What Parents Can Do NOW  
Preparing for  
Changes to Virginia’s Diploma Options

A Quick Review
For Virginia’s special education students, diploma options are changing. The Modified Standard diploma is no longer an option for students entering the ninth grade (or younger) in the 2013-2014 school year. If your son or daughter will be a ninth grader (or younger) this fall, and was aiming for a Modified Standard diploma, he or she will now be working toward a Standard diploma.

Credit accommodations are adjustments that will be provided to students with disabilities so they can meet the requirements for earning a Standard Diploma. Credit accommodations will be determined by the student’s IEP team or 504 plan committee, including parents and students at any point after the eighth-grade year.

The Board of Education has approved Guidelines for Standard Diploma Credit Accommodations for Students with Disabilities to provide alternatives for these students in meeting the requirements for a Standard Diploma. Direct questions about credit accommodations to spedinstruction@doe.virginia.gov.

Start Now – Thank yourself next September!
Let’s talk IEP’s. If your child’s IEP paperwork has descended to a bottom drawer, dig it out, dust it off and take some time to update yourself.

- Is it current? More than a year old?
- Are you due for an IEP meeting?
- Do the goals still make sense for your child?
- What are your child’s current related services and supports?
- Is your child’s IEP a traditional or a standards-based IEP?

What is the difference between a traditional IEP and a standards-based IEP?
Students with traditional IEPs have goals addressing basic academic and practical living skills. For instance, goals might include basic sight word identification, money management skills or personal hygiene activities. Traditional IEP goals do not have any connection to the grade level information and skills non-disabled peers are learning in their classrooms.

In contrast, a standards-based IEP is tied to the content being taught in regular education classrooms. “Standards-based” IEP goals are directly related to Virginia’s SOLs - what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the
fine arts, foreign language, health/physical education and driver education. For example, a 4th grade math standard:

**SOL 4.2 The student will compare and order fractions and mixed numbers, represent equivalent fractions and identify the division statement that represents a fraction.**

4th grade special education student, Mattie, may achieve this standard by being able to compare, order and represent fractions having denominators of 12 or less with 80% accuracy by the end of the school year. Mattie’s accommodations and modifications might include individualized instruction, extended time for problem solving, and the use of drawings and concrete objects (sometimes called “manipulatives” like plastic fruit or blocks.)

A standards-based IEP does NOT imply that the student is on grade level in reading, math and the other subjects. Rather it ensures that she is being taught the same type of information as her non-disabled peers.

**To Do NOW**

1. Review your child’s existing IEP
2. Verify whether your child has a traditional or standards-based IEP by asking the teacher.
3. Become familiar with what all students are expected to know and be able to do at your child’s grade level by visiting at http://www.doe.virginia.gov. Click on the ‘SOLs’ link on the left.

**Resources**


“Standards-based IEP Examples” [http://www.projectforum.org](http://www.projectforum.org)

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