

Diploma

Updated December 2011

1. What is the role of the State Board of Education (SBE) regarding high school diplomas?
2. What is the purpose of a diploma?
3. Can SBE or the Superintendent of Public Instruction issue a high school diploma?
4. How can students earn a high school diploma in Washington State?
5. Can school districts issue students a "state" diploma that only meets the state minimum graduation requirements?
6. I need to find out if a student earned a diploma. How can I get that information?
7. I lost my diploma. How can I get a copy of it?
8. I'm trying to verify that this particular online diploma is legitimate. How can I tell?

1. What is the role of the State Board of Education SBE with high school diplomas?

SBE establishes state requirements for high school graduation. The legislature also establishes requirements, as do local districts, private schools, and Tribal schools. Only after students meet all of the designated state and local requirements do they earn a diploma.

The 2006 legislature asked SBE to revise the purpose of a diploma. The new purpose was adopted by SBE in January 2008, and is reflected in basic education [RCW 28A.150.220](#).

2. What is the purpose of a diploma?

The purpose of the diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner. The diploma represents a balance between the personalized education needs of each student and society's needs, and reflects at its core the state's basic education goals. The diploma is a compact among students, parents, local school districts, the state and whatever institution or employer the graduate moves on to - a compact that says the graduate has acquired a particular set of knowledge and skills. How the student demonstrates those skills may differ. Whether a student earns the credit by participating in formal instruction or by demonstrating competency through established district policies is immaterial; they are equally acceptable.

3. Can SBE or the Superintendent of Public Instruction issue a high school diploma?

No. By law, only school districts ([RCW 28A.230.120](#)) and community and technical colleges ([RCW 28B.50.535](#)) may issue a high school diploma.

Neither the State Board of Education nor the Superintendent of Public Instruction has the legal authority to issue high school diplomas.

4. How can students earn a high school diploma in Washington State?

There are five ways to earn a high school diploma in Washington.

1. Earning a diploma from a school district.
2. Completing and passing all required International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme courses; passing all internal assessments as scored at the local level; successfully completing all required projects and products as scored at the local level; completing the final examinations administered by the IB organization in each of the required subjects under the diploma programme; and completing all local district requirements unless waived (per [SHB 1524](#), 2011 Legislature).
3. Earning an associate's degree through [Running Start](#) and requesting a high school diploma from the community and technical college where they earned the degree.
4. Earning an associate's degree if they are 21 years or older.
5. Successfully completing a high school completion program through a community and technical college.

5. Can school districts issue students a "state" diploma that meets only the state graduation requirements?

There is no state diploma. Students must meet state high school graduation requirements. However, they must also meet requirements added by their local district, private school, or Tribal school.

Local school district, private school, or Tribal school policies should specify under which circumstances additional, locally set graduation requirements can or cannot be waived.

5. I need to find out if a student earned a diploma. How can I get that information?

Students' graduation dates are noted on their high school transcripts. Local districts must retain transcripts for 100 years. Check with the local district. The state does **not** maintain centralized records of individual diplomas.

6. I lost my diploma. How can I get a copy of it?

Contact the school district or community and technical college that issued the original diploma. There may be a fee for processing your request to replace the diploma, and it may take several weeks to receive it.

7. I'm trying to verify that this particular online diploma is legitimate. How can I tell?

The State Board of Education has no formal guidelines for evaluating online credentials. One indication of quality is often whether the school issuing the credential is accredited. Regional accreditation agencies, which are the only accrediting agencies that accredit **both** public and private schools, and the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), a private accrediting agency, are the primary accreditation agencies that accredit online schools. The Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), which serves Washington, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah, is an example of one of the six regional accrediting agencies.