



# Occupational Diploma

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# Overview

- **What is the Occupational Diploma?**
- **How was it developed?**
- **Who is it for?**
- **How do they earn it?**

# What Is the Occupational Diploma?

- **Prior to the development of the Occupational Diploma, schools had the following two options:**
  - General Education Diploma
  - Special Education Diploma (often referred to by districts as a “Certificate of Attendance”)
- **There was a large variance in the abilities and knowledge among the students receiving the Special Education Diploma.**
  - Example graduate: Highly dependent on others, minimal communication skills, requires an assistant for safety and health needs
  - Example graduate: Many independent skills related to daily living, can work with minimal coaching or modifications, will live alone or with a roommate

# Who is Eligible for the Occupational Diploma?

- Students with an IEP  
***and***
- Student not eligible for a general education diploma  
***and***
- Students who graduated with a Special Education Diploma and is entitled to special education services until the student either earns a high school diploma or reaches twenty-two (22) years of age. A student with a disability who reaches twenty-two (22) years of age after the beginning of a school year continues to be entitled to special education services for the remainder of that school year.

If a student meets those guidelines, than no sooner than 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the IEP team ***may*** select Occupational Diploma for that student.

# How Was It Developed?

- A multi-disciplinary task force, made up of approximately 40 members from across the state, was developed to create the rule and guidance for the Occupational Diploma.
- The task force had four meetings throughout the year with work to complete in between meetings.
- They reviewed the work from other states focusing on:
  - New York
  - Mississippi
  - Florida
  - North Carolina
- The task force defined the target student population and defined the purpose and benefits of the diploma.
- Ultimately, the task force created the rule, which was passed by the State Board of Education, filed with the Office of the Secretary of the State, and legal as of Jan. 11, 2015.

# Developing Criteria for Future Employment

The task force identified requisite skills for employment by examining:

- **Soft skills**
  - Interpersonal & broadly applicable
  - Ex. Teamwork, responsibility
- **Hard skills**
  - Ex. Typing, math skills (so the student has increased opportunity in work settings)
- **Skills underlying the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**
  - Business leaders input on the Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) confirmed the “Critical,” “Preferred”, and “Enhanced” skills
- **Work experience needed**
  - The task force developed a work experience document

The skills were then categorized as “Critical,” “Preferred,” and “Enhancing”

# How Do Students Earn the Occupational Diploma?

- Students selected for the Occupational Diploma ***must*** successfully complete the Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA)
  - All 4 “Required”
  - 8 of 10 “Critical”
  - 2 years work experience (for the pilot schools, one year work experience is required)

# Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA)

## **“Required” skills on the SKEMA:**

- All 4 at a Level 3 or higher required for Occupational Diploma
  - If students do not have these skills then they will not be considered for the Occupational Diploma

## **“Critical” SKEMA:**

- 8 of 10 at Level 3 or higher to achieve Occupational Diploma
  - Critical skills, knowledge, and experience to be a successful employee

# SKEMA Scoring Rubric

Mastery Level 1	Mastery Level 2	Mastery Level 3	Mastery Level 4
No Evidence or Minimal Mastery	Need Improvement	Mastered	Exceeds Mastery Expectation
Not yet, or very rarely demonstrating the skill and requires additional training/instruction.	Inconsistently demonstrates the skills or requires assistance to demonstrate the skill. Additional practice and/or independence is required.	Demonstrates the skill at a level required for the workplace or setting with rare exceptions and demonstrates continuous improvement and/or generalization.	Consistently demonstrates and generalizes the skill. Often exceeds the expectation and/or demonstrates leadership.

