



# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **BOARDS CAN AWARD ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS RETROACTIVELY**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – High school graduates with special needs, who received a certificate of attainment upon finishing high school, may now request an alternative high school diploma from their local board of education.

This is the result of a change in regulation prompted by the passage of Senate Bill 43 (2012), sponsored by Sen. Dennis Parrett, D-Elizabethtown. Starting in the 2012-13 school year, it allows a student with a severe disability who has completed a modified curriculum and an individualized course of study established by the Kentucky Board of Education to receive an alternative high school diploma.

“After the bill passed, I heard from hundreds of parents, whose child had already graduated, that wanted them to also receive an alternative high school diploma marking their achievements,” said Sen. Parrett.

The Kentucky Board of Education approved a change in [704 KAR 3:305](#) that allows school boards to award the diplomas retroactively. It took effect in January. Without a diploma or GED, many graduates find it difficult to gain employment, obtain career training or continue their education.

“This will right a wrong for those special needs students who completed the course work prescribed for them but who received a certificate of attainment and not a diploma. This is important not just as a morale booster but also because it opens doors for these students. Having a diploma should make it easier for them to advance in job opportunities and continue their education,” Sen. Parrett said.

(more)

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“Our goal is college and career readiness for all students,” said Education Commissioner Terry Holliday. “Awarding the alternative high school diploma along with the delivery of strong planning and transition services will support the transition to life after K-12 for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.”

“This is an opportunity for school districts to allow these students to receive the diploma they rightfully earned,” Sen. Parrett said.

Sen. Parrett and his wife have a daughter, Kristen, who is a special needs student and will be among the first in the state to receive the alternative high school diploma when she graduates from Central Hardin High School this spring. But Sen. Parrett stressed that this legislation is not just about his daughter.

“It is about all the students in Kentucky schools with special needs -- they deserve to get an alternative high school diploma if they complete the core alternative assessments they are expected to meet,” he explained. “This is important because it rewards their hard work and dedication to complete high school.”

Past students who received a certificate of attainment are encouraged to check with their local board of education to see if they meet the requirements to receive an alternative high school diploma.

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