

ISAEP GUIDELINES

Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)

Virginia School Laws, Section 22.1-254, Compulsory attendance required; excuses and waivers;
alternative education program attendance; exemptions from article

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FULFILLMENT OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS THROUGH THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PLAN (ISAEP)

Introduction

Virginia School Laws, Section 22.1-254, Compulsory attendance required; excuses and waivers; alternative education program attendance; exemptions from article, 1999, authorizes local school boards to allow the satisfaction of compulsory attendance requirements by any student who is at least 16 years of age and for whom an individual student alternative education plan (ISAEP) is developed in a meeting between the student, the student's parents, and the principal or designee. The Virginia Board of Education is charged with development of the guidelines associated with the ISAEP, which must include career guidance counseling, mandatory enrollment in a General Educational Development (GED) testing program or an alternative education program approved by the local school board, counseling on the economic impact of failing to complete high school, and provisions for re-enrollment in school. A student for whom an ISAEP has been granted and who fails to comply with the components of the ISAEP shall be deemed to be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements. Students with an ISAEP shall be counted in the average daily membership (ADM) of the school division.

Local boards also must implement GED testing and preparatory programs with funds appropriated as a result of this legislation. The Virginia Board of Education is charged with the development of guidelines associated with such GED testing and preparatory programs.

Program Requirements

Code of Virginia

The ISAEP must include (1) career guidance counseling, (2) mandatory enrollment in a GED testing program or an alternative education program approved by the local school board, (3) counseling on the economic impact of failing to complete high school, and (4) provisions for re-enrollment in school. A student for whom an ISAEP has been granted and who fails to comply with the ISAEP shall be deemed to be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements. If violated, appropriate legal actions will be taken against the student and/or parent. Students with an ISAEP shall be counted in the (ADM) of the school division.

As a component of this program, local boards also must implement GED testing and preparatory programs with funds appropriated.

American Council on Education

Regulations of the GED Testing Service (GEDTS) of the American Council on Education (ACE) prohibit GED testing of any person "enrolled in school." Because the GED is a test created for adults, and because it is recognized as the equivalent of a high school diploma, the regulation was established to help keep young adults in attendance at secondary schools, reserving the use of the GED test for persons who need a "second chance." Because more and more of the young adult population need a "second chance," Virginia was the first state to request that the GED Testing

Service approve use of the GED, under close supervision, with students enrolled in alternative education or “at-risk” programs in the public schools. Permission was granted in 1988, with the provision that alternative education programs follow strict guidelines set by the State Department of Education. Those guidelines, as amended for the purpose of opening a window for graduation of these students with their class, are contained in Appendix 1, “*Informational Superintendent’s Memo #5, January 6, 1995.*” *Superintendent’s Memo #5*, by its requirement that all four conditions outlined be met, currently prohibits the testing of students preparing for the GED in alternative education programs in Virginia until they are 17 years old.

As sixteen is the minimum age for testing required by the American Council on Education, the Council has specified that we rewrite our current alternative education guidelines for GED testing eligibility to incorporate the new ISAEP program and its student participants. The new ISAEP requirement guidelines will allow students in alternative education programs as well as students with an ISAEP to be eligible at age 16 if they are otherwise qualified. Guidelines proposed in this document address both groups and will be submitted to the GED testing Service of the American Council on Education for review and approval. (See Appendix 2, “*Clarification regarding GED Testing Eligibility, Superintendent’s Memo #36, March 3, 2000.*”)

Virginia Board of Education

The Virginia Board of Education identified and approved critical areas to be included in the ISAEP program services. Because of the demands in the world of work, the Board requires an occupational training option for those students who are not gainfully employed and in, support of this option, a vocational assessment/evaluation component for the student.

