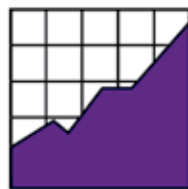


Earning a High School Diploma through Alternative Routes



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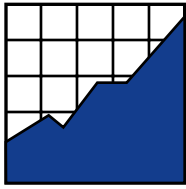
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June 2010

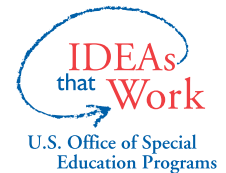
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Executive Summary

Earning a standard diploma has increased in importance during the past several years. Not only is it a document that improves post school outcomes, but it also has become a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) accountability system at the high school level—with the required graduation rate including only those students who have earned a regular/standard high school diploma or higher. Complicating matters in several states is the addition of an exit exam requirement to the traditional coursework requirements. The addition of a testing requirement to other requirements for earning a standard diploma is a challenge for students who do not perform well on assessments. Many, but not all, of these students have disabilities. The purpose of the study reported here was to examine the alternative routes to passing the high school exit exam that were available during the school year 2008-09 to students to earn a standard high school diploma. We examined alternative routes in the 26 states with active or soon to be active exit exams. We documented the alternative routes available for all students and those specifically for students with disabilities.

Nineteen states were identified as having exit exams that had designated alternative routes to the standard diploma. Most of these states had multiple alternative routes, totalling 46 across the 19 states. Thirteen of these states had alternative routes for all students (which included students with disabilities); sixteen had alternative routes uniquely available to students with disabilities. Ten of the states had both. Many states had more than one route available for either group of students. The 13 states with routes for all students had a total of 23 alternatives. The 16 states with routes specifically for students with disabilities had a total of 23 alternatives.

Our analyses revealed that information on alternative routes is not always easily accessible, and that once found, it is still not always easy to find some of the most basic information about the route. Routes vary in their names, with some being very clear about their comparability to the regular exit exam route, and others suggesting that an alternative route does not require the same level of performance as the regular route, even though the result is receipt of a standard diploma.

Alternative routes also vary considerably in the process involved, including whether the student must first take the regular exit exam before being allowed to pursue the alternative route, and who must request the alternative route option. In addition, there are variations in who approves the performance reflected in the alternative route, thereby allowing the student to earn a standard diploma.

Several differences were noted between the routes designated for all students and those designated only for students with disabilities, although the differences did not apply to all states or all alternatives. For example, students were more often not required to take the regular exit exam if they had disabilities. Furthermore, approval decisions were more often made at the local level for students with disabilities than for all students.

Compared to a previous analysis of alternative routes by Krentz, Thurlow, Shyyan, and Thurlow (2005), more alternative routes to a standard diploma appeared to be available in states with exit exams. Additionally, a greater discrepancy emerged in the requirement to first take the regular exit exam. Specifically, in the current study, two-thirds of the alternative routes for all students required that the student first take the exit exam, whereas less than one-fourth of those for students with disabilities had this requirement. In 2005, Krentz et al. found about one-half of the alternative routes required that the student first take the exit exam, which was the case for both students with disabilities and all students.

Recommendations made in 2005 continue to hold true today. The recommendations are documented and discussed in this report:

1. Provide clear, easy-to-find information.
2. Base alternative routes on the same beliefs and premises as the standard route to the diploma.
3. Make the same alternative routes available to all students.
4. Create alternative routes that are not just another test, but truly are alternatives to the graduation test.
5. Develop a reasoned and reasonable process for the alternative route.
6. Evaluate the technical adequacy of alternative routes and track the consequences of each.

It is important that states are pursuing alternative ways for students to show that they have met the requirements to earn a standard diploma. At the same time, it is important for states to continue to work toward improving these alternative routes. Improvement includes documenting the extent to which they are being used and the consequences of their use, including their long-term consequences for post-secondary and career pursuits.

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Overview

The importance of earning a standard high school diploma within a specific time frame is escalating. This is due, in part, to changes in federal laws and regulations that require high schools to be held accountable for the graduation rates of all their students. Although the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) does not have jurisdiction over high school exit exams—unless they are also used as an ESEA accountability measure—or over states' graduation requirements, ESEA does require that one of the additional measures used for accountability at the high school level be the high school graduation rate (Sec. 1111(b)(2)(c)(vi)).

How to define the high school graduation has been a subject of debate. In the past, federal and state estimates of dropout rates have used event, status, and cohort rates (Lehr, Clapper, & Thurlow, 2005; Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002), with rates varying as a function of how they were calculated. Similar approaches are used to calculate graduation rates. It is now fairly well accepted that a cohort rate is preferable, not just for dropout rate calculations but also for graduation rates, and many states have adopted a method for calculating high school graduation proposed by the National Governors' Association (NGA, 2008). This definition requires states to calculate their graduation rates by dividing the number of students graduating within four years with a diploma by the number of first-time entering ninth graders four years earlier. In 2008, 16 states were using the NGA procedure for calculating graduation rates and another 5 states were planning to use it within a year (NGA, 2008). Additional states were planning to use the NGA definition within the next two to three years (Final Regulations, 2008, Sec. 200.19(b)(4)(ii)).

High school graduation rates have for some time varied across the 50 states, regardless of how the rate was calculated. The high school graduation rates for 2006 reported in the Common Core of Data (Stillwell & Hoffman, 2009) indicated that the national rate was 73%. However, the rate varied considerably across states and for different student groups. For example, Nevada reported a freshman graduation rate of 55.8%, while Wisconsin reported a freshman graduation rate of 87.5%. The rates for ethnic groups varied as well, with Asian/Pacific Islanders showing the highest average rate (89.9%) and Black non-Hispanic students showing the lowest average rate (59.1%).

Few national data bases have reported graduation rates for students with disabilities. Part of the reason for this may be that states have a variety of exit documents available to students with disabilities (e.g., IEP diplomas), and varying requirements that they must meet to receive a standard diploma (Johnson, Thurlow, Stout, & Mavis, 2007). In addition, the Office of Special Education Programs, which collects data from states, typically has defined graduation as exiting school with a diploma or certificate of completion. Furthermore, some of the states that are using the NGA approach when calculating graduation rates may allow students with disabilities (and

English language learners) to be assigned to different cohorts (NGA, 2008), further increasing the difficulty in interpreting the reported graduation data.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) has gathered information on a nationally representative sample of students with disabilities since 2000-2001; when combined with a previous longitudinal study of students with disabilities, information is available from 1987. The calculation of school completion for these students counts those students who receive a regular high school diploma, a certificate of completion, or some similar document (e.g., General Education Development Diploma—GED). NLTS2 reported that 72% of all students with disabilities completed school, with the range for individual disabilities starting at 56% for students with emotional disturbance and going to 95% for students with visual impairments (Wagner, 2005). Students with learning disabilities, the most frequently occurring disability category, had a 72% school completion rate.

Given the evidence that completing school with a GED or other type of exit document (such as a certificate of completion) is not always treated as equal to completing high school with a standard high school diploma (Amos, 2008; Hartwig & Sitlington, 2008), it is important to know the rate at which students with disabilities graduate with a regular diploma. Increasingly, it is becoming evident that it is also important for students with disabilities to meet other criteria identified as important for success after high school, including requirements that signify college and work-readiness (Achieve, 2008; Steinberg & Almeida, 2008). The Education Trust (Habash, 2008) argued that a top priority in its agenda for state leadership was to collect better data, expect improvement for all schools, and make improving graduation rates a high priority. It is important that this occur for all students, including students with disabilities.

Attention to successful graduation in a timely manner has been the subject of discussion over the past two decades or more. The research literature in this area has addressed dropping out of school and its negative effects for students and society (Amos, 2008), the rigor of graduation requirements and high school exit exams (Achieve, 2008), and international comparisons of the knowledge and skills of American high school students with those from other countries (NGA, CCSSO, & Achieve, 2008; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2006, 2008).

Recent revisions in the regulations to ESEA suggest that there is a policy interest at the federal level in greater accountability for the graduation results of all students, including students with disabilities. For example, final regulations governing certain programs administered under ESEA released October 29, 2008 (citation to Federal Register, 2008) were accompanied by the following explanatory statements:

Similar to the importance of disaggregating assessment results to ensure that high performance by the “all students” group does not mask low performance by subgroups of students, we believe schools and LEAs need to be held accountable for the differences in graduation rates among subgroups. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 64460)

and:

We agree that better and more data alone will not increase graduation rates, but those data will provide States, LEAs, and schools with critical information that is necessary for understanding the reasons for low graduation rates and for designing better programs and services to help students graduate. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 64447)

The October 29, 2008 final rule was grounded in beliefs of the importance of students completing high school with a standard (i.e., regular) diploma within four years of their 9th grade year. The importance for students with disabilities was highlighted several times:

An adjusted cohort graduation rate will improve our understanding of the characteristics of the population of students who do not earn regular high school diplomas or who take longer than four years to graduate. . . (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 64447)

and:

It is important that only students who receive a regular high school diploma (which could include a higher diploma) that is fully aligned with a State’s academic content standards be included in the four-year rate in order to ensure that graduation rates accurately reflect the percentage of students who graduate with a diploma that represents what the state determines all students should know and be able to do by the end of 12th grade; alternative credentials, such as a GED credential and modified special education diplomas, do not meet these requirements. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 64454)

and:

Students with disabilities who fulfill requirements for any other State-approved alternative award, certificate of attendance, or GED credential or who complete their IEP goals but do not receive a regular high school diploma may not be counted as graduating in either the four-year or extended-year rate, consistent with the definition of regular high school diploma in new §200.19(b)(1)(iv).

(U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 64450)

Recently there has been renewed attention to the exit exam as one of the requirements that must be met for successful completion of school and to obtain a high school diploma. In those states

that have them, the exit exam introduces an additional criterion for students to meet but also numerous complexities in terms of the number of times a student can attempt to pass the exam and the ways in which the criterion can be met.

Exit Exams

More than half of the states have, or will have in the next five years, a mandatory exit exam that must be taken and passed as a condition for receiving a standard diploma (Center on Education Policy, 2008; Johnson, Thurlow, Stout, & Mavis, 2007). These exams are considered “high stakes” because earning or not earning a regular high school diploma directly affects an individual’s future economic self-sufficiency and well-being as an adult (see Johnson, Thurlow, & Stout, 2007; Johnson, Thurlow, Stout, & Mavis, 2007).

For many states, the purpose for implementing a state-level exit exam was to ensure that the students leaving high school had a minimal set of skills that showed they were ready for the workplace, college, or other post-secondary training (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). And, more recently, some states have changed the nature of the assessment that must be passed. In some cases, end-of-course exams for a specific set of courses have become the exit assessment (Center on Education Policy, 2008). Regardless of whether there is a single test or a set of tests that must be passed, there has always been concern expressed about those students who perform poorly on tests but who have the desired knowledge and skills (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). This concern is generally about more than simply giving several opportunities to take the same basic test (i.e., retesting). Rather, it is about allowing students to show what they know and are able to do through a mechanism other than the traditional exit exam. Various organizations have examined what states do to ensure that students have other ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skills (Center on Education Policy, 2007, 2008; “Diplomas Count,” 2008; Krentz et al., 2005). However, much controversy remains.

Many researchers and policymakers have argued that traditional exit exams disproportionately affect certain groups of students negatively, including minority and economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and students with disabilities (Johnson, Thurlow, Stout, & Mavis, 2007; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Reardon, Atteberry, Arshan, & Kurlander, 2009). More specifically, for students with disabilities, it has been suggested that traditional test formats put them at a disadvantage for several reasons including the lack of universally designed assessments and the failure to provide appropriate accommodations for high stakes testing (Thompson, Thurlow, & Malouf, 2004; Thurlow, 2007; Thurlow & Johnson, 2000; Thurlow, Thompson, & Johnstone, 2007). In response to these kinds of concerns, sometimes

stimulated by legal challenges, an increasing number of states is offering alternative routes to the standard diploma (Zabala, 2008).

Legal Issues

Legal challenges have surrounded states' exit exams for some time (see Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Krentz et al., 2005; Langenfeld, Thurlow, & Scott, 1996). During the early part of the century, cases addressing exit exams and students with disabilities emerged in Indiana, Oregon, Massachusetts, and Alaska. The Indiana case (*Rene v. Reed*, 2001) determined that three years constituted adequate notice of the upcoming graduation exam, even for students with disabilities, and did not make a determination about the issue of whether a sufficient number or type of accommodations were allowed for students with disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The cases in both Oregon (*Advocates for Special Kids v. Oregon*, 1999) and Alaska (settled out of court, see Associated Press, 2004) were resolved by addressing the accommodations allowed during the testing and by providing either an alternative diploma (modified diploma in Alaska) or an alternative route to the exit document (certificate of initial mastery in Oregon). The Massachusetts case (*Holyoke v. Springfield*, 2002) raised several issues about the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS); it eventually settled out of court with an agreement by the Massachusetts Department of Education to allow students with disabilities access to its alternative routes with a lower score (216) than required of other students (220).

Another case that emerged about the same time (*Juleus Chapman et al. v. California Department of Education*, 2001), has continued to the point that negotiations and decisions were occurring as late as 2008 (Disability Rights Advocates, 2008). Specifically, in May, 2008 a settlement agreement was reached between the plaintiffs and the state. Prior to reaching a settlement agreement, California had conducted another study of accommodations/modifications and alternative routes for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The recommendations of that study were to waive the requirement for students with disabilities to pass the CAHSEE, at least for one year. In response, California passed a law that allowed students with disabilities to earn a diploma regardless of whether they passed the CAHSEE, as long as they met all other graduation requirements (Disability Rights Advocates, 2008).

In the settlement, the state again agreed to fund a study to examine the impact of the CAHSEE on students with disabilities. That study is to produce recommendations for policy changes (by November, 2009) that will be shared with the California legislature. However, in September 2008, California Assembly Bill No. 2040 was approved by the Governor, indicating that the state will identify a panel "to make recommendations about alternative means for eligible pupils with disabilities to demonstrate that they have achieved the same level of academic achievement in

the content standards in English language arts or mathematics, or both, required for passage of the high school exit examination” (p. 95); the board is required to make and adopt regulations that take into consideration the recommendations of the panel by October 1, 2010.

Alternative Routes

All states provide the opportunity for students to retest when they do not pass an exit exam. Retesting assumes that students eventually can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the same way as other students, although they failed to do so in a previous attempt. Some states have recognized that there may be some students who are not able to show their knowledge and skills on traditional paper and pencil tests, and that it is not just a matter of taking the test again for students to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This situation is recognized most often as occurring for students whose disabilities (e.g., physical disabilities) prevent them from responding via paper and pencil. Even if students with disabilities are able to respond to paper and pencil formats, it may be difficult to obtain an accurate reflection of their knowledge and skills this way (Krentz et al., 2005).

Various investigators have explored the ways provided by states with exit exams to allow students to exit school. In 2003, the Center on Education Policy identified waivers, alternative routes, and other kinds of diplomas for students who did not pass the exit exam. In the same year, Johnson and Thurlow (2003) identified exemptions, other assessments, and alternative methods for completing the graduation exam requirement. Education Week’s *Count Me In* issue (Quality Counts, 2004) also explored appeals, alternate assessments, and other options for earning a diploma.

It is important to distinguish alternative routes to a diploma from alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS), which are assessments designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities. These assessments are used for ESEA accountability, and allow for students to demonstrate proficiency against different achievement standards.

It is also important to distinguish alternative routes to a diploma from other “pathways to graduation.” The latter is a descriptor that has been used for strategies to re-engage students “who are slipping off the graduation path” (Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008). Among the strategies are “recuperation and recovery efforts” and providing a “portfolio of schools” for students with differing needs.

In 2005, Krentz et al. provided a comprehensive examination of alternative routes to a standard diploma. They specifically looked at those routes available to all students and those available specifically to students with disabilities, focusing on who initiated the request for an alternative route, who approved the request for the alternative route, the specific nature of the alternative

route process, including whether students had to first fail the general exit exam, and the comparability of the criteria reflected in the alternative routes and the criteria reflected in the standard routes. They found that 16 states had alternative routes, and that the number of alternative routes available to students was 13 for all students and 13 for students with disabilities (with some having both, and some having only one or the other).

More recently, the Center on Education Policy (2008, 2009) summarized basic information on alternative routes for students with disabilities. Based on its survey, it noted that all states that have a requirement that the student's performance on the high school exit exam be used to withhold a diploma provide an alternative measure for students with disabilities. In 2008, 18 of the 23 states with the exit exam requirement also had an alternative route for general education students. In 2009, 18 of 24 states with an exit exam requirement also had an alternative route for general education students. The Center clarified that these alternative routes are toward *graduation*, not necessarily toward obtaining a standard diploma. This is an important distinction, especially in light of the ESEA graduation rate calculation requirements, and in light of research showing that a standard diploma is related to better outcomes than other exit documents (Hartwig & Sitlington, 2008; Wolpin, 2005)

The Center on Education Policy (2008) also noted that not all states can provide information on the percentage of students using "alternative routes" (note that this use of the terms refers to other diploma options). Those state that do provide data, according to the information provided by the Center, often mix the use of the alternative route with obtaining exit documents other than the standard diploma. For example, the Center for Education Policy reported the following data:

In Mississippi, for example, 61.2% of students with disabilities in the class of 2007 received a certificate of completion or an occupational diploma, which do not require that students pass the state's high school exit exam. (p. 23)

It is important to be able to examine data on exit exam performance in light of whether students obtain a standard diploma. These data, along with data on retesting and how many students successfully obtain a standard diploma via a retesting route are important to examine, especially for students with disabilities. It is clear that most states with exit exams report on both the participation and performance of students with disabilities on these exams (Thurlow, Bremer, & Albus, 2008), but it is not clear that most states report on the details for those who do not complete via the regular exit exam.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine in detail the current alternative routes that states provide for school-age students with and without disabilities to obtain a standard diploma. These data will provide an update to the Krentz et al. (2005) report and will provide a refined and more detailed analysis of the Center for Education Policy (2008) report on high school exit exams and various alternative routes.

In pursuing this purpose, we specifically focus on a “standard” or “regular” diploma, in contrast to other types of diplomas, including those specifically designated for students who have already left school. All advanced or honors diplomas were considered to be standard diplomas. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a standard diploma is one that confers on the student access to both post-school employment and post-secondary educational opportunities and that would be counted in ESEA graduation rate calculations for accountability.

