

North Dakota Choice Ready Guidance for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Current legislation requires that all students be held to high standards. There are many questions regarding how to appropriately calculate students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and who are alternately assessed on alternate academic achievement standards for North Dakota Choice Ready high school accountability measure.

The choice ready indicator supports the NDDPI vision: All students will graduate choice ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful. Successful completion of high school and preparation for post-secondary living for students with disabilities is driven by the student's individualized transition IEP, which will in turn assist the student in being deemed choice ready.

What does this mean for the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?

- *Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take the NDAA, based on alternate academic achievement standards, **WILL NOT** be exempt from the Choice Ready measure; instead, these students will have alternate Choice Ready Criteria for each pathway.*

Essential Skills Indicators (See NDDPI Choice Ready Document)

The overarching goal of having all students earn a North Dakota high school diploma includes students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Students with significant cognitive disabilities will need to fulfill the requirements of the Essential Skills indicators listed on the Choice Ready chart with the financial literacy and civics test having an alternative option based on IEP team recommendation.

- Financial Literacy (15.1-21-21): Applicable Applied Topic Course work
- Civics Test: Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities may be exempt as determined by the IEP team. If they are exempt, they have met this criteria.

Choice Ready Alternative Criteria for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Post-Secondary Ready
Workforce Ready
Military Ready (Life Skills Ready)

Post –Secondary Ready

The Federal Law regulating education of students with disabilities, including those with severe cognitive disabilities, stresses the importance of students being post-secondary ready as they move through the transition process in high school and move to post-school activities that might include post-secondary education, vocational education, and integrated employment including supported employment, continuing and adult education or adult services (IDEA, 2004).

The Post-Secondary Ready component begins with the students with significant cognitive disabilities completing:

- T-2 Section of the student's IEP: Transition Plan Course of Study
- T-3 Section of the student's IEP: Strategies and Activities Needed to Assist in Reaching Post Secondary Goals

OR

*Students must meet **two or more** of the additional academic indicators:*

- Applied Topic Core Course Work (A, B, or C)
- Pre-employment Activities (Pre-ETS) *at least one*
 - Job Exploration Counseling
 - Work-Based Learning Experiences
 - Counseling for Post-Secondary Education
 - Workplace Readiness Training
 - Instruction in Self-Advocacy
- ACT/SAT (Some students who may attend an alternative college program may be required to take the ACT/SAT)

Work Force Ready

Schools support students who desire to secure employment directly after high school graduation. In addition to academic standards, criteria are identified which promotes the transition to the workforce. The breadth of criteria broadens the opportunities for all students including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who seek employment.

Like the other two pathways, the Workforce Ready component begins with students with significant cognitive disabilities completing the T-2 Section: Course of Study on the Transition IEP.

Students need to complete **two or more** from the following list of indicators:

- Complete the T-2 Section: Course of Study.
- Complete Three CTE Courses or More (A, B, or C): *See NDDPI Choice Ready Document*
- Complete Career Ready Practices: *See NDDPI Choice Ready Document*
- WorkKeys (Gold or Silver): *See NDDPI Choice Ready Document*
- Work-Based Learning Experience: *See NDDPI Choice Ready Document*
- Work Skills Readiness Curriculum
- Job Exploration Counseling
- NDAA (Reading/Math) Target or greater
- Applied Topic **Occupational Education Course Work**
 - At least 2 or more units (total of 5 units)

Military Ready (Life Skills Ready)

Understanding that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities have very unique characteristics that may limit their physical and communication capabilities, an alternate pathway may be needed which includes indicators that illustrate students can demonstrate preparatory skills needed to be as independent as possible upon graduation.

Like the other two pathways, the Life Skills Ready/Military Ready component begins with students with significant cognitive disabilities completing the T-2 Section: Course of Study on the Transition IEP.

Along with the completion of **2 or more** of the following requirements:

- Applied Topics **Daily Living Courses** (2 or more levels completed)
- Independent Living Activities (Transition Services Activities: T-3 Section of the Transition IEP)
- Completed **Summary of Performance**
- Pre-employment Transition Activities (Pre-ETS): Workplace readiness training to develop social and independent living skills