

Graduating Cap and Gown—and Diploma?

For the next four years, Kimberly attended some classes (like math, reading, and English) in special education classes. For other subjects like art, music, and cooking, she attended regular education classes with students who do not have disabilities.

Each year, her parents met with her teachers and wrote an Individualized Education Plan—or IEP—which detailed the educational goals that everyone wanted Kim to achieve each year. For four years, Kim reached all of the goals that were established by her teachers and parents.

All students in Massachusetts are now required to take an exam during 10th grade. This test is known as a “proficiency test” or “standardized exam.” The test was created in order to adhere to a new national law called No Child Left Behind. The purpose of this test is to ensure that all students who receive a high school diploma have a sufficient amount of knowledge.

Kim received multiple accommodations to take the test—she had someone read her the questions and someone to fill-in the bubbles on the answer sheet. Kim, however, failed the exam twice.

- 1. Should Kim be allowed to graduate from high school if she did not pass the test?**
- 2. Should Kim be able to participate in the high school graduation ceremony?**
- 3. Massachusetts currently has a law, as do most states, which says students cannot receive a high school diploma if they do not pass the proficiency exam. What should school administrators do if they cannot issue Kim a diploma?**
- 4. What would you do if you were Kim’s brother or sister?**