
Occupational Diploma, Rule

The Background:

Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-6001(g) requires the State Board of Education to adopt, in addition to a full diploma, a certificate of attendance, or a special education diploma, an occupational diploma for students with disabilities. The Board is required to set appropriate standards and benchmarks of attendance, academic achievement, and job readiness skills for the occupational diploma. A student will not be required to comply with the testing requirements set forth by the Board pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-6001(a) for receipt of a full diploma in order to receive an occupational diploma.

The following State Board of Education staff, Department of Education staff, representatives of advocacy groups, and school districts met and developed a proposed rule amendment:

Pat Beane, Shelby Co. Schools
Erik Carter, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
Cynthia Cheshier, Oak Ridge City Schools
Karen Baynham Curry, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Cindy DaCosta, Tullahoma City Schools
Mitzi Delker, Hamilton County Department of Education
Scott Eddins, TN State Board of Education
Joey Ellis, Step TN
Gayle Feltner, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Alison Gauld, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Crystal Godwin, UT Center for Literacy, Education & Employment
Carry Hobbs Guiden, The Arc Tennessee
Joey Hassell, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Tammy Hatfield, Tullahoma City Schools
Kyle Hauth, Orange Grove Center
Tie Hodack, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Melvin Jackson, UT Center for Literacy, Education & Employment - Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities
Pablo Juarez, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
Suzanne Keefe, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
George Kington, Cumberland County Schools
Teresa Kirk, TN Department of Human Services
Treva Maitland, The Tennessee ARC
Danielle Mezera, TN Department of Education, Career and Technical Education
Gary Nixon, TN State Board of Education
Souette Lee Quinn, Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools
Loria Hubbard Richardson, The Arc Tennessee
Sebrena St. Johns, Washington County Schools

David Sevier, TN State Board of Education
Steve Sparks, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Nathan Travis, TN Department of Education, Special Populations
Angela Webster, Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee
Wanda Willis, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities
Bill Wilson, TN Department of Education, Special Populations

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.

Proposed Rule Revision

Rule 0520-01-03-.06(1)(a) Graduation, Requirement E is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

3. An occupational diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth year of high school to students with disabilities who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program, (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct, and (4) have completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) created by the department and have completed two (2) years of paid or non-paid work experience. The determination that an occupational diploma is the goal for a student with a disability will be made at the conclusion of the student's tenth (10th) grade year or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who obtain the occupational diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.