

Instruction

DIFFERENTIAL GRADUATION AND COMPETENCY STANDARD FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS

- 1.0 Definition: A "differential standard" is a standard, other than that adopted by the local Governing Board, developed by an IEP team for a student whose disability prevents the achievement of the district's regular standards.
- 2.0 Legislative Background
 - 2.1 Proficiency Standards: California's Student Proficiency Law (AB 3408 as amended in 1977 by AB 65 and in 1980 by AB 3369) requires each local school district to adopt standards of proficiency in the basic skills of reading comprehension, writing and computation. Students in California schools are required to demonstrate proficiency in the basic skills, as measured by the locally adopted standards, prior to receiving a high school diploma. They are to be assessed in grades 4-6, 7-9, 10 and 11. Those not making sufficient progress toward meeting the district's standards must be provided with remedial programs and opportunities for reassessment. School personnel are to hold conferences with parents of students who fail proficiency tests to inform them of their children's weaknesses in basic skills and of the program of remediation. A student must be denied the high school diploma unless he or she demonstrated proficiency in the basic skills at the minimum standards set by the district and has also completed the district's course requirements. If a student has passed proficiencies but not completed the district's course requirements, a letter of recommendation may be awarded, however.
 - 2.2 Differential Standards: AB 3369 (1980) and AB 283 (1982) require that differential standards be adopted for specified students for whom individualized education programs have been developed. They further require that the determination and development of differential proficiency standards be included in the IEP process and that differential standards be applied when an IEP team determines that the student's disabilities preclude his/her attainment of the district's regular standards. Under local district Board-adopted policy, every effort must be made to see that special education students achieve the standards prescribed for students in the regular program. However, when an IEP team determines that a student's disability prevents the attainment of those established standards, then differential standards may be developed for that student. The IEP Team will also establish a projected time frame in which the student would reasonably be able to meet the differential standards and thus be able to be granted a graduation diploma (providing unit requirements have been met). These unit requirements may be met through alternative means or modes of assessment. The differential standards must be appropriate to the needs

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and potential of the student. The standards of proficiency must reflect attainment of a reasonable level of competence.

3.0 Eligibility: Differential standards or alternative means or modes of assessment procedures shall be adopted for students who:

3.1 Are enrolled in special education programs pursuant to Part 30 (commencing with section 5600); or for whom individualized education programs have been developed, and for whom the regular instructional program has been modified, as necessary, under the supervision of a person who holds an appropriate credential in special education and; for whom students have previously been exited from special education prior to graduation.

3.2 Have diagnosed learning handicaps or disabilities such that the Individualized Education Program Team determines they have not demonstrated evidence of the ability to attain the district's regular proficiency standards with appropriate educational services and support.

4.0 Identifying the Need for Alternative Means or Modes of Assessment: When districts develop alternative means or modes of assessment for application to course of study and unit requirements, it is recommended that the identification of students and determination of specific alternative means or modes of assessment be delegated to the IEP Team which represents a cross-section of professionals who work with the student as well as the student's parents, and regular education administrative personnel. Thus, alternative means or modes of assessment are most appropriately determined on an individual student basis rather than on categories of handicapping conditions. The following continuum is recommended for IEP team consideration in this process.

4.1 Utilizing recommendations/alternate means or modes of testing:

4.1.1 The IEP Team must decide whether or not proposed modifications can be made without altering the validity of the instrument and still adequately measure the true abilities of the student.

4.1.2 Once process deficits (e.g. visual, auditory, motoric, tactile deficits) are identified, test format and/or administration may need modifications. General questions to consider might include:

4.1.2.1 How does the student adopt to/function in timed settings?

4.1.2.2 Is it necessary to read the exam to the student?

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4.1.2.3 Is assistance needed in recording responses?

