

High School Options for Students who had Modifications at Elementary School

Many students with special education needs have a modified program in elementary school but in high school modifications are rarely an option. At secondary school the curriculum is by subject and, in order to earn a credit, the student must achieve the learning expectations for the subject. The school Principal can approve modifications to a credit course but to maintain the integrity of the credit, the modifications will be minimal.

Some students, who had a modified program at elementary school, may be able to complete credit courses with accommodations only. Accommodations for instructional strategies, the environment and assessment strategies may be sufficient. When accommodations are documented in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), the teacher can present the information in formats that are more helpful to the student, or assess their knowledge using different formats. Discussion about the accommodations your child needs at high school should start in Grades 7 and 8 as part of the plan for transition to high school. For more information on types of accommodations see page 28 to 30 of [The Individual Education Plan \(IEP\) A Resource Guide \(2004\)](#).

Finding out about the course content for each subject and deciding whether the course outcomes are achievable for the student, should begin in Grade 8 during secondary school program and course selection. The student and parent can seek help from the special education teacher at elementary school and the Guidance and Special Education departments at high

school. The same discussions should occur each year as the courses for the following year are selected.

The limited modifications of courses at high school comes as a surprise to some parents, who are disappointed to learn that their child may not be able to complete subject courses and earn the 40 credits required for graduation. However, there are many opportunities at high school for a student to develop skills and earn credits. This includes:

- **Locally developed courses** may include compulsory courses in English, math and science, and optional courses in specific program or interest areas not covered in the provincial curriculum. For more information, check the [Ministry of Education, Guide to Locally Developed Courses Grade 9 to 12](#) or ask the Guidance Department for information on courses available at your high school.
- **Learning strategies** courses are designed to enable students with an IEP to develop the Skills for Success at Secondary School (Grade 9 to 12) and Skills for Success after Secondary Schools (Grade 12). For more information, check the [Ontario Curriculum for Guidance and Career Education](#).
- **Cooperative education** and other forms of experiential learning – students can earn credits from placement in a workplace and gain valuable employment skills and experience. For more information, check [Cooperative Education](#) on the Ministry of Education website.
- **Additional options** include high skills majors, e-learning and other strategies that are part of the [Student Success Strategy](#).

Students can also work towards an Ontario Secondary School Certificate, which requires 14 credits, rather than the Ontario Secondary School Diploma that requires 40 credits. For more information, see the article, [High School Certificates](#).

Modifications are a useful strategy for students with special

education needs and they are very appropriate at elementary school. However, for high school the modifications may prevent the student from achieving a course credit. At post-secondary school, colleges and universities, modifications are not allowed at all. For more information on the difference between elementary, secondary and post secondary education check the article, [Differences Between Secondary and Post Secondary](#).