

Disclaimer

This guidance does not constitute legal advice, nor should it be considered definitive or legally binding. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) strongly recommends that school districts review the law carefully and consult with their own legal counsel to understand their obligations. ODE may amend or clarify this information, as needed.

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A: General Information

A-1: What is the purpose of a certificate of attendance?

A certificate of attendance acknowledges a student's regular full-time attendance for at least four years, beginning in grade nine and may be awarded to students who do not meet the requirements for an Oregon Diploma, a modified Oregon Diploma, or an Oregon Extended Diploma.

A-2: Is the certificate of attendance the same as a diploma?

No. The certificate of attendance is not equivalent to a high school diploma. Students who receive a certificate of attendance are not considered high school graduates for any purpose, which includes state or school district reporting, applications for employment, military service, financial aid, admission to institutions of higher education, or any other purpose.

It is essential to recognize that a certificate of attendance may impact a student's post-secondary opportunities. Many colleges, universities, and employers require a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), for admission or employment. A certificate of attendance may also affect a student's eligibility for financial aid or scholarships, as many programs require a high school diploma or its equivalent as a prerequisite.

A-3: When updating IEPs for students currently working towards an alternative certificate, should the IEP team select the certificate of attendance option? *(Corrected 10/2/2024)*

~~After July 1, 2024, no student experiencing disability can have an IEP with alternative certificate selected as a graduation option. School districts will need to review the circumstances of students within their jurisdiction to ensure that, as applicable, IEPs have an appropriate graduation option selected. The certificate of attendance is not a graduation option.~~

~~An alternative certificate was authorized by ORS 329.451(1)(b) prior to July 1, 2024 (the effective date of SB 992) as a graduation option. While receiving an alternative certificate enabled an individual to be considered a graduate (ORS 339.505(1)(a)(C)(v), *repealed*), current~~

Correction: *Prior to July 1, 2024 (the effective date of SB 992), districts were authorized to provide an alternative certificate as a graduation option. Students who began 9th grade before July 1, 2020, and have an IEP specifying an alternative certificate for graduation may continue to pursue an alternative certificate for school completion, as it remains valid under the provisions that were in place at the time the student began 9th grade.*

The alternative certificate is no longer available for any student who began 9th grade on or after July 1, 2020. School districts will need to review the circumstances of students within their jurisdiction to ensure that, as applicable, IEPs have an appropriate graduation option selected.

Current statute states that "a student awarded a certificate of attendance will not be counted as a high school graduate . . . and may not indicate that [they] received a high school diploma on applications for employment, military service, financial aid, admittance to an institution of higher education or any other purpose" (ORS 329.451(13)(c)(A)(ii)). Therefore, a certificate of attendance is not a graduation option and cannot be considered as such in the IEP.

To ensure that a student experiencing disability is not denied the opportunity to earn a diploma, the IEP team should review the requirements for an Oregon Diploma, a modified Oregon Diploma, and an Oregon Extended Diploma and consider the necessary services, supports, and accommodations for that student to achieve a diploma.

A-4: When does the certificate of attendance go into effect? When is the alternative certificate repealed? (*Corrected 10/2/2024*)

SB 992 was effective on July 1, 2024. Eligible students may be awarded a certificate of attendance. No student may be awarded an alternative certificate.

Correction: SB 992 became effective on July 1, 2024. ***Only those students who began 9th grade before July 1, 2020 may continue to pursue an alternative certificate for school completion, as it remains valid under the provisions that were in place at the time the student began 9th grade.***

SB 992 allows districts to award a certificate of attendance to students who have maintained regular, full-time attendance for at least four years, starting in grade nine, but do not meet the requirements for an Oregon Diploma, Modified Oregon Diploma, or Extended Diploma.

However, current statute states that “a student awarded a certificate of attendance will not be counted as a high school graduate . . . and may not indicate that [they] received a high school diploma on applications for employment, military service, financial aid, admittance to an institution of higher education or any other purpose” (ORS 329.451(13)(c)(A)(ii)). Therefore, a certificate of attendance is not a graduation option and cannot be considered as such in the IEP.

B: Eligibility

B-1: When is a student eligible for a certificate of attendance?

A school district or public charter school shall award a certificate of attendance to a student who does not satisfy the requirements for a high school diploma, a modified diploma, or an extended diploma if the student:

- Has maintained regular full-time attendance for at least four years beginning in grade nine, and
- Meets requirements established by the board of the school district or public charter school.

