MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

FROM: Thomas R. Bice, State Superintendent of Education

RE: Exception Request for Cooperative Education Seminar/Work-Based Learning

June 25, 2012

Last year, great concern was expressed about the dire economic situation of our state and the reality of the current job market. We recognized at that time that in some communities it was almost impossible to find part-time jobs for high school students when so many capable and available adults were unemployed and actively seeking employment. Regrettably, the economic condition and the current job market have still not recovered. Therefore, the department will continue to grant for this school year the same flexibility with the paid work hours for students pursuing the Alabama Occupational Diploma (AOD) and/or enrolled in Cooperative Education Seminar/Work-Based Learning as we did last year.

If the cooperative education teacher is unable to place all students, general education and special education, in a paid work experience as evidenced by the local education agency (LEA) effort and economic documentation, then in addition to continued enrollment in a career and technical education sequence of courses, the AOD student should be placed in the Workforce Essentials course one period each day using the Governor’s Career (Workforce) Readiness Credential as the end-of-course test. This course combined with opportunities outlined in the Work-Based Learning Manual will replace the paid work hours required for Cooperative Education Seminar/Work-Based Learning course. The determination as to who teaches the course is a local decision based on the Subject and Personnel Code. Through this option, the student will receive the required credits and, possibly, the Governor’s Career (Workforce) Readiness Credential.

If employment cannot be found for AOD students who have completed Workforce Essentials and earned the Career Readiness Credential, the students should be placed in the Transition Services II class in place of their work experience. If students have completed the Workforce Essentials course and did not receive the Workforce Readiness Credential, they should be placed in the Transition Services II class with the goal of obtaining the Workforce Readiness Credential.
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If any school system wishes to participate in this flexibility, the enclosed Exception Request Form must be submitted with the proper documentation to Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris, Deputy State Superintendent of Education, Post Office Box 302101, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2010. The exception should request that the paid work-hours requirement of the AOD be replaced with the Workforce Essentials course or Transition Services II course in order to receive the credit needed for graduation. For students pursuing the AOD, it is unacceptable for them to be denied a diploma because of the unavailability of a paid job; however, the activities outlined in the Work-Based Learning Manual in combination with obtaining the Career (Workforce) Readiness Credential will provide these students with an opportunity to seek employment upon graduation.

I do caution you not to allow this flexibility to become broadly applied as has been the request of several systems since the memorandum was disseminated last year. The flexibility is for those documented incidences that are specific to local schools and school systems where efforts to place students in paid work experiences have been unsuccessful. Vigorous efforts must be made to place students in paid work experiences whenever possible.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call Dr. Philip Cleveland at 334-242-9111 or Ms. Alicia Myrick at 334-242-8114.

TRB/AM/BJ

Enclosures

cc:    City and County Special Education Coordinators
       City and County Career and Technical Education Directors
       Dr. Thomas R. Bice
       Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris
       Dr. Linda Felton-Smith
       Dr. Philip Cleveland
       Ms. Crystal Richardson
       Ms. Alicia Myrick

FY12-2093
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EXCEPTION REQUEST FORM

System Name: ___________________________ System Number:__/__/__/__/__/

School Year: __________

EXCEPTION REQUESTED:

RATIONALE:

PLAN FOR EVALUATION OF IMPACT:

Date Submitted: ______ Superintendent’s
Signature: ________________________________

Date Approved: ______ State Superintendent’s Signature: __________________________
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EXCEPTION REQUEST FORM

Documentation of career/technical cooperative education coordinator's attempt to place students. Please list sites from July 2010 to present.

IN-FIELD ATTEMPTS:

OUT-OF-FIELD ATTEMPTS:

Documentation of unemployment rate in your county.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING EXCEPTION REQUEST FORM

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- The express purpose for approving exceptions is to encourage innovation, experimentation, and risk taking by providing local school systems the flexibility to be innovative and to require that they assume accountability for results.

- Certain regulatory functions will continue in effect and the State Department of Education will continue to monitor compliance. State and federal laws, regulations governing the expenditure of funds, safety requirements, and civil rights requirements are examples of arenas in which exceptions will not be granted.

- Exceptions may be requested for any State Board and/or State Department of Education rule that the local superintendent can demonstrate is an impediment to the improvement of student achievement.

- Exceptions may be granted for a one-year period. All exceptions granted will expire June 30 in the expiration year.

- Exception extensions, if requested, will be granted subject to a review of the local school system’s efforts to achieve and maintain prescribed standards.

- All school systems may apply for exceptions. Approval will be based on a careful assessment of the potential that the requested exception has for improving student achievement. In all cases, the department will attempt to balance the perceived need for flexibility with the reality of high expectations.

- The responsibility for education policy-making will continue to be the prerogative of the State Legislature, the State Board of Education, and the respective local boards of education. The process of granting exceptions will in no way violate the policy-making function.

- Exceptions will not be granted for administrative convenience; however, the reduction of excessive paperwork and the elimination of duplication in reporting requirements are desired goals.

- This form is not to be used for requesting waivers for out-of-field penalty.

EXCEPTION REQUESTED: Describe the specific exception you are requesting and indicate the school year in which you would like the exception to be effective. Note that only those exceptions with the following criteria can be considered:

- Exception requests should be based upon, and be an integral part of, a strategy designed to increase the opportunities for improved student achievement.

- Exception requests should have the clear goal of freeing teachers from non-teaching duties and relieving administrative staff in order that more time is spent on instructional leadership activities.

RATIONALE: Describe how the approval of this request will improve your system’s ability to provide opportunities for improved student achievement.

PLAN FOR EVALUATION OF IMPACT: Describe how you will evaluate the effectiveness of the exception.

- All exceptions that are granted will include provisions for an evaluation component.