

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools 

DATE: June 25, 2024

SUBJECT: Update on Diploma and Certificate Endorsements

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to provide the Maryland State Board of Education with a comprehensive update on the development of implementation plans for diploma and certificate endorsements. The endorsements are a COMAR requirement (§13A.03.02.09) and are designed to recognize students' specialized coursework and achievements in specific areas of study, thereby enhancing their competitiveness for post-secondary opportunities and careers. The presentation outlines the requirements, standards, and competencies associated with these endorsements, as well as the phased rollout plan to ensure successful implementation across the state.

Background

In response to the evolving educational landscape and the need for more personalized recognition of students' skills and achievements, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed a framework for diploma and certificate endorsements. These endorsements were proposed following extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and recommendations from the Maryland High School Graduation Task Force and the Maryland Certificate of Program Completion Task Force. Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, students will have the opportunity to earn various endorsements, including diploma endorsements for College and Career Readiness and Career and Technical Education, as well as specific competencies for students completing a certificate program.

Executive Summary

1. Background on Endorsements and COMAR Requirements
2. Workgroups and other Stakeholder Feedback Sessions
3. Endorsement Models from Other States
4. MSDE Recommendations for Diploma and Certificate Endorsements

Action

No action is required; this information is for discussion only.

Attachments

Update on Grad and Cert Endorsements.pptx

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Diploma and Certificate Endorsements Update

June 25, 2024

Presented By | Dr. Deann Collins, Deputy Superintendent, Office of Teaching and Learning
Richard Kincaid, Senior Executive Director, Office of College and Career Pathways
Molly Conner, Branch Chief, Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services





Presentation Outline

1. What is an Endorsement and COMAR Requirements
2. Planning, Convening and Workgroup Engagement
3. Endorsement Models from Other States
4. Endorsement Implementation Phases
5. Competencies and Rubrics

What is an Endorsement?

An endorsement for high school students is a **recognition** added to their **diploma or certificate** that signifies the **completion of specialized coursework and achievement** in a specific area of study, such as STEM, arts, career and technical education, or public service.

The endorsement highlights the student's **skills and knowledge** in that field of study, making them **more competitive** for post-secondary opportunities and careers.

COMAR Requirement: Diploma Endorsements

State Endorsements

- 1) Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, students graduating may earn a **College and Career Ready** State endorsement, a **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** State endorsement, or both.
- 2) The Department will establish the requirements for the endorsements.

MSDE Staff Convenings and Stakeholder Workgroups

MSDE after 2024: Developed a draft rubric and considerations to evaluate and award certificate endorsements in all three endorsement areas: **Postsecondary Education, Career and Work readiness, and Community and Citizenship**. Presentations to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), CTE teams, Chief Academic Officers, Assistant Superintendents of Instruction, and two virtual feedback sessions with over 200 combined participants.

2021-2023: Multiple presentations were conducted to inform stakeholder groups of Endorsements for students receiving a Maryland high school diploma or Maryland Certificate of Program Completion beginning SY 2024-2025.

2020-2022: Sub-committee workgroups met routinely to establish competency standards and skills aligned to graduation, diploma, and College and Career Ready Standards. Efforts were made at each to scaffold skill attainment and reduce redundancy.

2019-2020: MSDE established an internal, cross-departmental team and workgroups that met monthly to develop standards and competencies for the three endorsements for the MCOPC: 1) Post-Secondary, 2) Career & Work Readiness, and 3) Community & Citizenship.

2018-2019: The Maryland High School Graduation Task Force was first convened in January 2018 at the request of the Board and Superintendent. The Task Force was asked to focus on three areas: credit and program requirements (number of credits, subject areas, and other requirements), assessments, and options for awarding high school diplomas. All decisions were informed by current research, data, and experts.

Mississippi and Texas Endorsement Models

Successful models of diploma and certificate endorsement that serve as inspiration for Maryland:

Mississippi	Texas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers Career and Technical, Academic, and Distinguished Academic Endorsements. Concrete community benefits are tied to the endorsements, such as admission into the state’s public university, eligibility to directly enter the workforce, and dual-credit options. All students begin developing Individual Success Plans (ISP) in 7th grade. Some middle school students may earn high school credit. Students who have met the criteria for having a Significant Cognitive Disability (SCD) may participate in a program of study to earn the Alternate Diploma. The program of study is outlined and alternate assessment participation is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers five endorsement options: STEM, Business & Industry, Multidisciplinary Studies, Public Services, and Arts & Humanities. Endorsement pathways must include courses which allow the student to obtain at least one of the following: Apprenticeship, Industry Recognized Credential, Internship, and/or Service-Learning Experiences. Texas HB5, which mandates endorsements, created three Diploma Programs to accommodate the new requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Foundation Diploma (22 credits; 17 specific credits plus 5 electives) ✓ Foundation PLUS Endorsement Diploma (26 credits; 19 specific plus 7 electives) ✓ Distinguished Achievement Diploma (26 credits; 19 specific credits including Algebra II, plus 7 electives)

Endorsement: College and Career Readiness (CCR)

Endorsement Criteria and Implementation Plan for Maryland Students:

Phase I: (SY2024-25)

Students may earn the CCR endorsement if they meet the interim criteria **or** the current criteria for college and career readiness.

(The interim criteria required a student to “surpass benchmarks in 10th grade English and benchmarks in one of the following math courses: Algebra 1, Algebra 2, or Geometry. Students can also earn a score of 520 on the SAT math test to prove college readiness.”)