A second purpose of this study was to gather data from state Web sites on participation and performance of students with and without disabilities via retesting and alternative routes. Our intent was to examine the data that are publicly available.

All of the information that was gathered for this report was available publicly via state Web sites, or was a document to which we were specifically referred during the verification process. Because we wanted to reflect what parents/guardians or students would be able to access to obtain information about alternative routes, a note of explanation is provided whenever we used information that we did not specifically find on the state’s Web site.

Method

Data for the current study were obtained from publicly available information on state Web sites during the summer and fall of 2008. States were selected first on the basis of whether they had an alternative route in 2004 (Krentz et al., 2005), then from information on graduation requirements obtained by Johnson, Thurlow, Stout, and Mavis (2007), and finally on the basis of information included in the Center on Education Policy (2008) report on high school exit exams.

An online search of state Web sites was conducted from June to August 2008. States’ Web sites related to *Assessment*, *Accountability*, *Special Education*, and *Graduation Requirements* were searched extensively. For states that had searchable Web sites several of the following key words and phrases were used in the search: appeals, exit exams, graduation examination, graduation requirements, high stakes tests, high school testing, standard diploma, and waiver.

The initial search was conducted by two of the authors, who divided the list of states in half. Information about graduation examinations, details about alternative routes for obtaining a standard diploma, and specific criteria required to participate in any alternative route were identified independently. We sought the most recent information available, including that for an assessment for which the graduation class had not yet graduated. Data were entered into summary tables, and then a random sample of five of the states was selected for cross checking to ensure consistency in the amount and nature of information found on state Web sites.

Information collected from state Web sites was summarized for each state and then e-mailed in September 2008 to state assessment directors and special education directors simultaneously for verification (see Appendix A for the template used to create a state profile). In several cases, state directors delegated the task of verifying the state profile to other knowledgeable specialists, including education consultants and other state assessment personnel. The states were asked to verify the accuracy of the information and to supply publicly available supporting evidence if changes to the information were requested.

All states were contacted during the verification process. If a response was not received within two weeks, a follow-up e-mail was sent. In most cases (85%), at least one person (either from the special education office or the assessment office) provided feedback. Changes were made only following external verification that any requested changes were accurate. In addition, all three authors conducted post-verification checks of the states' information, based in part on the verification information. This final verified and rechecked information is included in this report.

A separate Web site search was conducted to find data on the performance of students on the exit exam, along with the percentage of students receiving a standard diploma. In addition, we searched for data on the number or percentage of students retesting because they did not pass the exit exam on the first attempt, and data on the number or percentage of students using an alternative route and the number or percentage successfully completing the alternative route.

Results

Table 1 shows the 26 states with exit exams used to determine, in part, whether a student earns a diploma. For each of these states, the table presents the year that the first graduating class was held to the exit exam, and the names of the diplomas that were counted as "standard" for this study. Appendix B shows the names of all the exit documents awarded by these states and whether they were considered to be "standard" or not for this study. Appendix C presents a profile for each of the states with an alternative route.

Table 1. First Graduating Class and “Standard” Diplomas in States with Exit Exams

State	First Graduating Class^a	Diplomas Counted as “Standard” for Study
Alabama	2001	Alabama High School Diploma without Endorsement (AHSD) Alabama High School Diploma with Endorsement ^b
Alaska	2004	Standard High School Diploma
Arizona	2006	High School Diploma
Arkansas	2010	High School Diploma
California	2006	Standard High School Diploma
Florida	2003	Standard Diploma
Georgia	1994	High School Diploma High School Diploma with Seal ^c
Idaho	2006	Regular High School Diploma
Indiana	2000	Core 40 Diploma Core 40 Diploma with Honors Core 40 Diploma with Technical Honors
Louisiana	2003	Standard Diploma Standard Diploma with Academic Area of Concentration Standard Diploma with Academic Endorsement High School Equivalency Diploma
Maryland	2009	High School Diploma
Massachusetts	2003	High School Diploma Certificate of Mastery ^d Certificate of Mastery with Distinction ^d
Minnesota	2010	High School Diploma
Mississippi	2006	Regular High School Diploma
Nevada	2003	Standard High School Diploma Advanced High School Diploma
New Jersey	2003	State-endorsed High School Diploma
New Mexico	1990	New Mexico Diploma of Excellence
New York	2003	Regents Diploma Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation Local Diploma
North Carolina	1982, 2001	Standard Diploma
Ohio	2007	High School Diploma Diploma with Honors
Oklahoma	2012	Standard Diploma Standard Diploma with Certificate of Distinction
South Carolina	2006	State High School Diploma State High School Diploma with Academic Honors Award
Tennessee	2006	Standard High School Diploma

Table 1. First Graduating Class and “Standard” Diplomas in States with Exit Exams (continued)

State	First Graduating Class ^a	Diplomas Counted as “Standard” for Study
Texas	2005	High School Diploma (Minimum, Recommended, Distinguished Achievement)
Virginia	2004	Standard Diploma Advanced Studies Diploma
Washington	2008	High School Diploma ^e

^a Based on information from states’ Web sites, as well as cross checks with the IES site. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/saa_tab11.asp. North Carolina has two dates for first graduating class because a computer skills test was added starting with the graduating class of 2001.

^b Four types of endorsements are available in Alabama: Advanced Academic Endorsement (AHSD/AAE), Advanced Career/Technical Endorsement (AHSD/ACTE), Career/Technical Endorsement (AHSD/CTE), and Credit Based Endorsement (AHSD/CBE).

^c Four types of seals are available in Georgia: Technology/Career Preparatory Seal, Technology/Career Preparatory of Distinction, College Preparatory Seal, and College Preparatory Seal of Distinction.

^d Massachusetts added these two certificates starting with the class of 2009.

^e Washington has two certificates that are noted on a student’s transcript—they both lead to the same diploma: Certification of Academic Achievement (CAA) and Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). CIA is available only to students with disabilities.

As Table 1 indicates, just under 50% of the states with exit exams had more than one diploma that we counted as a standard diploma. Usually, when a state had more than one diploma, it had two options. Still, some states (Alabama, Georgia) with their various endorsements or seals had as many as five options that could be considered to be standard diplomas.

Number of Alternative Routes

Figure 1 shows the states with exit exams and whether they had any alternative route available. This figure shows that there were 26 states, at the time of data collection, with an exit exam requirement. Nineteen of these states had one or more alternative routes available, and seven of them (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Nevada, Tennessee, South Carolina) had no alternative routes available. Some of the states with no alternative routes had not yet had the first graduating class held to the exit exam requirement (Arkansas – 2010, Oklahoma – 2012). Most of these states were well beyond the first graduating class that was held to the exit exam requirement (Alabama – 2001, Arizona – 2006, Nevada – 2003, South Carolina – 2006, Tennessee – 2005).

Figure 1. States with Exit Exams and Availability of Alternative Routes to a Standard Diploma

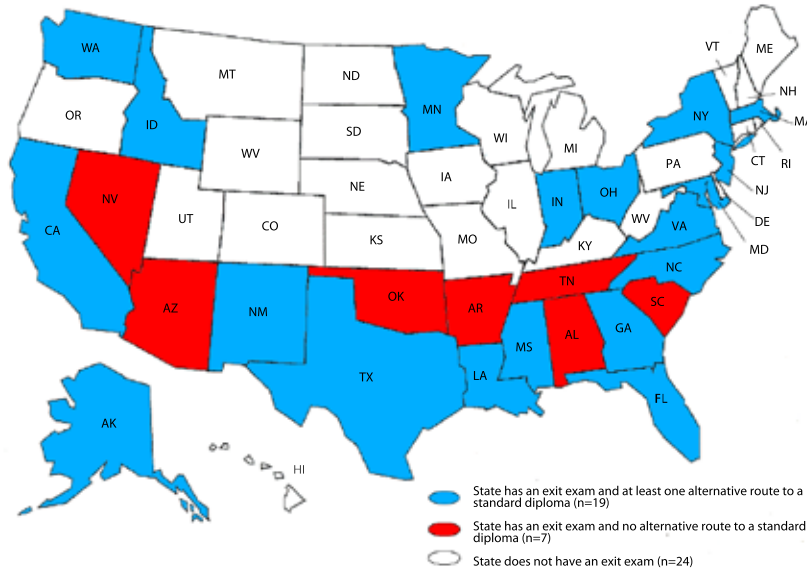


Table 2 shows whether the alternative route was available for all students (which includes students with disabilities) or only students with disabilities, in the 19 states with public information on their alternative routes. As seen in Table 2 (see shaded rows), 10 states had designated separate routes both for all students (which includes students with disabilities) and for students with disabilities (Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Texas, Washington). Of the remaining states, three had routes available only for all students (Indiana, Mississippi, Virginia) and six had alternative routes available only for students with disabilities (California, Idaho, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina).

Table 2. Status of Alternative Routes for Exit Exams

State	All Students		Students with Disabilities	
	Available ^a	Not Available	Available ^a	Not Available
Alaska	✓ (1)		✓ (1)	
California		✓	✓ (1)	
Florida	✓ (2)		✓ (1)	
Georgia	✓ (2)		✓ (1)	
Idaho		✓	✓ (2)	
Indiana	✓ (2)			✓
Louisiana		✓	✓ (1)	
Maryland	✓ (3)		✓ (2)	
Massachusetts	✓ (2)		✓ (1)	

Table 2. Status of Alternative Routes for Exit Exams (continued)

Minnesota		✓	✓ (1)	
Mississippi	✓ (1)			✓
New Jersey	✓ (1)		✓ (1)	
New Mexico		✓	✓ (2)	
New York	✓ (1)		✓ (2)	
North Carolina		✓	✓ (1)	
Ohio	✓ (1)		✓ (1)	
Texas	✓ (1)		✓ (1)	
Virginia	✓ (1)			✓
Washington	✓ (5)		✓ (4)	
Total # States	✓ 13	6	✓ 16	3

Note: Only exit exam states that had identified alternative routes are included in this table (states with exit exams that are not included are: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee). Neither Arkansas nor Oklahoma had its first graduating class held to the exit exam requirement at the time of our study, which might explain the lack of information on an alternative route for those states.

^aNumbers in parentheses indicate the number of alternative routes available.

The information in Table 2 does not reveal the number of alternative routes available to students. Figure 2 shows the number of separate alternative routes available in the 13 states with alternative routes for all students and the number of separate alternative routes available only to students with disabilities in the 16 states with alternative routes for students with disabilities.

As is evident in Figure 2, the 23 separate alternative routes for all students are accounted for by one state that has five separate routes for all students, one state that has three separate routes, four states that have two separate routes, and seven states that have a single alternative route for all students.

Figure 2. Number of Alternative Routes Available in the 13 States with Alternative Routes for All Students (N=23 Routes) and in the 16 States with Alternative Routes Unique to Students with Disabilities (N = 23 Routes)

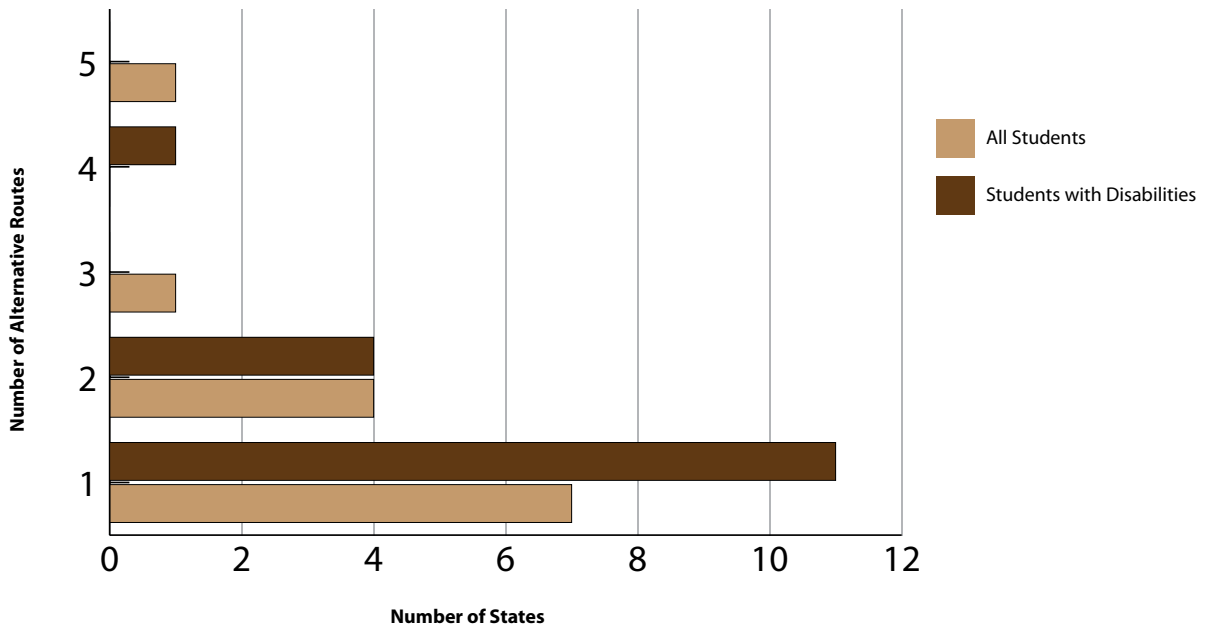


Figure 2 also shows the number of separate alternative routes available in the 16 states with alternative routes unique to students with disabilities. As is shown in the figure, the 23 separate alternative routes for students with disabilities are accounted for by one state that has four separate routes for students with disabilities, four states that have two alternative routes, and eleven states that have just one alternative route unique to students with disabilities.

Names of Alternative Routes

States use a variety of terms for their alternative routes. These terms are presented in Table 3, along with the total number of alternative routes in each state. The number of routes per state is consistent with the information shown in Figure 2, but in addition shows that some states have multiple routes both for all students and for only students with disabilities. For example, Washington is the state with the most alternative routes overall, with a total of 9 routes (5 for all students and 4 for students with disabilities only). Maryland is the state with the next highest number of alternative routes, with a total of 5 routes (3 for all students and 2 for students with disabilities only).

Table 3. Name of Alternative Route

State	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Total Routes
Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified or Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exam^a 	2
California	[Not available]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver 	1
Florida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED Exit Option Model • Concordant Scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCAT Waiver 	3
Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver – Hardship • Variance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver—IEP 	3
Idaho	[Not Available]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable Graduation Requirements • Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team 	2
Indiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-Based Waiver • Work Readiness Waiver 	[Not available]	2
Louisiana	[Not available]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver 	1
Maryland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute Assessments (AP/IB) • Combined Score Option • Bridge Plan for Academic Validation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified HSA • Modified HSA Plus 	5
Massachusetts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCAS Performance Appeal—Cohort Review • MCAS Performance Appeal—Portfolio Appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCAS Alternate Assessments (MCAS-Alt) 	3
Minnesota	[Not available]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Established Passing Standard 	1
Mississippi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute Evaluation Process 	[Not available]	1
New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Review Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP Exempt 	2
New Mexico	[Not available]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Readiness Pathway • Ability Pathway 	2
New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regents Competency Test Safety Net • Low Pass Option 	3
North Carolina	[Not Available]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC Checklist of Academic Standards 	1
Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Pathway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP Exempt 	2
Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARD Exempt 	2
Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute Test for SOLs 	[Not available]	1

Table 3. Name of Alternative Route (continued)

State	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Total Routes
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of Evidence • WASL/Grades Comparison • AP and College Admission Test Scores • Transfer Student Waiver • Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Performance on WASL • Pass WAAS-DAW (Developmentally Appropriate WASL) • Pass WAAS-Portfolio • Locally Determined Assessment System 	9
Total Number	23	23	46

Note: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they either do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

^aThe Modified and Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exams were counted as a single alternative route, although they possibly could be separated because the Modified allows students to substitute something for a portion of the test, and the Nonstandard uses an individual graduation plan to guide how requirements are met.

The names of the alternative routes vary considerably among the states. The term “waiver” is the most frequent term used to describe an alternative route. Four states identify a waiver as an alternative route for all students, with Indiana having two waiver options, and four states identify a waiver as an alternative route for students with disabilities. Only Georgia had a waiver as an alternative route for all students as well as a waiver for students with disabilities. Other terms used for alternative routes often described what was involved in the alternative route (e.g., Special Review Assessment, Appeals Process, Low Pass Option).

