

## Technical Assistance Paper

## 312651

### Reporting and Awarding Credit to Secondary Students with Disabilities in Career Education

#### Purpose and Background

Questions have arisen concerning how to report and award appropriate credit to secondary students with disabilities who, needing additional time to master competencies in career education (formerly vocational education) classes, enroll in the same course more than once to complete their individualized programs. The purposes of this paper are to clarify the course modifications rule for students with disabilities, provide examples of circumstances under which secondary students with disabilities might enroll in the same course more than once in secondary or dual enrollment programs, and explain how to report and award appropriate credit to such students.

Rule 6A-6.0312, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), Course Modifications for Exceptional Students, states, "School boards shall modify basic courses, as necessary, to assure exceptional students the opportunity to meet the graduation requirements for a standard diploma. School boards shall modify vocational courses and programs of study, as necessary, to assure handicapped students the opportunity to meet graduation requirements for a standard or a special diploma." The following sections of the rule address students with disabilities in vocational education\*:

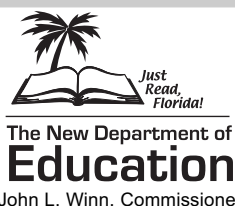
- (1) Modifications to basic courses shall not include modifications to the curriculum frameworks or student performance standards. When modifying vocational courses, the particular outcomes and student performance standards which a student must master to earn credit must be specified on the student's individual educational plan.
- (2) Modifications to basic or vocational courses may include any of the following:
  - (a) The instructional time may be increased or decreased.
  - (b) Instructional methodology may be varied.
  - (c) Special communications systems may be used by the teacher or the student.
  - (d) Classroom and district test administration procedures and other evaluation procedures may be modified as specified in Rule 6A-1.0943, FAC, to accommodate the student's handicap.\*\*

\* The term "career education" has replaced "vocational education" since this rule was enacted.

\*\* The term "disability" has replaced "handicap" since this rule was enacted.

#### REFER QUESTIONS TO:

Janet Adams  
325 West Gaines Street, Room 601  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400  
janet.adams@fldoe.org or  
(850) 245-0478 or SC 205-0478



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS (TAPs) are produced periodically by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to present discussion of current topics. The TAPs may be used for inservice sessions, technical assistance visits, parent organization meetings, or interdisciplinary discussion groups. Topics are identified by state steering committees, district personnel, and individuals, or from program compliance monitoring.

BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES

Some students with disabilities need additional time to master the student performance standards in their career education courses, i.e., a longer period than the regular school year. These students may be pursuing regular occupational completion points or modified occupational completion points. Regardless of their individual goals, students may need to enroll in the same course more than once to allow sufficient time to master the competencies. Students may enroll in the same course for more than one year. They will work on different competencies and new applications of competencies each year to complete their individualized career education programs and reach their desired post-school outcomes. When the student has achieved the competencies identified through the individual educational plan (IEP) process, the student earns the credit for the course.

Some districts report that they have a process for meeting the instructional needs of students with disabilities by allowing them to enroll in a course more than once. However, there appears to be a problem with the information system in some districts accepting multiple credits for the same course number for these students. There is nothing at the state level that precludes this practice in districts.

The following situation illustrates this concern. A student was enrolled in course #1. Through the IEP process, competencies were identified for mastery the first year. The student completed these competencies and was awarded one credit. This credit was recorded on the student's automated record in the district's information system. The next year, the student re-enrolled in course #1 and worked on the remaining competencies identified through the IEP process. At the end of the year, the local information system did not allow the additional one credit to be recorded in the student's automated record.

In the example above, the local information system was not set up to accurately reflect the course credit earned by the student. The district system contained an edit that disallowed the awarding of more than one credit for a single course in this case.

## **Implications and Guidelines**

The application of the course modifications rule ensures that students with disabilities have opportunities to participate and succeed in their educational programs. It is essential for career education representatives to work with their exceptional student education counterparts through the IEP process to ensure that accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities are provided. It is critical that school districts provide students with disabilities the time needed to master the competencies in their individual programs and award appropriate credit for students' work and skill mastery. Accurate reporting and an information system that accommodates special circumstances are essential. Staff development is a key element in ensuring accurate reporting at the local and state levels for accountability purposes.

There are no state prohibitions against awarding multiple credits for a single career education course for secondary students with disabilities who need additional time to master the competencies, as identified through the IEP process. The state Automated Student Information System does not include any edits that would prohibit reporting a career education course multiple times for multiple credits for such students. The local education agency (LEA) may have edits in their system to safeguard reporting and prevent the erroneous reporting of multiple credits. This is a local data processing issue that may be addressed in several ways.

It is recommended that representatives from the local information services office, career education department, and exceptional education department work closely to resolve any reporting issues and provide staff development to appropriate personnel involved in the documentation of student credits.

It is important to remember that this issue and recommendations apply not only to secondary students with disabilities participating in regular (mainstream) high school career education programs, but also to secondary students with disabilities who are dually enrolled in regular (mainstream) career education programs at area technical centers and community colleges.

## **Summary**

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services and the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education are committed to ensuring equal access and increasing opportunities for individuals with disabilities throughout the career preparation process. It is crucial that appropriate staff work collaboratively to resolve issues that may negatively impact students with disabilities and provide staff development to assure that all personnel are knowledgeable about the reporting process. LEAs are providing instructional accommodations and curriculum modifications that are enabling students with disabilities to succeed in career education programs and ultimately attain their desired post-school outcomes. Accurate reporting of credits earned by students benefits students themselves as well as the LEA as a whole.