With appropriate written consent, a student may receive a certificate of attendance in less than four years, but not less than three years.

B-2: What if a student is not able to meet the criteria for any Oregon diploma or the certificate of attendance requirement of ‘full-time attendance for at least four years’ due to their disabling condition?

Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements cannot receive a certificate of attendance. However, a school district could elect to provide a different participatory document in cases where a student has not met requirements but would like to participate in the high school commencement.

C: Decision Making

C-1: Will local school boards be involved in this implementation?

Yes. School boards will need to adopt revisions to requirements for earning a certificate of attendance. School boards may decide to add additional requirements if those requirements are consistent with ORS Chapter 329. School boards are actively involved in determinations about whether students meet the requirements for diplomas and certificates of attendance criteria, and in the consideration of requests to waive the requirement for four years of regular, full time attendance.

C-2: Can a student meet the requirements for the certificate of attendance in less than four years?

Yes. A student may satisfy the requirements for graduation with a modified Oregon Diploma, an Oregon Extended Diploma, or completion with a certificate of attendance in less than four years if the parent, guardian, adult student, or emancipated minor student gives consent. The consent must be written and state that the parent, guardian, adult student, or emancipated minor student, as appropriate, is waiving the allowance of four years or, for students experiencing disabilities eligible for special education, until the age of 21 to complete the requirements for the diploma or certificate.

A copy of the consent must be sent to the district superintendent.

Each school district must annually provide the number of consents to the State Superintendent. Consent may not be used to allow a student to satisfy the requirements of the certificate of attendance in less than three years.

C-3: Could a district's adopted Board policy for granting a certificate of attendance delegate the decision on whether a student has met the requirements to the student's IEP team?

No. Students must meet both the time requirements outlined in ORS 329.451 and any additional requirements included in the adopted local school board policy for obtaining a certificate of attendance.

D: Consents/Notifications for Diploma Options

D-1: What do school districts and public charter schools need to know about required consents for diploma options?

A school district or public charter school may award a modified Oregon Diploma or Oregon Extended Diploma to a student only with the informed consent of the student's parent, guardian, adult student, or emancipated minor student, as appropriate. A district or school must receive the consent in writing and the consent must be received during the school year in which the modified Oregon Diploma or the Oregon Extended Diploma is awarded.

While there is no requirement for obtaining parent or guardian consent to award a certificate of attendance, IEP and 504 teams should be mindful of the consent requirements for any abbreviated school day program as outlined in statutes related to [Abbreviated School Day Programs](#) as well as requirements for informed parent consent during the IEP process.

D-2: When should an IEP team discuss diploma options?

An IEP Team or school team should start discussing diploma expectations with parents and students early in the student's academic career. School districts and public charter schools are required to annually provide information to the parents and guardians of students with a documented history of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers or students who have a documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement on the availability of the Oregon Diploma, the modified Oregon Diploma, and the Oregon Extended Diploma, and the requirements for each. A student's school team must decide that a student should work toward a modified Oregon Diploma no earlier than the end of the student's sixth grade year and no later than two years before the student's anticipated exit from high school. However, a student's school team may formally decide to revise the diploma decision.

D-3: Can a student continue working toward another graduation option after they receive the modified Oregon Diploma, Oregon Extended Diploma, or a certificate of attendance?

Yes. A student can continue working toward another graduation option after receiving a modified Oregon Diploma or Oregon Extended Diploma, or towards a graduation option after receiving a certificate of attendance. Students

who are eligible for special education are allowed to continue their enrollment in high school beyond the typical four-year period as long as they have not reached 21 years of age on or before September 1 of the current school year. Within that age range, students who are eligible for special education can remain enrolled until they obtain an Oregon Diploma.

E: Considerations for Districts

E-1: Can a student with a certificate of attendance participate in the high school graduation ceremony?

Yes. Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 329.451(12)(a)(A) requires that the student who receives or qualifies to receive a certificate of attendance shall be offered the option of participating in the high school graduation ceremony with the class of the student, such as the school year in which the student receives the certificate of attendance.

E-2: Does access to online courses and electives count as a high school's on-site access?

There is nothing in ORS 329.451 that precludes using online courses for high schools and public charter schools required to provide on-site access. However, for a student experiencing disability as defined by ORS 343.321, whether an online class is synchronous or asynchronous, and the number of online courses a student is taking, can make a difference when calculating the number of hours of meaningful access being provided for the purposes of Abbreviated School Day Programs.