Alternative Route Eligibility Requirements

Even though alternative routes may be targeted generally to all students or specifically to students with disabilities, states sometimes provide more details about the students who have access to alternative routes within each of these groups. The specific characteristics of the students targeted for the alternative routes are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Students Targeted for Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Eligibility Criteria
Alaska	Waiver	ALL	Students with extenuating circumstances—e.g., parent dies within last semester of graduation year; serious or sudden illness or physical injury prevents students from taking exam in final semester of graduation year; student passed competency exam in another state, etc.
	Modified/NonStandard HSGQE ^b	SWD	Students with disabilities who did not pass a portion of the exit exam and who require modifications in addition to accommodations, as long as working near grade level and a history of being unable to demonstrate proficiency on standardized instruments
California	Waiver	SWD	IEP or 504 students with plan that indicates student was scheduled to graduate
Florida	GED Exit Option Model Program	ALL	Students in school who are 18 years old and have passed the Tests of General Educational Development
	Concordant Scores	ALL	Students who have attempted to pass FCAT at least 3 times
	FCAT Waiver	SWD	Students with IEP who have attempted the FCAT at least 2 times
Georgia	Waiver-Hardship	ALL	Students who have a substantial hardship beyond their control
	Variance	ALL	Students with 90% high school attendance who earn a score within 1 standard deviation on test and have passed relevant end-of-course test
	Waiver-IEP	SWD	Students with IEPs whose disability makes them incapable of passing a section of the test, even with accommodations
Idaho	Comparable Graduation Requirements	SWD	Students who are eligible for special education services, have an Individual Graduation Plan, and are not demonstrating proficiency on the ISAT, and for whom it appears they will not be able to demonstrate proficiency
	Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team	SWD	Students who are eligible for special education services, have an Individual Graduation Plan, and are not demonstrating proficiency on the ISAT, and for whom it appears they will not be able to demonstrate proficiency

Table 4. Students Targeted for Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Eligibility Criteria
Indiana	Evidence-based Waiver	ALL	Students who have written recommendation from teacher of subject area not passed, with assurance that student met standards as evidenced by classroom work or other tests
	Work Readiness Waiver	ALL	Students who have 95% attendance, at least a C average, and have not passed every year, and who then complete specific course and credit requirements
Louisiana	Waiver	SWD	Students with disabilities who have passed all but one of required portions of exit exam and who meet all other graduation requirements
Maryland	Advanced Placement(AP)/ International Baccalaureate (IB)	ALL	Students who pass either the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate (no need to fail the HSA first).
	Combined Score Option	ALL	Students who did not earn a passing score on at least one HSA, but whose combined score on 4 tests reaches 1602
	Bridge Plan for Academic Validation	ALL	Students who did not earn a passing score on a test two times, and then complete an assigned project
	Mod-HSA	SWD	Students with IEPs who meet specific criteria and earn a passing score on the Modified-High School Assessments
	Mod-HSA Plus Option	SWD	Students with IEPs who do not meet specific criteria and who earn a passing score on the Modified High School Assessments
Massachusetts	MCAS Performance Appeal-Cohort Review	ALL	Students who have failed the high school graduation tests in ELA and Math 3 times, and Science and Technology/Engineering 1 time, and for whom a cohort of at least 6 students meeting specific criteria can be identified
	MCAS Performance Appeal-Portfolio Appeal	ALL	Students who have met the requirements for a Cohort Review, but for whom a cohort of at least 6 students meeting specific criteria cannot be identified.
	MCAS-Alternate Assessment	SWD	Students designated by their IEP or 504 team to take the state's alternate assessment based on grade-level achievement standards.
Minnesota	Team Established Passing Standard	SWD	Students with disabilities who have IEP or 504 plan

Table 4. Students Targeted for Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Eligibility Criteria
Mississippi	Substitute Evaluation Process	ALL	Students who did not pass a subject area test 2 times, but who have mastered the subject area curriculum
New Jersey	Special Review Assessment	ALL	Students who did not pass one or more sections of the exit exam during grade 11 and who attended special instruction
	IEP Exemption	SWD	Students with IEPs who have not been instructed in all the knowledge and skills tested
New Mexico	Career Readiness Pathway	SWD	Students with IEPs who have taken exit exam and earned IEP determined score, and who have meet Career Readiness standards
	Ability Pathway	SWD	Students with IEPs who complete a program that leads to meaningful employment
New York	Appeals Process	ALL	Students who earn within 3 points of passing score and have attempted the exam 2 times
	Regents Competency Test Safety Net	SWD	Students with IEPs or 504 accommodation plan or student declassified during grades 8-12
	Low Pass Option	SWD	Students with IEPs who earned a score between 55 and 64 on Regents Exams
North Carolina	NC Checklist of Academic Standards	SWD	Students with IEPs who cannot participate in the standard administration of the regular test with or without accommodations (e.g., newly blind, recent traumatic brain injury, physical disabilities)
Ohio	Alternative Pathway	ALL	Students who have failed the graduation tests by 10 points or less, and meet other criteria
	IEP Exempt	SWD	Students with IEPs
Texas	Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	ALL	Students who enter Texas educational system after January 1 of their senior year
	ARD Exempt	SWD	Students with IEPs
Virginia	Substitute Tests for SOLs	ALL	No apparent restrictions on which students can use substitute tests for SOLs

Table 4. Students Targeted for Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Eligibility Criteria
Washington	Collection of Evidence	ALL	Students who have taken the WASL at least one time
	WASL/Grades Comparison	ALL	Students who are in grade 12 and who have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.2 across all courses
	AP and College Admission Test Scores	ALL	Students who have taken the WASL at least one time
	Transfer Student Waiver	ALL	Students who have transferred from another state during grade 11 or 12
	Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	ALL	Students in grade 12 who wants to appeal his or her performance on WASL due to special, unavoidable circumstances, or students with disabilities who are at <i>Awareness</i> level of cognitive development in grade 11 or 12
	Basic Performance on WASL	SWD	Students with IEPs in grades 10-12 who earn a level 2 (basic) on WASL in one or more qualifying subjects
	Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	SWD	Students with IEPs in grade 11 or 12 who earn a level 3 (proficient) on lower grade-level assessment; best for students at <i>Concrete Conceptual</i> or <i>Below Grade</i> level of cognitive development
	Pass WAAS Portfolio	SWD	Students with IEPs in grades 10-12 who earn a passing score on the alternate assessment portfolio, WAAS; best for students at the <i>Abstract Symbolic</i> to the <i>Pre-symbolic</i> or <i>Early-symbolic</i> level of cognitive development
Locally Determined Assessments	SWD	Students with IEPs in grade 12; best for students at the <i>Concrete Conceptual</i> or <i>Below Grade Level</i> of cognitive development	

Note: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they either do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

^aALL = all students, including students with disabilities; SWD = students with disabilities.

^bThe Modified and Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exams were counted as a single alternative route, although they possibly could be separated because the Modified allows students to substitute something for a portion of the test, and the Nonstandard uses an individual graduation plan to guide how requirements are met.

It is clear from Table 4 that the degree to which there are additional specifications about eligible students varies considerably by state. For “all students,” there are often limitations on who has access to an alternative route (e.g., only those students who have met certain attendance requirements, or who have taken the exit exam a certain number of times and received a certain level of score). For students with disabilities, one of the systematic variations is whether only students with IEPs, or both IEP and 504 students are considered eligible for the alternative routes identified for students with disabilities. Only 4 of the 16 states with alternative routes for students with disabilities specifically indicated that 504 students could be targeted (California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York).

One criterion that often emerges when considering whether a student can pursue an alternative route is whether the student has first attempted to pass the regular exit exam and failed. Some states require that the student take the regular exit exam one or more times, while others do not require this. The requirement varies by the specific alternative route in some states also. Table 5 shows whether students must first take the exit exam before having access to an alternative route.

Table 5. Summary of Whether Alternative Route Requires Student to First Take the Regular Exit Exam

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group ^a	Student Must Take Regular Exit Exam First?
Alaska	Waiver	ALL	No
	Modified/NonStandard HSGQE ^b	SWD	Yes
California	Waiver	SWD	No
Florida	GED Exit Option Model Program	ALL	No
	Concordant Scores	ALL	Yes
	FCAT Waiver	SWD	Yes
Georgia	Waiver-Hardship	ALL	No
	Variance	ALL	Yes
	Waiver-IEP	SWD	No
Idaho	Comparable Graduation Requirements	SWD	No
	Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team	SWD	No
Indiana	Evidence-based Waiver	ALL	Yes
	Work Readiness Waiver	ALL	Yes
Louisiana	Waiver	SWD	Yes

Table 5. Summary of Whether Alternative Route Requires Student to First Take the Regular Exit Exam (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Student Must Take Regular Exit Exam First?
Maryland	Advanced Placement(AP)/ International Baccalaureate(IB)	ALL	No
	Combined Score Option	ALL	Yes
	Bridge Plan for Academic Validation	ALL	Yes
	Mod-HSA	SWD	No
	Mod-HSA Plus Option	SWD	No
Massachusetts	MCAS Performance Appeal-Cohort Review	ALL	Yes
	MCAS Performance Appeal-Portfolio Appeal	ALL	Yes
	MCAS-Alternate Assessment	SWD	No
Minnesota	Team Established Passing Standard	SWD	No
Mississippi	Substitute Evaluation Process	ALL	Yes
New Jersey	Special Review Assessment	ALL	Yes
	IEP Exemption	SWD	No
New Mexico	Career Readiness Pathway ^c	SWD	No
	Ability Pathway	SWD	No
New York	Appeals Process	ALL	Yes
	Regents Competency Test Safety Net	SWD	No
	Low Pass Option	SWD	Yes
North Carolina	NC Checklist of Academic Standards	SWD	No
Ohio	Alternative Pathway	ALL	Yes
	IEP Exempt	SWD	No
Texas	Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	ALL	No
	ARD Exempt	SWD	No
Virginia	Substitute Tests for SOLs	ALL	No
Washington	Collection of Evidence	ALL	Yes
	WASL/Grades Comparison	ALL	No
	AP and College Admission Test Scores	ALL	Yes
	Transfer Student Waiver	ALL	No
	Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	ALL	No
	Basic Performance on WASL	SWD	Yes
	Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	SWD	No
	Pass WAAS Portfolio	SWD	No
	Locally Determined Assessments	SWD	No

Table 5. Summary of Whether Alternative Route Requires Student to First Take the Regular Exit Exam (continued)

Note: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they either do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

^aALL = all students, including students with disabilities; SWD = students with disabilities.

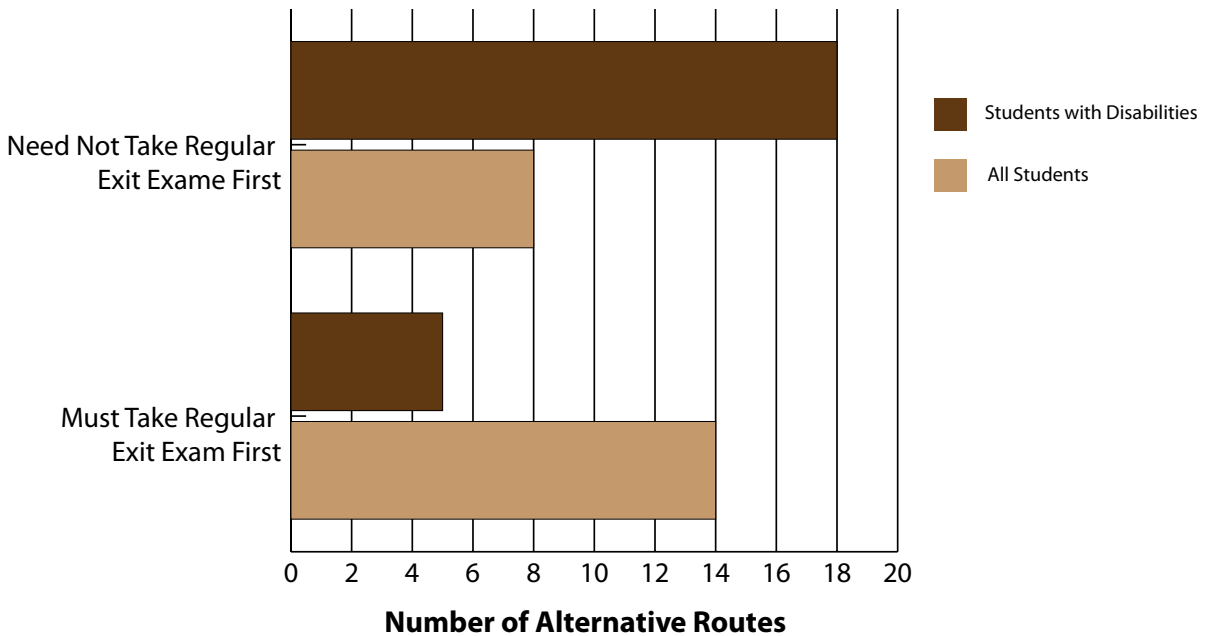
^bThe Modified and Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exams were counted as a single alternative route, although they possibly could be separated because the Modified allows students to substitute something for a portion of the test, and the Nonstandard uses an individual graduation plan to guide how requirements are met.

^cStudent must take the exit exam, but a different passing score is identified by the IEP team.

All but 3 of the 19 states with alternative routes (Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi) had at least one alternative route that did not require that the student first take the regular exit exam. In those states that had at least one alternative route that the student could pursue without first taking the regular exit exam, the routes that did not require taking the regular exit exam first (n = 27) were more often available to students with disabilities (n = 18) than to students without disabilities (n = 9).

Figure 3 shows the distribution of whether a student must first take the regular exit exam for all students and for students with disabilities. As is evident here, the numbers are quite different. The alternative routes available to students with disabilities are much more likely to not require that the student first take (and fail) the regular exit exam, whereas the alternative routes available to all students are much more likely to require that the student first take (and fail) the regular exit exam.

Figure 3. Number of Alternative Routes that Do and Do Not Require Students to First Take the Regular Exit Exam, for All Students and for Students with Disabilities



Alternative Route Request

States may have differing policies for how to gain access to an alternative route. Two factors are related to this part of the process. First, someone must request that a student use an alternative route. Second, someone must decide and approve the alternative route.

Generally, an individual must request the alternative route. Many states have specific requirements for who can request the alternative route. Table 6 shows the person who is to request the alternative route, for each of the alternative routes that states have.

Table 6. Requester of Alternative Route

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group ^a	Who Requests?
Alaska	Waiver	ALL	Student
	Modified/NonStandard HSGQE ^b	SWD	Student
California	Waiver	SWD	No Information
Florida	GED Exit Option Model Program	ALL	Student
	Concordant Scores	ALL	Student
	FCAT Waiver	SWD	Parent or legal guardian, and IEP team

Table 6. Requester of Alternative Route (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Who Requests?
Georgia	Waiver-Hardship	ALL	Student or parent/legal guardian
	Variance	ALL	Student or parent/legal guardian
	Waiver-IEP	SWD	Student or parent/legal guardian
Idaho	Comparable Graduation Requirements	SWD	IEP Team
	Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team	SWD	IEP Team
Indiana	Evidence-based Waiver	ALL	Student or parent/legal guardian
	Work Readiness Waiver	ALL	Student or parent/legal guardian
Louisiana	Waiver	SWD	No Information
Maryland	Advanced Placement(AP)/ International Baccalaureate (IB)	ALL	Student
	Combined Score Option	ALL	Student
	Bridge Plan for Academic Validation	ALL	Student
	Mod-HSA	SWD	Student
	Mod-HSA Plus Option	SWD	Student
Massachusetts	MCAS Performance Appeal-Cohort Review	ALL	District Superintendent, on behalf of student
	MCAS Performance Appeal-Portfolio Appeal	ALL	District Superintendent, on behalf of student
	MCAS-Alternate Assessment	SWD	District Superintendent, on behalf of student
Minnesota	Team Established Passing Standard	SWD	IEP or 504 Team
Mississippi	Substitute Evaluation Process	ALL	Student, Parent, or District Personnel
New Jersey	Special Review Assessment	ALL	District SRA Coordinator
	IEP Exemption	SWD	IEP Team
New Mexico	Career Readiness Pathway	SWD	IEP Team
	Ability Pathway	SWD	IEP Team
New York	Appeals Process	ALL	Student, Parent, or Teacher
	Regents Competency Test Safety Net	SWD	IEP Team or Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team
	Low Pass Option	SWD	No Information

Table 6. Requester of Alternative Route (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Who Requests?
North Carolina	NC Checklist of Academic Standards	SWD	IEP Team
Ohio	Alternative Pathway	ALL	Student and School Counselor
	IEP Exempt	SWD	IEP Team
Texas	Alternative Assessments for Exit Level TAKS	ALL	Student
	ARD Exempt	SWD	IEP Team
Virginia	Substitute Tests for SOLs	ALL	Principal or Superintendent
Washington	Collection of Evidence	ALL	Student
	WASL/Grades Comparison	ALL	School District Staff Member (e.g., Principal)
	AP and College Admission Test Scores	ALL	Student
	Transfer Student Waiver	ALL	Student or Parent
	Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	ALL	Student or Parent
	Basic Performance on WASL	SWD	IEP Team
	Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	SWD	IEP Team
	Pass WAAS Portfolio	SWD	Student or IEP Team
	Locally Determined Assessments	SWD	Student and School Counselor

Note: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they either do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

^a ALL = all students, including students with disabilities; SWD = students with disabilities.

^b The Modified and Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exams were counted as a single alternative route, although they possibly could be separated because the Modified allows students to substitute something for a portion of the test, and the Nonstandard uses an individual graduation plan to guide how requirements are met.

As is evident in Table 6, states vary in their designations of who can request the alternative route for a student. In many cases, the student makes the request. In most of the alternative routes that are only available to students with disabilities, the IEP team or the 504 team makes the request. In a few states, a school official (superintendent, principal, school counselor) makes the request for the alternative route.

Alternative Route Decision Making Body/Approver

Typically, there is a decision-making body or approver when a student opts for an alternative route to a standard diploma. The decision-making body or approver generally determines whether the student has met the alternative route criteria for earning a standard diploma. Table 7 shows who these decision makers or approvers are in the 19 states with alternative routes. The approver may vary by specific route, which is also reflected in Table 7.

Table 7. Alternative Route Decision-making Body/Approver

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group ^a	Decision-Making Body or Approver
Alaska	Waiver	ALL	Local School Board
	Modified/NonStandard HSGQE ^b	SWD	IEP or 504 Team
California	Waiver	SWD	Local School District
Florida	GED Exit Option Model Program	ALL	Local School District
	Concordant Scores	ALL	State Department of Education
	FCAT Waiver	SWD	IEP Team
Georgia	Waiver-Hardship	ALL	State Board of Education
	Variance	ALL	State Board of Education
	Waiver-IEP	SWD	State Board of Education
Idaho	Comparable Graduation Requirements	SWD	IEP Team and Principal
	Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team	SWD	IEP Team and Principal
Indiana	Evidence-based Waiver	ALL	State Board of Education
	Work Readiness Waiver	ALL	State Board of Education
Louisiana	Waiver	SWD	No Information
Maryland	Advanced Placement(AP)/ International Baccalaureate (IB)	ALL	State Department of Education
	Combined Score Option	ALL	State Department of Education
	Bridge Plan for Academic Validation	ALL	Local School
	Mod-HSA	SWD	IEP Team
	Mod-HSA Plus Option	SWD	State Department of Education

Table 7. Alternative Route Decision-making Body/Approver (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Decision-Making Body or Approver
Massachusetts	MCAS Performance Appeal-Cohort Review	ALL	Performance Appeals Board
	MCAS Performance Appeal-Portfolio Appeal	ALL	Performance Appeals Board
	MCAS-Alternate Assessment	SWD	Performance Appeals Board
Minnesota	Team Established Passing Standard	SWD	IEP or 504 Team
Mississippi	Substitute Evaluation Process	ALL	State Appeals Substitute Evaluation Committee
New Jersey	Special Review Assessment	ALL	District Superintendent, High School Principal, County Superintendent
	IEP Exemption	SWD	IEP Team
New Mexico	Career Readiness Pathway	SWD	Building Administrator
	Ability Pathway	SWD	Building Administrator
New York	Appeals Process	ALL	Appeal Committee
	Regents Competency Test Safety Net	SWD	Building Administrator
	Low Pass Option	SWD	No Information
North Carolina	NC Checklist of Academic Standards	SWD	IEP Team
Ohio	Alternative Pathway	ALL	Principal and Superintendent
	IEP Exempt	SWD	IEP Team
Texas	Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	ALL	School District
	ARD Exempt	SWD	ARD Committee
Virginia	Substitute Tests for SOLs	ALL	State Board of Education

Table 7. Alternative Route Decision-making Body/Approver (continued)

State	Name of Alternative Route	Target Group^a	Decision-Making Body or Approver
Washington	Collection of Evidence	ALL	Local School District
	WASL/Grades Comparison	ALL	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
	AP and College Admission Test Scores	ALL	School Official and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
	Transfer Student Waiver	ALL	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
	Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	ALL	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
	Basic Performance on WASL	SWD	IEP Team
	Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	SWD	IEP Team
	Pass WAAS Portfolio	SWD	IEP Team
	Locally Determined Assessments	SWD	Local School District

Note: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they either do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

^aALL = all students, including students with disabilities; SWD = students with disabilities.

