



Wednesday, December 11, 2024

INDIANAPOLIS -- After more than a year of stakeholder feedback, the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) today unanimously approved the [final diploma rule](#), which is designed to maximize the four years of high school for students.

“We started this process by asking Hoosiers across the state, ‘how might we make the four years of high school as valuable as possible for students and better connect them to their unique future goals,’” said Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education. “Listening to and incorporating significant stakeholder feedback has absolutely led us to a better place from where we started in March to where we are today. This new high school diploma will allow increased flexibility for students to personalize their journey, as well as increase access to both work-based learning and credentials of value.”

Over the past year, Indiana leaders have traveled the state to gather feedback and learn from schools that are working to blur the lines between K-12, higher education and the workforce. These examples served as a model for what new diploma requirements could look like and what is possible in all schools, to remove barriers for students and open doors of future opportunity.

As part of the rulemaking process, state statute requires two rule drafts, each with a 30-day public comment period. Prior to the final draft, adopted by SBOE today, Indiana leaders presented the first and second drafts in March and August, respectively.

During the first public comment period, which took place from March 27 to July 30, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and SBOE received more than 8,000 online comments and heard hours of testimony from stakeholders seeking to improve the high school experience for Indiana students.

The second draft incorporated significant stakeholder feedback and garnered public support as the diploma was streamlined and simplified to include one base diploma with minimum requirements for every student, as well as the opportunity for students to earn readiness seals aligned with their unique path. During the following public comment period, which took place from October 9 to November 8, approximately 1,300 were received. These comments focused primarily on refining the second draft, as consensus around the diploma rule continued to grow.

In the final rule, requirements for the base diploma remain the same as those presented in August. This includes increased flexibility and course options for earning credits in core



content areas, such as English, math, science, social studies, physical education and health. In addition to these core content areas, students will also take personalized electives which can include a variety of courses, such as career and technical education (CTE courses), performing or fine arts and/or world languages.

The majority of the updates between the second draft and the final rule were improvements to the readiness seals, based on feedback from educators, higher education leaders, business and industry as well as the military. With the increased flexibility in the diploma, the readiness seal concept first emerged in June as a way to provide students and parents with a better understanding of a blueprint for success complementing the student's unique goals and aspirations. The readiness seals are designed to be permeable, allowing students to update their graduation plan and pivot throughout their high school journey, if their original interests and goals change.

Indiana leaders worked with external stakeholders to develop two levels for each readiness seal:

- **Enrollment honors** and **Enrollment honors plus** seals - Developed with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, in conjunction with colleges and universities
- **Employment honors** and **Employment honors plus** seals - Developed with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and insights from Ascend Indiana's work with employers, in conjunction with the business representatives across multiple industries
- **Enlistment honors** and **Enlistment honors plus** seals - Developed with the Indiana National Guard, in conjunction with representatives from each military branch, as well as public safety officials

The *honors seals* are similar to the opportunities many Hoosier students have today, such as the current academic honors designation, and are designed to be even more intentional, elevating what truly impacts future success. The *honors plus seals* reflect the opportunities that exist for some Indiana students today, and that Indiana leaders aim to expand access for more students across the state. The *honors plus seals* are designed to increase skill development, work-based learning experiences, as well as opportunities for students to increase their educational attainment by earning a credential of value. Students who earn a readiness seal will automatically fulfill all Graduation Pathways requirements. Students who do not earn a seal must still complete components 2 and 3 of Graduation Pathways.



Throughout 2025, a number of implementation resources and supports will be developed, including:

- Eligible **course titles and descriptions**, by category
- Additional comprehensive work-based learning guidance, including a **landscape analysis**, complementing existing published guidance
- Market-driven **credential of value** list
- **Interactive advising tool** to support local implementation
- Increased flexibility on **who can teach high school and college courses**
- Rulemaking on **new accountability model** aligned to diplomas

Educators and parents are encouraged to submit questions and feedback regarding the implementation process [here](#). This will help to identify areas where additional guidance or clarification may be needed.

“Thank you to the many educators, parents, students, business and industry leaders, community members and other stakeholders who took the time to be a part of this important process,” said Dr. Jenner. “As we begin to implement the new diploma requirements, it will again take all of us working together to get this right, and I look forward to continuing to work with community leaders across the state to set our Indiana students up for the best possible future.”

IDOE and SBOE received multiple letters of support from superintendents, principals, school counselors, special education directors, higher education presidents and leadership, business and industry leaders, voicing their support for the final proposal.

Following approval by SBOE, the rule must be reviewed by the Office of the Attorney General. The graduation requirements become law when signed by the Governor, which concludes the rulemaking process.

Per statute, Indiana’s current graduation requirements will sunset October 1, 2028, making the new diploma requirements effective for all students beginning with the class of 2029, or students currently in eighth grade. Schools may opt-in beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Indiana will also continue to offer the federally-required alternate diploma, which is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

To learn more about the final high school diploma rule, click [here](#).



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

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