4.1.3 Possible accommodations and/or alternatives in the written format and response mode might include:

<u>Process Deficits:</u>	<u>Modification in Format and Response Mode:</u>
Visual Figure/Ground	Reduce number of questions per page.
Visual Figure/Ground Spatial Relations Motor Coordination	Allow for more space on a page between columns and between columns and questions if written response Fine required. It maybe necessary to place math problems on graph paper to aide alignment of numbers.
Visual Memory	Provide additional examples. Add extra questions on same topic to get a better picture of student's knowledge of subject.
Visual Acuity	Use large print, braille.
Visual Memory Visual Closure	Use yes/no answers or multiple choice answers as opposed to sentence completion or essay.
Visual Figure/Ground Transferability Visual Memory Spatial Relation Eye/Hand Coordination Fine Motor Coordination	Have alternatives to standard separate answer sheet; allow oral responses, yes/no responses, typed responses, recorded responses; use communication boards, tables, calculators; allow marking of test booklet rather than answer sheet.
Visual Figure/Ground Spatial Relation	Rephrase questions to use fewer words; emphasize salient features.
Transferability	Allow marking of test booklet rather than answer sheet; Eye/Hand Coordination have stimulus materials such as graphs and maps on same page as questions.
Visual/Auditory Deficits In General	Read to the student; allow student to read aloud or listen to tapes.

4.1.4 Adjustments in rate of responses might include:

4.1.4.1 Allowing more time for exam completion.

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4.1.4.2 Administering the test over a period of time rather than in one sitting.

4.1.4.3 Using fewer questions on the same topic.

4.1.4.4 Providing breaks during the testing period.

5.0 Identifying the need for Differential Standards; IEP Process: When districts develop differential proficiency standards, it is recommended that the identification of students and determination of specific differential standards be delegated to the IEP Team which represents a cross-section of professionals who work with the student as well as the student's parents and regular education administrative personnel. Thus, standards are most appropriately determined on an individual student basis rather than on categories of handicapping conditions. The following continuum is recommended for IEP team consideration in this process:

5.1 Administer regular district proficiency tests: All special education students should be given the opportunity to attempt the regular district proficiency test without penalty, whether or not addressing the necessity of differential standards. In determining the ability of the special education student to take the examination, the IEP Team should consider the student's strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the test format, content, and direction for administration as there may be a need to develop alternative means or modes of assessment.

If the special education student is able to pass all or any portion of the competencies tested, they are credited with passing those sections or tests and require no further testing in those area(s).

5.2 Develop Differential Proficiency Statements/Standards: The determination and the development of differential proficiency standards shall be part of the process of developing, reviewing and revising a student's IEP and should be considered only when the IEP Team determines that the student's disability prevents the attainment of established proficiency standards which may include possible alternative means and modes to meet course of study and unit requirements.

5.2.1 Important issues which the IEP Team should consider:

5.2.1.1 Are the rationale for partial/total differential standards clearly stated and available to the entire school/community?

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5.2.1.2 Will the diploma have relative meaning for the student?

5.2.1.3 Will differential standards affect the student's peer interaction?

5.2.2 In developing differential standards, it is also important to prioritize skills appropriate to career and vocational development.

5.2.3 The differential standard developed to accommodate the handicapped student must be viewed as minimum standards. Consequently, instructional objectives most likely will exceed the level specified by the standards. It is most important, however, that standards not limit the level of the instructional objectives set and thereby limit the individual's actual learning aspirations or achievement.

5.2.4 In setting differential standards, there are three approaches:

5.2.4.1 Combination of "enabling" skills - Using the district proficiency test as a diagnostic tool, it is possible to analyze each test objective/task to identify all of the enabling skills required for successful accomplishment of the task. The IEP Team may then require the student to demonstrate proficiency on a combination of subtest of enabling skills rather than on the original, total objective/task.

The identification of enabling skills provides a framework for remediation and subsequent assessment. Consequently, assessment and documentation of individual skill levels is certainly necessary prior to grade twelve.

5.2.4.2 Selective application from "real life" or "survival" situations - The IEP Team may select those standards which are clearly required for "survival" or "real-life" situations.

