



## 8.23 Grading and Graduation Credit

**DRAFT 1**

Effective Date: May 12, 2026
Authorized By: Utah State Board of Education

### 1. **Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent standards for grading practices and awarding academic credit at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB).
- 1.2. Grading practices shall be fair, transparent, and aligned with Utah law, the accountability framework established by the Utah State Board of Education, and the instructional mission of USDB.
- 1.3. USDB grading practices shall support mastery of Utah Core Standards and student progress toward the USD and USB Portrait of a Graduate competencies.

### 2. **Authority**

- 2.1. This policy is adopted pursuant to Utah law and administrative rules governing grading, course credit, and graduation requirements, including but not limited to:
  - 2.1.1. Utah Code Title 53G – Public Education System
  - 2.1.2. Utah Administrative Rule R277-705 – Secondary School Completion and Diplomas
  - 2.1.3. Utah Administrative Rule R277-717 – Student Grade Replacement and Course Re-take
- 2.2. As a Local Education Agency (LEA), USDB shall maintain policies governing grading practices, awarding credit, and maintaining student transcripts.

### 3. **Definitions**

- 3.1. “Alternate Diploma” means a diploma issued in accordance with Utah Administrative Rule R277-705-5.

- 3.2. “Certificate of Completion” is awarded to students who have finished their senior year or "aged out" of the school system (usually at age 22) without meeting standard diploma requirements. It signifies the completion of a student's high school experience but does not act as a high school diploma or GED.
- 3.3. “Comparable course” means a course that fulfills the same graduation credit requirements as a course for which a student seeks to improve a grade.
- 3.4. “Diploma” means an official document awarded by an LEA consistent with state and LEA graduation requirements and the provisions of this rule.
- 3.5. “Replacement credit” means a pass-fail credit a student earns for a course the student did not pass or complete, which:
  - 3.5.1. does not affect the student's grade point average; and
  - 3.5.2. allows the student to fulfill high school graduation requirements.
- 3.6. “Packet” means a collection of instructional materials and assessments used to receive credit through the packet method.
- 3.7. “Packet method” means an educational approach where:
  - 3.7.1. a high school student receives a collection of instructional materials from an institution, organization, or LEA;
  - 3.7.2. the high school student works through the materials independently with minimal or no direct instruction from a teacher; and
  - 3.7.3. Assessment is primarily based on completing assignments in the instructional materials.
- 3.8. “Student with the most significant cognitive disability” or “SWSCD” is determined by a comprehensive understanding of a whole student, including review of educational considerations and data obtained through the IEP process, including whether a student:
  - 3.8.1. requires intensive, repeated, modified, and direct individualized instruction and requires substantial supports to learn, maintain, and generalize skills in the student's grade and age-appropriate curriculum;
  - 3.8.2. has special education eligibility documentation indicating the disability significantly impacts intellectual functioning and

- adaptive behavior, which means typically functioning at least two and a half or more standard deviations below the mean;
- 3.8.3. demonstrates cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior in home, school, and community environments, which are significantly below age expectations, even with program modifications, adaptations, and accommodations;
- 3.8.4. has a severe and complex cognitive disability, which limits the student from meaningful participation in the standard academic core curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards established at grade level, without substantial support, modifications, adaptations, and accommodations;
- 3.8.5. has a course of study that addresses the significant impact on adaptive behavior skills;
- 3.8.6. may be eligible to participate in alternate assessments; and
- 3.8.7. has a disability, which increases the need for dependence on others for many, if not all, daily living needs, and is expected to require extensive ongoing support through adulthood.

#### 4. **Guiding Principles**

- 4.1. Grading practices at USDB shall:
  - 4.1.1. Accurately reflect student mastery of academic standards.
  - 4.1.2. Provide meaningful feedback to students and families regarding academic progress.
  - 4.1.3. Be developmentally appropriate and aligned with Utah Core or the Essential Element Standards for the specific student.
  - 4.1.4. Provide equitable access to instruction and assessment for Deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, and visually impaired students.
  - 4.1.5. Comply with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans.
  - 4.1.6. Support student progress toward graduation and postsecondary readiness.
  - 4.1.7. Align with the instructional mission of USDB and the USD and USB Portrait of a Graduate competencies.
  - 4.1.8. Recognize language as a fundamental human right and ensure that all students have access to a fully accessible language environment necessary for academic learning.

5. **Grading Scales**

5.1. Secondary Grading Scale (Grades 7–12)

5.1.1. Secondary courses shall use the following grading scale:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>GPA Value</b>
A	90–100	4.0
B	80–89	3.0
C	70–79	2.0
D	60–69	1.0
F	Below 60	0

5.1.2. Teachers shall communicate grading expectations and course requirements to students and parents or guardians at the beginning of each course.