E-3: Are there changes to what districts must report to ODE?

Yes. SB 992 (2023) updated ORS 339.520, impacting the annual reporting requirements for students who withdraw prior to graduating. Previously, school districts and public charter schools were already reporting similar information annually to ODE, based on ODE's requirements.

Under the updated requirements, codified in ORS, school districts and public charter schools must report the following:

- Students who are awarded a certificate of attendance after grade 12,
- Whether the student:
 - (1) has a disability,
 - (2) has an IEP or 504 plan and, if applicable,
 - (3) the student's disability category.

Additionally, districts and public charter schools must now be prepared to report on students who move to a transition program for students experiencing disabilities without first being awarded a modified Oregon Diploma or an Oregon Extended Diploma.

E-4: What annual notices are districts required to provide to parents?

ORS 329.451 requires districts and public charter schools to annually provide the following information and disclosure to the parents and guardians of students with a documented history of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers or students who have a documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement:

- Information about the availability of high school diplomas, modified diplomas and extended diplomas and the requirements for the diplomas; and
- A disclosure that a student awarded a certificate of attendance will not be counted as a high school graduate in any reporting for the state or school district; and
- Disclosure that a student awarded a certificate of attendance may not indicate that the student received a

high school diploma on applications for employment, military service, financial aid, admittance to an institution of higher education or any other purpose.

E-5: Does every public charter school need to provide all diploma options and their requirements?

Yes. Public charter schools must ensure that students have access to the appropriate resources and courses to achieve an Oregon Diploma, a modified Oregon Diploma, or an Oregon Extended Diploma.

E-6: Is a student who receives a certificate of attendance considered a dropout for the cohort graduation collection?

For the purpose of calculating cohort graduation rates, a student who receives a certificate of attendance will not be counted as a dropout. Students receiving a certificate of attendance will be categorized as Non-Dropout/Non-Completers in the Average Daily Membership (ADM) collection.

F: Transition Services

F-1: Does the requirement to ensure all students have on-site access to the appropriate resources and courses to achieve graduation apply to students ages 18-21 that are attending a transition program that is not on the high school campus?

No. ORS 329.451(13)(a) applies to high schools, and there is no requirement for off-site transition programs to provide these resources and courses. However, access to all courses and resources must still be available to each student to achieve an Oregon Diploma, a modified Oregon Diploma, and an Oregon Extended Diploma.

G: Regular Full-Time Attendance

G-1: What is the criteria for “regular full-time attendance” when determining a student’s eligibility for a certificate of attendance?

Oregon law does not define the attendance rate criteria for receiving a diploma, nor does it offer a definition of “regular full-time attendance”. Therefore, school districts and public charter schools will each need to determine the criteria for “regular full-time attendance” and may wish to revise school district policies to support the uniform implementation of this requirement.

School districts and public charter schools may wish to consider the following when determining criteria for awarding a certificate of attendance:

- **Review your school district’s or public charter school’s current attendance policies and procedures.** School districts and public charter schools could consider what policies and procedures they already have in place for supporting student learning and addressing absences. In reviewing these policies and procedures, they may find that they have a definition for “regular attender” that can be used or adapted to ensure consistency in interpretation and application of the updated requirements in ORS Chapter 329.
- **Consider language found in Oregon’s rules and statutes related to absenteeism and attendance.** OAR OAR 581-020-0631 defines chronic absenteeism as “not attending school for 10 percent or more than 10 percent of school days that the student is enrolled in a school year”. For the purposes of compulsory attendance requirements, ORS 339.065 states that “eight unexcused one-half day absences in any four-week period during which the school is in session shall be considered irregular attendance”. While neither is specific to awarding a certificate of attendance, information contained within OAR 581-020-0631 or ORS 339.065 could be useful for districts and public charter schools when determining if a student has achieved “regular full-time attendance”.

- **Develop a definition of “regular full-time attendance” for the purpose of awarding a certificate of attendance.** After reviewing their attendance policies and procedures, school districts and public charter schools may wish to create and implement a clear and comprehensive definition of “regular full-time attendance”. ODE suggests that school districts and public charter schools may wish to consider the following factors in developing this definition:
 - A minimum number of instructional hours or days required per week or semester,
 - Criteria for excused and unexcused absences,
 - Policies regarding tardiness and early dismissal, and
 - Any allowances for extenuating circumstances or special cases.