To ensure that parents and participants are fully informed of the ISAEP process, the Board requires that a process and procedures for full disclosure be implemented. Likewise, so that students and parents receive ongoing information as to the student’s progress and career opportunities, the Board determined that ISAEP programs will include regular reports to students and parents regarding students’ academic progress, occupational training progress, and information on additional career opportunities based on improved academic and occupational preparation.

Administrative Procedures

To support the integration of the ISAEP option into the existing system of services, a number of administrative procedures have been developed. They include procedures for coding students participating in and exiting from ISAEP programs, requirements for serving students with disabilities, GED testing procedures, and program application requirements.

- A. Coding for Enrollment and ADM: Students placed in the ISAEP program will be assigned a unique code for attendance-monitoring purposes. Local school divisions will draw ADM on these students.
- B. Completion: Students can exit an ISAEP program in one of three ways and their actions will be coded accordingly.

- Students can successfully complete the requirements of the ISAEP, which include passing the GED exam and completing the occupational training component.
 - Students can re-enroll in the K-12 program including regular high school or a local school board approved alternative education program.
 - Students can discontinue their involvement in the ISAEP process and drop their enrollment in any recognized educational program. Such action is coded as a dropout and will result in notifying the courts as appropriate.
- C. Students with Disabilities: School divisions should be familiar with GED preparation and testing accommodations (refer to Appendix 3, “*Accommodations Available for GED Testing*” for students with disabilities. The IEP and/or 504 process will determine student placement in an ISAEP program. Any accommodations identified for the student in the IEP and/or 504 plan must be addressed in the ISAEP. Even if students with disabilities complete their ISAEP, per IDEA, they continue to be entitled to free access to public education (FAPE) through age 21).
- D. GED Testing: Students who have successfully completed the *Official GED Practice Test* must be tested at an official GED testing center. They must register in the school division where they live, whether they attend preparation classes in that school division or in another, since some divisions will be offering preparation classes cooperatively. All students in the ISAEP program should have access to registration and scheduling information so that testing can be accomplished efficiently. In some jurisdictions, school districts may wish to make arrangements with their local GED testing center to deliver testing services on site for groups of ISAEP participants.

A student enrolled in an ISAEP may take the GED test if a letter from an official of the school division operating an ISAEP program is submitted stating that the applicant meets the following provisions:

- the applicant is currently enrolled in an ISAEP program;
- has successfully completed the Official GED Practice Tests; and
- is at least 16 years of age.

Because GED testing is a cooperative program administered by the Commonwealth and local school divisions in conjunction with the GED Testing Service, American Council on Education, guidelines proposed for testing eligibility are binding upon school divisions.

- E. Coding for Exit: As soon as ISAEP students have completed all of the ISAEP components including qualifying for a GED credential, they will be assigned a unique exit code that will signify withdrawn but completing a recognized secondary credential. The ISAEP exit code will differ from the code assigned to students in alternative education. ISAEP completers should be counted on the school’s “*Report of Graduates*,” submitted to the Department of Education and released from compulsory attendance.
- F. Application for Funds: Participating school divisions will make application for the appropriated funds. Each application will include a budget and actual expenditures by object category will be reported. **Monies allocated to the division will be used to expand opportunities for students and not to support existing program options.** It is expected

that all participating divisions will monitor student attendance and adherence to the ISAEP, and that all required data will be collected and reported as prescribed. Preparation classes and testing may be done cooperatively between two (or more) school divisions.

Guidelines for ISAEP Plan Development and Implementation

Step One: Initial Principal-Parent-Student (PPS) Meeting

The purpose of the initial principal-parent-student meeting is to help parents and students understand the following options for satisfying the compulsory attendance requirement: (1) remaining in the regular school program, (2) enrolling in an alternative educational program, or (3) completing an ISAEP. The principal or designee will provide full disclosure of the relevant aspects of the program, written descriptions of the required program components, a listing of the parties involved in developing and implementing the ISAEP, and complete information regarding an academic and/or vocational assessment/evaluation. At this initial meeting, parents will sign a consent form to attest that they have received full disclosure on the ISAEP program and understand all requirements for each of the options for completing public school.

