



# Understanding Assessment Options and their Relationship to Diplomas/ Long-Term Goals

For all children with disabilities identified under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), the IEP Team determines how the child will participate in the state's accountability system, and for children identified under Section 504, the 504 Committee determines how the child will participate.

## Assessments

A child's IEP must specify the child's participation in the state accountability system as follows:

- Participation in the Standards of Learning (SOL) test which assesses the minimum expectations for what children should know and be able to do at the end of the grade or course in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science without accommodations;
- Participation in the SOL test with accommodations; or
- Participation in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) which evaluates the performance of children with significant cognitive disabilities who are working on Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning (VESOL). The VESOL are based on SOL but have been reduced in complexity and depth.

## Diploma Options

The IEP Team determines the diploma the child will be working toward. For children who start their ninth-grade year during the 2018-2019 school year and beyond, the diploma options follow.

### Advanced Studies Diploma:

Requires children to have 26 standard credits (awarded for completing a course) and 5 verified credits (awarded when the child completes a course and achieves a passing score on the associated SOL test, or a substitute assessment approved by the Virginia Board of Education). This diploma is Virginia's highest diploma and requires children to complete three years of a foreign language and advanced math classes. This is the best option for children who plan to attend a four-year college.

### Standard Diploma:

Requires children to have 22 standard and 5 verified credits. Although children can attend a four-year college with this diploma, it is more suitable for children wishing to attend a community college or enter a career after graduation.

### Applied Studies Diploma:

Is only available to children identified as having a disability who complete the requirements of their individualized education programs (IEPs), but do not meet the requirements for the Advanced Studies or Standard Diplomas. This diploma option may not qualify a child for post-secondary opportunities for which a regular high school diploma is required.

## Important to Note

Children with disabilities who participate in the SOL assessments with or without accommodations and earn verified credits may receive either the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. **A child participating in VAAP will not obtain a Standard or Advanced Diploma but may receive an Applied Studies Diploma. Participation in the VAAP should only be considered after the SOL participation has been discussed and all possible accommodations have been fully examined.**