

California State Graduation Requirements: Considerations for Students with Disabilities

All students in California, including those with disabilities, have meaningful opportunities to earn a high school diploma through multiple statutory pathways. This resource outlines the available pathways for students with disabilities, whether they are eligible for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments or the California Alternate Assessments (CAA). For students who are eligible for the CAA, this option is also known as the Alternative Pathway, providing an supportive and accessible route to graduation.

Graduation Requirements

All students earning a diploma in California are required to complete the [State Minimum Graduation Requirements](#).

Content Area	Courses/Credits	Content Area	Courses/Credits
English	3 courses /30 credits	VAPA/CTE/Language	1 course/10 credits
Math	2 courses/20 credits	Physical Education	2 courses/20 credits
Science	2 courses/20 credits	Ethnic Studies	1 course/5 credits
Social Studies	3 courses/20 credits	Personal Finance	1 course/5 credits

Pathway for Students Eligible for SBAC

Governing boards of local education agencies (LEAs) have the authority to supplement these [state minimum graduation requirements](#) at the local level. Students under this pathway may be required to complete these local requirements in addition to the state minimum graduation requirements.

Pathway for Students Eligible For CAA

LEAs must exempt a student from any local graduation requirements that are in addition to the [state minimum graduation requirements](#) under [California Education Code 31225.31](#) and [31225.32](#).



State Standards

Pathway for Students Eligible for SBAC

The vast majority of students with disabilities will earn their high school diploma by taking the same courses with the same expectations as their non-disabled peers based on the [California State Standards](#) with the inclusion of any supports and services as outlined in the IEP.

Pathway for Students Eligible For CAA

Students earning a diploma through the Alternative Pathway, will earn their high school diploma by taking the same courses as their non-disabled peers with expectations aligned to the California State Standards in [Reading](#), [Writing](#), [Math](#), and [Science](#) and based on alternate achievement standards.

Diploma & Transcripts

A high school diploma earned through either pathway results in an award of the same diploma document. In the case that a student eligible for the CAA is not able to meet the state minimum requirements for a high school diploma by age 22, they may still receive a [Certificate of Completion](#).

A [student's transcript](#) will identify the courses taken to meet graduation requirements.

Course Of Study

The course of study is the specific courses that a student will take in high school towards a diploma. Course decisions should prioritize access to core content in the least restrictive environment, as determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Course decisions should prioritize access to core content in the least restrictive environment, as determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

Students with disabilities eligible for the CAA require extensive modifications to curriculum and instruction to access grade-level standards. Utilizing accessible curriculum and instruction and alternative achievement standards, students with disabilities eligible to take the CAA should be provided access to high school credit-bearing courses that count toward earning a high school diploma.

Accessibility note: For students with disabilities, IEP teams will determine the accommodations needed, which may include alternate means of expression. Alternate means of expression include the different assessment mediums (tools, strategies, and assessment types) offered to students with disabilities within instruction that give students flexibility in how they showcase their learning while still meeting coursework proficiency requirements—especially those requirements tied to earning a diploma.



Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Ensuring a Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) As Students Transition Out of High School

Pathway for Students Eligible for SBAC

Upon graduation from high school with a diploma under this pathway, an LEA's responsibility for providing a FAPE under the [IDEA](#) is complete.

Pathway for Students Eligible For CAA

Upon graduation from high school with a diploma under the alternative pathway, the student is still eligible to access transition and other IEP services under [IDEA](#) until they reach the [maximum age](#) of 22.

Statewide and Federal Accountability

Pathway for Students Eligible for SBAC

State Graduation Rate: Diplomas earned by students on this diploma pathway are counted as graduates in the graduation rate for purposes of the [California Accountability System and Dashboard](#), earning a diploma on this pathway counts as a graduation toward an LEA's graduation rate in the same manner other pathways to a high school diploma count as a graduation in California.

Federal Graduation Rate: For purposes of [federal accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), a diploma earned on this pathway counts as a graduation toward an LEA's graduation rate in the same manner other pathways to a high school diploma count as a graduation in California.

Federal IDEA Indicator 1 Graduation Rate: Students who earn a diploma on this diploma pathway are counted as graduates for the [State Performance Plan](#).

Pathway for Students Eligible For CAA

State Graduation Rate: Diplomas earned by students on this diploma pathway are counted as graduates in the graduation rate for purposes of the [California Accountability System and Dashboard](#). Earning a diploma on this pathway counts as a graduation toward an LEA's graduation rate in the same manner other pathways to a high school diploma count as a graduation in California.

Federal Graduation Rate: For purposes of [federal accountability under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), a diploma earned on this pathway counts as a graduation toward an LEA's graduation rate in the same manner other pathways to a high school diploma count as a graduation in California.

Federal IDEA Indicator 1 Graduation Rate: Students who earn a diploma on this diploma pathway are counted in the denominator in the calculation for the [State Performance Plan](#), but are not in the numerator as high school graduates.

For additional resources on the CA Pathways to a Diploma ([51225.31](#) and [51225.32](#)) visit [CDE's website](#) and [Diploma Pathway Community of Practice resources](#).



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