

# Parent/Student Handbook for the Occupational Course of Study

*McDowell County Schools*

2019 – 2020



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# Overview

The Occupational Course of Study (OCS) is designed to help students access the world of work and receive a high school diploma. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) team determines eligibility for participation. A student should only be considered for participation if the IEP team (including parents) determines the Future- Ready Core Course of Study is inappropriate for the student even with the use of modifications, adaptations, and supplemental aids and services.

Students participating in this course of study can receive instruction in a wide variety of educational settings, and the curriculum will correlate with Common Core standards for English, Math, etc. Students in the OCS program will participate in the regular classroom setting to complete Health/PE, Career-Technical Education (CTE), and elective requirements. Additionally, some of the academic courses may be delivered through co-teaching in the general education classroom. OCS courses provide a combination of academics and hands-on work experience. Students are evaluated on work experience and course work. A brief description of the OCS academic courses can be found in the registration handbook provided in the spring. The OCS goals and objectives for each course can be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/new-standards/>.

In order to graduate with a North Carolina diploma from the Occupational Course of Study, the student is required to perform three basic types of work experiences: school-based, community-based, and competitive employment. While the school may assist with placement, securing a jobsite and all transportation needs are the responsibility of the student and parent. If necessary, the student could remain in school for additional semesters to complete all requirements, including the required training hours and paid employment hours, until the age of 22. Any student who fails to meet all of the requirements will receive a certificate instead of a diploma.



# NC Occupational Course of Study Graduation Requirements (Revised 2015)

The Occupational Course of Study is available for certain students with disabilities who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

**Students on the Occupational Course of Study must complete:**

**150 hours of school-based training\***

**225 hours of community-based training\*\*\***

**225 hours of paid employment\*\*\***

**A Career Portfolio and Senior Presentation\*\*\*\***

<b>4 Credits</b>	OCS English I, II, III, IV
<b>3 Credits</b>	OCS Intro to Mathematics, OCS Math I, OCS Financial Management
<b>2 Credits</b>	OCS Applied Science, OCS Biology
<b>2 Credits</b>	OCS American History I, Am. History II
<b>1 Credit</b>	Health & Physical Education
<b>4 Credits in Career/Technical Education</b>	Select from appropriate CTE courses.
<b>6 Occupational Preparation Credits:</b>	Occupational Preparation I, II, III, IV
<b>6 Elective Credits:</b>	At least one credit in an arts discipline is recommended.
<b>A total of 28 credits</b> , which includes local requirements, must be earned for graduation with a North Carolina Diploma on the Occupational Course of Study.	
<b>Completion of IEP Objectives</b>	



# Requirements cont.

## **\*School-Based Training Activities (150 hours)**

- Vocational Assessment Activities
- School-Based Enterprises
- Student-Operated Small Businesses
- On-Campus Jobs
- Vocational Organizations and Job Clubs
- Leadership in School-Sponsored  
Community Service Projects (e.g. Blood  
Mobile, Food Drive)
- Job Fairs
- Mock Interviews by Local Employers

## **\*\*Community-Based Training Activities (225 hours)**

- Work-Based Training (enclaves, mobile  
work crews)
- Situational Assessment
- Paid and Non-Paid Internships (WIA or  
CTE)
- Job Shadowing
- Apprenticeships
- Co-Op programs
- Industry Tours
- Interviews of Local Employers
- Part-Time Employment
- Legitimate Volunteer Experiences
- Community Service Projects/Volunteerism

## **\*\*\*Competitive/ Paid Employment Activities (225 Hours)**

- Successfully obtain and maintain a *competitive* employment position in an *integrated* community setting at or above minimum wage (with or without supported employment) in a chosen career pathway.
- Community Service under individual circumstances with prior approval may count for competitive work hours.
- Synthesize and apply all skill areas learned through the OCS to obtain and maintain competitive employment.
- “Sheltered Employment” is not competitive employment.
- Employment must not be with parents, grandparents, or close family members.