^bThe Modified and Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exams were counted as a single alternative route, although they possibly could be separated because the Modified allows students to substitute something for a portion of the test, and the Nonstandard uses an individual graduation plan to guide how requirements are met.

There is considerable variation in the identified person or regulating body that processes the request for a student to pursue an alternative route to obtain a standard diploma (see Table 7). Furthermore, there can be differences within a state between the decision maker or approver for all students and for students with disabilities. The decision maker or approver for all students varies from a local level decision maker (e.g., local school board, principal, local school district) to a state board of education or state department of education decision. Some variation also is evident for alternative routes for students with disabilities, although the primary decision maker or approver is the IEP team. Some states that require a state level decision to be made for “all students” require a local decision for students with disabilities. In two states (Georgia, Massachusetts) the same decision-making body or approver was identified for both groups of students (all students and students with disabilities).

Nature of Alternative Route

All Students. The specific nature of the alternative route can vary from being more like a test to being a completely different process (e.g., portfolio, comparison of grades). In general the alternative route itself can be described in terms of the whether it involves participating in a specific curriculum, taking a test, showing proficiency through some other method, or simply having requirements waived. Table 8 shows the general nature of the alternative routes for all students.

Table 8. Nature of Alternative Routes for All Students

State	All Students				
	Different Test	Different Curriculum	Different Method of Demonstrating Competency	Waiver	Other
Alaska – Waiver				X	
Florida – GED Exit Option Model Program	X				
Florida – Concordant Scores	X				
Georgia – Waiver-Hardship				X	
Georgia – Variance				X	
Indiana – Evidence-based Waiver			X		
Indiana – Work Readiness Waiver		X			
Maryland – AP or IB	X				
Maryland – Combined Score Option					X
Maryland – Bridge Plan for Academic Validation			X		
Massachusetts – Performance Appeal-Cohort Appeal					X
Massachusetts – Performance Appeal – Portfolio Appeal			X		
Mississippi – Substitute Evaluation Process			X		
New Jersey – Special Review Assessment			X		
New York – Appeals Process				X	
Ohio – Alternative Pathway to Graduation				X	

Table 8. Nature of Alternative Routes for All Students (continued)

Texas – Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	X				
Virginia – Substitute Tests for SOLs	X				
Washington – Collection of Evidence			X		
Washington – WASL/Grades Comparison					X
Washington – AP and College Admission Test Scores	X				
Washington – Transfer Student Waiver	X				
Washington – Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals			X		
Total	7	1	7	5	3

Note: The following states with alternative routes are not included in this table because they do not have a route designated for *all* students: California, Idaho, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina. Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

Table 8 reveals that most alternative routes involve a different test ($n = 7$) or a different method of demonstrating competency ($n = 7$), followed by a waiver from the requirements ($n = 5$). These three approaches accounted for 19 of the 23 routes available for all students. A different curriculum route was used by one state, while other approaches were used by three states. The specific nature of the routes described as “Other” generally involved some type of comparison. For example, in Maryland, the Combined Score Option allows the student to successfully complete this alternative route to the standard diploma by earning a combined score of 1602 on the four High School Assessment tests, even if that individual did not individually pass each test. In Massachusetts, the Cohort Performance Appeal allows the students to successfully complete the alternative route to the standard diploma by identifying a cohort of at least six students who passed the MCAS, and then providing a comparison of the student’s Grade Point Averages (GPA) to those of the cohort. The Washington Grades Comparison alternative route approach is similar to that in Massachusetts—the student’s grades in English or Mathematics must be comparable to those of students who took the same courses and also passed the WASL.

Students with Disabilities. Table 9 shows the general nature of the alternative routes for students with disabilities. As for all students, the alternative route can be described in terms of the

whether it involves participating in a specific curriculum, taking a test, showing proficiency through some other method, or simply having requirements waived.

Table 9. Nature of Alternative Routes for Students with Disabilities

State	Students with Disabilities				
	Different Test	Different Curriculum	Different Method of Demonstrating Competency	Waiver	Other
Alaska – Modified or Nonstandard Graduation Qualifying Exam ^a	X				
California – Waiver				X	
Florida – FCAT Waiver				X	
Georgia – Waiver-IEP				X	
Idaho – Comparable Graduation Requirements			X		
Idaho – Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team			X		
Louisiana – Waiver				X	
Maryland – Modified HSA	X				
Maryland – Modified HSA Plus Option	X				
Massachusetts – Alternate Assessment	X		X		
Minnesota – Team Established Passing Standards			X		X
New Jersey – IEP Exempt				X	
New York – Regents Competency Test Safety Net	X				
New York – Low Pass Option					X
North Carolina – NC Checklist of Academic Standards			X		
Ohio – Exemption				X	
Texas – ARD Committee Exempt				X	
Washington – Basic Performance on WASL					X

Table 9. Nature of Alternative Routes for Students with Disabilities (continued)

Washington – Pass WAAS Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	X				
Pass WAAS – Portfolio	X				
Locally Determined Assessments	X				
Total	8	0	5	7	3

Note: The following states with alternative routes are not included in this because they do not have a route designated specifically for students with disabilities: Indiana, Mississippi, Virginia. Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee are not shown in this table because they do not have an alternative route available for either all students or students with disabilities, or they had no information on their Web sites.

^aThe Modified and Nonstandard High School Graduation Qualifying Exams were counted as a single alternative route, although they possibly could be separated because the Modified allows students to substitute something for a portion of the test, and the Nonstandard uses an individual graduation plan to guide how requirements are met.

Table 9 shows that, in general, the same types of routes were used for students with disabilities, but the order of frequency was different. A different test ($n = 8$), a waiver ($n = 7$), or a different method of demonstrating competency ($n = 5$) accounted for 20 of the 23 alternative routes for students with disabilities. No alternative routes involved a different curriculum. Other approaches were used by three states; these generally involved some type of comparison. For example, in Minnesota, the Team Established Passing Standards alternative route allows the student to pass the GRAD exam at an individually modified level of difficulty determined by the IEP team. New York’s Low Pass Option allows the student with a disability to score between 55 and 64 rather than the typically required score of 65 on the Regents Exams. In Washington, the Basic Performance on WASL alternative route is similar to the New York’s Low Pass Option, in that a student with an IEP who scores at a basic level on the WASL (level 2)—rather than proficient level (level 3)—is considered to have met the requirements for earning a standard diploma.

Discussion

The controversy surrounding graduation exams has persisted over the years. Policymakers continue to put in place processes that allow students to graduate with a standard diploma through alternative routes. These alternative routes may or may not be supported by evidence of their validity and fairness.

The number of states adopting exit exams as part of their assessment systems has remained relatively stable in the past few years, with 26 states currently having active or soon-to-be active exit or end-of-course exams. We identified 19 states that had designated alternative routes to the standard diploma at the time of our study, which was conducted primarily during the summer of 2008. Of the 19 states, 23 identified routes existed for “all students” and 23 routes were designed just for “students with disabilities.”

The purpose of our study was to examine the characteristics of these alternative routes and to identify the differences that exist between those available to all students (including students with disabilities) and those available only to students with disabilities. We explored the nature of the routes and the processes involved in them.

We found that states’ alternative routes for earning a standard diploma are complex and multi-faceted. It is likely that because of the importance of the alternative routes, legislators, governors, state boards of education, state departments of education, and stakeholders all weigh in on them. As a result, the alternative routes are varied and often changing. Documenting these alternatives routes when they often change and when they may not be transparent or easily accessible on state Web sites increases the challenge of accurately portraying alternative routes available to students, including those students with disabilities.

Although the number of states with exit exams did not change much since the Krentz et al. (2005) study, the number of alternative routes available to students, based on what was found on state Web sites or sent to us, increased considerably (from 30 to 46). Krentz and colleagues found that there were 15 alternative routes for all students and 15 specifically for students with disabilities. The current update of alternative routes revealed 23 alternative routes for all students and 23 alternative routes specifically for students with disabilities.

Requirements for the alternative routes and the nature of the alternative routes also have changed somewhat from the 2005 report (Krentz, 2005). Although previously the requirement to first take the exit exam existed for about half of the alternative routes, whether designed for all students or students with disabilities, there is now a different distribution. For all students, almost two-thirds of the alternative routes require that the student first take the regular test, whereas for students with disabilities, less than one-fourth of the alternative routes require that the student first take the regular test. The nature of the decision-making body or approver also differed for all students and students with disabilities, and there have been shifts over time as well. For example, Krentz et al. found that about one-third of the alternative routes for students with disabilities had the IEP team as the decision maker or approver and another one-fourth had no information about who made the decision or approved the results from the alternative route. In this study, over half of the alternative routes for students with disabilities had the IEP team making decisions and only a couple had no information available. For all students, none

of the alternative routes had no information about the decision making or approver. In all other cases, the decision-making body or approver was either at the state level or at the school level.

In contrast to differences for all students and students with disabilities that seem to suggest that the approaches are more divergent than in the past, other indicators suggest a merging of the approaches for the two groups. For example, the nature of the alternative route seems to have shifted, at least to some degree, toward being more similar. In the 2005 report (Krentz et al.), by far the most frequent alternative routes for all students involved either a different test or a different way of demonstrating competency, whereas for students with disabilities the most frequent alternative routes involved waivers. In this study, more waiver options appeared for all students, whereas more options that involved different tests or different methods of demonstrating competency emerged specifically for students with disabilities.

Transparent information on alternative routes is not available in all states that have alternative routes. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish an alternate assessment (such as the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards—AA-AAS) from an alternative route. This was the case despite the fact that the AA-AAS generally has very different purposes. To complicate matters, in some states, the AA-AAS actually was identified as one of the alternative routes for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Thus, students with significant cognitive disabilities were able to obtain a standard diploma regardless of whether they met the same grade-level achievement standards as required for the exit exam. Furthermore, there were a number of alternative routes used by states that led to a variety of different diplomas, ones not considered equivalent to a standard or regular diploma. These alternative diplomas may lead to further confusion when navigating alternative routes because they are sometimes presented as being alternative routes to a diploma, but there is no explicit statement that the diploma obtained is not the same as the standard diploma. An example of this is the Substitute Evaluation Program in Virginia, which leads to a modified diploma.

Continued concerns exist about the comparability of various alternative routes to the traditional route where students must take and pass the regular exit exam. Some states have attempted to address the concern about comparability by using special notations. For example, students with disabilities who pass at a lower score level in Minnesota receive a standard diploma but it is noted on the students' records that they "passed—individual level." We found no evidence that other states with similar alternative routes had this kind of designation to indicate to employers or higher education officials that the student had earned the standard diploma at a different level of proficiency from other students.

Although comparability is sometimes difficult to discern, there are hints about the comparability of an alternative route to the exit exam route in some of the language surrounding some of the alternative routes currently being used in states. For example, in some states the names of the

alternative routes raise questions about their comparability to the exit exam route (e.g., Ability Pathway, Low Pass Option, waiver). Other names clearly suggest comparability (Idaho’s “Comparable Graduation Requirements”).

Comparability of alternative routes will continue to be a critical issue that states, educators, parents, students, employers, and the community at large must grapple with. With the clear differentiation in outcomes from different diploma options, it is likely that similar differentiation also will emerge for standard diplomas obtained in different ways.

Recommendations

Krentz et al. (2005) made several recommendations after looking at alternative routes to a standard diploma. They were:

1. States with alternative routes to their standard diplomas must provide clear, easy-to-find information about the alternative route.
2. The alternative route must be based on the same beliefs and premises as the standard route to the diploma.
3. The same route or routes should be available to all students.
4. The alternative route should truly be an alternative to the graduation exam, not just another test.
5. The alternative route should reflect a reasoned and reasonable process.
6. Procedures should be implemented to evaluate the technical adequacy of the alternative route and to track its consequences.

These recommendations from 2005 continue to be relevant today, as indicated by the findings of the current study.

Provide clear, easy-to-find information. Although less so the case than five years ago, it continues to be challenging—in many states—to find clear, concise, and easy to follow information on the alternative routes that are available to students to receive a standard diploma. In many states, it is difficult even to find information on regular graduation requirements, much less alternatives to them. States need to continue to work toward greater transparency about the ways in which students can graduate with a standard diploma as well as why the alternative routes exist.

Base alternative routes on the same beliefs and premises as the standard route to the diploma.

With the increased number of alternative routes that have emerged in the past five years, it seems that the need for clarity about the assumptions and meaning of alternative routes is greater than ever before. Clear explanations of why specific alternative routes were developed was noticeably lacking in the information found on state Web sites. In fact, it was rare to find a state that provided information on the assumptions underlying graduation requirements in general. There was a lack of definitions about what a regular diploma was supposed to mean, something that has been recommended for states with a variety of diploma options besides the regular diploma (Thurlow & Johnson, in press).

Make the same alternative routes available to all students. Contrary to this recommendation made five years ago, it appears that states are identifying increasing numbers of alternative routes designated only for students with disabilities, and sometimes only those students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Of course, all of the alternative routes for *all* students are also available to students with disabilities, but the proliferation of routes available only to students with disabilities is surprising. This development leads one back again to the question of comparability—does a lack of comparability explain why some routes are available only to students with disabilities?

Create alternative routes that are not just another test, but truly are alternatives to the graduation test. This recommendation by Krentz et al. (2005) has been pursued, to some extent, by the increased number of states that have created alternative routes that use portfolios or ways to examine the coursework and class performance of students. Still, many states simply have identified other tests for the students to take, such as GED tests, substitute tests, or other versions (such as a lower developmental level) of the state test, or have determined that all requirements can be “waived” given certain conditions.

Develop a reasoned and reasonable process for the alternative route. Krentz et al. (2005) suggested that whether the alternative route process, is reasonable, and reflects a reasoned development and implementation process depends on identifying foundational beliefs and assumptions underlying the process. They also suggested that examining intended and unintended consequences is one aspect of this process. We found little evidence that states are examining the consequences of alternative routes. One indication of noting consequences that we would have expected to see was documentation of the number of students obtaining standard diplomas through the various routes. We did not find this information on state Web sites. Although states have become used to public reporting of their data, and even their graduation rates, they have not ventured into publicly reporting data on the specific diplomas and the routes that students have taken to earn a standard diploma.

The Center on Education Policy (2009) was able to look at initial pass rates and cumulative pass rates. But this is not the same as obtaining a breakout of the rates at which students are pursuing alternative routes. In our examination of the Web sites of all the states with alternative routes, we found only two states (Massachusetts, New Jersey) with any information on the numbers of students pursuing alternative routes, and the information that was provided was minimal, and was buried in other information (see Thurlow et al., 2009).

Evaluate the technical adequacy of alternative routes and track the consequences of each.

We found no evidence on states' Web sites, nor any published studies, on the technical adequacy or consequences of alternative routes. This remains a critical need, especially as states seem to be increasing their reliance of alternative routes to the standard diploma.

Conclusion

There continues to be a need to examine more closely the ways in which students are able to earn a standard diploma. The search for this information should not be so difficult. Still, it is important that states are pursuing alternative ways for students to show that they have met the requirements to earn a standard diploma. The next challenge is to document the comparability of the alternative routes to the standard route, so that employers and post-secondary institutions can be assured that every student who has a standard diploma is entering the workplace or the post-secondary institution with the same knowledge and skills.

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Appendix A

Template for State Profiles for States to Review and Verify

State Alternative Route Profile – [State Name]

Document Source(s):

[Web Adresses]

1. Status of Alternate Routes for Exit Exams

This table provides a summary of the status of alternative routes available to all students and only available to students with disabilities.

All Students			Students with Disabilities		
Available	Not Available	No Information	Available	Not Available	No Information
[state response]			[state response]		

2. Students Targeted for Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

This table shows the group or groups of students considered eligible for the alternative route to a standard diploma (if available). The table is divided into all students and students with disabilities, with the exact words that are used by the states entered into the table. This table also reveals the groups of students that states cover in general.

All Students		Students with Disabilities	
Target	Comments	Target	Comments
[state response]		[state response]	

3. Decision-making Body/Approver for the Alternative Route

This table depicts the decision-making body or approver when the alternative route is for all students (which can include students with disabilities) and when it is only for students with disabilities.

All Students	Students with Disabilities
[state response]	[state response]

4. Nature of the Alternative Route

This table provides specific information on the types of option(s) available to both students with and without disabilities.

All Students	Students with Disabilities
[state response]	[state response]

5. Status of Alternate Routes for Exit Exams

This table provides a summary of whether each of the options first requires the student to take the general assessment, and by inference, to fail the exit exam, before having access to the alternative route to the standard diploma.

All Students				Students with Disabilities			
Must Fail	Must Not Fail	No Information	Other	Must Fail	Must Not Fail	No Information	Other
[state response]				[state response]			

6. Types of Alternative Routes

This table synthesizes the specific nature of alternative routes to a standard diploma for all students and students with disabilities in terms of whether the route involves (a) taking a different test, (b) completing a specific curriculum, (c) using a different method of demonstrating proficiency, or (d) obtaining a waiver from requirements.