# SKEMA Required

Behavior	Domain			Mastery			Types of Evidence					
	Skills	Knowledge	Experience	Level of Mastery (1,2,3,4)	Date of Mastery	Who verified mastery	Norm-referenced	Observation	Forms	Checklist	Work Sample	Other
Attendance of 70% or higher at school	X		X	*								
Attendance at work at a level commensurate with work peers	X		X	*								
Punctual to school and work	X		X	*								
Complies with health, safety, and emergency procedures at school and work.	X		X	*								

*\*Mastery at a level 3 or 4 is required in all of these to be an Occupational Diploma candidate*

# SKEMA Critical

Behavior	Domain			Mastery			Types of Evidence					
	Skills	Knowledge	Experience	Level of Mastery (1,2,3,4)	Date of Mastery	Who verified mastery	Norm-referenced	Observation	Forms	Checklist	Work Sample	Other
1. Respond to and meets new work challenges within a reasonable time frame provided needed visual supports or training	X		X	**								
2. Communicates concerns clearly and asks for assistance when needed.	X		X	**								
3. After a probationary period, work at a satisfactory rate for the job.	X		X	**								
4. Apply information previously learned to a new setting, routine, or scenario.	X	X	X	**								
5. Follow multi-step routine directions and/or at least 2-step non-routine directions.			X	**								

# SKEMA Critical (continued)

Behavior	Domain			Mastery			Types of Evidence					
	Skills	Knowledge	Experience	Level of Mastery (1,2,3,4)	Date of Mastery	Who verified mastery	Norm-referenced	Observation	Forms	Checklist	Work Sample	Other
<b>Critical</b>												
6. Use job-related tools, technologies and materials appropriately.	X		X	**								
7. Demonstrates flexibility when the nature of the work changes.	X		X	**								
8. Maintains workplace appropriate language and social skills for each work placement.			X	**								
9. Respect authority and chain of command	X		X	**								
10. Follow a task schedule presented in a variety of formats.	X		X	**								

# Work Experience

**“Work” for the Occupational Diploma is typically defined by the following:**

- **Meaningful experiences aligned to measurable postsecondary goals, and/or the student’s potential post-school career choice**
- **Coordinated and planned experiences designed to teach the student new and necessary employment skills**
- **Work experience does not need to be “successful”**
  - **We often learn more from what is not a “good fit” or success than we do from a successful experience**
- **IEP team selected experience, hours, and paid/unpaid status**
  - **State approval is not required.**
- **Paid or Unpaid**
  - **Among the strongest predictors of post-school employment for young people with disabilities is whether they had hands-on, paid work experience while still in high school.**
- **For students graduating in the 2015-16 school year, only one year of experience is required.**

## Work Experience: 2 years experience required for an Occupational Diploma

Work Experience	Start Date	End Date	Paid	Unpaid
Location			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation or Performance Narrative				
Work Experience	Start Date	End Date	Paid	Unpaid
Location			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation or Performance Narrative				
Work Experience	Start Date	End Date	Paid	Unpaid
Location			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation or Performance Narrative				

# SKEMA Preferred & Enhancing Skills

**The SKEMA includes additional skills within the “Preferred” and “Enhancing” sections because we know that students who receive an Occupational Diploma are often not strong interviewees.**

**The “Preferred” and “Enhancing” skills provide the potential employer additional information on a student’s strengths and abilities to assist in the successful placement of students within the company or business.**

- Ex. A student with strong social skills could be great with customers while a student with strong organizational skills could be great within receiving, stocking, and inventory**

# Why would a high school want to offer an Occupational Diploma?

- The Occupational Diploma raises expectations and increases outcomes for all students.
- It is another reflection of the work currently around increasing outcomes for at-risk students:
  - RTI<sup>2</sup>
  - Instructionally Appropriate IEPs
  - Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
  - Instructionally Appropriate IEPs training focused on accommodations and modifications
  - Work-Based Learning
  - The Tennessee Department of Education restructure is focused on increasing postsecondary outcomes.
- **The Occupational Diploma provides a structured opportunity for students to obtain instruction and skills required to earn a wage, live as independently as possible, engage with peers socially, and be productive tax-paying citizens.**

# 2014-2015 Pilot Districts

- **Cleveland City**
  - Our first graduate was in Cleveland City
- **Maryville**
- **Collierville**
- **Germantown**
- **Sevier County**
- **Bartlett**
- **Knox County**
- **Montgomery-Clarksville**
- **Putnam**

# How do I request an Occupational Diploma?

- Occupational Diplomas can be ordered online the same way the other two diplomas have been ordered in the past.
- Also, as of July 1, this is a diploma option on Easy IEP.

# Contact Information

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