Students in Texas earn ONE diploma through one of the high school programs available to all students, based on:

- Year they entered grade 9 (cohort)
- Level of academic achievement

- Course of study based on:
  - Required/elective courses available
  - Other courses available for local credit
  - Student interests and postsecondary goals

- Appropriate supports for each course:
  - Accommodations
  - Modifications
  - Alternate achievement standards

- Students with disabilities earn the same diploma as all students, and the ARD committee determines:
  - Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for each course, starting with general education
  - Appropriate assessment based on what’s available and eligibility/participation requirements:
    - STAAR
    - STAAR-A
    - STAAR-L
  - STAAR Alternate-2

- If the student will be required to pass the state assessment (all required EOCs) in order to graduate

Graduation requirements and options for students with disabilities are outlined in Commissioner’s Rule §89.1070.

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Least Restrictive Environment, or LRE, identifies where the student will be most successful. Starting with the general education environment, the LRE is determined individually for each student, for each class on their schedule. LRE is not determined by the type of disability, and students can access a variety of types of classrooms throughout their school day.

Some examples of LRE include:
- General education classroom with accommodations
- General education classroom with modifications to assignments and tests
- General education classroom with support from a co-teacher or paraprofessional
- Special education classroom with modifications to assignments and tests
- Homebound with accommodations or modifications, as recommended by ARD committee

Supports in each class are based on the needs that stem from the student’s disability.

Accommodations are adaptations that allow the student to demonstrate the skill without fundamentally altering or lowering the standard.

Supports like guided note-taking or preferential seating are examples of accommodations that a student might receive.

Modifications are “a reduction in the amount or complexity of the curriculum” (TAC 89.1070 (l)). This means that while the student is accessing the same content as others in their grade, they are not meeting the same standard expected for all students.

Some examples of modifications include a different rubric for grading, or altering the expectation so that the student is required to “list” or “identify” instead of to “explain” or to “analyze.”

Alternate achievement standards can be used for students who need to access the curriculum through prerequisite skills. For some students with intellectual disabilities, these modifications might be quite significant.

Using adapted text with pictures or objects to represent key points, matching pictures to a diagram, or measuring the appropriate amount for a recipe are examples of alternate achievement standards.

Students who receive modified curriculum or alternate achievement standards for any of their courses for state graduation credit must also meet a few additional requirements. They need to meet the requirements in their IEP, and they need to meet one of the following conditions (per TAC §89.1070):

- Have a full time job and the skills needed to keep it; or
- Have job skills and self-help skills for successful employment and adult living; or
- Have access to an agency that can support them in adulthood; or
- They will reach age 22 by the start of the school year (Sept. 1)

“Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student’s disability on academic tasks, but do not reduce learning expectations. The objectives of the course/activity remain the same.

Modifications change the expectations of what the student is expected to master. The course/activity objectives are modified to meet the needs of the learner.”

Least Restrictive Environment Question & Answer Document, TEA, January 2016