All Students				
Different Test	Different Curriculum	Different Method of Demonstrating competency	Waiver	Other
[state response]				
Students with Disabilities				
Different Test	Different Curriculum	Different Method of Demonstrating competency	Waiver	Other
[state response]				

Appendix B

Names of Diplomas in States and Whether Considered “Standard”

State	Exit Documents Available to Students	Standard?	
		Yes	No
Alabama	Alabama High School Diploma without Endorsement (AHSD) Alabama High School Diploma with Endorsement ^b Alabama Occupational Diploma Graduation Certificate	X X	X X
Alaska	Standard High School Diploma Certificate of Achievement Modified Diploma	X	X X
Arizona	High School Diploma Certificate of Completion	X	X
Arkansas	High School Diploma	X	
California	Standard High School Diploma Certificate/Document of Educational Achievement/Completion	X	X
Florida	Standard Diploma Special Diploma Option 1 Special Diploma Option 2 Certificate of Completion Special Certificate of Completion Certificate of Completion-College Placement Test Eligible	X	X X X X X
Georgia	High School Diploma High School Diploma with Seal ^c Certificate of Performance Special Education Diploma	X X	X X
Idaho	Regular High School Diploma	X	
Indiana	Core 40 Diploma Core 40 Diploma with Honors Core 40 Diploma with Technical Honors General Diploma	X X X	X
Louisiana	Standard Diploma Standard Diploma with Academic Area of Concentration Standard Diploma with Academic Endorsement High School Equivalency Diploma Certificate of Achievement Skill Certificates	X X X X	X X
Maryland	High School Diploma Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion	X	X

State	Exit Documents Available to Students	Standard?	
		Yes	No
Massachusetts	High School Diploma Certificate of Mastery ^d Certificate of Mastery with Distinction ^d Certificate of Achievement	X X X	X
Minnesota	High School Diploma Certificate of Achievement	X	X
Mississippi	Regular High School Diploma Occupational Diploma	X	X
Nevada	Standard High School Diploma Advanced High School Diploma Certificate of Achievement	X X	X
New Jersey	State-endorsed High School Diploma	X	
New Mexico	New Mexico Diploma of Excellence State Certificate	X	X
New York	Regents Diploma Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation Local Diploma IEP Diploma	X X X	X
North Carolina	Standard Diploma Certificate of Achievement	X	X
Ohio	High School Diploma Diploma with Honors High School Equivalence Diploma	X X	X
Oklahoma	Standard Diploma Standard Diploma with Certificate of Distinction	X X	
South Carolina	State High School Diploma State High School Diploma with Academic Honors Award South Carolina High School Certificate	X X	X
Tennessee	Standard High School Diploma Special Education Diploma	X	X
Texas	High School Diploma (Minimum, Recommended, Distinguished Achievement) Certificate of Coursework Completion	X	X
Virginia	Standard Diploma Advanced Studies Diploma Modified Standard Diploma Special Diploma	X X	X X
Washington	High School Diploma ^e	X	

^a Based on information from states' Web sites, as well as cross checks with the IES site http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/saa_tab11.asp. North Carolina has two dates for first graduating class because a computer skills test was added starting with the graduating class of 2001.

^b Four types of endorsements are available in Alabama: Advanced Academic Endorsement (AHSD/AAE), Advanced Career/Technical Endorsement (AHSD/ACTE), Career/Technical Endorsement (AHSD/CTE), and Credit Based Endorsement (AHSD/CBE).

^c Four types of seals are available in Georgia: Technology/Career Preparatory Seal, Technology/Career Preparatory of Distinction, College Preparatory Seal, and College Preparatory Seal of Distinction.

^d Massachusetts added these two certificates starting with the class of 2009.

^e Washington has two certificates that are noted on a student's transcript – they both lead to the same diploma: Certification of Academic Achievement (CAA) and Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). CIA is available only to students with disabilities.

Appendix C

Profiles of States with Alternative Routes

Alaska

To receive Alaska’s Standard High School Diploma, Alaska students must earn at least 21 credits, and some school districts require more. The State Board of Education & Early Development stipulates that students earn four credits in language arts, three in social studies, two each in math and science, and one in health/physical education. Local school boards set the remaining nine or more credit requirements for their own schools. Many students earn credits beyond those required as a minimum.

To earn a diploma, students must also achieve passing grades on all three tests on the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE), which measures competency in reading, writing, and math. Students who experience disabilities can, as part of an Individual Education Program or 504 Plan, and with the approval of the state Department of Education & Early Development, take and pass optional exams. Students who do not pass the HSGQE or an approved optional exam receive a Certificate of Achievement.

A student with disabilities who does not pass a portion of the HSGQE may take the Modified HSGQE if the student requires modifications in addition to the accommodations already provided.

Information about Alternative Routes in Alaska

Table 1 provides an overview of the alternative routes that are available in Alaska. Alaska has two alternative routes—one for all students, and one only for students with disabilities. For both all students and students with disabilities, the student is the one to request the alternative route. The approving body is the local school board for all students, and the IEP or 504 team for students with disabilities. For the **Waiver, students do not need to first take the HSGQE.** For the **Modified or NonStandard HSGQE, students must first take the regular HSGQE** before requesting the Modified or Nonstandard HSGQE.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Waiver from HSGQE	All Students	Student	Local school board
Modified High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) or Non-standard HSGQE ^a	Students with Disabilities	Student	IEP or 504 Team

^aThe Modified HSGQE and Nonstandard HSGQW were counted as a single alternative routes, although they possibly could be separated. Table 2 shows information on the specific criteria for students to participate in an alternative route. The waiver for all students covers a variety of unique situations (e.g., late arrival in state, parent death). The Modified or Nonstandard HSGQE requires that the students has not passed a portion of the HSGQE.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Waiver	The student arrives within the final two semesters of his or her intended year of graduation; parent dies within the last semester of the student's intended year of graduation; a serious or sudden illness, or a physical injury, prevents the student from taking the exam in the final semester of his or her intended year of graduation; a disability arises too late in the student's high school career to develop a meaning full and valid assessment; a student has passed a competency exam in another state that assesses the same content areas, and is a high school exit exam.
Modified HSGQE or Nonstandard HSGQE^a	A student with a disability who does not pass a portion of the exam may take the Modified HSGQE if the student requires modifications in the addition to the accommodations already provided. A students with a disability who does not pass a portion of the exam may take the Nonstandard HSGQW if the student meets three requirements: (a) is working at or near grade level, (b) has taken but is not proficient on the HSQGE, and (c) has a documented history of being unable to demonstrate proficiency on a standardized assessment because of one or more conditions.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

^aThe Modified HSGQE and Nonstandard HSGQW were counted as a single alternative routes, although they possibly could be separated.

Each of the alternative routes in Alaska is described in more detail here.

Waiver from HSGQE

Students may request an application for a waiver from the HSGQE for several reasons. Depending on the reason, there are different requirements that the student must follow and submit with the request.

During the process of approval, the student who applied for a waiver must continue to take the HSGQE until the local school board approves of the waiver. The school board must notify the student by registered mail whether the application was approved or denied. The school board must also provide a copy of its decision to grant or deny a waiver to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development. If the waiver is denied, then the student may appeal the denial to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development. The appeal must be postmarked no later than 30 days following the student's receipt of the school board's decision to deny.

Arriving Late into Alaska Public School System. The student must submit documentation from the school in Alaska where the student is currently enrolled, including the enrollment date. The document must verify the date of the student's physical presence in Alaska prior to enrollment in any of the school options in the state. The submitted documentation must also include the out-of-state school district that the student is transferring from, including their enrollment date, and exit date.

Rare and Unusual Circumstances. This includes death of a parent, where the parent must have died in the last semester of the student's senior year (must provide documentation with date of death); serious and sudden illness or injury to which prevented the student from taking the HSGQE. A documented disability from the student's IEP team; a district or system error in which a documentation will verify that the mailed test materials were not received, or lost. If the student is unable to participate due to a disability, the student must submit an approved copy of the Request for Permission (student must have taken either the modified or nonstandard HSGQE before applying for the waiver). If the student passed another state's competency exam, the out-of-state school in which the student transferred from, must transmit directly to the regional school board which will include the student's transcripts demonstrating that the student has passed all parts/subtest of an out-of-state exam. The student may also get advice from Education and Early Development to take an alternate assessment.

Modified or Nonstandard HSGQE

Modified HSGQE. The IEP or 504 team indicates the student needs an alternative assessment program for the HSGQE on the student's plan. The team completes the Modified HSGQE application and submits it to the Department of Education and Early Development. If the application is denied, the team may appeal the decision to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development.

Nonstandard HSGQE. The IEP or 504 team indicates the student needs an alternative assessment program for the HSGQE on the student’s plan. The team completes the application for the nonstandard test and submits it for approval by the Department of Education and Early Development. If the Department of Education and Early Development denies approval, the team may appeal the decision to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development. In addition to the application, the student must have one or more of the following document conditions:

- The student has a severe emotional or behavioral impairment or a pervasive development or other disability that causes the student to be unable to concentrate on the HSGQE, even with accommodations or appropriate modifications;
- The student cannot cope with the demands of a prolonged test because of multiple physical disabilities, severe health-related disabilities, or a neurological disorder;
- The student has a significant motor or communication disability that causes the student to need more time than is reasonable or available for testing, even with extended time.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Earning a High School Diploma	http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/HSGQE/GuidetoHSdiploma2008.pdf

California

The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) was a requirement starting with the class of 2006 to receive a Standard High School Diploma. The CAHSEE has two parts, English-Language Arts and Mathematics. Both parts contain multiple choice questions, with the addition of an essay for the English-Language Arts portion.

In 2004, the California legislature (Senate bill 964-Burton) required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop and the State Board of Education to approve and provide alternatives to students with disabilities. The alternative was also a waiver, which allowed students with an IEP or 504 plan to take the CAHSEE with a modification.

In 2007, Senate Bill 267 required all local educational agencies to grant a high school diploma to each student with disabilities who was scheduled to graduate from high school in 2007, and has not passed the CAHSEE.

In 2008, California Education Code Section 60851(c) allowed local school district governing boards to waive the requirement to pass the CAHSEE for students with disabilities who test with a modification score of 350 or above. This waiver only applied to the class of 2008. Apart from this, the student must have an active IEP or 504 plan that indicates the student was scheduled to graduate with the class of 2008 and the student had taken one or both portions of the CAHSEE with one or more modifications and received a passing score.

Information about Alternative Routes in California

One alternative route is available in California. It is designated for students with disabilities (see Table 1). This alternative route **does not require that students first take the regular CAHSEE**.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Waiver	Students with Disabilities	No Information Found	Local school districts

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the waiver in California. This information indicates that the student may either have an IEP or a 504 plan.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Waiver	The student must have an IEP or 504 plan that indicates the student was scheduled to graduate.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The waiver alternative route in California is described in more detail here.

Waiver

In addition to the student having an IEP or 504 plan indicating the student was scheduled to graduate with their respective class, the student must have also taken one or both portions of the CAHSEE with one or more modifications and received the equivalent of a passing score (350 or above).

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Waiver	http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/08waiverltr.asp

Florida

As part of Florida’s graduation requirement to receive a Standard Diploma, students must take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The FCAT measures student performance on benchmarks in reading, writing, mathematics, and science from the Sunshine State Standards (SSS). It is a part of Florida’s overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards.

The FCAT was first administered to sophomores in 1998. It has undergone a variety of changes since the first administration, including adding writing (2000) and science (2003). In 2005, multiple-choice items were added and the name changed to FCAT Writing+.

Students who have not passed the Grade 10 FCAT have up to five opportunities to pass it before graduation. Students may retest on the reading or mathematics section of the FCAT or both sections, in the fall and spring of their junior and senior years. Students who have not successfully passed the Grade 10 FCAT prior to their expected graduation may retake the FCAT as many times as they want until they pass it.

Information about Alternative Routes in Florida

Table 1 provides an overview of the three alternative routes in Florida. Two of the routes are for all students and one route is only for students with disabilities. One of the routes for all students, the **GED Exit Option Model Program, does not require that students first take the regular FCAT. The other two routes, one for all students and one only for students with disabilities, require that the student first take the FCAT.**

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
GED Exit Option Model Program	All students	Student	Local School District
Concordant Scores	All students	Student	Department of Education
FCAT Waiver	Students with Disabilities	Parent or legal guardian with student, and IEP team	IEP team

Table 2 shows information on the specific criteria for students to participate in an alternative route. The two routes available to all students each allow the student to use a different test score for the FCAT. The alternative route available to students with disabilities is a waiver based on an IEP team decision.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Concordant Scores	Any student who attempts to pass the FCAT at least three times without earning a passing score may use scores from an ACT or SAT.
GED Exit Option Model Program	Any student who is at least 18 years old and who has not earned a standard diploma may earn a State of Florida diploma by passing the Tests of General Educational Development (GED).
FCAT Waiver	The student's IEP team may decide whether the FCAT accurately measures the student's ability to master the FCAT. The student needs to first attempt the FCAT at least twice, and meet all other graduation requirements.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

Each of the alternative routes in Florida is described in more detail here.

Concordant Scores

Florida implemented the concordant scores alternative route in 2003-2004. It is an alternative route available to all students. A senior can graduate with a standard diploma by receiving a score comparable to the FCAT passing score. A student who uses this alternative route must take the FCAT a total of three times without earning a passing score in order to use scores from the ACT or SAT. Students who are new to the public school system starting in their 12th grade, do not need to meet this requirement.

The passing score for reading when taking the FCAT is 1926; the student must receive a score of 410 on the SAT or a 15 on the ACT to be considered comparable. For mathematics, the passing score when taking the FCAT is 1889; the student must receive a score of 370 on the SAT or 15 on the ACT.

GED Exit Option Model Program

Students who have not received a passing FCAT score can earn a State of Florida diploma by passing the GED test. This alternative route is only offered in some school districts. This alternative route is included here because it does not exclude students who are still in school, and thus is an alternative route available to students in school.

FCAT Waiver

An FCAT Waiver may be granted if the IEP team determines that the FCAT does not accurately measure a student’s ability, even with accommodations. This option is only available to students who are in their senior year and pursuing the traditional 24-credit standard program.

In addition that, the student must have attempted to take the test twice, and there must be documentation that the student has mastered the Sunshine State Standards test on the FCAT.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
High School Diploma Options for Students with Disabilities	http://fldoe.org/ese/pdf/hs_options_ese.pdf
Course Code Directory System Guide	http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/CCD/files/0708/GradRequ07_08.pdf
FCAT Graduation Requirements (Concordant Scores)	http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/fcatpass.pdf
Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities, What Parents Need to Know	http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/fcatpass.pdf

Georgia

All students must take the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT) and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) to receive a High School Diploma. The GHSWT is first administered to students in the fall of their eleventh-grade year. The GHSGT is first administered to students in the spring of their eleventh-grade year in areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

There is no limit to the number of times a student may retake the graduation assessments until he or she meets the passing criteria. Upon meeting these criteria, students who have met all other graduation requirements are eligible to receive a high school diploma.

Information about Alternative Routes in Georgia

An overview of the two alternative routes in Georgia is shown in Table 1. Georgia offers to all students a Hardship Waiver and a Variance. For students with disabilities, the state offers an IEP Waiver. It is the responsibility of the student or the student's parent or legal guardian to initiate a waiver or a variance. The **variance does not require that students first take the regular GHSGT**, while the **other two alternative routes do require the student to have first taken the GHSGT**.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Waiver – Hardship	All students	Student or parent/legal guardian	State Board of Education
Variance	All students	Student or parent/legal guardian	State Board of Education
Waiver – IEP	Students with Disabilities	Student or parent/legal guardian	State Board of Education

The process of the alternative routes begins with the student, or the student's parent or legal guardian, submitting a request in writing to the local superintendent of schools of the system that the student attends or attended. Initial information that needs to be included in addition to the specified criteria is:

- a. Specific facts that would justify the waiver or variance.

- b. The reason why the variance or waiver requested would serve the purpose of the underlying requirement. The reasons must be in accordance with the purposes of the waiver or variance.
- c. Written permission for the Georgia Department of Educational staff to receive all records that pertain to the request.

Table 2 shows the specific criteria for students to participate in an alternative route in Georgia.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Waiver–Hardship	The student has not had a reasonable opportunity to pass a section of the GHSGT or GHSWT due to a substantial hardship beyond the student’s control.
Variance	The student must pass at least three sections of the GHSGT and GH-SWT. The student may pass either three sections of the GHSGT, or two sections of the GHSGT plus the GHSWT. The student must also have an attendance record of 90%, excluding excused absences while enrolled in grades 9-12. The student’s scale score falls within one standard error of measurement for passing the relevant section of the GHSGT or GHSWT, using the student’s highest score over multiple administration; the student has successfully passed each related End-of-Course Test, where applicable, for the sections of the GHSGT in which the variance is sought.
Waiver – IEP	The student’s disability makes him/her incapable of passing a section of GHSGT or GHSWT, even with the provision of all allowable accommodations.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

Each of the alternative routes in Georgia is described in more detail here.

Waiver – Hardship

Substantial hardships may include a significant, unique and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of deprivation. The student must still adequately demonstrate with a record of coursework and earned credits that the student possesses the knowledge required to pass the GHSGT and/or GHSWT.

Variance

Students who request a variance must first have attempted, a minimum of four times, the relevant sections of the GHSGT or GHSWT. Students must also provide documentation of having received remediation in the sections for which the variance is being sought.

Waiver–IEP

While the student’s disability will not preclude him/her from taking the assessments, the disability and its impact on the student’s achievement must be documented in the student’s individual education plan (IEP) over time. Just like the Hardship Waiver, the student’s record of coursework and earned credits should adequately demonstrate that the student possesses the knowledge required to pass the GHS GT and/or GHS WT.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Waivers and Variances of high School Graduation Assessments Guidelines	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/DMGetDocument.aspx/Waivers%20Variance%20Guidelines.pdf?p=6CC6799F8C1371F6CCE12CA193F128E659E405913281A7D3002972D0BE3FBC41&Type=D
Diploma Options	http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/documents/curriculum
Transition Manual for Students with Disabilities (Diploma Options page 30)	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/DMGetDocument.aspx/specialed_transition_manual.pdf?p=4BE1EECF99CD364EA5554055463F1FBB77B0B70FCF5942E12E123FE4810FFF5B440E78DF74A7BADF823002584844BB6&Type=D

Idaho

Passing the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is required to receive a regular high school diploma. The test measures a student’s competency in reading, language usage, mathematics, and science. The ISAT was first administered as a requirement for high school graduation in 2002. The ISAT is administered every fall and spring; schools may also choose to give it in winter.

