

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Factsheet for Virginia's Parents The Applied Studies Diploma for Students with Disabilities

Things to Keep in Mind about Diplomas

If your student with a disability wishes to obtain a **Standard or Advanced Studies** Diploma (the diploma(s) needed if your student wants to go to college or participate in many other post-secondary training), they must participate in **the Standards of Learning (SOL) Curriculum**, take the SOL tests, and earn the required Standard and Verified Credits with or without accommodations, including special credit accommodations (**See PEATC Fact Sheet on Graduation Requirements for 2022 and Beyond**).

If your student does not take the SOL assessments or has a modified (**Aligned SOL**) curriculum, he will not be able to obtain either of these diplomas. Some parents may want to remove their student from SOL tests during elementary school and change course later. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to catch up in the later grades, so it is important to carefully consider this decision. Students who are not on the path to a Standard or Advanced diploma and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are eligible for the **Applied Studies Diploma**.

Applied Studies Diploma

The **Applied Studies Diploma** is for students who have completed their IEP requirements, but do not meet the requirements for the Standard or Advanced Studies diploma. These students still take part in statewide assessments. Students who receive an Applied Studies Diploma can still receive IEP services through age 22, even after they receive this diploma. Students with an IEP who attempt but cannot receive a Standard Diploma are still eligible to earn the Applied Studies Diploma.

VDOE has developed an **Applied Studies Curriculum Map** that helps IEP teams to see if a student needs more instruction to achieve his post high school goals. The skills in the Curriculum Map do not replace SOL or Aligned Standards of Learning; they are there to enhance instruction and help your student apply the skills he has learned. For detailed information see:

www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/applied_studies/applied-studies-curriculum-map.pdf.

Virginia Department of Education
(VDOE)

Critical Decision-Making Points

VDOE suggests that **as you consider Assessment and Diploma options**, you ask your student's school the following:

- How do the decisions made in elementary school about participation in state assessments relate to available diploma options?
- How long do I have to change my mind about my student's diploma option?
- How can **credit accommodations** help my student earn a Standard or Advance Studies Diploma?
- What courses can my student take in middle school that will count for high school credit. If my student doesn't do well on that course, how do I make sure the grade is not on their transcript?
- What is **industry certification** and does my student need one?

You can find those answers under **Critical Decision Points** found at www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents.



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What is Included in the Applied Studies Curriculum Map?

There are six **Domains (areas)** covered in the Curriculum Map: English, Math, Science, History and Social Science, Employment, and Independent Living

- Within each of the **Domains**, there are **Competencies** (the combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a task).
- Within the Competencies, are **Levels**, which show student's understanding within each content area by skill, with **Level 1** showing basic knowledge and **Level 4** showing that the student can apply the skills in various setting and circumstances (called generalization).
- The **Skills** listed help school teams to develop a **coordinated set of goals, accommodations, services and activities for each student, based on individual needs** that will help the student achieve post-secondary (after high school) goals.

The **Skills** and **Competencies** included in each Domain are designed to help students live as independently as possible. So instead of teaching one skill at a time, the **Map** focuses on developing long-term skills over time that are connected. Included are communication skills (language, reading, and writing), behavioral skills, and more. This unified approach is designed to ensure that your student learns both fundamental (basic) and functional (real world) skills.

How Can my Student Benefit?

If your student is going to receive an Applied Studies Diploma, ask your IEP team if they use the Curriculum Map to help develop the IEP. While it doesn't include every skill your student will need, it does outline skills that your student will need to be successful after graduation. The IEP team (which includes you) can decide:

- What skills will be addressed- how and why? (Every student will not need every skill in order to achieve his or her post-secondary goals.)
- How your student will show that he has mastered the skill.
- How your student's teacher will prioritize certain skills; and
- What accommodations or supports will be used to teach the skills, and how those supports will be faded to increase independence or adapted to address the student's needs in community and/or work settings.

What Types of Skills are in Each Level?

Students will often have a different level of skill in different areas. A Student may be in Level 1 in one area and Level 3 in another. Skill needs should be addressed on an individual basis. Levels do not describe students but rather help assess a student's skill needs in a specific area.

Level 1. The student may need instruction to improve attention, develop matching, pointing, and imitation skills, and be motivated to learn.

Level 2 – The students may work more independently. The focus will be on gaining new knowledge and skills, including improving vocabulary related to identified skills, employment and independent living.

Level 3 – The student can apply the skills learned and show that he can use what he has learned.

Level 4 – The student can independently apply the skills learned in a variety of places and in different situations, including new situations. The student shows complex problem-solving skills and can use those skills in workplace settings.

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

403 Holiday Court, Suite 104
Warrenton, VA 20186
800-869-6782 / 703-923-0010
www.peatc.org



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