1. **Purpose.** This chapter establishes the Bureau of Indian Education’s (BIE) policy for offering a certificate of completion when students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are unable to meet the requirements for a standard high school diploma.

2. **Authority.**
   2.1. **Statutes and Regulations.**
   2.1.1. 25 CFR § 36.32 – Standard XII
   2.1.2. 34 CFR § 200.6
   2.1.3. ESSA 20 USC 6301
   2.1.4. IDEA 20 USC 1400

As with any policy/directive, the positions noted herein are subject to change.

3. **Scope.** This policy applies to all BIE-operated schools.

4. **Roles and Responsibilities.**
   4.1. **Director, Bureau of Indian Education** is responsible for providing general oversight for all BIE programs and activities, including approving this policy.
   4.2. **The Chief Academic Officer** is responsible for ensuring that Associate Deputy Directors actively lead and support Education Program Administrators in providing training and other support to ensure that the provisions of this policy are fully implemented.
   4.3. **The Associate Deputy Director (ADD)** is responsible for ensuring that Education Program Administrators actively support School Principals/Superintendents accurately implement the provisions of this policy.
   4.4. **The Education Program Administrator (EPA)** is responsible for ensuring that School Principals/Superintendents are appropriately trained in the implementation of this policy. The Education Program Administrator is also responsible for ensuring that each School Principals/Superintendent under his/her supervision accurately implements the provisions of this policy.
   4.5. **The School Principals/Superintendents** are responsible for:
   4.5.1. Monitoring and communicating policy to school personnel, parents, and the tribal community.
   4.5.2. Ensuring that policy is reviewed and applied consistently within the school.

5. **Policy.** It is BIE’s policy to offer a certificate of completion to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to meet the requirements of a standard high school diploma. The BIE encourages schools/districts to support students with disabilities in seeking and obtaining a standard high school diploma whenever possible. The minimum standards for a standard high school diploma are defined in 25 CFR § 36.32 – Standard XII and described in the BIE’s Student Progress and Promotion Policy. A standard high school diploma is a credential recognized by employers and other educational institutions and, therefore, offers certain educational and employment advantages that a certificate of completion does not. The BIE seeks to set high expectations for the standard curriculum that will result in higher student performance. However, the BIE recognizes that for some
students with the most significant cognitive disabilities a certificate of completion may be appropriate.

5.1. **Transition.** The limitations of a certificate of completion option as compared to the standard high school diploma shall be discussed with the student’s legal guardians and the student as part of the individualized education program (IEP) process and in the context of transition planning to prepare the student for adult life.

5.2. **Requirements.** Whether a student qualifies for a certificate of completion is an IEP team decision.

5.2.1. A certificate of completion may be awarded when a student:

- Is typically characterized as functioning at least two and a half to three standard deviations below the mean in both adaptive behavior and cognitive functioning;
- Performs substantially below grade level expectations on the academic content standards for the grade in which they are enrolled, even with the use of adaptations and accommodations;
- Requires extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains, across all content areas and settings;
- Satisfactorily achieved his/her IEP goals and objectives during high school as determined by the IEP team; and
- Satisfactorily met high school attendance requirements.

5.3. **Limitations.** Reasons for putting a student on a path to a certificate of completion shall not include:

5.3.1. Excessive or extensive absences
5.3.2. Social, cultural, or economic differences
5.3.3. The mere existence of an IEP or identification in a specific disability category
5.3.4. A specific special education placement or services
5.3.5. Emotional, behavioral, or physical challenges
5.3.6. Anticipated scores on standardized tests or assessments
5.3.7. Concern for school-level performance ratings based on student test scores

5.4. **Free Appropriate Public Education.** The BIE shall make a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to any student with a disability who finishes high school with a credential other than a standard high school diploma, including a certificate of completion, until the student has exceeded the age of eligibility for FAPE under law.

5.5. **Equivalency.** A certificate of completion shall not be considered the equivalent of a standard high school diploma and should not be described as such to students, parents, or employers, or counted as a graduation in any reports by the school.
5.6. **Participation in Graduation.** Students receiving a certificate of completion may participate in a BIE school’s high school graduation ceremony.

6. **Guidance.**
   6.1. BIE Curriculum and Instruction Policy and Associated Handbook
   6.2. BIE Student Testing and Assessment Policy and Associated Handbook
   6.3. BIE Student Progress and Promotion Policy

**Approval**

[Signature] [DATE]

[Name] Date

Director, Bureau of Indian Education