Students use a computer to take this test. Computer administration allows the test to immediately adjust to the performance of each student and provides information quickly to the teacher and student.

Information about the Alternative Routes in Idaho

Two alternative routes are available in Idaho – both routes are designated for students with disabilities (see Table 1). Students who are eligible for special education services must have an Individualized Graduation Plan. The plan must include at least one evaluation measure in the core academic areas. If the student is not demonstrating proficiency on the ISAT and it appears the student may not be able to demonstrate proficiency, then another evaluation mechanism must be identified and agreed upon. The alternative routes in Idaho **do not require that the student first take the regular ISAT**.

Table 1. Target Groups, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Comparable Graduation Requirements	Students with IEP	IEP Team	IEP Team and Principal
Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team	Students with IEP	IEP Team	IEP Team and Principal

Table 2 presents information on the specific criteria for each of the alternative routes available to students with disabilities.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Comparable Graduation Requirements	Student is one with an IEP and an Individualized Graduation Plan (which is developed for all students with IEPs in grade 8). Annual reviews of the plan determined that the student will meet comparable graduation requirements.
Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team	Student is one with an IEP and an Individualized Graduation Plan (which is developed for all students with IEPs in grade 8). Annual reviews of the plan determined that the student will meet alternate requirements developed through the IEP process.

Note: The alternative routes available only to students with disabilities are in bold.

Each of the alternative routes in Idaho is described in more detail here.

Comparable Graduation Requirements

In addition to the student’s IEP, the student must also have an Individualized Graduation Plan. The IEP team uses a chart to determine which methods can be used to demonstrate a student’s proficiency on the standards. The chart includes the type of method, the description, scoring and what the student needs to score or grade as proficient.

Graduation Criteria Established by IEP Team

When the IEP team addresses completion of the student’s secondary program by adapting regular graduation requirements, these needs to be:

- Adapting the course content, course objectives, instructional strategies, grading, assessments; or
- Identifying alternative methods for demonstrating competence.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Students with Disabilities Graduation Decision Guidance (page 6)	http://www.sde.idaho.gov/specialeducation/docs/Features/Graduation-Guidance.pdf

Indiana

Diplomas were first withheld from students who did not pass the exam in 1999–2000. Initially, there were two levels of achievement on the graduation exam: “pass” and “did not pass.” Beginning in 2004, there were three levels: “pass+,” “pass,” and “did not pass.”

Starting with the fall of 2006, students who were entering high school were encouraged to complete the Core 40, and beginning with students who enter in high school in the fall of 2007 (graduating class of 2011), the completion of the Core 40 became a graduation requirement. Students were still able to take the General Diploma route through an opt-out process, although the General Diploma is not a standard diploma.

The decision to make the Core 40 the standard route to graduation was because in 2005, more than half of Indiana’s high school graduates earned the Core 40 diploma.

Information about Alternative Routes in Indiana

Two alternative routes have been created in Indiana, both of which are available to all students (see Table 1). Students are **required to first take the regular assessment** before requesting to participate in either of the alternative routes.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Evidence-based Waiver	All students	Student or parent/legal guardian	State Board of Education
Work-Readiness Waiver	All students	Student or parent/legal guardian	State Board of Education

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the waivers available in Indiana. This information indicates that although these options are available to all students, they have specific requirements and approval processes.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Evidence-based Waiver	Student must obtain written recommendation from a teacher of the subject area in which the student has not yet received a passing score. The written recommendation must be approved by the principal of the student's school and be supported by documentation that the student has attained the academic standards in the subject area based on either classroom work, or tests other than the graduation exam or classroom work.
Work-Readiness Waiver	Student must complete the course and credit requirements for a general diploma, maintain a least a "C" average, maintain school attendance at 95%, and take the graduation exam in each subject area in which the student did not achieve a passing score at least one time every school year after the school year in which the student first takes the graduation exam.

The waivers available as alternative routes in Indiana are described in more detail here.

Evidence-based Waiver

In addition to having to take the exam each year in the subject area where the student did not first pass, the student must also satisfy all state and local graduation requirements, maintain a "C" average or equivalent, complete remediation opportunities provided by the student's school, and maintain a 95% attendance rate (with excused absences not counting).

Work-readiness Waiver

Similar to the Evidence-based Waiver, the student must take the exam each year at least once, complete remediation opportunities, maintain school attendance, a "C" average and satisfy local and state graduation requirements.

In addition to this, the student must complete course and credit requirements for a general diploma (using the opt-out waiver), including the career academic sequence; a workforce readiness assessment, and at least one career exploration internship or cooperative education or workforce credential recommended by the student's school.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Waiver Rule	http://www.doe.in.gov/dps/teacherprep/testing/WaiverRule.html
GQE Requirements	http://www.doe.in.gov/istep/gqe/ (Click on Meeting the GQE Requirements)
Core40 FAQ	http://www.doe.in.gov/core40/docs/faq.pdf

Louisiana

The Graduation Exit Examination (GEE) is part of Louisiana’s criterion-referenced testing (CRT) program. The GEE measures how well a student has mastered the state content standards, and is administrated at grades 10 and 11 as a graduation requirement to receive a standard diploma.

In spring of 2001, the GEE English language arts and mathematics tests were administered for grade 10, and in spring 2002, the GEE science and social studies tests for grade 11 were administered. The GEE requires high school students to exhibit sufficient knowledge and skills to be eligible for a high school diploma.

In 2005, the Louisiana Department of Education Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted a waiver process for students with disabilities seeking a standard high school diploma.

Information about alternative Routes in Louisiana

One alternative route is available in Louisiana. It is designated for students with disabilities (see Table 1). Students who participate in this alternative route **must first take the regular GEE**.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Waiver	Students with Disabilities	No Information	No Information

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the waiver in Louisiana. This information indicates that the student must have a disability and must have passed certain portions of the exit exam to qualify for the waiver.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Waiver	The student must have passed all but one of the required portions of the GEE, and meet all other graduation requirements. Also, the student must be a graduating senior (or a student who previously left school).

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The waiver alternative route in Louisiana is described in more detail [here](#).

Waiver

The student must include evidence that the student participated in remediation and how the disability or disabilities impacted the student's inability to pass the assessment. In addition to this, the Waiver is only available to graduating seniors or students who have previously left school who have a disability.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
GEE Waiver	http://www.doe.state.la.us/Lde/eia/2592.html
High School Graduation Requirements	http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/7516.pdf

Maryland

The Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs) are high school end-of-course assessments based on the Maryland Content Standards for English, algebra/data analysis, biology, and government. Over time, the use of constructed response items has decreased; by the 2009 administration of the HSAs, all items were selected response items. The HSAs replace the Maryland Functional Tests.

To earn a Maryland high school diploma, students must pass the HSAs. In addition, they must meet other requirements. These include completing credit and service-learning requirements (i.e., 21 credits in English, math, science, social studies, fine arts, physical education, health education, technology education, and either advanced technology education or foreign language; 75 hours service), attending school for four years (past grade 8), and completing any local graduation requirements. If a student does not pass an HSA, the student must complete intervention or assistance programs before retaking the test. The student has four opportunities to take retake an HSA (October, January, May, summer), with an additional opportunity offered to seniors.

Students who pass the HSAs and meet the other graduation requirements earn the Maryland High School Diploma. Another option for students is the Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion; this is available to students with significant disabilities. To earn the Certificate of Program Completion, students must complete their IEP requirements (which will be accompanied by an exit document that cites the student's skills). Another option exists in Maryland for those students no longer enrolled in high school: they can either take and pass the five GED tests (if they are at least 16 years old and have been out of school for at least 3 months), or they can take and pass national competency-based External High School Program performance assessments (if they are at least 18 years old and have been out of school for at least 3 months).

Information about Alternative Routes in Maryland

Five options exist as alternatives to passing the four HSAs in Maryland. Some are designated for all students, while others are only for students with disabilities (see Table 1). First, there are three testing substitutions that students can pursue in place of the HSA: Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate tests (considered one option), the Modified HSA (which is available only to students with disabilities who meet specific participation criteria), and the Modified-HSA Plus Option. The two other options are: (a) Combined-Score Option, and (b) Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. Students **do not have to take the HSAs** before they can pursue three of the alternative routes (all except the Modified-HSA Plus Option and Bridge Plan for Academic Validation). For the other two (Combined Score Option, Bridge Plan for Academic Validation), they **must have first taken the HSA**.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB)	All students	Student	Department of Education
Combined-Score Option	All students	Student	Department of Education
Bridge Plan for Academic Validation	All students	Student	Local school
Modified-HSA	Students with disabilities	Student	IEP team
Modified-HSA Plus Option	Students with disabilities	Student	Department of Education

Table 2 provides the specific criteria used for students to be able to pursue each alternative route in Maryland.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB)	Student must earn a score that has been approved by the Maryland State Department of Education for the substitute assessment that is taken. The student does not need to fail the HSA first.
Combined-Score Option	Student must earn a combined score of 1602 on the four HSA tests, even if each test individually was not passed (412 on algebra/data analysis; 396 on English; 400 on biology; and 394 on government). The nature of this option suggests that the student has not passed at least one HSA.
Bridge Plan for Academic Validation	Student must complete assigned project in each targeted content area in which an HSA test was not passed (including the Modified-HSAs), after taking the test two times.
Modified-HSA	Student must earn a passing score on the Modified-High School Assessments. This assessment may only be taken by students with disabilities who have IEPs who meet specific participation criteria. The student does not need to fail the HSA first.
Modified-HSA Plus Option	Student must earn a required score on the Modified-High School Assessments. This option is available to students with disabilities who have IEPs who may not meet the criteria for participation in the Modified-HSA, but who have failed the HSA the first time it was taken.

Note: Those alternative routes available only to students with disabilities are in bold.

Each of Maryland's alternative routes is described in more detail here.

Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB)

Any student may take either an advanced placement test or an International Baccalaureate test that is in an HSA test content area. If the student receives a score that has been approved by the Maryland Department of Education as passing, the AP or IB score can substitute as a passing score on the relevant HSA. This option is open to any student.

Combined Score Option

This is an option for students who take the HSA tests, but do not pass one or more of them. The student does not have to retake any test if the total score obtained by adding all the earned scores together is 1602 points. Any student who takes the four HSA tests and earns at least this total score is considered to have met the assessment requirement.

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

The Bridge Plan option was introduced in the 2008-2009 school year, after successful pilot testing in summer 2008. Before participating in this option, students must have failed the HSA or Mod-HSA two times (or did not achieve a total of 1602 points on the HSAs). This option consists of students completing an independent project in the content areas (and covering comparable content) in which they did not pass the HSA or Mod-HSA. The Maryland Department of Education indicated that these independent projects are ones that can be completed under the guidance of a teacher over several days or weeks, and involve about 8-12 hours of independent student time.

Modified-HSA

The Modified-HSA was introduced in spring 2008 as an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (AA-MAS) for the high school level. The Modified-HSA has tests in the same areas as the HSA (English, algebra/data analysis, biology, government). It is an assessment that was developed for students with disabilities. The tests comply with federal guidelines for AA-MAS, which include being based on grade-level content standards, but with achievement standards that reflect less difficulty than those for the regular grade-level achievement standards assessments (HSAs), and for school accountability purposes, allowing only up to 2% of the total population of students (about 20% of students with disabilities) to be counted as proficient on the assessment. **Find more information to describe this option and the guidelines for participation.**

Modified-HSA Plus Option

The Modified-HSA Plus Option was introduced in summer 2008. The tests are the same as for the Modified-HSA, but the students eligible for the option includes those who do not meet the participation guidelines for the Modified-HSA, as long as they are students with disabilities. The student who uses this option must first have taken the regular HSA test and failed it. There is no indication that students who select this option must first participate in intervention or assistance programs (such as online courses for the HSA content are that was not passed), as they must do to retake the HSA.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Diploma Routes	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/nr/rdonlyres/b057da27-3ffb-40f9-98b8-7ead2535f779/17088/parents_guide_08_eng.pdf

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) includes assessments used in grades 3-8 and high school for school accountability purposes. The high school assessment is also used for a Competency Determination (CD) as part of local graduation requirements that must be met to earn a Massachusetts high school diploma. Starting with the 2010 graduating class, students must meet the CD requirement in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and technology/engineering (STE); prior to this (since the CD requirement first started with the graduating class of 2003), students had to meet the CD requirement only in ELA and mathematics. The assessments contain multiple-choice, short-answer, and open-response items, and prompts for the writing portion of ELA.

To earn a Massachusetts Competency Determination, students must pass the grade 10 MCAS tests; each must be passed with a score of 220 or higher. Starting with the graduating class of 2009, students also may earn a Certificate of Mastery or a Certificate of Mastery with Distinction. For a student to earn the Certificate of Mastery, a score of Advanced must be obtained on at least one of the grade 10 MCAS tests, and at least a score of Proficient on the others. To earn a Certificate of Mastery with Distinction, a student must qualify for the Certificate of Mastery, plus also demonstrate accomplishment in both Arts/Humanities and Mathematics/Science and meet or surpass performance standards set for SAT II or Advance Placement exams in the content areas in which an Advanced score was not achieved. Specific criteria for these assessments have been set by the Massachusetts Department of Education, along with lists of additional achievements that must be demonstrated (e.g., regional or state science fair winner).

Information about Alternative Routes in Massachusetts

Three options exist as alternatives to passing the four MCAS tests in Massachusetts (see Table 1). Two of these are called Performance Reviews: (a) MCAS Performance Review–Cohort Review, and (b) MCAS Performance Review–Portfolio Appeal. Both of these alternative routes are available to all students. The third option is the MCAS–Alternate Assessment. It is an alternate assessment based on grade-level achievement standards that is available only to students with disabilities. Students **do not have to first take the MCAS** before they can pursue the MCAS–Alternate Assessment. They do have **first take the MCAS to pursue either of the Performance Reviews**; there are up to five MCAS retesting opportunities for these students.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
MCAS Performance Appeal – Cohort Appeal	All students	District Superintendent, on behalf of student	Performance Appeals Board, with members appointed by the Commissioner of Education
MCAS Performance Appeal – Portfolio Appeal	All students	District Superintendent, on behalf of student	Performance Appeals Board, with members appointed by the Commissioner of Education
MCAS – Alternate Assessment	Students with disabilities	District Superintendent, on behalf of student	Performance Appeals Board, with members appointed by the Commissioner of Education

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in each of the three alternative routes available in Massachusetts. This information demonstrates the differences between the routes and the process involved in students gaining access to them.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
MCAS Performance Appeal – Cohort Appeal	The grades of the student who did not pass the MCAS and the student’s MCAS scores are compared to those of other students (ones who scored between 220 and 228, which is the minimum passing standard) on the MCAS and who were enrolled in the same sequence of courses in the content area for which an appeal was filed. Some adjustments are made for students with disabilities – different score that had to be attained on the MCAS before an appeal can be filed, and allowing for other evidence to be submitted. Students must meet specific criteria before filing an appeal – failed the MCAS test, attendance rate, and participation in academic support.
MCAS Performance Appeal – Portfolio Appeal	For cases where a cohort cannot be used for comparison, a portfolio is prepared of the student’s work in the content area for which the appeal is filed. The portfolio must confirm to specific criteria (e.g., include a table of contents and specific numbers and types of evidence depending on the content area). Similar to the Cohort Appeal, students with disabilities have different MCAS score criteria, and may submit additional evidence for the appeal. Students must meet specific criteria before filing an appeal – failed the MCAS test, attendance rate, and participation in academic support.
MCAS – Alternate Assessment	Student who meets the participation criteria for the MCAS-Alternate participates in the MCAS-Alternate based on grade-level achievement standards. In addition, a student who participated in the MCAS-Alternate may file an appeal if he or she participated in the MCAS-Alt in the content area at least two times.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

Each of the alternative routes in Massachusetts is described in more detail here.

MCAS Performance Appeal – Cohort Appeal

The grades of the student who did not pass the MCAS (but attained a score of at least 216) and the student’s MCAS scores are compared to those of at least 6 other students (ones who scored between 220 and 228, which is the minimum passing standard) on the MCAS and who were enrolled in the same sequence of courses in the content area for which an appeal was filed. For students with disabilities, the score of 216 need not have been attained before an appeal is filed; further, additional documentation identified by the IEP team to indicate the student’s knowledge and skills may be included in the appeal. For the Cohort Appeal, the student must fail the MCAS before filing an appeal (3 times for ELA or math; 1 time for STE). The student also must have an attendance rate of 95% during the school year of the appeal, and must have participated in school sponsored tutoring or other academic support services in the content area for which the appeal is filed.

MCAS Performance Appeal – Portfolio Appeal

For cases where a cohort cannot be used for comparison (e.g., fewer than 6 students taking the same courses), a portfolio is prepared of the student’s work (cumulative and current) in the content area for which the appeal is filed. The portfolio must confirm to specific criteria (e.g., include a table of contents and specific numbers and types of evidence depending on the content area). For the Portfolio Appeal, the student must fail the MCAS before filing an appeal (3 times for ELA or math; 1 time for STE). The student also must have an attendance rate of 95% during the school year of the appeal, and must have participated in school sponsored tutoring or other academic support services in the content area for which the appeal is filed.

MCAS – Alternate Assessment

Students who are eligible to participate in the MCAS–Alternate Assessment are eligible for the Competency Determination if they are in the MCAS–Alternate is judged against grade-level achievement standards. MCAS–Alt students are also eligible to file an appeal, if they have participated in the MCAS–Alt at least two times.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Laws and Regulations	http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr30.html?section=05
MCAS Appeals	http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/filing/guidelines.pdf

Minnesota

The Minnesota Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma (GRAD) are designed to measure reading, writing, and mathematics, with the goal of students being on track to the essential skills and knowledge needed for graduation. Beginning in 2006-2007 (for 9th graders), the tests have been administered across grades, with retesting opportunities in subsequent grades. GRAD Written Composition is administered in grade 9, Reading in grade 10, and Mathematics in grade 11. The graduating class of 2010 is the first class held to the GRAD, which replaced the Basic Standards Tests (BSTs)—the previous tests used as a graduation requirement. Retesting opportunities for each content area are available in years following the grade in which each is administered.

