



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION William C. Harrison, Ed.D., *Chairman and Chief Executive Officer*
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*
WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

May 7, 2009

TO Superintendents
Instructional Services Directors
Student Services Directors
Exceptional Children Directors
Charter School Directors

FROM Rebecca B. Garland

OCCUPATIONAL COURSE OF STUDY – PAID EMPLOYMENT WAIVER

The Occupational Course of Study (OCS) is one of two Future-Ready Courses of Study that students with disabilities may complete to receive a North Carolina Diploma. Currently, students participating in the OCS are required to complete 300 hours of supervised school-based vocational training, 240 hours of community-based vocational training and 360 hours of competitive, paid employment in an integrated employment setting. The current economic recession has made it extremely difficult and in many cases impossible for students with cognitive disabilities to obtain competitive employment after completing their unpaid vocational training. To address this issue, the State Board of Education at its May meeting adopted a temporary policy change that allows seniors in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 graduating classes to substitute 360 hours of competitive, paid employment hours with 360 hours of the following: additional unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship hours, paid employment hours at community rehabilitation facilities (the facilities must be considered affirmative employers by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation), and volunteer and/or community service hours. This substitution should only be applied if a student is unable to secure paid employment in an integrated employment setting due to local job market conditions.

This temporary policy change means that students in the OCS will still be required to complete a total of 900 hours of vocational training and/or employment in order to receive a North Carolina Diploma. All paid employment, unpaid vocational training hours, internship hours, volunteer and/or community service hours must be conducted in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and applicable state and federal child labor laws. In addition, high schools are required to maintain documentation of their attempts to help the student secure paid employment through referrals to the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Services for the Blind, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded youth employment programs and other appropriate adult employment service agencies. Evidence of interagency collaboration and referral(s) must be documented on the student's transition component of their IEP.

Should you or your staff have any questions or concerns about any information contained in this memorandum, please contact Freda M. Lee at flee@dpi.state.nc.us. Please know we appreciate all of your efforts to ensure students with disabilities are able to achieve positive post-school outcomes.

RBG/FML/ds

ACADEMIC SERVICES AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Rebecca Garland, Ed.D., *Chief Academic Officer* | rgarland@dpi.state.nc.us

6368 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6368 | (919) 807-3200 | Fax (919) 807-4065

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER