

Diploma Decision Guide

All students should be provided standards-based instruction and have access to the course content that will prepare them for postsecondary success. The State Board of Education’s High School Policy 2.104¹, defines Tennessee’s four diploma options, regular diploma, alternative academic diploma, occupational diploma, and special education diploma. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams must create a transition plan, inclusive of courses of study that will facilitate a student’s movement towards their chosen diploma option. This guide is intended to support teams in determining the most appropriate diploma option for individual students.

The following table outlines the four diploma options and the postsecondary opportunities and considerations for each.² It is important for IEP teams to consider the student’s postsecondary goals when determining the diploma option that is most appropriate. This discussion will also support the IEP team in developing a course of study within the student’s transition plan. The diploma does not determine, nor is it predicated by, the student’s least restrictive environment.

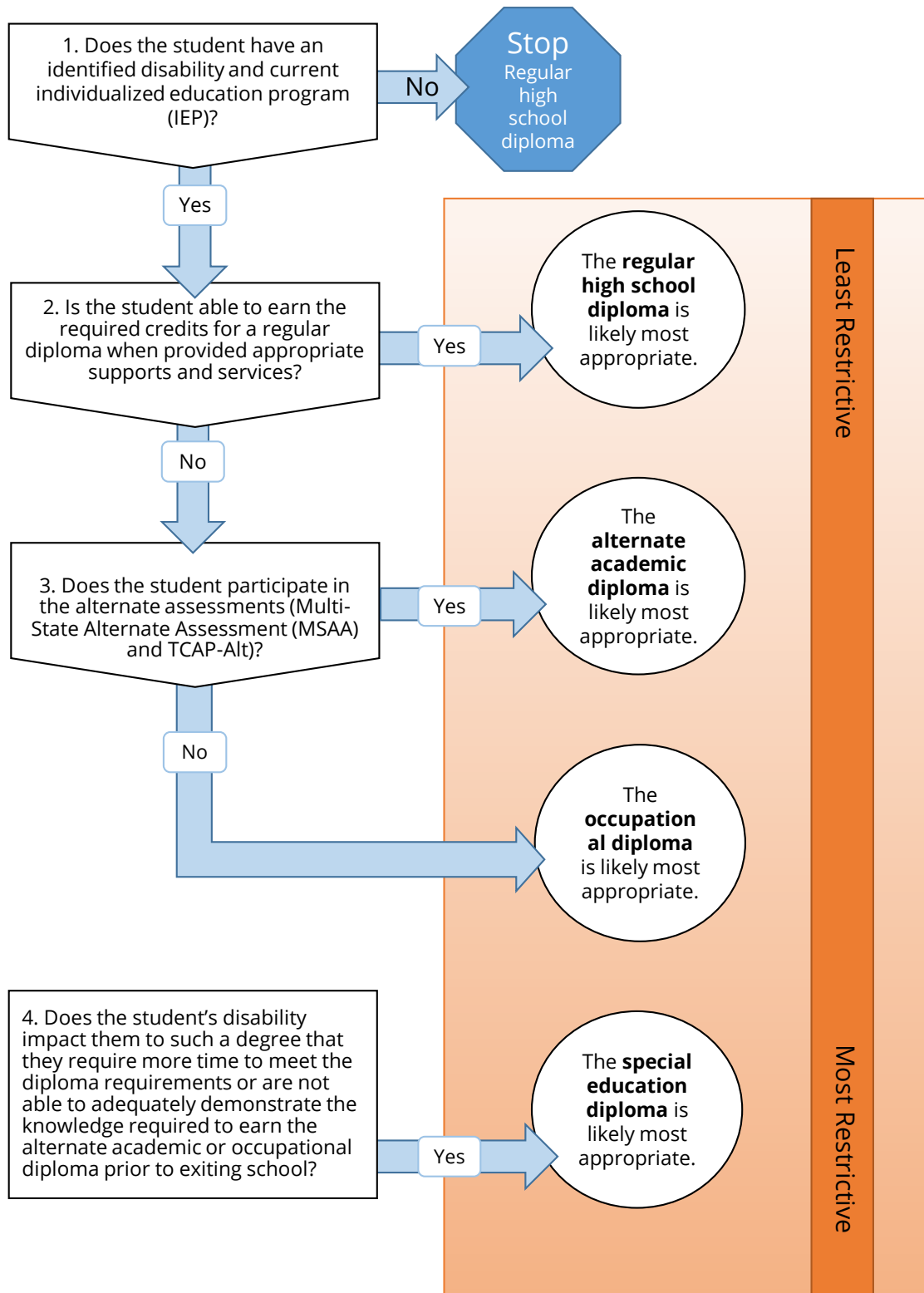
Diploma	Who Is Eligible?	Postsecondary Opportunities and Considerations
Regular Diploma	Everyone	Eligible for acceptance to postsecondary education and training
*Alternate Academic Diploma (AAD)	Students assessed on the alternate assessment	Indicates readiness for acceptance to inclusive higher education programs (IHEs), Project SEARCH, or other adult services/training.
*Occupational Diploma	Students with an IEP who will not earn the regular diploma	Indicates a readiness for work and eligible for acceptance to IHE, Project SEARCH or other adult services/training.
*Special Education Diploma	Students with an IEP who will not earn the regular diploma	Eligible for acceptance to IHE, Project SEARCH or other adult services/training.

* Not considered a “diploma” for traditional acceptance to postsecondary education and/or training.

¹ Tennessee State Board of Education, High School Policy 2.104 <https://www.tn.gov/sbe/rules--policies-and-guidance/policies.html>

² For additional information on the postsecondary opportunities and considerations, visit the Parent Guide for Tennessee Diploma and Postsecondary Education Options at <https://www.tnstep.org/uploads/files/STEP%20and%20DOE%20Diploma%20and%20Postsecondary%20Options%20%20April%202018%20OS.pdf>

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The following chart provides additional information for each guiding question in the decision chart.

Guiding Question	Description
<p>1. Does the student have an identified disability and current individualized education program (IEP)?</p>	<p>The regular education diploma should be the first consideration for all students.</p> <p>A student must have a current IEP to be considered for the alternate academic diploma, occupational diploma, or special education diploma.</p>
<p>2. Is the student able to earn the required credits for a regular diploma when provided appropriate supports and services?</p>	<p>The IEP team must determine any needed supplementary aids (e.g., accommodations and modifications) and services as well as the courses of study and consider the student’s postsecondary goals. The student may require an additional semester(s) or a summer to earn the required credits.</p>
<p>3. Does the student participate in the alternate assessments (Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) and TCAP-Alt)?</p>	<p>The IEP team must determine that the student meets all three eligibility requirements and that the assessment is the most appropriate. Refer to the alternate assessment webpage for more information.³</p>
<p>4. Does the student’s disability impact them to such a degree that they require more time to meet the diploma requirements or are not able to adequately demonstrate the knowledge required to earn the alternate academic or occupational diploma prior to exiting school?</p>	<p>Students with highly complex needs who require substantial modifications and whose disability impacts them to such a degree that they are not currently able to earn the alternate academic diploma or the occupational diploma should still benefit from purposeful engaging instruction. These students may earn the special education diploma, and their accomplishments are acknowledged and celebrated by the department.</p>

³ Alternate Assessment <https://www.tn.gov/education/assessment/alternate-assessment.html>