

Changing Lanes: Deferring Receipt of a Standard Diploma



Not only can students with disabilities work toward earning a standard diploma, certain students with disabilities may also defer receiving the diploma and continue to receive educational services through the school district. The deferral process is necessary because students who receive a standard high school diploma are no longer eligible for a free appropriate public education (FAPE). There are two parts to deferral.

1. The student must have an IEP that “prescribes special education, transition planning, transition services, or related services through 21.” This means that, because of the disability, a student must need continued education and services.
2. The student must be enrolled in one of several specific programs. Refer to the chart on this page for programs and their descriptions.

Students defer during the year in which they are expected to meet all of the requirements for a standard diploma. The school district must send the notice in writing by January 30th and a parent or the adult-age student must return the signed documentation by May 15th. Students with disabilities who earn a standard diploma and do not defer are NOT eligible for any further services from the school district. Considering deferral of the standard diploma is particularly relevant for students with significant cognitive disabilities. While in deferment status, students may have flexible scheduling. For example, they may not be going to school every day, or they may have a shorter daily schedule. Student attendance is expected. Students may request their diploma during the deferment time period and exit high school.

Diploma Deferral through Extended Transition (Florida 18-22 Programs)

Florida Legislation allows students with disabilities to defer receipt of their standard diploma and continue to receive special educational services from their school district [1003.4282(1)(c). F.S.].

Deferral timeline for students who defer:

1. In the year the student is expected to meet graduation requirements, the school district must provide a notice by January 30th to the parent and student regarding the opportunity to defer the receipt of the standard diploma.
2. The request to defer receipt of the standard diploma must be received by the school district before May 15th in order for the student to continue receiving transition or related services. The request to defer is only needed once.

To meet the criteria for eligibility, a student must:

1. Meet all credit, grade point average (GPA) and testing requirements for the standard diploma.
2. Have an IEP that documents the need for specialized instruction, transition or related services through age 21.

Upon deferment, the student must enroll in one of the educational programs listed below.

Program Type	Program Description
Accelerated College Credit Programs, as described in s.1007.27(1), F.S. Please note -These programs often have rigorous eligibility requirements, such as GPA.	Accelerated college credit programs, as described in s.1007.27(1), F.S., include dual enrollment and early admission, advanced placement, credit by examination, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) program. Please note: Available courses and programs for dual enrollment will vary by school district.
Collegiate High School Programs	International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) program
Industry Certification Courses Leading to College Credit	Available courses and programs for industry certification will vary by school district and may have eligibility requirements.
Earn Scholar Designation	Enables students to continue working on requirements needed to earn a Scholar diploma designation. Please note – For a student to earn this designation the required statewide testing results cannot be waived.
Structured Work-Study, Internships or Pre-Apprenticeships	Programs that prepare students for employment include a focus on the following skills that promote employability: self-determination and self-advocacy; social interaction; travel training; communication; and independent living. Please note, availability will vary by school district; and some programs have an application process, eligibility requirements and/or limited spaces, therefore acceptance may not be guaranteed and planning ahead is critical. Program examples: - Project SEARCH - Community-based instruction (CBI) - Community-based vocational education (CBVE) - School-based enterprise (SBE) - Internships - Pre-apprenticeships