July 7, 2015

Mr. James Ryan Hollingsworth, Superintendent
Marion County Schools
188 Winchester Drive
Hamilton, AL 35570-6626

Dear Mr. Hollingsworth:

Upon review of Marion County Schools Innovation/Flexibility Zone application, I am happy to approve your request to develop and expand dual enrollment offerings with an adopted program for Advanced Career and Technical Education (CTE) endorsements beginning with the 2015-2016 school term.

The attachment provides additional information regarding recommendations as you seek to substitute two years of mathematics credit and two years of science credit with two years (four credits) of dual enrollment CTE training during the junior and senior years in order to meet the current 4x4 curriculum requirements for an Alabama High School Diploma. Please carefully consider these recommendations as you continue with your commitment to innovation in education. I applaud your forward thinking as you strive to meet the needs of all the students in Marion County Schools and provide additional routes to graduation, college, and career.

Please remain in communication with Mrs. Karen Porter to share your successes, challenges, and lessons learned that will be valuable in providing helpful guidance to other local education agencies as they seek to develop innovative plans and move our state forward.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent of Education

TRB:KWP:DK

Attachment

cc: Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris
Dr. Philip C. Cleveland

Dr. Julie P. Hannah
Mrs. Karen Porter
Advisements and Recommendations for Approval of the Marion County Schools 2015 Innovation/Flexibility Zone Plan

1. Concerning dual enrollment taking place on Marion County Schools campuses, be advised that:
   a. The Alabama Accountability Act 2013-64 does not waive the requirements for individuals when working to provide instruction/services to students and who are not employed by a local education agency (LEA) from undergoing a criminal history background check and fingerprinting through the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). This includes community colleges, Institutions of Higher Education, community business partners, etc., which may provide services to students in an LEA and might have unsupervised face-to-face or virtual access to children.
   b. Pursuant to the Alabama Child Protection Act of 1999, as amended in 2002, when contractual obligations are established, contractors and their subcontractors (if there are any) who are providing services on behalf of an LEA and who might have unsupervised access to children must complete the ALSDE Criminal History Background Check through 3M Cogent Systems, Inc., as a noncertified applicant for employment.
   c. Results of the background check will be mailed to the LEA disclosing confirmed convictions and pending charges. The superintendent of the LEA will determine, based on the criminal history information, whether the individual may perform services for the LEA.

2. Concerning the adoption of a Career Path Diploma that will substitute two years of mathematics credit and two years of science credit with two years (four credits) of dual enrollment career and technical education (CTE) training during the junior and senior years in order to meet the current 4x4 curriculum requirements for an Alabama High School Diploma: It will be allowable with these recommendations:
   a. As noted in State Superintendent Memoranda FY15-1013: Approved Courses in Mathematics and Science and FY15-2072: Mathematics Pathways, it is strongly recommended that the school provide each student with counseling related to his/her career path planning when substitute courses are offered. Proposed courses should have a tight cross-walk/match. School personnel should be aware and advise students when substituted courses will not be accepted by a student’s chosen institution of higher education. Also, personnel should consider Alabama High School Athletic Association/NCAA guidelines when advising student athletes on substitute courses to assure retention of eligibility. This caution applies to all flexibility requests that involve substituting courses/flexible credit for traditional coursework/credit.
   b. If the LEA has other CTE courses (or new courses) it would like considered for mathematics and/or science substitution, then the LEA should submit to Dr. Philip Cleveland, Deputy State Superintendent for Career and Technical Education/Workforce Development, the course title and content standards and (if applicable) identity an existing course for a cross-walk. At that time, the appropriate ALSDE CTE staff and Academic Program Area staff will review the coursework to determine if viable.