

Heading to High School: Choosing a Course of Study

As your child gets ready to attend high school, the IEP Team will make an important decision about the appropriate Course of Study. The IEP Team, which includes you and your child, will consider progress on academic and functional goals, current performance in key areas, interests, and more. As required by IDEA, your child's high school education must prepare them for their future and open the door to a wide range of opportunities! Therefore, all discussions about high school will be grounded in your family's vision for your child's future.

Under North Carolina policy, IEP Teams must discuss the course of study during the year that your child will turn 14 or in the 8th grade. This decision must be reviewed annually, and it is possible to change your student's course of study. Be sure to ask about the implications of changing the course of study as it may have an impact on your student's graduation date, readiness for college, etc.



You can request an IEP meeting to talk about the course of study if your child's school does not schedule one.



If your child may want to attend a four-year university when they graduate, this will determine both the course of study and individual course selection. Be sure to ask questions about college entrance in your IEP meeting.

NC School offers three courses of study:

- 1) Future Ready Core Course of Study: Leads to a NC Diploma
- 2) Occupational Course of Study: Leads to a NC Diploma
- 3) Extended Content Standards: Leads to a Graduation Certificate

The Future Ready Core Course of Study:

This is sometimes called the “Standard Course of Study.” It is the combination of required courses and electives that most students with disabilities will take, and that all students without disabilities take. This course of study is designed to prepare students for careers and for college, and students graduate with a high school diploma.



If your child has a specific learning disability in math that makes it unlikely they can master Math 1, they may be eligible to take alternative math requirements and graduate with a diploma.

Your child's IEP or 504 Plan can provide a wide range of supports and services based on their individual needs. These include specially designed instruction, related services, and accommodations/modifications.

The Occupational Course of Study (OCS):

The Occupational Course of Study meets the needs of a specific group of students with disabilities who need a modified curriculum that prepares them for work and independent living after high school. OCS can be a good fit for students whose academic skills and life skills are well below their age level, including those with mild intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition to required courses in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and PE, students must develop a work portfolio and meet work requirements. These include school-based work activities and a range of paid and unpaid experience in the community. Students on the OCS graduate with a regular high school diploma; however, they will not be eligible to apply to a 4-year university.

The Extended Content Standards:

This option is sometimes called “the extensions” or “adapted curriculum.” It meets the needs of a small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The “extensions” modify the expectations for learning so that students are exposed to the same content that all students learn, as required by federal and state laws. The extended content standards represent an effort to assure a balance of functional and academic skills within the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. They are designed to help students with significant cognitive disabilities to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally, and vocationally.



The first stated purpose of the IDEA, or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and **prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.**

RESOURCES:

NCDPI High School Graduation Requirements

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/high-school-graduation-requirements>

NC OCS Guidelines & Resources

<https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=1996892>

NC Extended Content Standards

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/exceptional-children/resources-unique-needs/significant-cognitive-disabilities/nc-extended-content-standards>

NCDPI Memo Students with SLD and Mathematics Sequence Exemption in the Future-Ready Course of Study

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/11714/download?attachment>



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