
Occupational Diploma, Rule

The Background:

Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-6001(g) requires the State Board of Education to adopt, in addition to a full diploma, a certificate of attendance, or a special education diploma, an occupational diploma for students with disabilities. The Board is required to set appropriate standards and benchmarks of attendance, academic achievement, and job readiness skills for the occupational diploma. A student will not be required to comply with the testing requirements set forth by the Board pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-6001(a) for receipt of a full diploma in order to receive an occupational diploma.

The following State Board of Education staff, Department of Education staff, representatives of advocacy groups and school districts met and developed a proposed rule amendment:

Alison Gauld, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Angela Webster, Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee
Bill Wilson, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Carry Hobbs Guiden, The Arc Tennessee
Cindy DaCosta, Tullahoma City Schools
Crystal Godwin, UT Center for Literacy, Education & Employment
Cynthia Cheshier, Oak Ridge City Schools
Danielle Mezera, TN Department of Education, Career and Technical Education
David Sevier, TN State Board of Education
Erik Carter, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
Gary Nixon, TN State Board of Education
Gayle Feltner, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
George Kington, Cumberland County Schools
Joey Ellis, Step TN
Joey Hassell, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Karen Baynham Curry, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Kyle Hauth, Orange Grove Center
Loria Hubbard Richardson, The Arc Tennessee
Melvin Jackson, UT Center for Literacy, Education & Employment - Boling Center for
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Mitzi Delker, Hamilton County Department of Education
Nathan Travis, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Pablo Juarez, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
Pat Beane, Shelby Co. Schools
Scott Eddins, TN State Board of Education
Sebrena St. Johns, Washington County Schools
Souette Lee Quinn, Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools
Steve Sparks, TN Department of Education, Special Populations

Suzanne Keefe, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Tammy Hatfield, Tullahoma City Schools
Teresa Kirk, TN Department of Human Services
Tie Hodack, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Treva Maitland, The Tennessee ARC
Wanda Willis, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends acceptance of this item on first reading.
The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.

Proposed Rule Revision

Rule 0520-01-03-.06(1)(a) Graduation, Requirement E is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

3. An occupational diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth year of high school to students with disabilities who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program, (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct, and (4) have completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) created by the department and have completed two (2) years of paid or non-paid work experience. The determination that an occupational diploma is the goal for a student with a disability will be made at the conclusion of the student's tenth (10th) grade year or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who obtain the occupational diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.