

# QUICK GUIDE: GRADUATION

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

As the IEP team begins secondary transition planning starting no later than with the IEP that will be in effect when the student turns 16, it is essential that they consider how the student will access instruction and demonstrate progress toward Idaho graduation requirements.

There are two paths to graduation for students with disabilities:

1. Complete graduation requirements by meeting state standards with or without accommodations
2. Complete adapted graduation requirements based on criteria established by the IEP team

QUESTION	RESPONSE
Can a student with a disability participate in a special education class for one or more core subjects and still meet graduation requirements by meeting state standards with or without accommodations?	<p><b>Yes.</b> There may be times when a student is most appropriately served in the special education setting for one or more core subjects. If the grade-level standards are still being addressed and the course maintains the level of rigor required by the standards, the course will still “count” toward graduation with accommodations. In this case, instructional strategies and/or assessment methods may look different than what is taking place in a general education classroom.</p> <p>The IEP team must ensure the student is accessing content that will allow them to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the Idaho Content Standards in the applicable subject.</p>
If a student with a disability walks in a graduation ceremony with their peers, is this considered graduating?	<p><b>No.</b> Participation in a graduation ceremony does not equate to meeting graduation requirements. A student graduates when they meet graduation requirements with or without accommodations, receive a diploma, and are coded as having graduated by the district.</p> <p>Many students participate in the graduation ceremony with peers, then participate in the district’s 18-21 program. Unless the student has been exited and the district has coded the student as having graduated, then the student can participate in the district’s 18-21 program.</p>
If a student exits special education because they have reached the age of 21, is this considered graduation?	<p><b>No.</b> This would be considered completion of the adapted requirements through criteria established by the IEP team and the student would no longer be eligible to receive special education services in the PK-12 setting under IDEA (reached maximum age).</p> <p>These students would be coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>04-Reached Maximum Age OR</i></li> <li>• <i>02-Completed Adapted Requirements</i></li> </ul>

QUESTION	RESPONSE
<p>If a student exits special education because they have reached the age of 21, is this considered graduation?</p>	<p><b>No.</b> This would be considered completion of the adapted requirements through criteria established by the IEP team and the student would no longer be eligible to receive special education services in the PK-12 setting under IDEA (reached maximum age).</p> <p>These students would be coded as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>04-Reached Maximum Age OR</i></li> <li>• <i>02-Completed Adapted Requirements</i></li> </ul>
<p>If a student receives a high school diploma based on adapted requirements, are they still eligible to return to school until the semester they turn 21?</p>	<p><b>Possibly.</b> If the student completes adapted requirements through criteria established by the IEP team and has not met graduation requirements (with or without accommodations), as long as they continue to be eligible for special education and related services, they are eligible to return to the educational setting until the end of the semester they turn 21 or until they have met the Idaho standards. This would be an IEP team decision.</p>
<p>When should IEP teams determine if a student should graduate using adapted or regular requirements and what should the team take into consideration?</p>	<p>The student’s course of study, including whether they will complete regular or adapted graduation requirements, is a required component of a transition IEP, beginning with the IEP that will be in effect when the student turns 16. The student’s IEP team should consider the student’s IEP goals, postsecondary goals, transition services, disability impact, and present levels of academic and functional performance. Because adapted graduation requirements alter the rigor expected of the student, they are appropriate for those students who are not able to access and make progress in the general education curriculum without changes to course content, objectives, and/or grading standards. Adaptations may “not include exempting or excluding the student from an opportunity to pursue or meet the Idaho Content Standards” (Idaho Special Education Manual, Ch. 7, Sec. 2A).</p> <p>Teams must consider long-term consequences for the student when adaptations are made to graduation requirements. Completion of adapted requirements entitles the student to FAPE through the end of the semester in which they turn 21 (see question and answer above). Therefore, the team must consider whether participation in the LEA’s 18-21 program is an appropriate component of the student’s secondary program and is aligned with their postsecondary goals.</p>

## EXIT CODING

As you complete Program Exit coding, be sure to reference the resource [Reporting Special Education Data in ISEE](#) to ensure you are using the correct exit code.

**Remember:** *Written Notice* must be provided to parents/adult student whenever a district is proposing or refusing to initiate or change identification, evaluation, educational placement, or provision of FAPE to a student. Exiting a student from special education constitutes a change in placement.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION GRADUATION AND EXIT EXAMPLES

### Scenario 1

#### IF...

Matt is a student diagnosed with a Specific Learning Disability in reading comprehension. He qualifies for an IEP and receives services in the area of reading comprehension. Matt has completed all regular graduation requirements.

#### THEN...

Matt will participate with his class in the school's graduation ceremony and will receive his high school diploma. Because Matt has met state standards, he no longer has access to FAPE. The district will provide Matt and his parents with a *Summary of Performance*.

- Matt will be exited from Special Education with the code *01-Graduated-Met State Standards*.
- Matt's ISEE district exit code will be *4A-Graduated-Met State Standards*.
- Matt is no longer entitled to FAPE.

