



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

INDIANA INSTITUTE ON
DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY

August 21, 2017

To: Dr. Byron Ernest, Chair of Graduation Pathways Panel
Alicia Kielmovitch, SBOE Director of Policy and Legislation
Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Superintendent of Public Instruction

We are writing this letter as members of Executive Leadership at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University. We support your work to provide recommendations to the Indiana State Board of Education and want to provide our perspective for consideration in your discussions.

Competitive integrated employment remains a major challenge for many Hoosiers with disabilities. To put this in perspective, in 2015, the employment rate in Indiana for working age (18-64 yrs) people with disabilities was 36.0% and people with cognitive disabilities was 25.9%. These outcomes are markedly lower than the general population in Indiana, experiencing an employment rate of 77.7% (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2017). Education to prepare students for the labor force is critical to closing this gap.

Aligning with federal and state legislation, students with disabilities should have equitable access with high expectations to complete a graduation pathway. This will require supporting educators to provide high quality, evidence based instruction so that students leave high school with a pathway into college or a meaningful career.

Based on the Indiana Department of Education’s data, we know that over 12% of statewide student enrollment receive special education services (See Table 1).

Table 1. Statewide K-12 Enrollment

Statewide Public and Private Enrollment K-12+	2015	2016
Total Student Enrollment	1,131,000	1,333,380
Number of school-age students receiving special education services	159,201	161,136
Percent of students receiving special education services	14.08%	12.08%

Since FY 09, there has been approximately a 20% gap between graduation rates of students with and without disabilities. Table 2 shows the exit status of students with disabilities in 2015 and 2016.

Table 2. Exit Status of Students with Disabilities

	2015	2016	Difference
Certificate of Completion	11.01% (795)	16.49% (1326)	5.48%
Course Completion	.58% (42)	.58% (47)	0
General Diplomas	35.15% (2539)	33.53% (2717)	-1.62%
CORE 40	47.63% (3440)	44.32% (3591)	-3.30%
CORE 40 With Honors	5.61% (405)	5.07% (411)	-0.53%
International Baccalaureate	.03% (2)	0	-0.03%
TOTAL	7223	8102	

While only a small number of students with disabilities leave with a Certificate of Completion, it is important that this certificate be recognized by the Indiana State Board of Education as a viable option for a small number of students. We know that all students with disabilities who have had appropriate academic and vocational instruction are capable and willing to work. Currently, the Certificate of Completion is not recognized as a meaningful document by the employment community. However, the proposed Certificate of Completion requires alignment to state standards and has career pathways as a part of the certificate requirement.

We believe that students with disabilities should have access to all of the graduation pathways outlined in SECTION 34. IC 20-32-4-1.5 of HEA 1003. In high-growth industries, a certification will allow students to focus on interests and strength-based areas and enable these industries to develop a pool of employees. For students who struggle with testing, it will be important that they can be assessed in an applied manner and provided the necessary testing accommodations to ensure that they can truly demonstrate what they know.

Additionally, there may be other pathways that could support students post high school. For example, a portfolio pathway tied to a one year internship would allow a student to demonstrate what they know and be credited with work experience that supports the intent of the graduation pathways.

Finally, we strongly support the continuation of the general diploma as an option for Indiana students. Linking this diploma to other appropriate graduation pathways will provide students with a meaningful experience that can lead to career opportunities post high school. While legislative language outlining waiver options for students who do not meet other graduation requirements is of value, we would suggest 1) that waivers be used as an option only after it is clear that with support, a student cannot meet other graduation requirements; 2) that clear guidance and criteria be provided to districts on the use of the waiver; and 3) that the waiver be an option in every Indiana school district and applied consistently across the state.

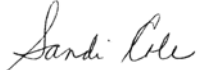
Thank you for your efforts. We appreciate your work on this very important issue.



Derek Nord, Executive Director



Teresa Grossi, Director of Strategic Development



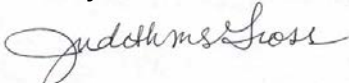
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