Step Two: Student Evaluation/Assessment

The purpose of the student evaluation is to provide the student, parents, and principal with the information necessary to determine the program of study that is in the best educational interests of the student. Students planning to satisfy compulsory attendance requirements by completing an ISAEP must first demonstrate that they have the ability to benefit from such a program. A formal academic and vocational evaluation will be conducted to provide the necessary information on which to base decisions. Evaluation results will be used in the development of each student's ISAEP, if they qualify. The recommended instruments and **required academic scores** for enrollment in the ISAEP program are:

INSTRUMENT	Required Scores
Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or any recognized standardized test	
READING	7.5 grade equivalent or higher
The Official GED Practice Test	40 on each sub-test
Vocational assessment/evaluation (local division choice)	

The GED test battery is normed on graduating high school seniors throughout the United States. Because the GED is a difficult test and measures the outcomes of a traditional high school education, certain levels of competence should be established for entry into the GED preparation/testing option. Obviously, students who need serious remediation of reading or math skills will not be successful after a semester or two in the preparation class. These students should be served in an existing

alternative education program, where a mixture of basic skills, vocational education, work experience, and/or other options can help to increase and reinforce basic skills. A few students may be interested in finishing their high school credits in night classes. These students should be placed in Adult Education. School divisions should be familiar with GED preparation and testing accommodations for students with disabilities and include accommodations in the ISAEP.

Step Three: Development of the ISAEP (Second Principal-Parent-Student Meeting)

Parents, students, and principal/designee are required partners for developing an ISAEP. Other individuals may be invited to participate as needed and/in (required). The ISAEP will address the needs of the student based on the evaluation results. Measurable goals and objectives should be written in the four areas outlined in *Virginia School Laws, Section 22.1-254*, to ensure ongoing progress and to address each of the program components as identified. Each ISAEP must include the following components:

- career guidance and counseling
- mandatory enrollment and attendance in a GED preparation program or alternative education program
- counseling on the economic impact of failing to complete high school
- procedures for re-enrolling in regular high school programs
- an occupational training component for those not gainfully employed

For students not gainfully employed, the ISAEP should include an occupational training component in an area of local labor market demand to ensure that the student exits the program with the technical skills necessary for entry-level employment. The occupational training component may include an apprenticeship, cooperative learning experiences, paid or unpaid internships, service learning, and/or job shadowing.

Note. The Board of Education supports and encourages that employability skills be incorporated into each student's ISAEP. A list of these is available from the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education Services.

Parents, principal/designee, student, and other appropriate individuals are required to sign the initial ISAEP and any subsequent amendments. In addition, parents will sign an acknowledgement that if the student for whom an ISAEP has been granted fails to comply with the ISAEP, he or she shall be deemed to be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements. If violated, appropriate legal actions will be taken against the student and/or parents.

Step Four: ISAEP Ongoing Activities

As described in the first section of this document, the Virginia General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education have prescribed components for the ISAEP. Local school divisions have flexibility in designing activities to meet educational needs of individual students. However, certain elements must be provided on an ongoing basis:

- academic preparation for the GED test
- career counseling to include emerging career opportunities
- updated information to both students and parents on additional career opportunities available as a result of the student's improved academic and occupational preparation
- regular reports to both students and parents of the students' progress in academic and occupational preparation

Step Five: Exiting the ISAEP Process

Students can exit the ISAEP program in one of three ways. Their actions will be coded accordingly.

- Students must successfully complete all of the requirements of their ISAEP that includes passing the GED exam.
- Students can re-enroll in the K-12 program including regular high school or an alternative education program approved by the local board of education.

Students who discontinue their involvement in the ISAEP program and drop their enrollment in any recognized educational program will be out of compliance with compulsory school attendance. These actions will result in notifying courts as appropriate.