For example, some proficiency tests require the reading and comprehension of a series of unrelated paragraphs. However, these tests also require the reading and comprehending of a series of simulated "real-life" tasks: business letters, driver's test, job application, classified ad, recipe, street map, etc.

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Under this option, the IEP Team may choose to eliminate the series of unrelated paragraphs and require proficiency only on the simulated real-life tasks.

5.2.4.3 Lowering of district-adopted standards- This approach allows the IEP Team to develop lower (less complex) standards as the exit (graduation) criteria for an individual student. However, the development of simplified or less demanding proficiency standards, in all areas should be the last considered option and be reserved only for those special education students who have not achieved the district standards.

5.2.5 If a student fails to achieve the performance objectives specified by the IEP Team, then this same team will develop a remedial course of study wherein the teacher would certify whether or not the specified performance objectives have been achieved.

6.0 Procedures for Implementing Differential Standards at the Local District or CCOE Level:

6.1 In accordance with State law and district adopted policy, all students must be assessed at the following intervals:

6.1.1 Elementary - At least once in grades 4 through 6.

6.1.2 Secondary - At least once in grades 7 through 9 and twice in grades 10 and 11.

6.2 When a student achieves the District standard in a given area, then no further testing of that standard is required at that level (elementary and secondary).

6.3 Students transferring into a local district who have passed their previous district's proficiency tests will have the differential proficiency standards reviewed by the IEP Team for possible acceptance.

The IEP Team will provide documented assurance that the transfer for proficiency standards are equal to those of the district adopted proficiency standards.

6.4 Special education students, beginning in grade 4, are assessed at the same interval as students in the regular program. Also, special education students are tested until they achieve the standards prescribed by the IEP Team. In

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most instances, those standards and the means of assessing them will be the same as those prescribed for students in the regular program. However, it is recognized that entirely separate differential standards may have to be developed for special education students as well as alternative means and modes of assessment for unit and course of study requirements.

- 6.4.1 Special education students in grades 7 to 12 or of a comparable chronological age who require differential proficiency standards must have reference on their IEP to:
 - 6.4.1.1 Vocational education, career education or work experience education or any combination of these which prepare the student for remunerative employment including independent living skills training.
 - 6.4.1.2 In the case where one or more differential standard is developed for a student enrolled in special education, such standards may be maintained throughout the student's school experience, irrespective of whether the student continues to be enrolled in special education. (Education Code 51215 (d)(5))
 - 6.4.1.3 The attainment of a standard of proficiency by a student shall also reflect the attainment of a reasonable level of competence. There may be some students who cannot meet regular or differential standards of proficiency, and others who will need to remain in school in order to meet a standard which reflects their maximum potential. (Education Code 51215(d)(9))
 - 6.4.1.4 The SELPA establishes the parameters within which IEP teams determine the differential standards for each IWEN.
 - 6.4.1.5 Differential standards and alternative assessment procedures for course of study/unit requirements shall permit the student for whom they are adopted to attain the standards within a reasonable amount of time but not after the state is no longer required by state or federal law to provide an education to the student. (Education Code 51215 (d)(8))

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- 6.4.1.6 No diploma, certificate or other document, except transcripts and letters of recommendation, shall be conferred on a student as evidence of completion of a prescribed course of study or training, or of satisfactory attendance, unless such student has met the standards of proficiency in basic skills prescribed by the Governing Board of the high school district, or equivalent thereof, including differential standards develop by the IEP Team, pursuant to Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 51215) of Chapter 2. (Education Code 51412)
- 6.4.1.7 Boards maintaining elementary or junior high schools located within a school district maintaining a high school shall adopt standards of proficiency in basic skills which are articulated with those standards adopted by the school district maintaining the high school. (Education Code 51215(e))
- 6.4.1.8 An important component of this process is the provision for inservicing both regular and special education personnel. School staff should possess an awareness and understanding of regular proficiency requirements as well as the continuum of modifications up to and including differential standards. This knowledge will in turn encourage communication and exchange of ideas between regular and special educators necessary for the ultimate refinement of this process.