New High School Credential Options For Students With Disabilities

New York State has created a new credential option for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who are exiting high school. This credential is designed for students who are taking classes and examinations in preparation for a Regents or local diploma. It is designed to serve as a companion to a local or Regents diploma and does not serve as a high school diploma.

What is the CDOS Commencement Credential?

It is documentation of a student’s readiness for entry-level jobs. Through effective transition planning, an individual participates in assessments of strengths and needs, development of realistic post-secondary goals, and development and implementation of meaningful instruction and experiences to increase knowledge and skills in preparation for post-secondary employment. The CDOS Commencement Credential recognizes the success of this process.

Who is eligible for the CDOS Commencement Credential?

Students with IEPs who do NOT take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) are eligible. Students must have attended school for at least 12 years (excluding kindergarten) or reached the end of the school year in which they turned 21 in order to qualify. The CDOS Commencement Credential is not available to general education students, including those with Section 504 Accommodation Plans.

How do you earn a CDOS Commencement Credential?

A student must complete a Career Plan that shows that s/he has achieved the New York State CDOS standards, completed at least two units of study in career and technical education (CTE) courses and/or work-based learning experiences, and has an employability profile completed by his/her school, OR s/he must meet the requirements for a nationally recognized work readiness credential.

Will the CDOS Commencement Credential serve as a high school diploma if an individual is unable to meet all the requirements of a Regents or local diploma?

NO. The CDOS Commencement Credential is not a high school diploma and cannot be used to apply for college, trade school or the military.

Contact your CSE Chairperson and guidance counselor for specific information about the CDOS Commencement Credential option for your child. Further information regarding the CDOS Commencement Credential can be found at: www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/CDOScredential-memo-613.htm.
For students with ASD to be successful in school, they require supports. The purpose of a support is to help a student become more functional and independent in any environment. Supports range from simple visuals to academic learning aids to elaborate equipment. All too often, too many supports are placed in front of the student without direct instruction on how to use them. The student does not use the supports, but instead continues to rely on adults for assistance, engage in challenging behavior, and/or do poorly on academic tasks. Sometimes the supports chosen do not match the student’s learning style and strengths, continuing to frustrate not only the student, but the teacher as well.

Providing Meaningful Instruction to Students with ASD: Effective Implementation of Academic Supports goes beyond introducing common supports that work well for students with ASD to demonstrating how to use the supports effectively. Steps for teaching a student how to use each support discussed will be provided. Participants will have the opportunity to choose the supports that best match their student’s strengths and needs, and bring those supports back to the classroom with the confidence and knowledge needed to implement them correctly.

The Make & Take workshop is divided into two sessions. The morning session focuses on supports appropriate for elementary-age students, and the afternoon session is designed for middle and high school-age students. Two workshops are scheduled for the fall: October 29th in Poughkeepsie, NY and November 20th in Utica, NY. If you are interested in attending one of the Make & Take workshops, please contact CARD at 518-442-2574.

New Make & Take Workshop!

Back to School: Tips for Parents

The summer is over, and school has started. While you might be excited about school starting, your child with autism may be dreading the noisy hallways, difficult assignments, and confusing social rules. This year does not have to be a repeat of the past. There are some things you can do to help your child enjoy school and learn.

- Establish a rapport with your child’s teacher(s). Schedule a meeting in September with the teacher(s) to introduce yourself and share your child’s strengths and needs. Learn about the teacher’s expectations for class and homework so that you can help your child meet those expectations at home. Create a communication system to keep both parties informed on a daily basis.
- Create a homework area at home. This area should be free of distractions, and should contain only those items needed to complete homework. If your child listens to music to calm down and stay focused, consider putting a radio or mp3 player in that area. Have your child help create this area.
- Establish a routine for after school. Does your child need to relax before starting homework? Does your child like to get all of his/her homework done right after school, and then exercise? Have this discussion together, and create a schedule that reflects everyone’s needs. Post the schedule in a place accessible to all.
- Keep a calendar. Teach your child to look at the calendar to keep track of upcoming tests, project deadlines, family events, vacations, appointments, etc. Establish time in the routine to review the calendar and prepare any materials/equipment for the event in advance.
- Plan extracurricular activities after school. The activities do not need to be offered by the school; instead, consider activities that are relaxing and enjoyable for your child, and determine how to incorporate them into the weekly schedule. Every child needs time to relax and have fun outside of school!
- Lastly, teach organizational strategies to your child. Create a system for organizing homework and getting it back into the backpack for the next day. The backpack can become the black hole for homework and class assignments. Binders and folders can burst from holding too many papers. Help your child clean out everything on a weekly basis. Establish a storage system (e.g., a file box, an accordion file, bins) for papers that are important but don’t need to be carried around every day. Keep an inventory of school supplies and replenish before they run out. Children with ASD are more likely to lose their supplies, so have enough on hand to prevent frustration for both your child and the teachers.
Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention

