



Alternate Academic Diploma Overview

Why are we proposing a new diploma?

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has made this an option.
- Pursuant to legislation passed during the 2017 legislative session (Public Chapter 177), the State Board of Education (SBE) must approve an alternate academic diploma (AAD) for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in the alternate assessment.
- The department understands the importance of recognizing the instruction, supports, and intervention provided to students.
- Students who are engaging in rigorous instruction should be able to celebrate their accomplishments.

ESSA Diploma Policy Requirements

ESSA has made this an option in Section 1801(23)(A)(ii)(I) relative to graduation rate.

- (bb) all students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in the cohort, as adjusted under clause (i), assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards under section 1111(b)(2)(D) and awarded a State-defined alternate diploma that is—
 - (AA) standards-based;
 - (BB) aligned with the State requirements for the regular high school diploma; and
 - (CC) obtained within the time period for which the State ensures the availability of a free appropriate public education under section 612(a)(1) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(1));

Proposed Update to the High School Policy

Beginning with students entering the ninth (9th) grade in 2018, an alternate academic diploma may be awarded to students with significant cognitive disabilities at the end of their fourth (4th) year of high school who have:

- (1) participated in the high school alternate assessments,
- (2) earned the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum,
- (3) received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP,
- (4) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct, and
- (5) have completed a transition assessment(s) that measures, at a minimum postsecondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community involvement.

The required credits may be earned either through the state-approved standards or through alternate academic diploma modified course requirements approved by the State Board. A student who earns an alternate academic diploma shall continue to be eligible for special education services under IDEA until the student receives a regular high school diploma or through the school year in which the student turns twenty-two (22).

Comparison of Diplomas

Diploma	Who Is Eligible?	Terminal (Yes or No)	Included in Graduation Rate?
Regular Diploma	Everyone	Yes—terminates eligibility for IDEA services	Yes
Alternate Academic Diploma	Students assessed on the alternate assessment	No—student is still eligible for IDEA services through 21	Yes*
Occupational Diploma	Students with an individual education program (IEP) who will not be able to earn the regular diploma	No—student is still eligible for IDEA services through 21	No
Special Education Diploma	Students with an IEP who will not be able to earn the regular diploma	No—student is still eligible for IDEA services through 21	No

*Included in graduation rate if completed within the four years plus one summer time limit.

Requirements

To receive the AAD, a student must:

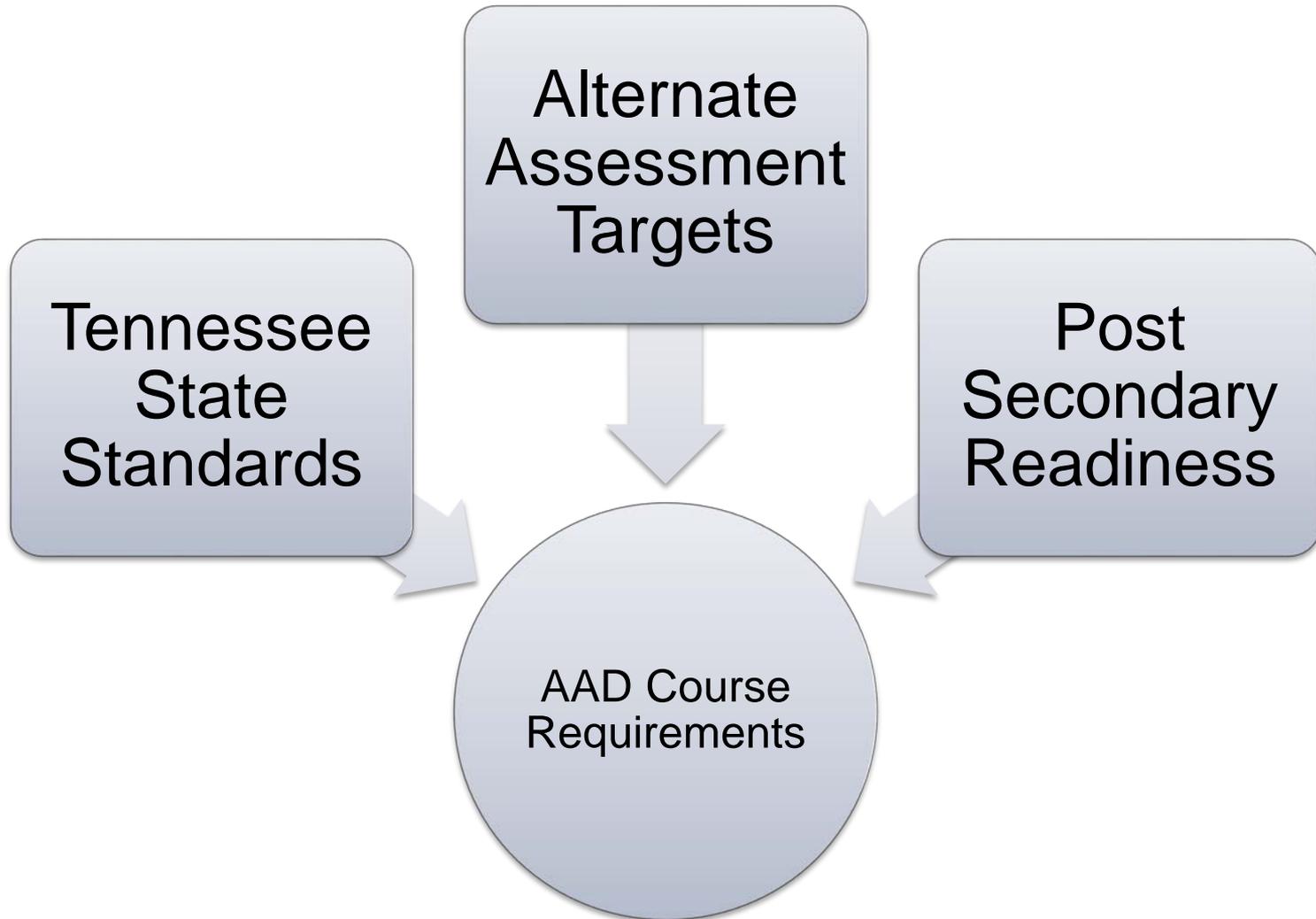
1. Participate in the alternate assessments,
2. Earn the prescribed 22 credit minimum,
 - To count within the graduation rate this must occur within the four years plus one summer timeline
 - Course requirements are outlined to support schools in the instructional expectations for the 22 credits
3. Receive special education services or supports and make satisfactory progress on an IEP,
4. Have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct, and
5. Complete a transition assessment(s) that measures, at a minimum postsecondary readiness in the areas of postsecondary education and training; employment; independent living; and community involvement.

