety of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) options. The AAS courses (and Alabama Extended Standards) are not restricted to separate classrooms.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are in the 2010-2011 or later cohort will be awarded an Alabama High School Diploma if they complete the courses on the AAS pathway, as outlined in the Alabama High School Diploma Substitute Courses for Students with Disabilities.
Graduation and Students with Disabilities

- According to the IDEA students with disabilities who have not earned a regular high school diploma are entitled to services up to age 21.
- Therefore, the awarding of the Alabama High School Diploma must be deferred for students with disabilities who will remain in school until age 21.
- It is imperative the IEP Team work with the student and his or her parent(s) to determine the anticipated date of exit for each student with a disability.
Awarding the Alabama High School Diploma prematurely would deny a student his or her right to receive services until age 21 and would be considered a denial of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Graduating with an Alabama High School Diploma is considered a change of placement for a student with a disability. The Notice of Intent Regarding Special Education Services must be used to document the proposed change of placement (graduation) to ensure that the student and parent have been fully informed of the proposed termination of services.
If they choose, students who stay in school until age 21 must be allowed to participate in graduation activities with their class. The LEA determines whether the student is given a blank sleeve or a locally developed certificate during the ceremony with their class, but they should not be awarded the diploma until the year of their agreed upon date of exit.

It is clear LEAs are concerned about the effect deferring the diploma could have on graduation rate.

The ALSDE is working on a plan to allow an LEA to get credit for students who stay until age 21 or at least identify a way to minimize the effect of deferring the diploma.

Stay tuned for further details.
FOR QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS, PLEASE CONTACT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES
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