In addition to passing the GRAD, students must earn 21.5 course credits. For the state graduation requirements, these must include 4 credits of language arts, 3 credits of mathematics, 1 credit of arts, 3 credits of science, and 3.5 credits of social studies. The other 7 credits are considered elective, unless local graduation requirements designate specific classes.

Information about Alternative Routes in Massachusetts

One alternative route is available in Minnesota. It is available only to students with disabilities, which includes students with either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 accommodation plan (see Table 1). The alternative route involves the team (either IEP or 504) establishing an appropriate passing standard for the student. As suggested by the nature of this alternative, students **do not have to first take the GRAD** before pursuing the alternative route. However, the student’s team must conduct a formal review to establish the “appropriate” passing standard.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Team Established Passing Standard	Students with disabilities	IEP or 504 Team	IEP or 504 Team

Table 2 presents the specific criteria used to be able to pursue the alternative route in Minnesota.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Team Established Passing Standard	No specific guidelines or criteria were presented for when it is appropriate for the IEP or 504 Plan team to suggest that an alternative to the regular passing standards for the GRAD is needed. When the team does establish a different passing standard, the student receives a designation of "Pass Individual."

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The Team Established Passing Standard alternative route in Minnesota is described in more detail here.

Team Established Passing Standard

No details were found about recommended procedures for which students might need an team established passing standards, nor how the alternative standard might be set.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
GRAD	http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/GRAD/General_Information/index.html
Graduation Requirements	http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=001070&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary
IEP-504 Route	http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/GRAD/General_Information/index.html

Mississippi

The Mississippi Subject Area Testing Program includes four subject area tests: Algebra I, Biology I, U.S. History (from 1877), and English II. These tests replace the Functional Literacy Exam (FLE), which was the previous requirement for graduation. All four subject area tests were first required of entering 9th graders in 2002-2003 (graduating class of 2005-2006). In addition to passing the tests, students must earn Carnegie units in the subject areas. Students may retake a test three times each year until a passing score is earned.

Students with disabilities who do not earn a regular high school diploma may earn an Occupational Diploma. This is done by completing certain coursework requirements and also submitting a portfolio of work. The courses and portfolio evidence must cover the areas of employment English, job skills math, life skills science, and career preparation (social studies). The IEP team meets for an exit meeting to evaluate whether IEP goals and objectives were met and the completion of all requirements for the Mississippi Occupational Diploma. The final portfolio is reviewed and approved by the principal prior to graduation.

Information about Alternative Routes in Mississippi

One alternative route is available in Mississippi (see Table 1). This alternative route is available to all students; no unique alternative route is designated only for students with disabilities. Information on the Subject Area Testing Program Appeals Process indicates that an appeal may be filed by a student, parent, or district personnel when there is reason to believe that the student has mastered the subject area curriculum, but the student was unable to demonstrate mastery of the Subject Area Test. It also indicates that the students must take the test on two separate administrations. Thus, students **do have to fail the Subject Area Test** before they can be considered eligible to pursue the appeals process.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Substitute Evaluation Process	All students	Student, Parent, or District Personnel	State Appeals Substitute Evaluation Committee

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the Substitute Evaluation Process in Mississippi. This information indicates that students who passed a course, and therefore earned the Carnegie unit, but failed the subject area test and students who failed a subject area test during a retest may appeal for a Substitute Evaluation Process.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Substitute Evaluation Process	<p>Students who did not pass the Subject Area Test two times, but who have mastered the subject area curriculum are eligible to submit an appeal to substitute a portfolio of evidence. The appeal is made to the district, which if viewed as having merit, moves to the state level. When the State Appeals Substitute Evaluation Committee determines that submitted evidence indicates that the student has demonstrated mastery, then a passing score is substituted for the failing score.</p> <p>When an appeal is denied, or if the evidence review indicates that the student has not demonstrated mastery, then the student must continue to participate in the testing. In addition, the district is then held responsible for the cost of the Substitute Evaluation review process (in contrast to the case when the student’s evidence is determined to show mastery, where the state bears the cost of the substitute evaluation).</p>

The single alternative route in Mississippi is described in more detail here.

Substitute Evaluation Process

Students who are thought to have mastered the subject area curriculum, but who have not been able to pass the Subject Area Test on two separate administrations may submit an appeal first to the district. This appeal is submitted by either the student or the student’s parents. The district then submits the appeal to the state, where a “determination of merit” is made to deny or grant the request. If the request is granted, then evidence is submitted that shows the student has demonstrated mastery of the subject area curriculum. The evidence is reviewed by the State Appeals Substitute Evaluation Committee. If this committee determines that the student has demonstrated mastery, then a passing score is substituted for the failing score.

When an appeal is denied, or if the evidence review indicates that the student has not demonstrated mastery, then the student must continue to participate in the testing. In addition, the district is then held responsible for the cost of the substitute evaluation review process (in contrast to the case when the student’s evidence is determined to show mastery, where the state bears the cost of the substitute evaluation).

The evidence that is submitted must include a written statement with supporting evidence that the student mastered the subject area curriculum and the reasons that the student will be successful with a substitute evaluation. The specific evidenced that is submitted must include: (a) nine-week grades from report card, (b) letter from the student’s teachers that describes the student’s work habits, class participation, homework assignments, class projects, and attendance record, and (c) portfolio of work completed by the student and tests that demonstrate the student’s own work and knowledge of the subject area curriculum.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Occupational Diploma	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/Special_education/pdfs/occupat_diploma.pdf
Appeals	http://www.mde.k12.us/acad/OSA/appeal.pdf

New Jersey

Passing the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) is a requirement for students to earn a high school diploma. The HSPA is required of all students who entered grade 11 during the 2001-2002 school year (thus, the first graduating class of 2002-2003). The HSPA replaced the grade 11 High School Proficiency Test (HSPT11), which was used as a graduation requirement from 1993 to 2001. The HSPA covered reading, writing (together considered Language Arts Literacy), and mathematics content standards from 2001 through 2006. In 2007, a science test was added to the HSPA. Starting in March 2006, the HSPA was administered to all students so that it could be used for ESEA accountability purposes at the high school level. The HSPA is administered in grade 11 (March). It includes both multiple choice and open ended items.

Students must earn a score of 200 (partially proficient) in each content area on the HSPA to be eligible for a standard high school diploma. Students who do not pass HSPA have two opportunities to retest in the specific content area in their senior year (October and March). State materials are clear that students who have completed all local graduation requirements (e.g., course completion) but who do not pass the HSPA will not receive a high school diploma, unless they satisfactorily pursue two other options that are available to them while in school. In addition, New Jersey has two options for those students who have left school, which are (a) pass the tests of General Educational Development (GED), or (b) return to school the following year at the time of testing and successfully take the HSPA.

Information about Alternative Routes in New Jersey

Two alternative routes are available to students in New Jersey (see Table 1). One of these is for all students (Special Review Assessment) and one is only available to students with disabilities who are on Individualized Education Programs (IEP Exempt). Students who participate in the **Special Review Assessment do have to fail HSPA** before they can pursue that alternative route (and, in fact, must continue to take the HSPA in the content area that was failed). Students who are considered **IEP Exempt do not have to fail HSPA** before they can pursue that alternative route (however, because the HSPA is the high school assessment for NCLB, they are required to participate in the assessment at least once, unless they are participants in the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards—the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA).

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Special Review Assessment	All students	District SRA Coordinator	District superintendent and high school principal verify that performance met or exceeded graduation requirement proficiency level; county superintendent reviews for compliance.
IEP Exempt	Students with disabilities	IEP Team	IEP Team

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the special review assessment and the IEP exempt alternative routes in New Jersey.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Special Review Assessment	When a student does not pass one or more of the sections of the HSPA during grade 11, the school arranges for the students to take special SRA instruction, which is targeted to the area failed. The student is required to attend the special instruction to proceed in the SRA process. The student then must pass two Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs) for each cluster in the failed content area.
IEP Exempt	The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines that that the student has not been instructed in all the knowledge and skills tested in the content area by HSPA, due to the nature or severity of the student's disability. The team then exempts the student from the HSPA, either one or all areas tested. However, the student must take each HSPA test at least once for ESEA accountability purposes. The exempted student receives the standard high school diploma.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

Each of the alternative routes in New Jersey is described in more detail here.

Special Review Assessment

For students who do not pass one or more of the HSPA content area tests in the spring of the student's 11th grade year, the school starts the process for the Special Review Assessment. Specifically, the school provides targeted instruction (for the content area that was failed), and the student is required to participate in this targeted instruction. The instruction is provided at specific times (which can be during a weekday, at night, or on a Saturday). The state requires that the school personnel involved in the instruction (designed and created) be content teachers. The student must take the fall administration of the HSPA content area for which instruction

was received. If, at this point, the student still has not passed the test, then the students must begin the SRA process. This involves passing two Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs) for each cluster in the content area.

The SRA tasks correspond to the HSPA, and are in the form of printed tasks that are distributed to the district test coordinators by the New Jersey Department of Education. The PATs are scored by two or three readers using a rubric.

IEP Exempt

For students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), the IEP team can decide that the student should be exempt from passing one or more of the content areas in the HSPA as a graduation requirement. In this case, the IEP team determines that the student has not been instructed in all the knowledge and skills that the HSPA covers, with the assumption that the lack of instruction is due to the nature or severity of the student's disability. Despite exemption from the HSPA requirement to earn a standard high school diploma, the student must take the HSPA for ESEA accountability purposes.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
High School Proficiency Assessment Parent Guide	http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/hs/hspa_guide_english.pdf
Special Review Assessment	http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/hs/sra2
Alternative Approaches	http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/hs/sra/expectations.pdf

New Mexico

The New Mexico High School Competency Exam (NMHSCE) is administered in grade 10, and is required for students to earn a standard diploma. In addition to passing the exam, students who were in grade 9 in 2009-2010 must also earn 4 units in English, 4 units in math (with 1 unit equal to, or higher than, Algebra 2), 3 units in science, 3 ½ units in social science, 1 unit in physical education, 1 unit in career cluster course or workplace readiness or language other than English, and 7 ½ elective courses. The NMHSCE covers language arts, reading, math, science, writing, and social studies.

In addition to the high school diploma, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may earn a certificate. This indicates that the student is on track to graduate, but still has transition or academic needs that need to be addressed by the school and by adult service providers. The certificate enables the student to participate in graduation activities, yet continue in school. A follow-up action plan must be developed for students who receive a certificate. The state is clear that any student with an IEP who earns a standard diploma is no longer eligible to receive special education services.

Information about Alternative Routes in New Mexico

Two alternative routes are available in New Mexico. These are only available to students with disabilities (see Table 1). New Mexico also has what it calls a Standard Pathway, which does not alter the requirement to pass the high school competency exam. The Standard Pathway was not considered to be an alternative route because the student must pass all sections of the graduation exam as well as meet other standard graduation requirements. The Career Readiness Pathway and the Ability Pathway are alternative routes. For the Career Readiness Pathway, students must first take the regular NMHSCE. For the Ability Pathway, students must first take either the NMHSCE or the alternate assessment.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Career Readiness Pathway	Students with disabilities	IEP Team	Building Administrator (responsible for integrity of process)
Ability Pathway	Students with disabilities	IEP Team	Building Administrator (responsible for integrity of process)

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the two alternative pathways in New Mexico. This information indicates that the student is required to have an IEP to participate in these alternative routes.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Career Readiness Pathway	Students must take the NMHSCE, achieving a level of proficiency determined by the IEP team. In addition, students meet the Career Readiness Standards, as defined by the IEP team.
Ability Pathway	Students take either the NMHSCE or the NM Alternate Assessment, earning a proficiency level determined by the IEP team. In addition, students complete a program of study designed to lead to meaningful employment. The IEP team individualizes the ability pathway for each student's needs.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The New Mexico Public Education Department indicates that it is expected no more than 10-15 percent of graduating students will graduate through the Career Pathway, and that no more than 1-3 percent of graduating students will graduate through the Ability Pathway. In fact, if a school exceeds the maximum recommended percentage, it must submit a waiver for all affected students to the Department's Special Education Bureau. For both alternative pathways, the IEP team is instructed to consider the standard pathway first. IEP teams cannot change a senior's designated pathway after the 20th school calendar day.

Each of the alternative routes in New Mexico is described in more detail here.

Career Pathway

The Career Readiness Pathway allows the IEP team to determine the level of proficiency for passing the NMHSCE, which the student must take. In addition the student follows the NM Career Readiness Standards, with benchmarks as defined by the IEP team. The student must meet the minimum number of credits required by the district for graduation, earning them through standard or alternative courses. The IEP documents the mastery of the standards and benchmarks.

Ability Pathway

The Ability Pathway is designed for a specific group of students—those with severe cognitive or physical disabilities, or students with severe mental health challenges. These students follow a program of study that the IEP has indicated will lead to “meaningful employment,” and that consists mainly of goals and objectives related to functional life and community skills. For each student, the IEP team designates the goals, objectives, and benchmarks that will provide

the most appropriate program for the student. Students on the Ability Pathway must take either the NMHSCE or the NM Alternate Assessment.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
New Mexico High School Competency Exam	http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/NMHSCE/index.html
Alternative Pathways	http://state.nm.us/seo/transition/tam.pathways.to.diploma.pdf

New York

New York administers Regents Exams in five areas—English, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign languages—as a requirement for earning a Regents Diploma. Students must pass each of these tests to earn the Regents Diploma. The scores that the student must earn have increased across years, with the class of 2012 (those entering 9th grade in 2008), having to pass all five Regents Exams with a score of 65 or above. To earn a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation, students must pass eight exams with a score of at least 65, with the additional tests in the areas of mathematics, science, and language other than English.

For students with disabilities, New York also offers the Regents Competency Tests. These tests focus on reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. The Regents Competency Tests are considered a safety net for students with disabilities; they are scheduled to continue to be available for students with disabilities who enter grade 9 prior to September 2010. Students who take the Regents Competency Tests earn a local diploma.

In addition to the high school diploma (either Regents or local), students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may earn an IEP diploma. This diploma is intended for students with the most significant disabilities. Earning it is based on achievement of IEP goals. The Department notes that if an IEP diploma is awarded before a student is 21 years of age, the diploma should be accompanied by a written statement of assurance that the student can continue to be eligible to attend public schools.

Information about Alternative Routes in New York

Three alternative routes are available in the state of New York (see Table 1). One route, which is available to all students, is called the Appeals Process. The other two routes, the Regents Competency Test Safety Net and the Low Pass Option, are available only to student with disabilities. Both the **Appeals Process and the Low Pass Option require that the student first take the Regents Exams.** Students **do not have to first take** the Regents Exams before they take the Regents Competency Test.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Appeals Process	All students	Student, parent, or teacher	Appeal Committee
Regents Competency Test Safety Net	Students with disabilities	IEP Team or Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team	Building Administrator
Low Pass Option	Students with disabilities	Information not found	Information not found

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the Appeals Process, the Regents Competency Test Safety Net, and the Low Pass Option.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Appeals Process	Student must earn a score within 3 points of the 65 required to pass an exam before submitting an appeal, as well as meet other criteria (including attempting the exam 2 times). The principal forms a committee that reviews the appeal.
Regents Competency Test Safety Net	Student may be either on an active IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan, or be a student who was declassified while in grades 8-12. Instead of taking the Regents Exams, the student takes the Regents Competency Exam. Specific requirements for documentation vary by whether the student is on an IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan, or has been declassified.
Low Pass Option	Student satisfies the conditions of this alternative route by earning scores between 55 and 64 on the Regents Exams.

Note: The alternative routes available only to students with disabilities are in bold.

Each of the alternative routes in New York is described in more detail here.

Appeals Process

The Appeals process is a request to graduate with a lower score on a Regents Examination. The appeal must be submitted for each examination by the student or the student’s parent/guardian or teacher. It is submitted to the school principal. A student can submit only up to two appeals requests. The student must have taken the Regents exam two times before an appeal can be submitted, and must have scored within 3 points of the 65 required for passing. In addition, the student must have participated in the academic help provided by the school for the subject, have an attendance rate of 95 percent, and have a course average in the subject that meets or exceeds the required passing grade by the school. The Appeal Committee reviews the appeal to determine whether the student has demonstrated the knowledge and skills in the state learning standards. The Committee includes the school principal (as chair), three teachers (not to include the teacher of the student making the appeal), and one additional administrator. The Appeal Committee may decide to also interview the student, the student’s teacher, or the Department

chairperson who recommended the appeal. All appeals are to be reviewed within 5 days of submission. The school superintendent may interview the student, and is the one who signs off on the appeal. Students who successfully complete the Appeals Process receive a local diploma.

Regents Competency Test Safety Net

Students with disabilities have the option of taking the Regents Competency Test instead of the Regents Exams. This test covers reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing content, and is not linked necessarily to Regents coursework. This option is available only up to the grade 9 class entering prior to September 2010. Students do not have to first take and fail Regents Exams. Students who qualify to participate in this alternative route are (a) students with disabilities identified through a Committee on Special Education (CSE), (b) students with disabilities identified through a Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team, and (c) students with disabilities who have been declassified in grades 8-12. Documentation is required for the latter two groups; for those on 504 plans, the determination that the student will participate in the Regents Competency Test must be documented on the student’s Accommodation Plan created by the Multidisciplinary Team. For those who have been declassified, there must be documentation by the CSE on the student’s IEP. For students currently in special education with active IEPs, the safety net does not have to be indicated on the student’s IEP. Students who take and pass the Regents Competency Test earn a local diploma.

Low Pass Option

This alternative route is for students with disabilities who take the Regents Exams but do not earn the required score of 65. By scoring between 55 and 64 on the Regents Exams, the student with a disability earns a local diploma.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Regents Exams	http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2005Meetings/June2005/0605bra5.htm
Low Pass Option	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/beds/2008/instructions/instructions-fall-2008-District-Summary-Final.pdf http://www.emse.nysed.gov/sar/appeal05-06.pdf
Diploma Requirements	http://emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/homeless/DiplomaRequirements.html
Regents Competency Test Safety Net	http://vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/55-64pass.htm

North Carolina

North Carolina has two assessments that are part of its high school graduation requirements: end-of-course exams and a test of computer skills. The end-of-course exams are administered in grades 9-12 and the general test administration consists of a multiple choice exam format with or without accommodations. The computer skills test is first administered in grade 8 and is required for graduation. This test was first administered to students who entered grade 8 in 1998, which was the graduating class of 2001. The computer skills test is in its third edition; it was first administered to students entering grade 8 in the 2005-2006 school year. End-of-course examinations first came into effect for the graduating class of 1982 in North Carolina. Currently, North Carolina requires end-of-course exams in the following content areas: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, English I, Civics and Economics, and U.S. History. North Carolina only has one diploma option, although students can opt to choose from three tracks—career preparation, college tech preparation, and college/university preparation. North Carolina also offers a certificate of achievement for students who satisfy all state and local graduation requirements, but fail to pass all competency tests. These students are also given a transcript and permitted to participate in graduation activities.