Phase II: (SY2025+)

Students may earn the CCR endorsement if they meet one of the two options:

- **Option 1:** Students must demonstrate both Academic Success and Math Mastery. Academic Success is achieved by earning a High School Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 or higher. Math Mastery may be achieved by either earning a final course grade of A, B, or C in Algebra I, OR by scoring Proficient or above on the Algebra I MCAP assessment.
- **Option 2:** Scoring Proficient or above on BOTH the English 10 MCAP assessment AND the Algebra I MCAP assessment.

Endorsement: Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Phase I: (SY2024-25)

- Students may earn the CTE Endorsement by meeting the *current* **completer pathway graduation requirement**. This requires the student to complete one program of study, comprised of 3-5 courses, in grades 9-12.

Phase II: (SY2025+)

- Students may earn the CTE Endorsement by **completing two or more courses** in the same program of study AND **earning an industry-recognized credential and/or completing** the high school level of **an apprenticeship**. MSDE will develop CTE Endorsements in the following areas:
 - STEM
 - Business & Industry
 - Multidisciplinary Studies
 - Public Services
 - Arts & Humanities.

Endorsement: Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Phase II: Examples of Pathways within Endorsement Categories

STEM	Business and Industry	Multidisciplinary Studies	Public Services	Arts and Humanities
<p>Pathways Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science Technology Engineering Math 	<p>Pathways Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting Agriculture Architecture Automotive Technology Communications Construction Finance Graphic Design HVAC Information Technology Marketing Welding 	<p>Pathways Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP Programs IB Programs 	<p>Pathways Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosmetology Culinary Arts Education and Training Health Science Hospitality Law Enforcement 	<p>Pathways Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive Arts Cultural Studies English Literature Social Studies World Languages

COMAR Requirement: Maryland Certificate of Program Completion (MCOPC) Endorsements

Certificate Endorsements

- 1) Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, students earning a Maryland Certificate of Program Completion (MCOPC) rather than a high school diploma may earn one or more endorsements. MCOPC attainment is **determined by a student's IEP team and reserved for fewer than 1% of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.**
- 2) The endorsements include a **Post-Secondary Education** endorsement, a **Work-Ready/Employment/Career** endorsement, and a **Community/Citizenship** endorsement.
- 3) Requirements for the endorsements will be identified by the Department.

<https://dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/13A.03.02.09.aspx>

Maryland Certificate of Program Completion (MCOPC) Task Force

The MCOPC Task Force met from 2020-2022 as a result of the recommendation of the High School Graduation Task Force to develop standards for endorsements added to the current certificate of program completion. **There were 27 workgroup members representing various organizations, community groups, agencies, LEAs and roles.**

- The group met to review national best practices to inform **three areas** for endorsement.
- **Refined the endorsement recommendations** and develop **standards and competencies.**
- The **finalized endorsement areas** and corresponding **attainment rubrics** were presented to various advocacy groups, steering committees, and the Governor's Workforce Development Boards.

MCOPC Endorsements: Phased Rollout Summary

Phase One (2021-2024)	Phase Two (2024-2025)	Phase Three (2025-2026)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland Certificate of Program Completion (MCOPC) Task Force Completed Recommendations. Certificate Endorsement Attainment Rubric Re-Routed and Reapproved by MSDE Leadership. Will be included in May superintendent transmittal. Professional Learning (PL) scheduled for June 3rd and June 4th to preview attainment rubric for LEA special education leadership, transition coordinators, and guidance counselors. PL will be recorded and distributed to LEA leadership, including superintendents, special education directors, and guidance counselors. Guidance on scoring the attainment rubric and an FAQ sheet will also be provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Fall 2024, LEAs will identify a cohort of all students in their final year of school being assessed according to the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards. From September – January, practitioners will be supported through Professional Learning series, Technical Assistance sessions, and open office hours. From January-February, MSDE will provide targeted coaching on the rubric-based observations of cohort students. By May 1st 2025, practitioners will utilize the MSDE created endorsement observation look-fors tool to complete an independent observation of cohort students and reward applicable endorsements. MSDE will conduct focus groups of these practitioners to inform and refine the observation cycle and 25-26 Professional Learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all students being assessed according to the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards, starting at age 14 the student's annual review meeting will include a discussion of the student's progress towards attainment of endorsements. Starting in October 2025, rubric-based observations for students in their final year of school will be conducted prior to the student's annual IEP meeting and distributed to parents and students as part of the student's pre-meeting documentation. At the annual IEP meeting, the team will incorporate all stakeholder feedback into the attainment rubric; this feedback will be incorporated into the finalized assessment will inform endorsement attainment. At least 3 observations will be required of exiting students on the Alternate Framework.

MCOPC Endorsements: Fall 2026 and Beyond

Starting in school year 2026-2027, all transition aged students* projected for MCOPC attainment by their IEP teams (often referred to as “students on the **Alternate Framework**”) will be required to have at least one Endorsement observation conducted and shared with the student’s family **prior to the student’s annual review meeting.**

The student’s annual review meeting will include space to discuss progress towards Endorsement attainment. Based on an IEP team discussion and observation data, students may be awarded credit for all or part of an Endorsement area. Endorsements will **directly inform** educational programming (IEP goals, objectives, and transition activities) and serve as an accounting of what the student has accomplished related to post-secondary transition.

If an IEP team determines that a student is making significant progress towards an Endorsement, or that a student has attained an Endorsement, the team should ask if that student would be better served by pursuing a diploma. This is especially true for students in 9th and 10th grade.

Professional Learning will continue to be provided to ensure that school-based teams are making decisions about Endorsement attainment aligned to data.

*In Maryland, transition aged student is defined as a student aged 14 or older over the life of the IEP.