

Before 2018, students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) could graduate and get a high school diploma simply by meeting their IEP goals. However, starting in the fall of 2018, the Iowa State Board of Education changed the rules for how students with IEPs graduate and what a regular high school diploma means.

### What are Iowa's minimum graduation requirements for all students, including students with IEPs, to receive a high school diploma?

The state's minimum graduation requirements are referred to as 4-3-3-3 or 4 triple 3. They are as follows:

- 4 years of English Language Arts
- 3 years of Mathematics
- 3 years of Social Studies
- 3 years of Science
- Completion of the local school district's physical education (PE) expectations

Each local school district may have additional graduation requirements beyond the minimum state requirements. Districts can adopt policies that give IEP teams flexibility to change a student's pathway to a diploma. These changes/additions to meet requirements can be made as long as the student's coursework still meets the state's basic graduation requirements.

For example, a district could require specific math courses, such as algebra, geometry, and pre-calculus, to meet graduation requirements. Instead, the district could choose to allow any math course to count toward the requirements. This could allow any student, including students on Alternate Assessment, to earn a diploma. These decisions are up to the discretion of the school board.

### How does 4-3-3-3 impact students with IEPs?

- Students with IEPs need to have chances to meet the 4-3-3-3 graduation requirements. The team may need to be creative to help them do this. Starting in 8th grade, the IEP team must create a course of study that shows how the student can meet graduation requirements and earn a high school diploma.
- During the annual IEP meeting for students 14 and over, the IEP team must discuss whether the student will graduate with a high school diploma or receive a certificate of attendance or completion.
- Students receiving special education services who do not complete graduation requirements may receive a certificate of completion or attendance. The Iowa Department of Education does not outline any specific requirements for a student to receive a certificate. A certificate is not the same as a diploma and may not be available in every district.
- A student with an IEP could attend school through the year they turn 21 if the IEP team determines they have unmet transition needs in the areas of living, learning, or working. The student may also need additional time to complete graduation requirements.
- Students who are continuing on to 4+ services may still walk the stage with their class at graduation but will not receive a diploma at that time.

## Graduation Options for Students with IEPs

<b>Diploma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Met all state and district graduation requirements (4-3-3-3) and is not eligible for 4+ services; or</li><li>• Met all state and district graduation requirements (4-3-3-3) and is eligible for 4+ services but chooses not to participate at any point; or</li><li>• Met all state and district graduation requirements (4-3-3-3) and completed 4+ services.</li></ul>
<b>Certificate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No standard state requirements. District requirements are determined by district policy.</li><li>• Students could be eligible for 4+ services if they have unmet transition needs.</li><li>• A student chooses not to continue with 4+ services and has not completed graduation requirements (4-3-3-3).</li></ul>

### What do families and IEP teams need to consider?

- It is important to know your district's specific graduation requirements. The Iowa Department of Education requires school districts to have an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) for each student in grades 8-12. This is often referred to as a course of study.
- A student's path to a diploma can be tailored to fit their individual needs and goals as long as they meet the basic graduation requirements of the Iowa Department of Education (4-3-3-3).
- As a 9th grader, it's important to focus on working toward a diploma. It is easier to switch to a certificate later if the student is unable to meet the minimum graduation requirements.
- During each annual IEP meeting, the team should review progress toward graduation requirements and discuss whether the student will finish with a diploma or a certificate.
- It's important to note that most community employment opportunities require a high school diploma and do not recognize a certificate.
- Once a diploma is given, a district's obligations are completed.

### Related Resources:

- 4-3-3-3 Guidance- Iowa DE
- 4+ Info Sheet
- Transitioniowa.org

### ASK Essential Questions:

- Do I have high expectations for my student and their future?
- What are the specific graduation requirements and policies in my student's school district?
- Is my student predicted to receive a diploma or a certificate?
- What classes does my student need to take to meet the district's graduation requirements?