



Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
"Educating Georgia's Future"

**Georgia Department of Education**  
**Item for State Board of Education Approval**  
**– Rule –**

**Item Name**

PFEA - State Board Rule - 160-4-2-.48 High School Graduation Requirements for Students Enrolling in the Ninth Grade for the First time in the 2008-09 School Year and Subsequent Years

**Recommendation – Rule Adoption**

It is recommended that the State Board of Education adopt the amendment to State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.48 High School Graduation Requirements for Students Enrolling in the Ninth Grade for the First time in the 2008-09 School Year and Subsequent Years.

**Supports the Following Education Goal or Goals in the Agency Strategic Plan**

- Increase the percentage of high school students who graduate ready for enrollment, employment, or enlistment.

**Rationale**

The GaDOE recently received an Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) amendment approval from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to include an Alternate Diploma for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Rule 160-4-2-.48 must be amended to include the Alternate Diploma in order to comply with USED's amendment approval.

**Details**

Georgia's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan was approved on January 19, 2018, and since then has guided our efforts to reshape Georgia's K-12 education system and offer a holistic, personalized educational pathway for every child.

In that same spirit of putting students' needs first, Georgia requested an amendment to our State Plan. Through this amendment, we sought flexibility to develop a state-defined Alternate Diploma for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are assessed using the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards.

The state-defined alternate diploma will be standards-based and aligned with Georgia's requirements for the regular high school diploma. It would first be awarded to students who enter ninth grade in the 2020-21 school year, upon their graduation.

After receiving much feedback, the Georgia Department of Education submitted an ESSA Amendment request, which was granted on November 21, 2019. Since the amendment was granted, Rule 160-4-2-.48 must be amended to include the Alternate Diploma.

This amendment will strengthen our ability to provide a holistic, high-quality education for all students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

The amended rule includes the following substantive changes:

- Definition of an Alternate Diploma

- Definition of Georgia Alternate Assessment
- Details regarding the cohort of students who receive a Regular Diploma (Students with significant cognitive disabilities who entered the ninth grade for the first time *prior to the 2020-2021 school year*).
- Details regarding the cohort of students who and the cohort of students who receive an Alternate Diploma (Students with significant cognitive disabilities who *entered the ninth grade for the first time on or after the 2020-2021 school year*).
- Removed the requirement that students score “proficient” on the Georgia Alternate Assessment to align with state law no longer requiring any gateway assessment for high school graduation.

**Contact**

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