

Alternative Pathway to a Diploma



Ed Code 51225.31 on January 1st, 2023

(a) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, a local educational agency shall exempt an individual with exceptional needs who satisfies the eligibility criteria described in subdivision (b) from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board or governing body of the local educational agency that are additional to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Section 51225.3 and shall award the pupil a diploma of graduation from high school, as described in Section 7801(23)(A)(ii)(I)(bb) of Title 20 of the United States Code.

Unpacking Ed Code 51225.31

(a) (1) Notwithstanding any other law, a local educational agency shall exempt an individual with exceptional needs who satisfies the eligibility criteria described in subdivision (b)

Every school district, charter school or Non-Public School (NPS) must adopt an Alternative Pathway that leads to a High School Diploma..

This pathway is intended for the most impacted students who have historically been considered “mod-severe” (now referred to as needing ESN support) and on a Certificate of Completion pathway.

LEAs will establish an internal process to track the student’s progress on this pathway.

Unpacking Ed Code 51225.31

from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board or governing body of the local educational agency that are additional to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Section 51225.3

Students will need to meet CA State graduation requirements. Students on this pathway do not need to meet other LEA adopted requirements for a diploma, such as A-G requirements.

Students will need to be enrolled in an alternative diploma pathway either via inclusion in general education or in an SDC Program with appropriate courses.

Graduation Requirements for Alternative Pathway

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hmgrmin.asp>

Unless otherwise specified, each course shall have a duration of one school year:

- Three courses in [English](#)
- Two courses in [mathematics](#), including one year of Algebra I (*EC* Section 51224.5)
- Two courses in [science](#), including biological and physical sciences
- Three courses in [social studies](#), including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics, and a one-semester course in economics
- One course in [visual or performing arts](#), [world language](#), or commencing with the 2012-13 school year, career technical education.
- Two courses in [physical education](#), unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of *EC* Section 51241

Sample Pathway for an SDC Program

EC 51225.3	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
3 - English Courses	Fundamental English 9	Fundamental English 10	Fundamental English 11	Fundamental English 12 or “elective”
2 Math incl. Algebra unless waived	Math 1 or Algebra	Math 2	Fundamental Math 11 or Consumer Math	Fundamental Math 12 or Math for Life
2 Science Courses: incl. biology and physical science	Fundamental Biology	Fundamental Physical Science	Alt Science in Everyday Life or “elective”	Career Awareness & Exploration
3 - Social Studies Courses	Life Skills or “elective”	Geography/World History and Current Events HS	Alt US History	US Government & Economics or Elective
1 - Elective from VPA, World Language and/or CTE	General Education Elective	Independent Living Skills I	Independent Living Skills II	Vocational Skills or Job Shadow
EC Section 51241: (2) Courses in PE	Physical Education or APE	Physical Education or APE	Communication & Social Skills or	Communication & Social Skills or

Alternative Pathway - Who is eligible?

- To qualify for this pathway, students must be eligible to take the CAA, as indicated in their IEP.
- If these students are also English Language Learners, the IEP team should consider the Alternative ELPAC along with the CAA at the IEP meeting.



Resources – California Alternative Assessments

- CAA Assessment Fact Sheet

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/caaelafactsheet.pdf>

- CDE CAA information

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/altassessment.asp>

- Alternative Assessment IEP Team Guidance

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caaiepteamrev.asp>

- Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool for California

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/documents/altassessmentdecision.pdf>

Content Standards



- For students taking the CAA, the content of the alternative pathway to a diploma courses is derived from the common core state standards (CCSS).
- Students should access, by ability, either the **CCSS, Common Core Connectors** or **Essential Understanding** of the standard.
- **Core Connectors & Essential Understanding Rubric for Reading, Writing, and Math**

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/altassessment.asp>

Alternative Pathway

(2) In accordance with Section 300.102(a)(3) of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the award of a **diploma of graduation from high school pursuant to this subdivision** does not change a local educational agency's obligation to provide a free appropriate public education or otherwise constitute a change in placement.

The LEA is still responsible for FAPE until the student is 22 years of age for students on the Alternative Diploma Pathway.



The Algebra/ Int. Math 1 Question

Q. Do special education students have to meet this requirement?

A. Special education students have to meet the Algebra I/Mathematics I graduation requirement. In order to earn a high school diploma, students in special education are required to pass a course or combination of courses based on all Algebra I or Mathematics I content standards.

The Algebra I or Mathematics I content standards are the same for all students; however, some students in special education may require accommodations or modifications to instruction. The individualized education program (IEP) team determines the type of instruction appropriate for each student. For students whose IEP team has determined they are pursuing an alternative diploma pathway as described in 51225.31, they are required to pass coursework for Algebra I or Mathematics 1 coursework aligned to the state standards

Can a waiver be filed for special education students with regards to the Algebra I/Mathematics I graduation requirement?

From CDE: Under *EC* Section 56101, the governing board of a district or county office of education or a Special Education Local Plan Area may request the State Board of Education (SBE) to grant a waiver for individual students from all or part of the Algebra I/Mathematics I graduation requirement. However, the review and approval of these waivers will be stringent. For additional information, including the online waiver process, see the [Specific Waiver Request web page](#) and [Waiver Process for the State Board of Education](#).

New IEP Procedural Requirements Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) CA ED CODE 51225.3

Before the Student Commences Grade 10

- Student's IEP team **must determine and notify the Student's Parent/Guardian** whether the student may be eligible to graduate with a high school diploma.

Based on Ed. Code language:

- The Pupil is required to take the CAA in grade 11th grade
AND
- Is required to complete state standards **aligned** coursework meeting the CA statewide minimum coursework requirements specified in Section 51225.31
 - Common Core Connectors
 - English Language Development Connectors for alternative ELPAC

Planning for the Alternative Pathway

- Realistically, the IEP team will need to discuss the student's course of study earlier than 10th grade.
- **There are required 9th and 10th grade courses that they will need to take.**
- Planning should begin **prior to high school** as the middle school courses are foundational for this course of study.



Aligning School Systems

Adding this alternative pathway may require that the schools' **Student Information System and Master Schedules** be updated to reflect the new pathway requirements.

LEAs may need to consider how **report cards and transcripts** currently note that the student accessed a non-A-G or college bound curriculum, and use that to guide this new pathway process.

Course descriptions and course catalogues may need to be updated to reflect changes to meet the alt-pathway requirements including standards alignment and progression towards a high school diploma.