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Indiana Department of Education

Glenda Ritz, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Indiana Graduation Plan

IC 20-30-4

Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***What is a graduation plan?***
   In simplest terms, a graduation plan enables students to connect what they are currently doing in school to what they want to do in the future. Effective graduation plans allow students to meet with counselors, teachers, and their parents/guardians each year to assess and record their academic progress, interpret test scores, schedule appropriate middle school and high school courses, prepare for graduation from high school, and begin making initial career and postsecondary education plans for life after high school.

2. ***Who is required to complete the graduation plan?***
   The initial graduation plan must be developed starting in 6th grade by the student and the student's parent. Prior to the completion of Grade 9, each student—in consultation with the student's school counselor and after seeking consultation with each student's parents—shall further develop the plan (see question 4 for details). If the plan was not completed in Grade 6 or subsequent years (transfer from another state for example) the plan should be completed at the earliest date possible. Starting in grade 9, the graduation plan should be updated each year until the student graduates.

3. ***What does the law say about the "initial graduation plan" for 6th grade students?***
   Indiana Code 20-30-4 was revised in 2008 and requires:
   - In Grade 6, students and their parents or guardians shall develop an "initial graduation plan,"
   - The plan must include:
     - A statement of intent to graduate from high school.
     - An acknowledgement of the importance of:
       - Good citizenship;
       - School attendance; and
       - Diligent study habits.
   - The plan becomes part of the "student's permanent school record."

4. ***What is the requirement for older students?***
   The law says students must further develop the graduation plan before the end of 9th grade to include:
   - The subject and skill areas of interest to the student,
   - A Core 40 program of study for Grades 10, 11 and 12 that meets the interests and aptitude of the student,

- Assurances that, upon satisfactory fulfillment of the plan, the student:
  - is entitled to graduate; and
  - will have taken at least the minimum variety and number of courses necessary to gain admittance to a state educational institution.
- An indication of assessments (other than ISTEP and the graduation examination) that the student plans to take voluntarily during Grade 10 through Grade 12, and which may include any of the following:
  - The SAT Reasoning Test.
  - The ACT test.
  - Advanced placement exams.
  - College readiness exams approved by the Indiana Department of Education.
  - Workforce readiness exams approved by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development established under IC 22-4.1-2.

5. ***How is a graduation plan different than a Career Plan?***
   Career plans had been required of Indiana high school students since the 1994-95 school year. Changes to the law in 2008 included:
   - Changing the term "career plan" to "graduation plan" in legislation;
   - Adding a requirement that the graduation plan include a list of assessments students plan to take in grades 10 to 12; and
   - Requiring students to develop an "initial graduation plan" in sixth grade.

   Read the law, Indiana Code 20-30-4, at https://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2016/ic/titles/020/articles/030/chapters/004/.

6. ***Are schools required to collect and keep graduation plans?***
   The law specifies that an initial graduation plan, begun in 6th grade, becomes part of a student's permanent record. Many schools give a copy of the graduation plan to the student and keep the original in the student's file, which is passed on to the next school the student attends.

7. ***Why are students required to have a graduation plan?***
   Many states require students to complete a student planning instrument, like a graduation or career plan, to help them see the connection between school and future success. Generally speaking, a student planning instrument does the following:
   - Helps students understand the importance and relevance of their coursework to what they want to do in the future;
   - Encourages students to strive for higher grades;
   - Engages students and parents in the process of planning for the future; and
   - Creates a structure for constructive conversations between students and their parents, teachers, counselors and other caring adults.

8. ***Are students in 6th grade too young to be planning for graduation?***
   Research indicates that students begin thinking about their future plans well before the 6th grade. Students who are not engaged in school and fail to see the relevance of school begin to disengage from the educational process as early as elementary school. Graduation plans provide a format for students and families to continuously monitor student progress and to begin setting goals for success in the future.

9. ***Must 7th grade students complete an initial graduation plan?***
   The law requires 6th grade students to complete an initial graduation plan and also requires students to complete or update their graduation plan before the end of Grade 9 and every year thereafter until graduation. While the law does not specifically require 7th or 8th grade students to complete a graduation plan, it is expected that once students complete a graduation plan in 6th grade, they will continue to update that plan during each year of school until graduation. The law does require further development of the plan in grade 9 and an annual review in grades 10-12.

10. ***What is the school's responsibility regarding graduation plans?***
    The initial graduation plan is the responsibility of the 6th grade student and the student's parent or guardian to complete and the school's responsibility to include in the student's permanent record. Schools following best practices will want to assist families in completing their initial graduation plans. Beginning in Grade 9, school counselors are required to assist students in further developing the graduation plan "in consultation with the student and the student's parent" on an annual basis.

11. ***Is there a specific graduation plan form that all Indiana schools must use?***
    No. Schools may develop their own graduation plans or use the sample plan provided by Learn More Indiana. The Learn More sample plans were originally developed with input from Indiana school counselors and were reviewed by staff at the Indiana Department of Education and Indiana Commission for Higher Education to ensure their usage provide schools an easy, simple way to meet the requirements of the law. In addition, Indiana Career Explorer's online college & career planning portfolio for students, incorporates all of the requirements of Indiana's Graduation Plan.

12. ***Must students and parents sign the graduation plan?***
    While signatures of parents and students are not required, it is one way to confirm that students and parents have been involved in completing the initial graduation plan in the 6th grade and are involved in reviewing the graduation plan on an annual basis.

13. ***What are some ways schools might help to ensure that the initial graduation plan is completed?***

Schools have said they plan to engage students in completing the initial graduation plan in many ways, including:

- Scheduling 15-minute appointments with parents and students to develop the plan before, during, or after the school day. Some propose doing this during student-led or parent teacher conferences or on a school day (or evening) during a designated week.
- Sending initial graduation plans home with students to complete with parents and to be returned to the office. Copies should be made to allow schools to keep one copy in the student's permanent file and the other to be sent home with the student.
- Sending a notice home with report cards. Other schools propose using an outbound phone call to all 6th grade parents alerting them of this requirement. If printed plans are not returned by a designated date, an outbound call could be made to those parents as well as a reminder to students.
- Updating the plan each year during parent/teacher conferences.
- Designating a specific week (such as College Go! Week) for parents and students to discuss and complete the plans.
- During scheduling of classes for the next year.
- The Indiana Career Explorer incorporates an 'electronic signature' for parents as well.

If you have further questions about the initial graduation plan or graduation plan requirements, please contact your child's School Counselor or visit: http://www.learnmoreindiana.org/college/preparing-for-college/graduation-plan/.

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