

Save the Date!

Zones of Regulation. May 8th.
Register on the CRP Website.

*Substitutes are not provided for this training.
Please use your own PD funds to attend this training.*

Executive Function in Learners
with Disabilities: Strategies for
Success. May 15th and 16th. Register
on the CRP Website.

*Substitutes are not provided for this training.
Please use your own PD funds to attend this training.*

PPS Autism Services



May 2014

Thinking About Modified Diplomas

Contact your Autism Consultant

Lauren Page

lpag@pps.net

Autism Consultant TOSA

On maternity Leave

Rebekka Baker

rbaker2@pps.net

Autism Consultant

Jennifer Caslavka

jcaslavk@pps.net

Autism Consultant

Carlyn Eames

ceames@pps.net

Autism Consultant

Keith Early

kearly@pps.net

Autism Consultant

Chantelle King

cking3@pps.net

Autism Para-Educator Coach

Jeremy Sloan

jsloan@pps.net

Autism Para-Educator Coach

Students with ASD may graduate with a standard diploma, as do the majority of students attending public school, or with a modified diploma. Modified diplomas have been an option in Oregon since 2007. They were introduced through the legislature as an alternate avenue to graduation for students with disabilities. That said, there are long-term implications for this decision. Parents and school staff need to understand all of the pluses and minuses when considering program planning.

This newsletter will share some of the research on the long-term outcomes of individuals with ASD, address basic information about what modified diplomas are, how they affect an individual's future opportunities and how we as educators make decisions that impact a student's opportunities in elementary, middle and high school.

Much of the content in this newsletter is from the following sources. Each goes into far more detail about the ideas discussed:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2047>

<http://drexel.edu/now/news-media/releases/archive/2013/September/Autism-Spectrum-Young-Adult-Transition-Studies/>

Long Term Outcomes

When parents are asked about their hopes and dreams for their children, most say their goals include: independence, employment, and happiness. Unfortunately, research indicates that adults with autism struggle in making those dreams a reality.

Living independently with ASD:

Members of the autism spectrum disorder group were less likely to have ever lived elsewhere and more likely to live under supervision since leaving high school compared to persons with emotional disturbances and learning disabilities.

<http://aut.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/08/30/1362361313481860>

Employment outcomes for people with ASD:

- Approximately one-half (53.4%) of young adults with an ASD had ever worked for pay outside the home since leaving high school, the lowest rate among disability groups.
- Young adults with an ASD earned an average of \$8.10 per hour, significantly lower than average wages for young adults in the comparison groups, and held jobs that clustered within fewer occupational types.
- Odds of ever having had a paid job were higher for those who were older, from higher-income households, and with better conversational abilities or functional skills.

Findings of worse employment outcomes for young adults with an ASD suggest that this population is experiencing particular difficulty in successfully transitioning into employment. Research is needed to determine strategies for improving outcomes as these young adults transition into adulthood.

<http://www.jaacap.com/article/S0890-8567%2813%2900377-8/abstract>

Rates of depression among people with ASD:

The researchers found that the percentage of children with autism rated by their parents as sometimes to very often contemplating or attempting suicide was 28 times greater than that of typical children, though three times less than that of depressed non-autistic children. The four demographic variables were significant risk factors, as well.”

Students with ASD may graduate with a standard diploma, as do the majority of students attending public school, or with a modified diploma. Modified diplomas have been an option in Oregon since 2007. They were introduced through the legislature as an alternate avenue to graduation for students with disabilities. That said, there are long-term implications for this decision. Parents and school staff need to understand all of the pluses and minuses when considering program planning.

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/aspergers-diary/201303/new-research-autism-and-suicide>

Modified Diplomas

Information from the ODE Website

What is a modified diploma?

A modified diploma is a high school completion document that may be earned by students who have demonstrated an inability to meet the full set of academic content standards required for a regular high school diploma, even with reasonable accommodations. To be eligible for a modified diploma, a student must have a documented history of an inability to maintain grade level achievement due to significant learning and instructional barriers, or a documented history of a medical condition that creates a barrier to achievement.

Why would a student earn a modified diploma instead of a regular high school diploma?

A student may not be able to meet the full set of academic content standards, even with reasonable accommodations, but may be able to fulfill all requirements for the modified diploma as described in state, district and school policies. The Modified Diploma requires 24 units of credit. Credits may be earned through modified courses, regular education courses (with or without accommodations or modifications), or a combination of these two types of courses.

Academic Subject	Credits Required for Graduation with a Modified Diploma	Credits Required for Graduation with a Standard Diploma
English/Language Arts	2	4
Mathematics	2	3 (all credits must be Algebra 1 and above)
Science	2	3 (2 of the credits require lab experience)
Social Sciences	2	3
Physical Education	1	1
Health	1	1
Second Languages / the Arts / Career & Technical Education	1	3
Electives	12	6
Total Credits	24	24

How does a modified diploma impact students after graduation?

Are modified diplomas accepted by four-year universities or community colleges?

Most four-year universities do not accept a modified diploma; however, an appeal may be considered by some universities. Community college courses are available to students who have a modified diploma. At the community college level, all new, non-transfer freshmen are required to take a placement exam that indicates course levels required in reading, language arts (comprehension and writing) and mathematics. Community colleges offer remedial courses that do not count toward college credit.

Is the modified diploma accepted by the military?

Some branches of the military may accept a modified diploma. Acceptance depends on the current needs of the military; however, criteria may change quickly. Students and their parents should check with recruiters to determine if a modified diploma is currently being accepted. All branches of the service have minimum scores required for entry on a placement test called the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).

Will students who receive a modified diploma be eligible for federal or state financial aid at a post secondary institution?

In July, 2009 the United States Department of Education (USDE), responded to a written request from the Oregon Department of Education regarding whether the Oregon Modified Diploma meets the high school diploma requirement for Federal student aid eligibility. **The USDE stated that the Oregon Modified Diploma does not meet this eligibility requirement.** However, as an alternative to having a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, a student may establish eligibility for Federal student financial aid by passing an independently administered ability to benefit test approved by the Department of Education.

But I teach elementary (or middle) school. Why does this apply to me? How do educational decisions made in elementary and middle school impact access to a standard diploma?

- All students on Extended Assessments are on a modified track.
- If students are on an Extended Assessment inappropriately, they are on track for a modified diploma regardless of age. A student who is 2 grade levels below should be taking the OAKS.
- If students' math skills aren't on track, and they aren't able to start high school in Algebra 1, they are on track for a modified diploma.
- Gaps in students' skills need to be addressed as early as possible (even kindergarten!) in order for students to have the best opportunity to access a standard diploma. Teams are encouraged to consider a wide range of supports and accommodations prior to modifying work.

Modified diplomas are *inappropriate* for students who are:

- of average intelligence
- struggling in only one academic area (i.e. math)
- on this track due to things that can be heavily accommodated (organization, attendance)
- within a reasonable range of meeting essential skills for graduation. (i.e. within 10 points of meeting on OAKS) In this case offer a work sample in lieu of a modified.

References from the ASD Library:

Different... Not Less, by Temple Grandin, Ph.D.

The Ziggurat Model, by Ruth Aspy, Ph.D., and Barry G. Grossman, Ph. D.