Learning how to interact with peers is one of the biggest challenges faced by students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Peer-mediated instruction and intervention (PMII) is designed to improve social interaction skills of students with ASD by training their peers how best to interact with them (National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, 2010). PMII takes place in school settings, and is best led by a teacher who works closely with the student with ASD. Implementing PMII involves a series of steps, starting with choosing and training peers, followed by implementing the intervention in structured settings, and eventually extending peer interactions throughout the day. These steps will look different depending on the age of the students.

The first step of PMII at any age level is choosing appropriate peers to be involved. Selecting peers is a key part of PMII, since the peers are interacting directly with the student with ASD. Peers should have good social and language skills, be well-liked by others, and be willing to participate. Peers should also have a positive history of interacting with the student with ASD. At younger ages, it is important that peers be able to follow instructions from a teacher. At higher grade levels, peers should have similar schedules as the student with ASD. In general, peers should be good social role models who are available throughout the day to have positive interactions with the student with ASD.

Once selected, peers are taught strategies for interacting with the student with ASD. For young children, strategies might include starting interactions and providing help. For elementary school children, skills include starting and continuing conversations. At the middle and high school levels, peers are taught how to provide positive feedback, model social skills, and help the student with ASD interact with other students. To help peers understand the purpose of the intervention, they are also taught about individual differences and ASD in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding.

As the peers begin to use their skills in interacting with the student with ASD, teachers provide various levels of support. For the youngest children, teachers plan structured play opportunities with specific toys or games. In elementary school, teachers might provide scripts for activities and conversation. In middle and high school, teachers work to create environments that allow for individual peer interaction, including small learning groups. Teachers might also provide structure for lunch interactions, including giving peers ideas for conversation starters. At the early stages for any age group, teachers provide prompts and reinforcement to peers and to the student with ASD. Teachers decrease their own involvement as the students become more comfortable in their interactions.

Moving beyond structured activities, teachers seek opportunities to extend interactions throughout the school day. In younger grades, teachers might seat peers next to the student with ASD during class activities. More peers may also be added so the child with ASD can practice skills with other students. For older students, teachers work closely with the peers to review strategies that work well and brainstorm ideas for increasing interaction. Even as teachers decrease their own involvement, they should continue to monitor the student with ASD and the peers in order to help as needed.

By using peers to model and initiate social and communication skills, PMII can improve the quantity and quality of peer interactions for students with ASD. PMII has been shown to be effective in early childhood and elementary school for increasing communication and social skills, perhaps particularly for students who have limited communication skills and social interactions. In middle and high school, PMII can be used to build a social network of peers from whom a student with ASD can observe appropriate social behavior. Moreover, PMII can be individualized to students’ needs by teaching peer to target specific skills, all while providing the student with many opportunities for social interaction. More information on PMII can be found through the National Professional Development Center on ASD (autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/) or the Autism Internet Modules (www.autismininternetmodules.org).
Calendar of Statewide Events

10/17/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Hyatt Regency, Buffalo, NY
10/29/2014  Make & Take Workshop: The Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel, Poughkeepsie, NY
11/06/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Radisson Rochester Riverside, NY
11/06/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown, NY
11/13/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Chautauqua Inn and Suites, Mayville, NY
11/20/2014  Make & Take Workshop: The Radisson, Utica, NY
12/02/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Holiday Inn, Onteona, NY
12/04/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Best Western University Inn, Canton, NY
12/09/2014  Professional Development and Parent Seminar: Holiday Inn, Plattsburgh, NY

For more information or to register online for a seminar, visit the website:
www.albany.edu/autism/pdps.php

SAVE THE DATE!
9th Annual Statewide Autism Conference, Friday, March 27, 2015
The Desmond, Albany NY