5.2. Elementary Grading

5.2.1. Elementary programs may utilize standards-based reporting systems that communicate student progress toward grade-level standards rather than traditional letter grades.

6. **Pass/Fail Grading**

6.1. Courses may be graded using a Pass/Fail (P/F) system when appropriate for the instructional program.

6.2. Pass/Fail grading may be used in:

6.2.1. Elective courses

6.2.2. Exploratory learning experiences

6.2.3. Transition programs

6.2.4. Vocational or work-based learning experiences

6.2.5. Individualized learning opportunities aligned with a student's IEP

6.3. A Pass (P) indicates the student has met minimum course requirements and earned credit.

6.4. A Fail (F) indicates the student has not met course requirements.

6.5. A Pass (P) earns course credit but does not calculate into the GPA.

6.6. The use of Pass/Fail grading shall be approved by school administration and communicated to students and families at the beginning of the course.

7. **Incomplete Grades**

- 7.1. An Incomplete (I) may be assigned when a student is unable to complete course requirements due to extenuating circumstances such as illness or approved absence.
  - 7.2. Students must complete the remaining coursework within the timeframe established by the teacher and school administration.
  - 7.3. Incomplete grades should be resolved within one grading term unless an extension is approved by the administration.
  - 7.4. Failure to complete required coursework may result in the conversion of the incomplete to a final grade.
  - 7.5. Changes to a final grade after the close of a grading term shall require administrative approval and shall be documented in accordance with USDB procedures.
8. **Awarding Credit**
- 8.1. Secondary students earn credit upon successful completion of courses aligned with Utah Core Standards or approved competency frameworks.
  - 8.2. Typically:
    - 8.2.1. One (1.0) credit represents a full-year course.
    - 8.2.2. One-half (0.5) credit represents a semester course.
  - 8.3. Credit shall be recorded on the student transcript.
  - 8.4. USDB may award credit through:
    - 8.4.1. Traditional coursework
    - 8.4.2. Competency-based learning
    - 8.4.3. Approved online learning programs
    - 8.4.4. Credit recovery programs
    - 8.4.5. Transition or work-based learning experiences aligned with student learning goals
9. **Acceptance and Reciprocity of Credit**
- 9.1. USDB shall accept credits and grades awarded to a student from a school or a provider accredited by an accrediting entity adopted by the Board.
  - 9.2. USDB may establish reasonable timelines and require adequate, timely documentation of authenticity for credits and grades submitted.

- 9.3. USDB shall provide various methods for a student to earn credit from a non-accredited source, coursework, or education provider, including:
  - 9.3.1. satisfaction of coursework by demonstrated competency, as evaluated at the LEA level;
  - 9.3.2. assessment as proctored and determined at the school or school level;
  - 9.3.3. review of student work or projects by an Educational Director; and
  - 9.3.4. satisfaction of electronic or correspondence coursework, as approved by the USDB Superintendent.
  - 9.3.5. USDB may require documentation of compliance with Utah Code Section 53G-6-204 before reviewing a student's home school, competency work, assessments, or materials.
- 9.4. USDB has final decision-making authority over the awarding of credit and grades from a non-accredited source, consistent with state law, due process, and this rule.

## 10. **Competency-Based Credit**

- 10.1. USDB may award credit based on demonstrated mastery of course standards rather than seat-time requirements.
- 10.2. Students may demonstrate competency through:
  - 10.2.1. Examinations
  - 10.2.2. Performance assessments
  - 10.2.3. Portfolios or projects
  - 10.2.4. Demonstrations of learning
  - 10.2.5. Teacher verification of competency
- 10.3. Competency-based credit may support accelerated learning, credit recovery, or flexible pacing for students whose instructional needs require alternative pathways.
- 10.4. Documentation of demonstrated competency shall be maintained in the student's academic record (P/F or letter grade).

## 11. **Packet Method Use**

- 11.1. USDB may award a grade for original credit through the packet method if:
  - 11.1.1. The packet adheres to the following criteria:

- 11.1.1.1. it fully covers the course standards;
- 11.1.1.2. it includes adequate opportunities for practice and application;
- 11.1.1.3. it includes a variety of assessments; and
- 11.1.1.4. it is consistent with Section 53E-3-501; and
- 11.1.2. The Board will recommend a packet for use as instructional material once it has undergone the state instructional materials process as described in Title 53E, Chapter 4, Part 4, State Instructional Materials.

## 12. **Course Re-take and Grade Replacement**

- 12.1. Students who repeat a course to improve academic performance shall have the highest grade earned used in GPA calculations.
- 12.2. If a course is retaken for grade replacement, the lower grade must be excluded from the student's permanent record.
- 12.3. If a student repeats a course, the student's LEA:
  - 12.3.1. shall adjust, if necessary, the student's course grade and grade point average to reflect the student's highest grade and exclude a lower grade;
  - 12.3.2. shall exclude from the student's permanent record the course grade that is not the highest grade; and
  - 12.3.3. may not otherwise show on the student's current record that the student repeated the course.
- 12.4. A high school student may improve a grade through grade replacement by:
  - 12.4.1. repeating a course one or more times; or
  - 12.4.2. enrolling in and completing a comparable teacher-led course.

## 13. **Graduation and Certificate of Completion Requirements**

- 13.1. Students pursuing a Utah High School Diploma must meet graduation requirements established by the Utah State Board of Education.
- 13.2. A student with a disability served by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) shall satisfy high school completion or graduation criteria, consistent with state and federal law and the student's IEP.
- 13.3. Graduation requirements generally include a minimum of twenty-four (24) credits distributed across required subject areas.

13.4. Students must also complete a College and Career Readiness Plan (CCR Plan) and meet other state requirements.

13.5. **Certificates of Completion**

13.5.1. A certificate of completion may be awarded to a student who:

13.5.1.1. has completed the student's senior year;

13.5.1.2. is exiting or aging out of the school system; and

13.5.1.3. has not met all state requirements for a diploma.

13.5.2. USDB may award a student a certificate of completion consistent with state and federal law and the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

13.5.3. Earning a high school equivalency (GED) does not terminate eligibility for FAPE.

13.5.4. USDB may not enroll a student with the intent to award a diploma or a certificate of completion once the student has earned a high school equivalency.

13.6. **Alternate Diploma**

13.6.1. USDB may award an alternate diploma to a student with the most significant cognitive disability if:

13.6.1.1. the student accesses grade-level Core standards through the Essential Elements;

13.6.1.2. the student's IEP team makes graduation substitutions in the same content area, from a list of alternative courses approved by the Superintendent; and

13.6.1.3. the student meets all graduation requirements before exiting school at or before age 22.

13.6.2. An alternate diploma may not indicate that the recipient is a student with a disability.

13.6.3. Notwithstanding the award of an alternate diploma, USDB may still be obligated to provide FAPE to an eligible student in accordance with the IDEA.

13.6.4. USDB may submit alternate courses to the Superintendent for possible inclusion by USBE.

13.7. **Career Development Credential**

- 13.7.1. A Career Development Credential is not a diploma and does not affect graduation rates.
- 13.7.2. USDB may award a career development credential to a student with an IEP or Section 504 plan:
  - 13.7.2.1. who meets the requirements of a career-focused work experience before leaving school; and
  - 13.7.2.2. consistent with:
    - 13.7.2.2.1. state and federal law; and
    - 13.7.2.2.2. the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.
- 13.7.3. Before receiving a career development credential, a student shall earn the following credits in core content:
  - 13.7.3.1. English Language Arts (3.0);
  - 13.7.3.2. Mathematics (2.0);
  - 13.7.3.3. Science (1.0); and
  - 13.7.3.4. Social Studies (1.0);
  - 13.7.3.5. complete 120 hours of community-based work experience, to include:
    - 13.7.3.5.1. 40 hours of paid employment; or
    - 13.7.3.5.2. documentation of completion of intake with a vocational rehabilitation counselor or the Department of Workforce Services;
    - 13.7.3.5.3. complete a USDB-approved transition curriculum class or coursework that includes:
      - 13.7.3.5.3.1. disability awareness;
      - 13.7.3.5.3.2. accommodations;
      - 13.7.3.5.3.3. self-advocacy training;
      - 13.7.3.5.3.4. career exploration; and
      - 13.7.3.5.3.5. workplace soft skills;
  - 13.7.3.6. receive .5 credits in a CTE Work-Based Learning internship, including accommodations or modifications as appropriate and allowed by industry standards; and
  - 13.7.3.7. verify concentration in a CTE pathway in the student's area of interest.

#### 14. Individualized Graduation Pathways

- 14.1. Students receiving special education services may pursue individualized pathways to graduation consistent with their Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- 14.2. Possible outcomes may include:
  - 14.2.1. Utah High School Diploma
  - 14.2.2. Alternate High School Diploma
  - 14.2.3. Certificate of Completion
- 14.3. The student's IEP team shall determine appropriate graduation pathways based on the student's goals, progress, and transition planning.
- 14.4. USDB will document the nature and extent of the modifications, substitute credit, and exemptions from graduation criteria on the student's Individualized Education Plan and cumulative record with the registrar, as determined by the IEP team.
15. **Student Rights and Responsibilities Related to Graduation, Transcripts, and Receipt of Diplomas.**
  - 15.1. USDB shall supervise the granting of credit and awarding of diplomas.
  - 15.2. Only students who have completed their graduation requirements at USDB may participate in commencement exercises and receive a diploma, an alternate diploma, or a certificate of completion from USDB.
  - 15.3. Students may only participate in commencement ceremonies when they receive a diploma, an alternate diploma, or a certificate of completion
  - 15.4. A diploma, a certificate, credits, or an unofficial transcript may not be withheld from a student for nonpayment of school fees.
  - 15.5. Graduation standards shall be applied in accordance with those in effect when the student entered ninth grade, unless otherwise required by state law.
  - 15.6. Graduation with a regular high school diploma constitutes a change in placement and terminates the student's eligibility for Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under IDEA.
    - 15.6.1. The student/parent shall receive written prior notice at least 30 days before the USDB proposes to terminate the student's eligibility to special education by issuing a regular diploma.

