

### Introduction

*A benefit of releasing the Senate Bill 744 report is allowing more people in Oregon to weigh-in on the recommendations. In the development of the report ODE connected with more than 3,500 diverse students, family members, educators, and community. While that number represents significant engagement, it is still not every voice.*

*Since the release, **Recommendation 8** has received important, critical feedback about the potential impact of this recommendation on specific communities of students, including students who experience disability. Additional input is valued and additional engagement and direction that may shift the direction of this, or any other, recommendation is welcome and called for in the report.*

**Recommendation 8:** Use practices and examples from around the nation on diploma pathways to make a single Oregon Diploma accessible to all students

### Goals of Recommendation #8

- Simplify the diploma requirements/options so they are clear for every student, family, and educator.
- Ensure every student experiences the full value of an Oregon diploma without labels or stigma.
- Ensure alignment with relevant Federal laws and regulations (e.g., ESEA, IDEA).

### Core values inherent in this section

- Provide access to the general education curriculum
- Inclusivity for all students
- Focus on student strengths, over student deficits
- Intentionally design for each student's learning trajectory/arc
- Charge a responsibility to teach to the ceiling of each child's potential
- Create integrity in system design to help ensure opportunities for student learning

**These values could conceivably be addressed in a single diploma with pathways for each and every student -or- by improving implementation of the multiple diploma options that currently exist.**

## Background Information

### What do other states do?

- States take different approaches to diplomas, which fall into the following categories ([NCEO, 2000](#))
  - Single diploma or diploma with additional requirements (e.g., Honors/Scholars diploma), with a single criteria
  - Single diploma or diploma with additional requirements, with multiple criteria
  - Certificate options
  - Special education diplomas
- Each of these options have design advantages and disadvantages.
- Implementation of each approach requires a system to support equitable implementation.
- As of 2019, 47 states offered a standard diploma or diploma with additional requirements; 3 states offer multiple diplomas (LA, MS, WI - university/career). In this report Oregon is considered a single diploma state due to the similarity of the Oregon Diploma and Modified Diploma. However, in statute and in practice these diplomas are identified differently ([ECS, 2019](#)).

### What does ESSA say about diploma options?

- In the Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95), states are expected to prioritize student attainment of a regular high school diploma, which means the “standard high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of students in the State that is fully aligned with State standards, or a higher diploma” Section 8101(43).
- Only diplomas that meet this standard are reportable within state's four-year official graduation rates

### Oregon should do what is best for all of its students.

- The SB 744 Report recommendations are *not* policy changes *nor* requests for rule or statute changes.
- The recommendations may be considered as part of a coherent approach to overall graduation policy - they can work together to increase equity, access, and inclusivity.
- The Senate Bill 744 report denotes the beginning of a conversation about policy, not the end. From the conclusion of the Report, “...*further engagement with community and education partners will be needed to bring these recommendations to fruition and to ensure that any new policies that might be adopted do not create inequities in implementation.*”

## Concerns Raised

### Concerns raised about the data

Graduation rates for students on IEPs with a standard diploma have remained relatively unchanged, but there has been change with students earning modified diplomas. It's important to keep modified diplomas available for students who can reach the standards for a modified diploma; it is working.

- The data show that some of the improvement in graduation rates for students experiencing disabilities was garnered through increased modified diploma attainment.
- There are some differences that pattern by race/ethnicity, which should be explored, but changes should not be made that negatively impact access to students who experience disability.

### Concerns raised about the engagement

Engagement with the disability community was not deemed sufficient by some because it did not provide adequate opportunity to weigh in on this specific recommendation to make a single Oregon diploma accessible to all students.

- Oregonians weighed in on their personal experiences with graduation, helping ODE to identify causes of the disparities that exist in our graduation outcomes.
- Engagement questions were designed to connect to participants' lived experiences and generate open responses about their values.
- ODE was charged with developing recommendations based on information gleaned from the engagement process and review process, understanding that further engagement and review would be required on each of the specific recommendations.

### Specific concerns raised about recommendation 8

- Eliminating opportunities for students with disabilities to obtain diplomas.
- A single diploma cannot address the needs of all learners.
- ODE should hold districts accountable for implementing the three current diploma options correctly rather than develop a new single diploma with multiple pathways.
- Concern that a single diploma with multiple pathways would lead to increased practices of tracking students and reduce opportunity.
- ODE should correct misconceptions that were shared through engagement regarding the value of the current diploma options for students going on to higher education or the workforce.
- ODE should review the report and data with a deeper equity lens regarding students who experience disability.

## Next Steps

- Substantial engagement has occurred to develop this recommendation. However, deeper and further engagement and study would be required to address challenges that have been identified before implementation of this recommendation should be considered.
- Each of the recommendations need to be reviewed with an equity decision tool and community vetting to be sure they cause no harm.
- The Oregon Legislature, Oregon's next Governor, and the State Board of Education will set direction regarding any next steps toward further analysis or implementation of any of the recommendations in this report. ODE was directed to create a report with recommendations, no further authorization for action is present in SB 744. Any move toward implementation of Recommendation 8, specifically, would require changes in statute through action of the Legislature and Governor and OAR changes by the State Board of Education.