Numbers 3 and 4 are the same requirements for all three special education diplomas.

Course Requirements

- The Department has developed draft course requirements based on alternate assessment targets to guide educators in the development of grade-level, standards-based modified instruction.
 - Alternate assessment targets were developed with input from Tennessee educators.

Course Requirements Continued



Sample Course Requirements

From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes (LS1)	
AAD.BIO1.LS1.1	Recognize that all living things are composed of cells and basic cell structures. (i.e. plant cell vs. animal cell)
AAD.BIO1.LS1.2	Use a model to identify how growth occurs when cells multiply.
AAD.BIO1.LS1.3	Recognize that a system of cell work together to form tissue or organs that have specialized body functions. (i.e. digestive system).
AAD.BIO1.LS1.4	Identify essential functions of a cell from maintaining life (i.e., breakdown and absorption of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates).
AAD.BIO1.LS1.5	Describe the feedback mechanisms used by a living system to maintain internal conditions. (Ex. Identify how different organisms react to changes such as during exercise (e.g., heart rate, body temperature)).
AAD.BIO1.LS1.6	Recognize the process of photosynthesis as related to the storing of energy and respiration as the release of that energy.
AAD.BIO1.LS1.7	Recognize the importance of oxygen within a cell in order to produce energy from food (aerobic cellular respiration).
Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics (LS2)	
AAD.BIO1.LS2.1	Recognize that an ecosystem is defined by physical factors such as light, temperature, water, soil and shelter required

Sample Course Requirements

Language Standards		
	AAD.L.CSE.28	Use capitalization at the beginning of sentences, I, personal names, days of the week, and months of the year and ending punctuation correctly.
Anchor Knowledge of Language (KL): Apply knowledge of language to comprehend more fully when reading or listening		
Standards		
ELA IV	AAD.L.KL.1	Understand complex sentences and figurative language heard and/or read.
	AAD.L.KL.2	Use non-verbal cues and tone to determine the intent of a speaker when listening.
	AAD.L.KL.3	Use context cues and text features such as diagrams, photos, and charts to determine and clarify meaning.
	AAD.L.KL.4	Distinguish between declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences heard and/or read.
	AAD.L.KL.5	Respond appropriately to declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences heard and/or read.
ELA III	AAD.L.KL.6	Understand compound sentences and figurative language with graphic or non-verbal supports heard and/or read.
	AAD.L.KL.7	Use non-verbal cues and tone to determine the intent of a speaker when listening.
	AAD.L.KL.8	Use text features (i.e. charts, diagrams, photos) and/or reference materials (i.e. dictionary, internet) to determine and clarify meaning.
	AAD.L.KL.9	Distinguish between declarative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences heard and/or read.
	AAD.L.KL.10	Respond appropriately to declarative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences heard and/or read.
ELA II	AAD.L.KL.11	Understand simple and compound sentences within a context heard and/or read.

Benefits

- Counts within the graduation rate as long as it is earned in the four years plus one summer timeline.
 - Students may earn the diploma after this timeline, it just will not be reflected in the graduation rate.
- Schools are able to use the course requirements to guide the current work in providing all students with rigorous academic instruction.
- The AAD policy and course requirements can be supported within each student's least restrictive environment (LRE) as determined by their IEP team.
- Students will have a diploma that accurately reflects achievement with high expectations and standards.

Next Steps

- Actively seek input from all stakeholders before final reading in January 2018.
- Make any necessary revisions to the policy or course requirements based on stakeholder feedback.
- SBE final reading in January 2018.
- Virtual and/or regional trainings:
 - Policy trainings—policy, implications, requirements, expectations, benefits, etc.
 - Implementation trainings—course requirements, instructional design, scheduling, etc.
- Anticipated implementation within schools beginning in August 2018.

Questions or Comments

Theresa Nicholls

Theresa.Nicholls@tn.gov

Blake Shearer

Blake.Shearer@tn.gov

Alison Gauld

Alison.Gauld@tn.gov