

Alternate Pathway to Graduation Questions and Answers

May we use Course Codes more than once for a student who is staying past his four-year cohort?

- Course codes may be used more than once. Change the section so there will be no confusion. (Change the last digit of the course code.)

~~Do students on the alternate pathway have to have a Digital Course?~~

- ~~• Yes, the DESE Virtual Arkansas Visual Art Exploration course may be used to fulfill this requirement, or another course may be chosen from the [Approved Digital Providers](#) list.~~

As of August 1, 2023, the digital course is no longer a requirement.

Must a student on the alternate pathway meet the Computer Science requirement?

- Yes, the new requirement for all students went into effect in the 2022-2023 school year.
- [Computer Science Alternate Achievement Standards](#)
- [Computer Science Resource document](#)
- Current 9th & 10th graders (2023-24) will be required to meet the computer science requirement in order to graduate on the Alternate Pathway to Graduation. The standards should be embedded within 11th or 12th grade Math Exploration.
- Information will be added on the [Computer Science page](#) and to our Alternate Pathway Requirements page.

Do students on the alternate pathway have to take the Civics test?

- All students with IEPs should be given the opportunity to participate in the Civics Exam; however, the [AR Civics Exam Policy Document](#) (**updated 2024**) states:
 - The requirement to test will not apply to a student who “is exempted in accordance with the student's individualized education program (IEP).** ** For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the IEP team may determine, as guided by data, that there are “not supports available to allow the student access to the Arkansas Civics Exam.” Requests to exempt should be made primarily for students that are, or have been, participating in the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) online assessment, Arkansas’ alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) in grades 3-10.”
- If an IEP team makes this determination, the decision must be documented on the IEP. The decision could be documented in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) section. A District’s DTC must complete the [AR Civics Exemption Form](#).
- Educators are encouraged to allow all students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to participate in the Civics Exam. The [AR Civics Exam Policy Document](#) details the many accommodations that are available.

Do students on the alternate pathway count as graduates for the ESSA School Index?

- Yes, students who complete the alternate pathway to graduation count as graduates for ESSA.

Do students on the alternate pathway count as graduates in our data for our Annual Performance Report (APR)?

- They do not. IDEA states that only students on the regular graduation path will count as graduates for the APR.

Will the students receive a diploma?

- Yes, if the student fulfills the requirements for the alternate pathway to graduation, the student will receive a diploma. The alternate pathway will be indicated by the courses on the student's transcript. The student may receive the same diploma as any other student.

Where on the IEP should we document the graduation pathway for upcoming ninth graders?

- The decision should be noted in the Alternate Pathway to Graduation field on the IEP.
- Parents should sign this document each year.
- If the student isn't a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities, or if the student isn't in a grade in which the decision is made, the team would mark *Not Applicable*.

For a student who has a primary disability of SLD, do we leave this section of the IEP blank; as they do not have a cognitive disability?

- Only complete the section for students who have a most significant cognitive disability. For all others, mark *Not Applicable*.

What will happen if a parent won't allow a student to participate in the alternate pathway to graduation?

- Unless the student graduates by participating in the general pathway to graduation, he would not meet the graduation requirements and could receive a certificate of completion or attendance.
- It is up to the district whether or not to award a certificate. If the student does not meet all graduation requirements and is given a certificate, the student will not count as a graduate for the district.

Can the Health & Safety standards be used for more than one course (more than one year) if the student is staying past his four-year cohort?

- The standards could be embedded in other courses, or
- There could be more than one Health & Safety class if the student is staying longer. Use a different section and change the last number of the course code.

If a student on the alt path will stay longer than his 4-year cohort, may he walk in graduation with his cohort?

- Yes, the district may allow a student to walk in graduation with his or her cohort and then return the following fall. It is a district decision.

Will students with severe deficits who cannot participate in school tasks receive a certificate instead of a diploma?

- The IEP Team will determine if a student will participate in the Alternate Pathway.
- The district should strive to address the student's needs, including communication, to help the student access instruction.
- If the student does not participate in the alternate pathway or regular pathway, the student will not receive a diploma.
- The school should strive to support students to earn the required credits in order to graduate by participating in this pathway.
- Students on the alternate pathway may remain in school until the school year that they turn 21 (and still be counted as a graduate) which would allow more time to meet the alternate pathway requirements.
- It is up to the district whether or not they award certificates. There may be some students who do not attain the required credits on the alternate pathway. Those students may be awarded a certificate.
- One thing to consider is that the IEP team may determine mastery for a student.

Can a student who is in self-contained classes graduate with general ed credits?

- Beginning with the 2019-20 School Year, incoming freshmen with IEPs who are not participating in Smart Core must either meet the requirements for the core pathway or alternate pathway in order to graduate. To pursue the Alternate Pathway to Graduation, the student must have a significant cognitive disability and meet the criteria for and participate in the state's alternate assessment.
- Currently, districts may award credit toward the regular graduation pathway for special classes if the instruction is aligned to grade-level standards. This will begin changing in 2026.
- Students on the alternate pathway to graduation may earn credits in Exploration classes, special classes, or general education classes (with modifications).

Since course codes are no longer tied to assessment, how do we indicate that a student will participate in the alternate assessment?

- There is an Alternate Assessment Field in eSchool
 - Mark **NA** (Not Applicable) for students who participate in the general assessment. This is the default setting.
 - Mark **ALMS** (Alternate Literacy, Math, and Science) for students who participate in the DLM.
 - Mark **AELP** for students in grades K-2 or grades 11-12 who are English Learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
 - Mark **BOTH** for English learners in grades 3-10 who participate in DLM.
 - Mark **PAAHS** to indicate a non-English Learner currently in **grade 11 or 12** who took DLM in Grade 10, has the alternate pathway flag indicated, and does not need to be tested in grades 11-12.

How do we indicate in eSchool that a student will participate in the Alternate Pathway to Graduation?

- In order to code a student as participating in the Alternate Pathway to Graduation, the appropriate field must be marked in eSchool on the *SIS/Misc Items* screen.

- Pulls in Cycles 2-7

Must a student on the alternate pathway take only courses for that pathway?

- No, students on the alternate pathway may earn credits in alt pathway courses, resource courses, or general education courses (with modified curriculum).

What course codes do we use for the alternate pathway?

- The courses on the third page of [this document](#) show the course codes for Exploration courses.
- But, students on this pathway may receive credit toward graduation in general education classes or resource classes as well.

Will students on the Alternate Pathway be required to have instruction aligned to the computer science requirement?

- Yes. The ninth and tenth graders in the 2023-2024 school year who are on the alternate pathway will need to have instruction aligned to the Alternate Achievement Standards for Computer Science. That instruction should be embedded in 11th or 12th grade Math Exploration
- [Computer Science Alt Standards](#)
- [Computer Science Alt Resource Doc](#)