

DIFFERENTIATED DIPLOMA PATHWAY (DDP) POLICY AND PROCESS

Policy **3460-R**

The Board is committed to every student being provided the necessary tools to become productive citizens, to gain meaningful employment and to further his/her education. A Differentiated Diploma Pathway gives an option to students who are at risk of dropping out of school.

This pathway allows students with specific eligibility requirements to graduate with a North Carolina Future-Ready Core Diploma of 21 or 22 credits. Differentiated Diploma Pathway candidates would be students who demonstrate at-risk characteristics that may threaten their potential to graduate.

Expectations for All Rising Ninth Grade Students

All students will begin high school with a four-year plan to earn a 28-credit diploma. All students must meet North Carolina graduation requirements and exit standards.

Candidacy for Differentiated Diploma Pathway

A student seeking permission to pursue a Differentiated Diploma must demonstrate characteristics that put him/her at risk for not graduating from high school. The following at-risk characteristics, with evidence, will be considered as valid reasons for meeting the criteria for candidacy:

- Behind peers by one year (age, credits, achievement) with at least one of the three conditions below
 - o Chronic academic failures
 - o Chronic attendance/truancy- 11+ absences
 - o Chronic behavior problems
- Chronic substance abuse: Students who have been in treatment within the last year and have a substance abuse counselor's recommendation for differentiated diploma.
- Depression/Mental Health Issues: Must be diagnosed by qualified medical professional
- Parenting Teens with parental responsibilities
- Homelessness as defined by McKinney-Vento Act
- Transience, Run-away, Undisciplined Juveniles
- Major/severe medical issues

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The student's transcript, discipline record, Personal Education Plan (PEP) and attendance record must be reviewed as part of the application and screening process. Students must have received appropriate interventions to address their risk factors for academic failure, including a PEP, prior to being considered for a Differentiated Diploma.

A student must be at least 16 years old and enrolled in high school for at least a full academic year before he/she may be considered for a Differentiated Diploma. Students cannot apply after first grading period of the second semester of the senior year. After undertaking the Differentiated Diploma Pathway, students must attend one semester and take at least two classes. A student must pass at least two classes in his/her final semester of high school.

No more than 5% of the graduating class will be considered for a differentiated diploma process. This percentage will be calculated based on the current enrollment at the time of the approved differentiated diploma. In rare circumstances, the superintendent may waive the maximum cap.

Differentiated Diploma Academic Requirements (North Carolina Future-Ready Core)

Students entering ninth grade in 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 must obtain the following credits in order to secure a Differentiated Diploma (21 credits):

- Four (4) credits of English
- Four (4) credits of Mathematics
- Three (3) credits of Social Studies
- Three (3) credits of Science
- One (1) credit of Health/Physical Education
- Six (6) Elective credits to include
 - Two (2) credits from Career/Technical Education (CTE), Arts Education or World Languages
 - Four (4) credits Concentration (recommended)

Students entering ninth grade in 2012-2013 must obtain the following credits in order to secure a Differentiated Diploma (22 credits):

- Four (4) credits of English

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- Four (4) credits of Mathematics
- Four (4) credits of Social Studies
- Three (3) credits of Science
- One (1) credit of Health/Physical Education
- Six (6) Elective credits to include
 - o Two (2) credits from Career/Technical Education (CTE), Arts Education or World Languages
 - o Four (4) credits Concentration (recommended)

At any time, students may choose to re-enter the 28-credit Future Ready Core course of study. Students who earn 21 or 22 credits and meet North Carolina

State graduation requirements may participate in graduation exercises and receive a full diploma.

Referral and Decision Process for the Differentiated Diploma

School counselors, teachers, parents and administrators may refer a student for the Differentiated Diploma option provided the student meets the eligibility requirements using the “Referral for Consideration.”

Once referred, the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) (unless the student is an adult or emancipated minor) must participate in a documented meeting with the student’s school counselor to review the student’s transcript and graduation options.

If the student, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school counselor agree the Differentiated Diploma is the best course of action, they will complete the “Student Referral and Agreement Form.”

A designated school committee will evaluate the referral form and make a recommendation to the principal. The committee will secure all necessary signatures and submit the form to the principal for approval.

The principal will approve or deny the committee’s recommendation. If the principal approves the committee’s recommendation, the principal will submit the request to the district-level

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committee. The Deputy Superintendent for Operations will secure the approval/disapproval of the Superintendent.

The student, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), the student's counselor and the principal at the student's school will be notified within five school days of the final decision. The counselor will give written notice.

Once accepted for a Differentiated Diploma Pathway, the student, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school counselor must write a graduation plan outlining the courses needed, a schedule for completing the courses and, if appropriate, an amendment to the PEP for academic and/or behavioral support.

Adopted: October 6, 2014