High School Graduation Requirements

To receive a high school diploma, students must fulfill state and district graduation requirements. State-mandated graduation course requirements (the state minimums) follow:

* Three years of English
* Two years of mathematics (including Algebra I)
* Three years of social science (including U.S. history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; one semester of American government; and one semester of economics)
* Two years of science (including biology and physical science)
* Two years of physical education
* One year of foreign language or visual and performing arts or commencing with the 2012–13 school year, career technical education. For purpose of satisfying the minimum course requirement, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language

Students who successfully complete Algebra I in middle school must still complete a minimum of two years of mathematics in high school. Recognizing that these 13 years of preparation are state minimum requirements, local school boards often set local graduation requirements that exceed the state-mandated requirements. Beginning in the 2005–06 school year, students must pass the California High School Exit Examination to receive a high school diploma. (Please refer to the Testing section for information on this requirement and two methods of earning a high school diploma or its equivalent: the California High School Proficiency Examination and the General Educational Development test.) As of 2015 the Ca High School Exit Exam has been cancelled until further direction.

Pursuant to *Education Code* Section 56101, a district, Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), county office, or public education agency may request the board to grant a waiver of the Algebra I requirement for individuals with exceptional needs. The district would submit a Specific Waiver to the State Board of Education. Each waiver will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Before submitting a request for a waiver, however, the district, county office or SELPA must ensure that all students/parents/guardians are informed that completion of a course in Algebra I prior to graduation is a requirement for earning a standard high school diploma. Students/parents/guardians must also understand that the consequences of not enrolling in an Algebra I course is the denial of a high school diploma. Information on the waiver process is available from the California Department of Education's (CDE) [Waiver Office](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/wr/index.asp).

**EDUCATION CODE**

**SECTION 56390-56392**

56390. Notwithstanding Section 51412 or any other provision of law,

a local educational agency may award an individual with exceptional

needs a certificate or document of educational achievement or

completion if the requirements of subdivision (a), (b), or (c) are

met.

 (a) The individual has satisfactorily completed a prescribed

alternative course of study approved by the governing board of the

school district in which the individual attended school or the school

district with jurisdiction over the individual and identified in his

or her individualized education program.

 (b) The individual has satisfactorily met his or her

individualized education program goals and objectives during high

school as determined by the individualized education program team.

 (c) The individual has satisfactorily attended high school,

participated in the instruction as prescribed in his or her

individualized education program, and has met the objectives of the

statement of transition services.

56391. An individual with exceptional needs who meets the criteria

for a certificate or document described in Section 56390 shall be

eligible to participate in any graduation ceremony and any school

activity related to graduation in which a pupil of similar age

without disabilities would be eligible to participate. The right to

participate in graduation ceremonies does not equate a certificate or

document described in Section 56390 with a regular high school

diploma.

56392. It is not the intent of the Legislature by enacting this

chapter to eliminate the opportunity for an individual with

exceptional needs to earn a standard diploma issued by a local or

state educational agency when the pupil has completed the prescribed

course of study and has passed the proficiency requirements with or

without differential standards.

56026. "Individuals with exceptional needs" means those persons who

satisfy all the following:

 (a) Identified by an individualized education program team as a

child with a disability, as that phrase is defined in Section 1401(3)

(A) of Title 20 of the United States Code.

 (b) Their impairment, as described by subdivision (a), requires

instruction and services which cannot be provided with modification

of the regular school program in order to ensure that the individual

is provided a free appropriate public education pursuant to Section

1401(9) of Title 20 of the United States Code.