**\*\*\*\*Career Portfolio and Presentation:** Instead of an exit exam or graduation project

# Understanding OCS Requirements for a NC Diploma

**The successful completion of the Occupational Course of Study requires that the following expectations be met:**

- Passing Grades in all required OCS Coursework
- Passing Grades in 4 Career Technical Education Courses
- Passing Grades in Health/PE and 6 elective courses
- 150 hours of successful School-based Vocational Training
- 225 hours of successful Community-based (Volunteer) Vocational Training
- 225 hours of successful Competitive Employment
- Completion & presentation of a Career Portfolio containing all required components

**In order for competitive employment hours to be counted the placement must meet the following guidelines:**

- All employment placements must have prior approval from the Transition Coordinator if the hours are going to count toward graduation.
- All employment placements must be in an integrated setting within the community.
- Students must be paid at or above minimum wage for all work performed.
- The employment placement must meet Child Labor regulations under FLSA.
- The employment placement must be open to evaluation of student performance by the Transition Coordinator or the employer.
- Employment placements should be in alignment with the student's chosen career pathway and post-school employment goals.
- Students may receive supported employment or work adjustment job coaching, if needed.
- Chores, work in the home, or similar activities are not approved Competitive Employment.

The vocational training requirements for the Occupational Course of Study are expected to be completed in a manner that involves moving from school-based training to community-based training and culminating in competitive employment during the last two years of high school.

Students and their family members are expected to work collaboratively and cooperatively with school personnel in obtaining and maintaining a competitive employment placement. This may involve, but is not limited to: participation in transition planning meetings, follow-up on referrals to outside agencies, provision of transportation outside of school hours, and completion of all required paperwork for the school and service providers.

*Adapted from "Implementing the North Carolina Occupational Course of Study" presented by Dr. Nellie P. Aspel and Gail Bettis, M.Ed.*

# **Student Work Responsibilities**

Each student will be required to complete and show proof of the following:

## **150 HOURS OF SCHOOL-BASED TRAINING**

Activities may include on-campus jobs, participation in school-based enterprise, and work-based learning activities including but not limited to MECA and PAES lab assignments.

## **225 HOURS OF COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING**

These hours may include but are not limited to volunteer time, job shadowing/sampling, and student internships.

While the school may assist in locating these options, the responsibility lies with the student.

The school will require students to submit a monthly record of completed hours to ensure progress.

Supervisors will complete worker evaluations for each placement.

## **225 HOURS OF COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT**

Paid employment in a community setting is required for successful completion of the Occupational Course of Study.

**Again, while the school may assist in locating placement, the responsibility lies with the student. The school will not provide transportation, but transportation might be available through Vocational Rehabilitation or McDowell Transportation.**

## **CAREER PORTFOLIO/PRESENTATION**

Students will develop and present a career portfolio that provides an educational and vocational record of their high school experiences and job seeking information.

\*Business letterhead with days and hours worked signed by supervisor

\*\*Copies of pay stubs

# Parent/Guardian Responsibilities



Parents are expected to work collaboratively with the school system and other service agencies to ensure that students are meeting graduation requirements in a timely manner.

Parents will need to assist students with seeking, completing, and returning job applications. Requirements that are specific to employment sites are also considered the responsibility of the parent. Such things may include criminal background checks. Parents will be responsible for all transportation involved in work related situations.





## Recommended Timeline for Work Requirements

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Completed by</u>
150 hours of school-based training	End of sophomore year
225 hours of community based training	End of junior year
225 hours of competitive employment	End of senior year



## Notification of Student Progress



Each student is updated on their progress of their required work hours at each IEP annual review.

Progress reports on IEP goals are given at each grading period.

# Outside Service Agencies

Sometimes outside agencies are needed to provide transition services to help students to be successful. The following agencies are available to provide services for students as needed. If you would like for the schools to make a referral to an outside agency, please, complete a Consent for Information Exchange form and return it to your child's case manager or the transition coordinator.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services** <http://dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us> **828-652-2826**

Vocational Rehabilitation partners with the school system to assist students in planning for a career and life after high school. A counselor from VR makes weekly visits to the schools.

Vocational Rehabilitation operates a statewide program of rehabilitation services to enable working-aged persons with disabilities to become gainfully employed and to live as independently as possible. The objective of the program is to assist persons who have a mental, physical, or learning disability to develop and complete a program of rehabilitation services that will result in employment. Services can include job placement, vocational and academic training, and other services in support of achieving an employment outcome.

**JobLink Career Center** <https://www.mcdowelltech.edu> **828-659-6001**



# **What Happens When A Student Does Not Complete The Competitive Employment Hours?**

## **Option 1:**

The student may exit school with a certificate and transcript. The student shall be allowed by the LEA to participate in graduation exercises. If the student later secures employment that meets the specified criteria established in the “High School Exit Agreement” and completes 225 hours of successful employment, he/she could then be granted a North Carolina diploma.

## **Option 2:**

The student may choose not to graduate with a diploma at graduation but instead with a certificate. However, the student then may go to work and complete their required 225 hour work requirement. At which point the students may bring documentation of work hours back to the school to receive their high school diploma.

*Adapted from “Implementing the North Carolina Occupational Course of Study” presented by Dr. Nellie P. Aspel and Gail Bettis, M.Ed.*



# STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

## Enrollment in the Occupational Course of Study (OCS)

**I understand** that in order for competitive employment hours to be counted toward meeting the requirements for the Occupational Course of Study, the placement must meet the following guidelines:

- McDowell County Schools (MCS) staff must approve all employment placements if the hours are to count towards graduation.
- All employment placements must be in an integrated setting within the community.
- Students must be paid at or above minimum wage for all work performed.
- Students who complete work hours via community service are not required to be paid.
- The employment placement must meet Child Labor regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act) FLSA.
- The employment placement must be open to evaluation of student performance by the Transition Teacher or other MCS personnel/staff.
- To be counted as “successful” competitive employment, the student must receive average or above average evaluations on job performance.
- Students must turn in appropriate documentation for employment, such as paycheck stubs.

**I understand** that the vocational training requirements for the Occupational Course of Study are expected to be completed in a manner that involves moving from school-based training to community-based training culminating in competitive employment.

**I understand** that students and their family members are expected to work collaboratively and cooperatively with school personnel in obtaining and maintaining a competitive employment placement. This may involve but not be limited to:

- Participation in transition planning
  - Follow-up referral to outside agencies
  - Provision of transportation outside of school hours, and
  - Completion of all required paperwork for the school and service providers
- I understand that obtaining a competitive employment placement may require collaboration with the following agencies:
- Social Security Administration if SSI or SSDI payments are being received
  - Vocational Rehabilitation if supported employment, community-based work adjustment, or any other service related to competitive employment is needed.

**I understand** that in order to obtain competitive employment a valid social security number or appropriate work permits from U.S. Immigration will be required.

**I understand** that a work permit from the Department of Social Services will be required if employment is being obtained for a student under the age of 18.

**I understand** that insurance coverage through the school insurance program will be required prior to participation in work-based vocational training.

**I understand** that successful completion of the Occupational Course of Study will result in the awarding of a high school diploma that is based on the completion of an adapted course. The Occupational Course of Study is designed to prepare students for employment and is not considered appropriate for any student who plans to enroll in a curriculum major at a community college or four-year university.

**I understand** that successful completion of the requirements for the Occupational Course of Study may require enrollment in school longer than the traditional four years.

**I understand** that upon completion of all requirements for the Occupational Course of Study resulting in eligibility for a diploma, that graduation must occur even if the student is not yet 21 years of age.

**I understand** that the option of exiting high school with a certificate of achievement and a transcript is a possibility if all requirements except competitive work hours are satisfied and that students choosing this exit option will be able to participate in graduation exercises.

The above information was explained on \_\_\_\_\_ by  
\_\_\_\_\_ and all parties have indicated their understanding.

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other:** \_\_\_\_\_