Information about Alternate Routes in North Carolina

One alternative route is available in North Carolina. It is designated for students with disabilities (see Table 1). Students need not first take the end of course and computer skills test to pursue the alternative route.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards	Students with disabilities	IEP team	IEP team

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards. This information indicates that the student must have a documented IEP to participate in this alternative route.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards	A student is to participate in this alternate assessment if his or her individualized education plan (IEP) team decides that it is appropriate. Only a very limited number of students will take the NCCLAS.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The alternative route in North Carolina is described in more detail here.

North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards

The North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards (NCCLAS) is based on grade-level content and grade-level achievement standards. Students are eligible to participate in this assessment option if they cannot participate in the standard administration of the regular test with or without accommodations. Examples provided were the newly blinded, students with recent traumatic brain injuries, and students with physical disabilities that prohibit the student from being able to manipulate materials required for test.

There are a number of corresponding tests for the NCCLAS, such as end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, English I, Civics & Economics, and U.S. History. Field tests for tests in Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, and Physics were also conducted during the 2006-2007 school year. The process involves an assessor maintaining a student work folder over the course of the year and for a final student profile, an objective level scoring, a final goal level scoring and an online submission of scores to be completed at the end of the year. The final goal level scoring and the online submission of scores are done by two assessors, whereas the final student profile and the objective level scoring are completed by a single assessor.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Assessment of Students with Disabilities	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/tswd/
North Carolina Testing Program Assessment Options	<i>Elementary and Middle School:</i> http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/policyoperations/nctpassessmentoptions.pdf <i>High School:</i> http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/policyoperations/nctphsassessmentoptions.pdf
North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/policyoperations/assessingswdacctconf07.ppt
North Carolina Graduation Requirements	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/graduation/

Ohio

To obtain a High School Diploma in Ohio, students need to meet both the curriculum and graduation test requirements. The Ohio Graduation Test is first administered to students in the spring of 10th grade and is subsequently offered 6 times until graduation. Students who fail to pass the test on their first try have the opportunity to test again in the summer between 10th and 11th grade and between 11th and 12th grade, as well as in the fall and spring of 11th and 12th grade. Regardless of a student's academic standing, the OGT is required by state law to be passed in order to receive a diploma in Ohio.

The graduating class of 2007 is the first to be required to pass the OGT in order to graduate from high school; this graduation requirement is to be in place until 2013. The OGT tests are given in 5 major content areas. In 1997, Ohio increased the number of credits required to obtain a high school diploma. Further, the requirements for a high school diploma with honors were also increased in 1998. These two diplomas are mutually exclusive and a high school student may only meet the requirements to obtain one of the two.

Information about Alternative Routes in Ohio

Two alternative routes are available in Ohio (see Table 1). One is designated for all students and the other is only for students with disabilities. The **Alternative Pathway to Graduation**, which is for all students, **requires that the student first take the Ohio Graduation Test**. The **Exemption route does not require the student to first take the OGT**.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Alternative Pathway to Graduation	All Students	Students and school counselors	Principal and Superintendent
Exemption	Students with an IEP	IEP Team	IEP Team

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the alternative pathway to graduation and the exemption in Ohio. This information indicates that for the exemption, the students must have an IEP. However, this is not a requirement for participation in the alternative pathway to graduation.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Alternative Pathway to Graduation	The student may use this alternative route when he or she only failed one of the graduation tests by 10 points or less, as well as meeting a number of criteria described below.
Exemption	A student with an IEP may be exempted from taking and passing the OGT and still graduate with a standard high school diploma.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The alternative routes in Ohio are described in more detail here.

Alternative Pathway to Graduation

The student must meet a number (7) of criteria in order to qualify for this alternative route. The most important component being that the student must have only failed one of the graduation tests by 10 points or less. The other criteria include a 97 percent attendance rate for every year over the past 4 years, no expulsions in the last four years, a grade point average of 2.5 (out of 4) in the subject area that the OGT was failed, completion of the curriculum in the OGT content area that was failed, the participation in intervention programs targeting the OGT content area failed, and a letter of recommendation from the teacher in the content area failed *and* the student’s high school principal.

Exemption

Division (L) of ORC §3313.61 allows a student with an IEP to be awarded a diploma without obtaining the required scores on the OGT, if his or her IEP team has exempted him or her from obtaining the required scores.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
OGT	http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?Page=2&TopicID=9&TopicRelationID=216
Ohio Graduation Requirements	http://www.education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1702&ContentID=15291&Content=61683
Alternative Pathway to Graduation	http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=216&ContentID=23705&Content=65513
Exemption	http://education.ohio.gov/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=53403

Texas

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) came into effect in 2003, replacing the previous test called the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Students in Texas are required to pass all their courses according to three high school programs (minimum, recommended, and distinguished achievement), as well as pass an exit-level TAKS in math, science, social studies, and English language arts, in order to receive their High School Diploma. These tests are based on the curriculum standards known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Students have five opportunities to take and pass the TAKS while in high school.

Interestingly, the TAKS will eventually be replaced by end-of-course assessments in Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and United States history. These assessments will have implications for graduation for students in their freshman year of high school in 2011. The purpose of the end-of-course assessments at lower levels is to ensure readiness for advanced coursework, whereas the purpose of higher-level tests is to ensure college readiness.

Information about Alternative Routes in Texas

Two alternative routes are available in Texas. Both are designated for students with disabilities (see Table 1). Neither of these routes requires that the student first take the regular TAKS.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	Students entering the Texas educational system after January 1 st of their senior year of high school	Student	School district
Admission, Review, Dismissal (ARD) Committee Exempt	Students with an IEP	IEP Team	ARD Committee

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS and the ARD Exempt options.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Description
Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	Special case alternative route available to students who entered the Texas educational system after January 1 st of their senior year of high school and may replace their Exit-Level TAKS requirement with a number of other assessments.
ARD Exempt	The Texas Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines that a student with a disability is exempted from taking the TAKS for reasons other than having failed the TAKS.

Note: The alternative route available only to students with disabilities is in bold.

The alternative routes in Texas are described in more detail here.

Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS

This alternative is only available to students entering public schools in Texas for the first time after January 1st of their senior year or after an absence of at least four years from any public school in the state. This option does lead to a standard diploma, but is clearly only applicable to a very limited number of students. To meet this requirement, the student must earn a state designated scores on the SAT verbal/critical reading test or ACT English test (for English language arts) or SAT mathematics test or ACT mathematics test (for mathematics), along with earn passing score on exit level science and social studies. The student is responsible for providing official scores to the school district. This rule became effective in 2006.

ARD Exempt

The student may be identified to participate in the modified or alternate TAKS assessments (TAKS-M & TAKS-Alt) and may or may not be required to pass the regular, modified, or alternate TAKS in order to meet graduation requirements, as determined by the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee. Failing the TAKS is not a justification for changing a student’s IEP so that the student is Exempt from the Exit Level TAKS.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Texas Graduation Requirements	ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/grad/2008-09_Grad-Bro.pdf
TAKS Information	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=948&menu_id3=793
Alternative Assessments for Exit-Level TAKS	http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/faq/alt_exit_assess.pdf
Upcoming End-of-Course Assessments Information	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3302&menu_id3=793
ARD Exempt	http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/.../special_education/testing_req/testing_guidelines_flowchart_a.pdf

Virginia

The state of Virginia has implemented its requirement to complete the Standards of Learning (SOL) end-of-course (EOC) exams in the form of verified credits. Thus, students must pass EOC exams in core content areas and receive a verified credit for every exam that meets or exceeds the passing criteria as outlined in their course requirements to receive a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma.

To receive an advanced studies diploma, beginning with the graduating class of 2004, students must successfully pass two EOCs in English, Mathematics, Laboratory Science, History and Social Science, and one Student Selected EOC. Therefore, students seeking an advanced studies diploma are required to complete 9 verified credits.

The verified credits came into effect a year later for the standard diploma, with the graduating class of 2006 required to pass two EOCs in English and four Student Selected EOCs. To receive a standard diploma, the graduating classes of 2007 and beyond are required to pass two EOCs in English, and one EOC in Mathematics, Laboratory Science, History and Social Science, as well as one Student Selected EOC. Therefore, students seeking a standard diploma graduating in 2006 and beyond are required to complete six verified credits.

In Virginia, there are three diploma options other than the one resulting in a standard high school diploma. The *Modified Standard Diploma* is intended for students with disabilities who are unlikely to meet the credit requirements for the standard diploma. These students are required to pass the eighth-grade level assessments in literacy and mathematics, although these requirements may be met by substituting high school level end-of-course assessments. Students enrolled in the *Modified Standard Diploma* must be permitted to pursue a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma at any point in their high school career and may not be excluded from courses and tests required to earn either standard diploma. There is also a *Special Diploma* that is awarded to student with disabilities who complete the requirements of their IEP, but do not meet the necessary requirements to obtain other diplomas. The other diploma option available to students in Virginia is the *Certificate of Program Completion*, the requirements for which are defined by the local school board. Generally, students receive this Certificate when they complete their individually specified program, while not qualifying for other diplomas.

Information about Alternative Routes in Virginia

One alternative route to a standard diploma is available in Virginia. It is designated for all students (see Table 1). Students are not required to first take the EOCs before pursuing the alternative route.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Substitute Tests for SOL EOCs	All students	Principal or Superintendent	State Board of Education

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the substitute tests for SOL EOCs in Virginia.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Substitute Tests for SOL EOCs	The student may use scores from a state board approved substitute assessment to meet his or her SOL EOC requirement.

The alternative routes in Virginia are described in more detail here.

Substitute Tests for SOL EOCs

For this alternative route, students must earn state designated proficient or advanced score on a range of substitute assessments (e.g., AP, Cambridge International Examinations, WorkKeys, etc.) approved by the State Board of Education in each of the required content areas. The list of substitute tests is extensive and includes at least three test options in every content area covered by the SOL EOCs.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Virginia Diploma Graduation Requirements	http://www.doe.virginia.gov/2plus4in2004/dip-standard.shtml
End-of-course Exam Information	http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Assessment/home.shtml#Standards_of_Learning_Tests
Substitute Tests for SOL EOCs	www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Assessment/SubTestChart.pdf

Washington

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading, writing, and math is currently required as a graduation requirement for the class of 2009 to 2012 to receive a High School Diploma. The graduating class of 2013 will have the additional requirement of having to pass the WASL in science.

Washington has two certificates that are noted on a student’s transcript—they both lead to the same diploma: Certification of Academic Achievement (CAA) and Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). While the state currently encourages students to earn these certificates, the graduating class of 2013 will be the first to be required to earn the certificates to graduate. The CIA is available only to students with disabilities.

Information about Alternative Routes in Washington

Nine alternative routes are available in Washington (see Table 1). Five alternative routes are available to all students, and four are available only to students with disabilities. Just three of the alternative routes require that the student first take the WASL—Collection of Evidence, AP and College Admission Test Scores, and Basic Performance on WASL.

Table 1. Target Group, Requesting Parties, and Approval Body for Alternative Routes

Name	Target Group	Who Requests	Who Decides
Collection of Evidence	All students	Student	Local school district
WASL/Grades Comparison	All students	School district staff member (e.g. Principal)	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
AP and College Admission Test Scores	All students	Student	School Official and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Transfer Student Waiver	All students	Student or Parent	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	All students	Student or Parent	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Basic Performance on WASL	Students with disabilities	IEP Team	IEP Team
Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	Students with disabilities	IEP Team	IEP Team
Pass WAAS-Portfolio	Students with disabilities	Student or IEP Team	IEP Team
Locally Determined Assessments	Students with disabilities	Students and school counselors	Local school district

Table 2 provides information on the specific criteria for participation in the numerous alternative routes available in Washington.

Table 2. Specific Criteria of Alternative Routes to Standard Diploma

Name	Specific Criteria
Collection of Evidence	CAA Option in which a set of classroom work samples are reviewed by a panel of educators.
WASL/Grades Comparison	CAA Option in which a student's grades in English and/or Mathematics are comparable to those of students who took the same courses and also passed the WASL.
AP and College Admission Test Scores	CAA Option in which a student demonstrates key skills represented in the WASL through Advanced Placement, SAT or ACT tests.
Transfer Student Waiver	Earned a passing score on another state's high school exit exam or its ESEA high school exam.
Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	The appeals review board determines that the student is more likely than not to possess the skills and knowledge required to meet the state standard.
Basic Performance on WASL	CIA option in which the student earns a level 2 (basic) on the WASL in one or more qualifying subject areas.
Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	CIA option in which the student earns a level 3 (proficient) on lower grade level assessment, DAW.
Pass WAAS-Portfolio	CIA option in which the student earns a passing score on the alternate assessment portfolio, WAAS.
Locally Determined Assessments	The student earns a state approved cut score on a specified standardized measure of academic achievement.

The alternative routes available to students in Washington are described in more detail here.

Collection of Evidence

This is a CAA Option in which a student compiles a set of classroom work samples (with the help of a teacher) that is then reviewed by a panel of educators determining that student's subject-specific classroom work samples show that the student has the skills that are tested on WASL. This option can be used in core content areas such as math, reading, and writing. There are specific guidelines for the collection of evidence outlined by the state. Students must take the WASL at least once to qualify for this option.

WASL/Grades Comparison

This is a CAA Option in which a student's grades in English or Mathematics is comparable to those of students who took the same courses and also passed the WASL. Therefore, this option may be used to meet the math, reading, or writing standard. This option is only available to students in grade 12 and who have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.2 across all their courses.

AP and College Admission Test Scores

This is a CAA Option in which a student demonstrates the key skills represented in the WASL by scoring 3 or higher on specified AP tests or earning state designated score on SAT or ACT. The scores on the SAT that must be met or exceeded are 470, 350, and 380, for mathematics, reading, and writing, respectively. The scores on the ACT that must be met or exceeded are 19, 13, and 15, for mathematics, reading, and writing, respectively. There are a number of AP tests that count toward this option, such as Calculus or Statistics for mathematics; English Literature and Composition, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Psychology, United States History, World History, United States Government and Politics, or Comparative Government and Politics, for reading; and English Language and Composition for writing.

The student pursuing this route must take the WASL at least once, regardless of whether he or she already took and met the standard on one of these other tests. Further, students may be reimbursed for these tests if they are to be used to demonstrate proficiency in one or more the content areas of the WASL.

Transfer Student Waiver

This option is available to students who have transferred from another state during their 11th or 12th grade year. These students are able to receive credit for having passed an exit exam in his or her previous state, thus exempting the student from having to take the WASL to graduate. The exit exam in the previous state must have been used for ESEA purposes for it to qualify under this option.

Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals

The parent of a student or the student in 12th grade can request an appeal to his or her performance on the WASL due to a special, unavoidable circumstance. The other reason to request this appeal is if a 12th grade student has transferred to a public school from a private or home school setting and wants direct access to a state approved alternate assessment. The appeals review board determines that the student's evidence indicates the student more likely than not possesses the skills and knowledge required to meet the state standard. This option is also used

for students with disabilities considered to be at the *Awareness* level of cognitive development in 11th or 12th grade.

Basic Performance on WASL

This is a CIA option for a student with an IEP who earns a level 2 (basic) on the WASL in one or more qualifying subject areas. This option can be used by students in grade 10-12 and can be taken with or without accommodations. Further, this option is specified as being best suited for students at the *Concrete Conceptual on Grade Level* on the continuum of cognitive development.

Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)

This is a CIA option for a student with an IEP who earns a level 3 (proficient) on the lower grade level assessment, DAW. This option can be used by students in grades 11 and 12, and can be taken with or without accommodations. Further, this option is specified as being best suited for students at the *Concrete Conceptual on or below Grade Level* on the continuum of cognitive development.

Pass WAAS-Portfolio

This is a CIA option for a student with an IEP who earns a passing score on the alternate assessment portfolio, WAAS. This option can be used by students in grades 10-12. Further, this option is specified as being best suited for students ranging from the *Abstract Symbolic* to the *Pre-* or *Early-symbolic* levels on the continuum of cognitive development.

Locally Determined Assessments

The student can meet the exit exam requirement by earning a state approved cut score on the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test–III, the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 2nd ed., or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (2nd ed.). This option can be used by students in grade 12 and is specified as being best suited for students at the *Concrete Conceptual on or below Grade Level* on the continuum of cognitive development.

World Wide Web Resources

Content	Web Address
Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)	http://www.k12.wa.us/graduationrequirements/WASLInformation.aspx
Certification of Academic Achievement (CAA) and Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA)	http://www.k12.wa.us/graduationrequirements/CAA-CIA.aspx http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/CAAoptions/default.aspx http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/altassess.aspx
Collection of Evidence	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/CAAoptions/CollectionofEvidence.aspx
WASL/Grades Comparison	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/CAAoptions/Comparison.aspx
AP and College Admission Test Scores	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/CAAoptions/Equivalency.aspx
Transfer Student Waiver	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WaiverAppeals/TransferWaiver.aspx
Special, Unavoidable Circumstance Appeals	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WaiverAppeals/SpecialCircumstances.aspx
High School Assessment Score Appeal	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WaiverAppeals/AppealingHSAssessment.aspx
Basic Performance on WASL	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/pubdocs/HSContinuumofDevandAssessOptions.pdf
Pass WAAS-Developmentally Appropriate WASL (DAW)	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/pubdocs/HSContinuumofDevandAssessOptions.pdf
Pass WAAS-Portfolio	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/pubdocs/PortfolioBrochure.pdf http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/pubdocs/ChecklistforPortfolioCompletion.pdf
Locally Determined Assessments	http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/AlternativeAssessment/pubdocs/AssessmentOptionsSpring2008.doc