

Exit Exams Can Be Optional If You Plan Ahead  
by **Suzanne Whitney, Research Editor, Wrightslaw**

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This spring, thousands of high school students will not graduate with a high school diploma. The students took the required courses and received passing grades.

How is this possible?

The students will not graduate because they did not pass their state's exit exam. They spent at least twelve years in school. Obviously, they learned something - they have the credits and the grades to prove it.

In some cases, the child knows a great deal about some things and less about others. In some cases, a teacher or two may have strayed from the state curriculum framework.

In most cases, the state changed its curriculum - what it expects teachers to teach and students to learn. The state exit exam reflects this new curriculum. These students are being penalized because they were not taught the new curriculum.

Do students need to pass their state exit exams before they can graduate with a high school diploma?

No.

[Students who attend private schools](#) do not have to pass state exit exams. Home schooled students do not have to pass state exit exams.

The easiest way to eliminate the exit exam obstacle is to apply your child's high school credits to a diploma from a private school. This is not as difficult or as costly expensive as you may think.

Many home schooled students graduate from a private school in Maine that they have never attended, or even seen. The school is the [North Atlantic Regional Schools \(NARS\)](#), a private high school accredited by the state of Maine.

The procedure is simple.

The child registers at the school. NARS requests the child's records from the public school. The public school sends the records to NARS. If the child's transcript shows the child has earned the required credits, NARS awards a high school diploma. If the transcript does not show the required credits, NARS can tell you how to obtain the missing credits.

You have a choice.

NARS holds two graduation ceremonies each spring. In June they hold a graduation ceremony in Lewiston, Maine. In May there is a graduation ceremony in Orlando, Florida. You may also graduate at anytime of the year, without participating in a ceremony.

Getting a diploma from NARS means not spending years fighting with the public school so your child can graduate from high school with a diploma.

The choice is yours.

And ... if your child dropped out of high school or wants to get an accelerated diploma NARS may be able to help you too.

Have questions? [Watch this video.](#)

### **Additional Resources**

[North Atlantic Regional Schools website](#)

[The New Way for High School - Your Way](#)

[Graduation Requirements](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Accelerated Diploma](#)

Download the [NARS High School Handbook](#)

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### **Meet Sue Whitney**

[Sue Whitney](#) of Merrimack, New Hampshire, is the research editor for [Wrightslaw](#).

Sue is the co-author of [Wrightslaw: No Child Left Behind](#) (ISBN: 1-892320-12-4) that is published by [Harbor House Law Press](#).

In [Doing Your Homework](#), she writes about [reading](#), [research based instruction](#), [No Child Left Behind](#), and creative strategies for using federal education standards to advocate for children and to improve public schools. [Her articles](#) have been reprinted by [SchwabLearning.org](#), [EducationNews.org](#), [Bridges4Kids.org](#), [The Beacon: Journal of Special Education Law and Practice](#), the [Schafer Autism Report](#), and have been used in CLE presentations to attorneys. [Sue Whitney's bio](#).

She is webmaster for the [Special Education Resources for New Hampshire website](#). Sue has served on [New Hampshire's Special Education State Advisory Committee on the Education of Students/Children with Disabilities \(SAC\)](#) and has been a [volunteer educational surrogate parent](#). She currently works with families as a [special education advocate \(www.suewhitney.com\)](#).

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