



Utah State
Board of
Education

Special
Education
Services

ALTERNATE DIPLOMA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND COURSE OPTIONS

Updated August 2025

Introduction

This document is intended to assist Local Education Agencies (LEA) and Individual Education Program (IEP) teams with understanding the graduation requirements and course options to award a student with the Alternate Diploma. **The Alternate Diploma is for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and aligns with the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) graduation requirements.** USBE requires a minimum of 24 units of credit earned, through course completion ([R277-700](#)) or through competency assessment ([R277-705](#)), to graduate with a regular diploma or Alternate Diploma from a Utah public high school.

A student with the most significant cognitive disability working toward earning an Alternate Diploma can be enrolled in general education or special education courses. Students enrolled in general education courses may require significant modifications and adaptations of the grade-level curriculum. Utah's alternate achievement standards, the Essential Elements (EE), provide the support for modification to ensure students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can access the grade-level standards for English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and Science. This document outlines the required number of courses and options in ELA, Math, and Science to meet requirements.

More comprehensive information regarding Utah graduation requirements can be found on the [USBE Graduation Requirements webpage](#).

Utah Administrative Rule for the Alternate Diploma

[R277-705-5. Alternate Diploma](#)

- (1) An LEA may award an alternate diploma to a student with a significant cognitive disability if:
 - (a) the student accesses grade-level Core standards through the Essential Elements;
 - (b) the student's IEP team makes graduation substitutions in the same content area, from a list of alternative courses approved by the Superintendent; and
 - (c) the student meets all graduation requirements before exiting school at or before age 22.
- (2) An alternate diploma issued in accordance with Subsection (1) may not indicate that the recipient is a student with a disability.
- (3) Notwithstanding the award of an Alternate Diploma, an LEA may still be obligated to provide a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) to an eligible student in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

(4)(a) The Superintendent shall provide a list of alternative courses that may be considered for students with cognitive disabilities working to receive an alternate diploma.

(b) An LEA may submit courses to the Superintendent to be considered for possible inclusion on the list required by Subsection (4)(a).

(c) The Superintendent shall annually update the list of alternative courses required under Subsection (4)(a) following review of LEA recommendations made under Subsection (4)(b).

Number of Required Course Credits and Areas

A minimum of 24 credits must be completed in the following areas:

- 4 credits of English Language Arts
- 3 credits of Mathematics
- 3 credits of Science
- 3 credits of Social Studies
- 1.5 credits of The Arts
- 0.5 credits of Health Education
- 1.5 credits of Physical Education
- 1.0 credit of Career and Technical Education
- 0.5 credit of Digital Studies
- 0.5 credit of General Financial Literacy
- 5.5 credits of Electives

The student's IEP team can make course substitutions or modifications in the same content area to meet the unique needs of the student ([R277-705-5](#) and [R277-700-6\(22\)\(a\)](#)). For more detailed guidance use the “Graduation Guidelines for Students with Disabilities” document on the [USB E Postsecondary Transition and Graduation for Students with Disabilities webpage](#) under the Guidelines tab.

All Special Education, including Essential Elements, courses can be found in the “Special Education Course Codes with Descriptions” on the USB E [Postsecondary Transition and Graduation for Students with Disabilities webpage](#) under the Guidelines tab.

Alternate Course Options for English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science

English Language Arts

4.0 Credits

Three courses from either the Essential Elements (EEs) courses, Special Education Courses, or the general education courses.

Plus, EE Language Arts 12, Language Arts 12 – Special Ed or 1.0 credit from the Applied and Advanced Courses.

For the general education and applied and advanced courses list, use the “Current Core Courses Meeting the Criteria for Graduation Requirements” found on the [USB E Graduation Requirements webpage](#).

Essential Elements (EEs) Courses	Special Education Courses
Language Arts 9 Essential Elements Course Code 06-02-23- 23-040	Language Arts 9—Special Ed Course Code 06-02-00-23-040
Language Arts 10 Essential Elements Course Code 06-02-23-23-050	Language Arts 10—Special Ed Course Code 06-02-00-23-050
Language Arts 11 Essential Elements Course Code 06-02-23-23-060	Language Arts 11—Special Ed Course Code 06-02-00-23-070
Language Arts 12 Essential Elements Course Code 06-02-23-23-070	Language Arts 12 – Special Ed Course Code 06-02-00-23-060

Mathematics

3.0 Credits

Three courses from either the Essential Elements (EEs) courses, Special Education courses or the general education courses; for Mathematics Secondary I, II, and III.

Secondary III can be replaced by an advanced or applied course with a written parent request.

For the general education and applied and advanced courses list, use the “Current Core Courses Meeting the Criteria for Graduation Requirements” found on the [USB E Graduation Requirements webpage](#).

Essential Elements Courses	Special Education Course Codes
EE Math Secondary I Course Code 07-08-23-23-090	Secondary Mathematics I - Special Ed Course Code 07-08- 00-23- 090
EE Math Secondary II Course Code 07-08-23-23-100	Secondary Mathematics II - Special Ed Course Code 07-08-00-23-100
EE Math Secondary III Course Code 07-08-23-23-110	Secondary mathematics III – Special Ed Course Code 07-08-00-23-110
EE Math Grade 12 Course Code 07-07-23-23-012	NA

Science

3.0 Credits

Two courses from either the Essential Elements (EEs) courses, Special Education courses or the general education courses.

Plus 1.0 credit from the Essential Elements (EEs) courses or the general education courses or the applied and advanced courses.

For the general education and applied and advanced courses list, use the “Current Core Courses Meeting the Criteria for Graduation Requirements” found on the [USBE Graduation Requirements webpage](#).

Essential Elements (EEs) Courses	Special Education Courses
EE-Earth Science Course Code 08-04-23-23-010	Earth Science – Special Education Course Code 08-04-00-23-010
EE-Biology Course Code 08-02-23-23-010	Biology – Special Education Course Code 08-02-00-23-010
EE-Chemistry Course Code 08-03-23-23-010	NA
EE-Physics Course Code 08-06-23-23-020	NA

Additional Required Course Credits and Areas for the Alternate Diploma

Students earning the Alternate Diploma are required to earn course credits in areas outside of English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science, [see Number of Required Course Credits and Areas](#) on page 3, for the requirements. Students can enroll in general education or special education courses to meet the course requirements for the diploma. IEP teams decide which courses are appropriate for individual students. If an IEP team determines a student will enroll in special education courses use the “Special Education Course Codes with Descriptions” on the USBE [Postsecondary Transition and Graduation for Students with Disabilities webpage](#) under the Guidelines tab.

For further information regarding the Alternate Diploma contact Lavinia Gripentrog lavinia.gripentrog@schools.utah.gov or Tracy Gooley tracy.gooley@schools.utah.gov