

R277. Education, Administration.

R277-705. Secondary School Completion and Diplomas.

R277-705-1. Authority and Purpose.

(1) This rule is authorized by:

(a) Utah Constitution Article X, Section 3, which vests general control and supervision of public education in the Board;

(b) Subsections 53E-3-501(1)(b) and (c), which direct the Board to make rules regarding competency levels, graduation requirements, curriculum, and instruction requirements; and

(c) Subsection 53E-3-401(4), which allows the Board to make rules to execute the Board's duties and responsibilities under the Utah Constitution and state law.

(2) The purpose of this rule is to:

(a) provide consistent definitions;

(b) provide alternative methods for a student to earn credit and alternate methods for schools to award credit;

(c) provide rules and procedures for the assessment of all students as required by law; and

(d) provide rules for a student to receive an alternative to a traditional diploma if appropriate criteria are met.

R277-705-2. Definitions.

(1) "Alternate Diploma" means a diploma issued in accordance with Section R277-705-5.

(2)(a) "Comparable course" means a course that fulfills the same graduation credit requirements as a course for which a student seeks to improve a grade.

(b) "Comparable course" does not include a course a student completes through the packet method.

(3) "Core class" means a course in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies, or another course required for high school graduation as described in Section 53E-4-204.

(4) Credit recovery" means the same as "replacement credit."

(5) "Demonstrated competence" means subject mastery as determined by LEA standards and review. LEA review may include such methods and documentation as: tests, interviews, peer evaluations, writing samples, reports, or portfolios.

(6) "Diploma" means an official document awarded by an LEA consistent with state and LEA graduation requirements and the provisions of this rule.

(7) "FAPE" means a free appropriate public education, which includes special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge in accordance with Board rule and the IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

(8) "Grade replacement" means credit a student earns by retaking a teacher-led course for a letter grade to improve a previous grade, which:

- (a) may raise the student's grade point average if the new grade is higher; and
- (b) replaces the lower grade on the student's transcript.

(9) "Original credit" means credit a student earns through the successful completion of a course for the first time.

(10) "Packet" means a collection of instructional materials and assessments used to receive credit through the packet method.

(11) "Packet method" means an educational approach where:

- (a) a high school student receives a collection of instructional materials from an institution, organization, or LEA;
- (b) the high school student works through the materials independently with minimal or no direct instruction from a teacher; and
- (c) assessment is primarily based on completion of assignments within the instructional materials.

(12) "Replacement credit" means a pass-fail credit a student earns for a course the student did not pass or complete, which:

- (a) does not affect the student's grade point average; and
- (b) allows the student to fulfill high school graduation requirements.

(13)(a) "Secondary school" means grades 7-12 in whatever kind of school the grade levels exist.

- (b) Grade 6 may be considered a secondary grade for some purposes.

(14) "Section 504 plan" means a written statement of related aids and services for a student with a qualifying disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

(15)(a) "Special purpose school" means a school designated by a regional accrediting agency, adopted by the Board.

(b) "Special purpose school" includes a school:

(i) that serves a specific population such as a student with a disability, youth in care, or a school with a specific curricular emphasis; and

(ii) with curricula designed to serve specific populations that may be modified from a traditional program.

(16) "Student with the most significant cognitive disability" or "SWMSCD" is determined by a comprehensive understanding of a whole student, including review of educational considerations and data obtained through the IEP process, including whether a student:

(a) requires intensive, repeated, modified, and direct individualized instruction and requires substantial supports to learn, maintain, and generalize skills in the student's grade and age-appropriate curriculum;

(b) has special education eligibility documentation indicating the disability significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior which means typically functioning at least two and a half or more standard deviations below the mean;

(c) demonstrates cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior in home, school, and community environments, which are significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications, adaptations, and accommodations;

(d) has a severe and complex cognitive disability, which limits the student from meaningful participation in the standard academic core curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards established at grade level, without substantial support, modifications, adaptations, and accommodations;

(e) has a course of study that addresses the significant impact in adaptive behavior skills;

(f) may be eligible to participate in alternate assessments; and

(g) has a disability, which increases the need for dependence on others for many, if not all, daily living needs, and is expected to require extensive ongoing support through adulthood.

(17) "Supplemental education provider" means a private school or educational service provider:

- (a) that may or may not be accredited; and
- (b) that provides courses or services similar to public school courses or classes.