### Scenario 2

#### IF...

Joshua is a student with an Intellectual Disability. He qualifies for Special Education and is on an IEP. Joshua receives services in a self-contained Special Education classroom. His services include functional academics, life skills, and pre-vocational skills. Joshua is a senior and the IEP team has determined that he will continue receiving services in the district's 18-21 program in the fall. His graduation requirements will be determined by his IEP team.

#### THEN...

Joshua will participate in the school's graduation ceremony with his peers. He will not receive his diploma at this time. The diploma will be awarded to Joshua after he completes the requirements for graduation as determined by his IEP team.

- Joshua will not be exited from Special Education at this time. He will be exited from Special Education when he meets the IEP graduation requirements as *02-Completed-Adapted Requirements*.
- Joshua will not be disenrolled from the District until he completes his graduation requirements as determined by the IEP team.
- At that time, his ISEE district exit code will be *4C-Completed-Adapted Requirements*.

### Scenario 3

#### IF...

Sarah is a student with an Emotional Behavioral Disorder. She has average or above-average test scores in academic areas. She is on an IEP as her disability prevents her from successfully completing grade-level work in a general education classroom. She receives services in the area of social/emotional support and is on a behavior plan. Sarah dropped out of school for a year between her freshman and sophomore years and again between her junior and senior years. Sarah and her IEP team determined that she would graduate by meeting regular graduation requirements. She has 42 credits and her district requires 52 credits to graduate. Sarah needed 10 credits, all of those in core content areas. She turned 21 in October and only passed 3 classes during the fall semester. She did not meet the district's graduation requirements.

#### THEN...

Sarah will not participate in the school's graduation ceremony. The district will provide Sarah with a Summary of Performance and Written Notice.

- Sarah's Special Education exit will be coded as *04-Reached Maximum Age*.
- Sarah's ISEE district exit code will be *3B-Reached Maximum Age*.

### Scenario 4

#### IF...

Christy is a student diagnosed with ADHD and qualifies for Special Education under the category Other Health Impairment. She receives services in the areas of reading, math, and academic support. Christy obtained full-time employment at the age of 17 and chose to drop out of school. The Special Education teacher and counselor reached out to Christy and her parents to express their concerns with her dropping out and offered to hold an IEP meeting to address Christy's needs. Christy and her family refused a meeting and confirmed the dropout status by officially withdrawing her from school.

#### THEN...

- Christy will be exited from Special Education with the code *05-Dropped Out*.
- Christy's ISEE district exit code will be *3A-Confirmed Drop Out*.
- If Christy re-enrolls, she may be entitled to FAPE until she meets state standards for graduation or until the semester in which she turns 21 years old, whichever occurs first.

## Scenario 5

### IF...

Cody is a student with a Speech Impairment. Services listed on his IEP are academic support and speech/language therapy. He just turned 18 and has decided, with his parents' support, to withdraw from his high school and attend a local GED test preparation program. He plans to get his GED in the next 3 to 6 months, then obtain full time work. Cody and his parents have completed the school withdrawal paperwork and have confirmed his enrollment in the GED prep program.

### THEN...

- Cody will be exited from Special Education with the code *05-Dropped Out*.
- Cody's ISEE district exit code will be *3D-Transfer to Adult Education*.
- If Cody reenrolls, he may be entitled to FAPE until he meets state standards for graduation or until the semester in which he turns 21 years old, whichever occurs first.

For additional information on similar scenarios see:

- Idaho Code 08.02.01.650 (GED)
- Idaho GED Testing Youth Waiver Request Form: *"A person must be at least 16 years of age and not currently enrolled in an accredited high school, either full or part-time, in order to qualify to take the GED in Idaho."*
- [Reporting Special Education Data in ISEE](#), page 21 ("Dropout" definition)

## Scenario 6

### IF...

Katie is a 17-year-old student receiving services on an IEP under the disability category Other Health Impairment. Her parents have decided that she no longer needs to receive services, even though the IEP team has determined she continues to qualify. Katie's parents provided the district with a written note revoking their consent for Katie to receive Special Education Services.

### THEN...

- Katie will be exited from Special Education with the code *09-Revoked Consent*.
- She will continue high school as a general education student.

## Scenario 7

### IF...

Tanner is a 17-year-old student with autism who receives special education services. During his senior year, he is participating in general education English with a modified curriculum. Previous coursework included resource room English and Math using a replacement curriculum. Tanner's parents and IEP team have determined that he will graduate with adapted requirements listed in his IEP. Tanner and his parents have decided that after he receives his diploma with his graduating class, he will seek employment, choosing not to continue with the 18-21 program offered by the district (this should be documented in *Written Notice*, including that the LEA stands ready and willing to provide FAPE if he chooses to re-enroll).

### THEN...

Tanner may participate in the school's graduation ceremony with his peers and will receive his diploma at this time.

- Tanner may be disenrolled from the District as he has completed graduation requirements as determined by the IEP team. His ISEE district exit code will be *4C-Completed-Adapted Requirements*.
- Tanner remains entitled to FAPE until he meets state standards for graduation or until the semester in which he turns 21 years old, whichever occurs first.

## RESOURCES

[2024 Special Education Manual](#) (Chapter 7)

[Enrollment Quick Guide](#)

[Idaho Attendance and Enrollment User Guide](#)

[Reporting Special Education Data in ISEE](#)