



What Everyone Needs to Know About... Course of Study

Courses of study are a multi-year description of coursework and related learning experiences designed to assist a student in developing readiness to achieve post-school goals. The development of a course of study is the combined responsibility of the school counselor, student, family, and, in the case of students eligible for special education, other school professionals familiar with the student’s disability related needs.

What IDEA Says

Definition of individualized Education Program [300.320](#) / b

(b) Transition services. Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually; thereafter, the IEP must include--

- (1)** Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and
- (2)** The transition services (including course of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

Course of Study and the IEP

Every student develops a course of study including classes and other learning experiences that make up the student’s school schedule. Typically, this is accomplished by parents and school counselors in alignment with state and local district requirements. The IDEA does not establish a separate process for students eligible for special education, rather, federal law presumes that eligible students will access and utilize the same school services as all other students and exceptions are only made when the IEP Team determines they are necessary (in order to assure the student receives free appropriate public education).

In some circumstances, IEP Teams are tasked with making decisions about changes to the general education course offerings and accompanying curriculum. During the elementary and middle school years, IEP Teams are advised to be thoughtful and meticulous when making changes to the learning requirements expected of all students. Even subtle changes in the elementary years may have a compounding effect later, with the unintended consequence of leaving the student poorly prepared to achieve Michigan’s rigorous graduation requirements.

When considering curriculum modifications, schools may find it useful to follow recommendations from the [National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials](#) that identifies a continuum of modifications ranging from accommodated to overlapping curriculum.

Accommodated Curriculum	A change to the delivery of instruction or method of student performance that does not change the content or conceptual difficulty of the curriculum.
Adapted Curriculum	A change in the delivery of instruction method and demonstrated knowledge that slightly changes the conceptual difficulty of the curriculum without changing the content.
Parallel Curriculum	Changes to the delivery of instruction and intended student performance that involve significant change to conceptual difficulty.
Overlapping Curriculum	Changes to delivery of instruction and conceptual difficulty of the content that result in partial participation in the general curriculum.

Michigan law requires that all students develop an [Educational Development Plan](#) (EDP) before entering high school as the first step in identifying and aligning the course of study. An EDP is a continuous planning activity that includes personal information, career goals, education/training goals, assessment results, a plan of action and

NOTE: While the content of this page reflects general aspects of the law regarding students with disabilities as of the date of its creation, it is not intended to constitute or serve as legal advice for any particular student scenario. Schools should consult legal counsel for advice with regard to specific situations



consultation/endorsement by parents. School counselors are essential to the EDP development process. When a student has an IEP, essential members of the IEP Team may also contribute to EDP development and the resulting course of study. The EDP is used to inform alignment between career pathways and course of study options such as career technical education, early college and alternative education.

The [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition](#) has developed a number of [sample case studies](#) that highlight the considerations that may go into course of study decisions for students eligible for special education.

Course of Study and Diploma

In Michigan, the granting of a diploma is tied to a student’s achievement of specific state and local district credit requirements. When considering modifications to the learning requirements in a student’s course of study, it is critical that everyone involved be mindful of the potential impact. In general, the more a student’s curriculum is modified, the less likely it is that the graduation requirements will be met.

<u>CURRICULUM TYPE</u>	<u>COURSE OF STUDY TYPE</u>	<u>ALIGNMENT TO STANDARDS</u>	<u>MODIFICATION OPTIONS</u>	<u>END OF SCHOOL OUTCOME</u>	<u>POST-SECONDARY OUTCOMES</u>
No Modifications	International Baccalaureate Advanced Placement	Aligned to State Achievement Standards	Elementary: Counselor, teacher, parents, IEP Team members High School: Personal Curriculum	High School Diploma	College/University Advanced Technical Training Trade School Apprenticeships Entry Level Employment
Accommodated Curriculum	Regular Education Early College Career Technical Education				
Adapted Curriculum	Alternative Education Vocational Education				
Parallel Curriculum	Alternative Education				
Overlapping Curriculum	Basic Classrooms Self – contained Programs Center based Programs Adult Transition Programs & Services	Aligned to Alternate Achievement Standards	IEP Team Determined	Certificate of Completion	Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent • Supported Adult Living <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent • Supported Connections to Community Agencies

Related Resources

[Curriculum Modification: National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum](#)

[School Accommodations and Modifications: OSEP IDEAs That Work](#)

NOTE: While the content of this page reflects general aspects of the law regarding students with disabilities as of the date of its creation, it is not intended to constitute or serve as legal advice for any particular student scenario. Schools should consult legal counsel for advice with regard to specific situations