



Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council
Council Meeting Minutes
October 24, 2018



AGENDA:

1. Meeting introductions
2. Review, discussion and approval of last full council meeting minutes
3. Learn about three options for how the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) may change the types of diplomas available to students with intellectual disabilities. These changes may influence opportunities for those with the greatest degree of functional disability-related limitations
4. Weigh the options CDE is considering, and the potential benefits and drawbacks of each, to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities
5. Share members' opinions with the Colorado Department of Education
6. Decide whether sharing our opinions with CDE is the only action we want to take. Should the Council select one option to support? If so, should we as a Council educate other stakeholders about our position?
7. Recap action items / evaluations
8. Adjournment

DISCUSSION:

1. Alicia Eakins called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm.
2. Introductions
3. Quorum not present for approval of September minutes.
4. State Defined Alternate Diploma Stakeholder Meeting
 - a. Gina Herrera presented on behalf of the Colorado Department of Education. Out in the field to get feedback from stakeholder and will then compose a document to share with all of the responses.
 - b. CDE received requests for guidance from school districts about whether ESSA requires states to make alternate diplomas available to a narrow group of students with the most significant disabilities. CDE decided to take up the matter and make a decision at the executive level. The Department asserts this action is based on a requirement in ESSA.
 - c. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaces the No Child Left Behind Act.
 - d. ESSA defines a regular high school diploma as the standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in the state that are fully aligned with state standards, except that a regular high school diploma shall not be aligned to the alternate academic achievement standards.
 - e. Intended for the students with the most functionally limiting cognitive disability but there is no federal definition as a State Department of Education.
 - f. If a student has an IEP and has received Special Education Services and has documented evidence of this.
 - g. Current Status in Colorado: A very small population, about 1% of the special education population would likely be affected by a change if it were to occur.
 - h. Local Control- 178 school districts in Colorado. Graduation guidelines designed to help students and their parents plan a path for high school and beyond. There would be a

Colorado graduation guideline and then districts may design individualized guidelines within the standard set by the state.

i. CDE is considering three options:

1. Current Status:

- Regular Diploma Only
- No State-Defined Alternate Diploma
- Continue with one high school “regular” diploma
- Graduation guidelines will remain in place
- Everyone who meets or exceeds the graduation requirements set forth by the district will receive a “regular” diploma

Possible Implications: Student’s right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) terminates upon graduation or reaching age 21. A student with a significant cognitive disability who is issued a non-diploma certificate or a diploma not fully aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards, would not count as a graduate for federal/state accountability.

2. Require a State-Defined Alternate Diploma:

- In addition to a regular diploma achieved through existing graduation guidelines, add a state defined alternate diploma required for students who are assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to Colorado’s Extended Evidence Outcomes.

Possible Implications: Students who receive an alternate diploma will be counted as a graduate for federal and state accountability and can continue to receive FAPE through age 21.

3. District Choice - Offer a Regular Diploma with the Option of a State-Defined Alternate Diploma:

Possible Implications: If a student with a significant cognitive disability is issued a non-diploma certificate or diploma not fully aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards they would not count as graduates for federal accountability; FAPE ends when the student receives a regular high school diploma. Also, students with a significant cognitive disability who receive a state defined alternate diploma, will be counted as graduates for state and federal accountability; however, FAPE does not end and students may receive services through age 21.

5. Pam Bisceglia presented the opposing perspective of the alternative diploma.

- a. Supports Denver Public Schools and their approach on high school diploma requirements.
- b. Opposed to the State Alternate Diploma.
- c. Some cons are that the State Alternate Diploma goes against Advocacy Denver values and mission of an agency who believes in inclusion and general education with appropriate supports and services and it compromises students potential to excel in getting a job and retaining employment.
- d. Pam believes individuals with IDD should be educated with their peers without disabilities.

6. Steve Sandoval presented the supporting perspective for the alternative diploma.

- a. Raised three different questions:

1. Is a singular diploma option fair and just for individuals with cognitive disabilities?
2. Is a singular diploma option fair and just for students without cognitive disabilities?
3. Is an alternative diploma a rabbit hole idea?
 - b. We are not raising motivation if everyone gets the same blue ribbon at the end.
 - c. Advocating for a state wide guaranteed.
7. Should the Council select one option to support? Council discussion.
 - a. Katie Oliver recused herself from the discussion based on her position with the Colorado Department of Education.
 - b. Julie: Radical thumbs down and does not want to support as a Council.
 - c. Patrick: Concern in that there is some advantage in saying Colorado has a higher graduation rate but feels the presentations today did not present the entire story. Feels the Council should be against this proposal and suggests a vote through email since quorum is not present today.
 - d. Bruce: Agrees and is disappointed that CDE did not identify how this will improve education. Also disappointed with Pam that she did not fully explain the opposing side.
 - e. Kristen: Agrees. This does not speak to the values of inclusion and this could impact future employment for individuals with an IDD when a potential employer reads 'Alternate Diploma' on an application or resume.
8. Public Comment- Steve Miller and Doug Potter shared their thoughts on the alternate diploma.
9. The Council meeting adjourned at 3:57 PM.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: November 28, 2018
LOCATION: Christ Church United Methodist

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Action Items/ Motions Made:

1. Motions Made:
 - a. Hal made the motion to adjourn. Lisa seconded.
 2. Actions Items:
 - a. None.
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Those in attendance: Alicia Eakins, Deon Gillespie, Kristen Erby, Hal Wright, Paulette Steinhoff, Bruce Cline, Julie Voltaire Schleusener, Katie Oliver, Elizabeth (Lisa) Potter, Patrick Hackney

Those absent: Sen. Irene Aguilar, Debroah Marks Williams, Joe Morrone (medical leave of absence), Jennie Munthali, Jennifer Martinez, Willie Wade, Patricia Henke, Rob Buzogany, Peggy Spaulding, Sandra Friedman, Milly Segura Cubas, Jessica Howard, Lisa Franklin (on a leave of absence)

Staff Present: Joelle Brouner, Mackenzie Helton, Susan Fager, Robert Lawhead, Vanessa Hernandez, Tina Trammer

Guests: Doug Potter, Steve Miller, Steve Sandoval, Pam Bisceglia, Gina Herrera