



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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## Memorandum

**To:** EC Directors  
Charter School Directors  
State Operated programs

**From:** Mary N. Watson, Director *MNW*  
Exceptional Children Division

**Subject:** **Occupational Course of Study (OCS)**  
**Paid Employment Waiver**

The current economic recession has made it extremely difficult; and in many cases, impossible for students with cognitive disabilities to obtain competitive, paid employment after completing their unpaid vocational training. To address this situation, the North Carolina State Board of Education at its October 7th board meeting voted to temporarily amend the paid employment graduation requirement of the Occupational Course Study to allow participating students in the graduating classes of the 2010-2011 and the 2011-2012 school years to substitute 360 hours of additional unpaid vocational training, unpaid internships, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community service hours for the 360 hours of competitive, paid employment hours if unable to secure paid employment in an integrated employment setting due to local job market conditions. Any community rehabilitation facility used must be considered an affirmative employer by the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

This temporary amendment 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 will be conducted in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and applicable state and federal child labor laws. In addition, LEAs will be 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.

If you have any questions or need additional information about this temporary change in graduation requirements please feel free to email Freda Lee, Consultant for Intellectual Disabilities. Her email address is [flee@dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:flee@dpi.state.nc.us). It is our hope that the economy will improve in the near future and it will not be necessary to extend the employment waiver again. Thanks again for everything you do for students with disabilities.

MNW/fl

## OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent* | [jatkinson@dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:jatkinson@dpi.state.nc.us)  
6301 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6301 | (919) 807-3430 | Fax (919) 807-3445

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