(18)(a) "Transcript" means an official document or record generated by one or several schools which includes:

- (i) the courses in which a secondary student was enrolled;
- (ii) grades and units of credit earned; and
- (iii) citizenship and attendance records.

(b) A transcript is one part of a student's permanent record or cumulative file that may include:

- (i) birth certificate
- (ii) immunization records; and
- (iii) other information as determined by the school in possession of the record.

(19) "Unit of credit" means credit awarded for a course taken:

- (a) consistent with this rule;
- (b) upon LEA authorization; or
- (c) for mastery demonstrated by approved methods.

(d) For grades 9 through 12, one unit of credit is at least 83 class hours in an attendance-validated program in lieu of a requirement of days, consistent with Subsection 53F-2-102(5)(c)(i)(B). Special Purpose Schools may implement alternative instructional delivery models to meet state requirements for credit issuance.

R277-705-3. Required LEA Policy Explaining Student Credit.

(1)(a) An LEA governing board shall establish a policy, in an open meeting, explaining the process and standards for acceptance and reciprocity of credits earned by a student in accordance with state law.

(b) An LEA policy described in Subsection (1)(a) shall include specific and adequate notice to a student and a parent of all policy requirements and limitations.

(2)(a) An LEA shall accept credits and grades awarded to a student from a school or a provider accredited by an accrediting entity adopted by the Board.

(b) An LEA policy may establish reasonable timelines and may require adequate and timely documentation of authenticity for credits and grades submitted.

(3) An LEA policy shall provide various methods for a student to earn credit from a non-accredited source, course work, or education provider including:

(a) satisfaction of coursework by demonstrated competency, as evaluated at the LEA level;

(b) assessment as proctored and determined at the school or school level;

(c) review of student work or projects by an LEA administrator; and

(d) satisfaction of electronic or correspondence coursework, as approved at the LEA level.

(4) An LEA may require documentation of compliance with Section 53G-6-204 before reviewing a student's home school or competency work, assessment, or materials.

(5) An LEA policy for participation in extracurricular activities, awards, recognitions, and enhanced diplomas may be determined locally consistent with the law and this rule.

(6) An LEA has the final decision-making authority for the awarding of credit and grades from a non-accredited source consistent with state law, due process, and this rule.

(7) An LEA may award a grade for original credit through the packet method if:

(a) the packet adheres to the following criteria:

(i) it fully covers the course standards;

(ii) it includes adequate opportunities for practice and application;

(iii) it includes a variety of assessments; and

(iv) it is consistent with Section 53E-3-501; and

(b) the LEA approves the packet for use as an instructional material in accordance with:

- (i) Subsection 53G-4-402(27) for a district school; or
- (ii) Section 53G-5-404 for a charter school; or
- (c) the Board recommends the packet after going through the state instructional materials process described in Title 53E, Chapter 4, Part 4, State Instructional Materials.

(8) Packets for original credit are not "Demonstrated Competence" as defined in Subsection R277-705-2(2).

(9) An LEA may not use the packet method, or classify a packet as original credit, to improve a previous course grade of a high school student as described in Subsection (9).

(10) A high school student may improve a grade through grade replacement by:

- (a) repeating a course one or more times; or
- (b) enrolling in and completing a comparable course that is teacher-led.

(11) The Board shall:

(a) ensure that packets that come to the Board for review adhere to the following criteria:

- (i) the packet fully covers the course standards;
- (ii) the packet contains adequate opportunities for practice and application;
- (iii) the packet includes a variety of assessments; and
- (iv) is consistent with Section 53E-3-501; and

(b) maintain a comprehensive list of Board approved packets in the Board 's Recommended Instructional Materials System on the Board's website; and

(c) report annually to the Education Interim Committee the number of students in each LEA who receive academic credit through the packet method.

(12) An LEA shall:

(a) assign a distinct course name and number for credit earned through the packet method to easily identify the use of the packet method on a student transcript; and

(b) track and record the number of packets an LEA uses to award original credit or replacement credit each school year.

(13) Subsection R277-705-3(11)(b), regarding a report on the packet method, is repealed July 1, 2028.

(14) Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, in accordance with Section 53E-4-209, an LEA shall offer and administer statewide test-out options for core classes.

(15) An LEA shall award credit to a student who demonstrates proficiency through a statewide test-out option for a core class established under Section 53E-4-209.

(16) An LEA shall record credit earned through a statewide test-out option for a core class on a student's transcript in accordance with Board rules.

(17) A statewide test-out option for a core class established under Section 53E-4-209 is distinct from locally determined demonstrated competence under Subsection R277-705-2(4).

(18) An LEA may not substitute a locally developed assessment for a statewide test-out option required under Section 53E-4-209.

R277-705-4. Diplomas and Certificates of Completion.

(1) An LEA shall award diplomas and certificates of completion.

(2) An LEA shall establish criteria for a student to earn a certificate of completion that may be awarded to a student who:

- (a) has completed the student's senior year;
- (b) is exiting or aging out of the school system; and
- (c) has not met all state or LEA requirements for a diploma.

(3) A student with a disability served by a special education program shall satisfy high school completion or graduation criteria, consistent with state and federal law and the student's IEP.

(4) An LEA may award a student a certificate of completion consistent with state and federal law and the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

(5) An LEA may not enroll a student with the intent to award a diploma or a certificate of completion once the student has earned a high school equivalence.

R277-705-5. Alternate Diploma.

(1) An LEA may award an alternate diploma to a student with the most significant cognitive disability if:

(a) the student accesses grade-level Core standards through the Essential Elements;

(b) the student's IEP team makes graduation substitutions in the same content area, from a list of alternative courses approved by the Superintendent; and

(c) the student meets all graduation requirements before exiting school at or before age 22.

(2) An alternate diploma issued in accordance with Subsection (1) may not indicate that the recipient is a student with a disability.

(3) Notwithstanding the award of an alternate diploma, an LEA may still be obligated to provide FAPE to an eligible student in accordance with the IDEA.

(4)(a) The Superintendent shall provide a list of alternative courses that may be considered for student with cognitive disabilities working to receive an alternate diploma.

(b) An LEA may submit courses to the Superintendent to be considered for possible inclusion on the list required by Subsection (4)(a).

(c) The Superintendent shall annually update the list of alternative courses required under Subsection (4)(a) following review of LEA recommendations made under Subsection (4)(b).

R277-705-6. Career Development Credentials.

(1) An LEA may award a career development credential to a student with an IEP or Section 504 plan:

(a) who meets the requirements of a career focused work experience before leaving school; and

(b) consistent with:

(i) state and federal law; and

(ii) the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

(2) Before receiving a career development credential, a student shall:

(a) earn the following credits in core content:

- (i) English Language Arts (3.0);
- (ii) Mathematics (2.0);
- (iii) Science (1.0); and
- (iv) Social Studies (1.0);
- (b) complete 120 hours of community based work experience, to include:
 - (i) 40 hours of paid employment; or
 - (ii) documentation of completion of intake with a vocal rehabilitation counselor or the Department of Workforce Services;
- (c) complete an LEA approved transition curriculum class or coursework that includes:
 - (i) disability awareness;
 - (ii) accommodations;
 - (iii) self-advocacy training;
 - (iv) career exploration; and
 - (v) workplace soft skills;
- (d) receive .5 credits in a CTE Work Based Learning internship, including accommodations or modifications as appropriate and allowed by industry standards; and
- (e) verify concentration in a CTE pathway in the student's area of interest.

R277-705-7. Adult Education Students.

- (1) An adult education student is eligible only for an adult education secondary diploma.
- (2) An adult education diploma may not be upgraded or changed to a traditional, high school-specific diploma.
- (3) A school district shall establish a policy:
 - (a) allowing or disallowing adult education student participation in graduation activities or ceremonies; and
 - (b) establishing timelines and criteria for satisfying adult education graduation and diploma requirements.

R277-705-8. Student Rights and Responsibilities Related to Graduation, Transcripts, and Receipt of Diplomas.

(1) An LEA shall supervise the granting of credit and awarding of diplomas, but may delegate the responsibility to schools within the LEA.

(2) An LEA may determine criteria for a student's participation in graduation activities, honors, and exercises, independent of a student's receipt of a diploma or certificate of completion.

(3) A diploma, a certificate, credits, or an unofficial transcript may not be withheld from a student for nonpayment of school fees.

(4)(a) An LEA shall establish a consistent timeline for all students for completion of graduation requirements.

(b) A timeline described in Subsection (4)(a) shall be consistent with state law and this rule.

(5) An LEA's graduation requirements may not apply retroactively.

KEY: adult education, high school credits, graduation requirements

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Authorizing, and Implemented or Interpreted Law: Art X Sec 3; 53E-3-501(1)(b); 53E-3-401(4)