16. **Transition and Work-Based Learning Credit**

- 16.1. USDB may award elective credit for approved transition services, vocational training, or work-based learning experiences aligned with student transition goals. These experiences may be recorded as elective credit on the student's transcript.
- 16.2. Examples may include:
  - 16.2.1. Community-Based Instruction
  - 16.2.2. Daily Living Skills
  - 16.2.3. Life Skills
  - 16.2.4. Transition
  - 16.2.5. Careers, Career Awareness/Skills
  - 16.2.6. Job Sampling
  - 16.2.7. Joy Training
  - 16.2.8. Employment preparation
  - 16.2.9. Work-based learning placements
- 16.3. Appropriate documentation of participation and competency shall be maintained for credit to be awarded.

17. **Grading for Students with Disabilities**

- 17.1. Students receiving special education services shall be graded consistent with their Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- 17.2. Grading practices may include:
  - 17.2.1. Modified assignments aligned with IEP goals
  - 17.2.2. Alternative assessments
  - 17.2.3. Adapted grading criteria
  - 17.2.4. Extended time or accessibility accommodations
- 17.3. Grades should reflect progress toward academic standards and IEP objectives.

18. **Language Access and Assessment for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students**

- 18.1. Because many students served by USDB are Deaf or hard of hearing, grading and assessment practices shall ensure that grades reflect academic knowledge rather than communication or language barriers.

- 18.2. Instruction and assessment shall be accessible through appropriate communication modalities, which may include:
  - 18.2.1. American Sign Language (ASL)
  - 18.2.2. Spoken language supports
  - 18.2.3. Interpreting services
  - 18.2.4. Captioning
  - 18.2.5. Visual instructional supports
  - 18.2.6. Other communication systems identified in a student's educational plan
- 18.3. Educators shall distinguish between mastery of academic content and language proficiency when evaluating student work.
- 18.4. Courses specifically designed for language development may assess student performance based on language acquisition objectives.
19. **ASL/English Bilingual Assessment Practices**
  - 19.1. USDB recognizes that many Deaf students learn within a bilingual environment that includes American Sign Language (ASL) and English.
  - 19.2. Assessments may allow students to demonstrate understanding through:
    - 19.2.1. ASL responses
    - 19.2.2. Written English responses
    - 19.2.3. Signed presentations
    - 19.2.4. Visual or project-based demonstrations
  - 19.3. Assessments shall measure students' understanding of academic content rather than proficiency in a specific language modality, unless language proficiency is the course objective.
20. **Language Deprivation Considerations in Assessment**
  - 20.1. USDB recognizes that some Deaf students may have experienced limited access to fully accessible language during early childhood.
  - 20.2. Assessment and grading practices shall consider the potential impact of language deprivation while maintaining high expectations for student learning.
  - 20.3. Educators shall:
    - 20.3.1. Use multiple measures of student learning

- 20.3.2. Provide appropriate instructional supports
- 20.3.3. Distinguish between gaps in prior language access and mastery of current instruction
- 20.3.4. Avoid grading practices that disproportionately penalize students for historical language access barriers.

21. **Blind and Low-Vision Considerations**

- 21.1. Students who are blind or visually impaired shall receive instructional materials and assessments in accessible formats.
- 21.2. Accessible formats may include:
  - 21.2.1. Braille
  - 21.2.2. Tactile graphics
  - 21.2.3. Large print
  - 21.2.4. Accessible digital text
- 21.3. Grades shall reflect academic mastery rather than limitations caused by inaccessible materials.

22. **Alignment with State Accountability Standards**

- 22.1. Grading practices shall support student progress toward mastery of Utah Core Standards and alignment with the accountability framework established by the Utah State Board of Education.
- 22.2. Student performance data may be used to:
  - 22.2.1. Monitor academic progress
  - 22.2.2. Identify areas for improvement
  - 22.2.3. Inform instructional practices
  - 22.2.4. Support student achievement

23. **Administrative Oversight**

- 23.1. School administrators shall ensure grading practices are applied consistently and in compliance with this policy.