



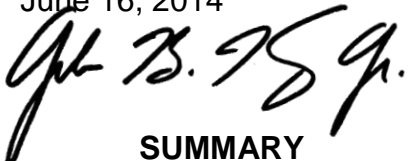


TO: P-12 Education Committee
Adult Career and Continuing Education Services
Committee

FROM: Ken Slentz 
Kevin Smith 

SUBJECT: New York State Career Development and Occupational
Studies Commencement Credential

DATE: June 16, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To provide the Board of Regents with updated information on initiatives related to the New York State (NYS) Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For information and discussion.

Proposed Handling

This item is for information purposes and will be discussed before the P-12 Education and Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committees at the June 2014 meeting.

Procedural History

Pursuant to regulations adopted effective June 30, 2013, many students with disabilities across the State will be exiting school beginning in June 2014, and thereafter, with the CDOS Commencement Credential. The CDOS Commencement Credential is a Regents-recognized work readiness credential, earned by students with disabilities after demonstrating achievement, at the commencement level, of the CDOS

learning standards and after successfully completing a minimum of 216 hours of career and technical education coursework and/or work-based learning (of which 54 hours must be work-based learning). Students exiting with the credential must have at least one completed employability profile which documents their specific work-readiness knowledge and skills¹. For students with disabilities who exit from high school prior to July 1, 2015, the NYS CDOS Commencement Credential may be awarded to a student who has not met all of the requirements, provided that the school principal, in consultation with relevant faculty (e.g., guidance counselors, teachers, job coaches, career and technical education (CTE) teachers and/or others knowledgeable about the student's skills), has determined that the student has otherwise demonstrated knowledge and skills in the commencement level CDOS learning standards 1, 2 and 3a².

Background Information

This item provides information on four major topics related to the CDOS Commencement Credential:

1. State technical assistance and professional development to assist school districts to prepare students to exit with the Credential.
2. Instruction and work-based learning experiences that schools are providing to support student attainment of the Credential.
3. Connecting to employers – the value of the credential in opening employment doors for students with disabilities.
4. Connecting to adult services – the value of the credential in preparing students for referral to ACCES-VR.

1. State Technical Assistance to School Districts

Since adoption of the regulations, the P-12: Office of Special Education, in collaboration with the Office of Career and Technical Education, has been engaged in ongoing information dissemination, technical assistance and professional development activities. These include, but are not limited to:

- Written guidance and question and answer documents which have been widely disseminated and posted on the Department's website at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/gradrequirements/home.html>.

¹ In lieu of these requirements, some students who earned one of the nationally-recognized work readiness credentials may also be awarded this credential.

² For students with disabilities who transfer from another school district within the State or another state, the principal must, after consultation with relevant faculty, evaluate the work-based learning experiences and coursework on the student's transcript or other records to determine if the student meets the requirements of the NYS CDOS Commencement Credential.

- Development of sample forms to assist school districts to properly document student attainment of the CDOS learning standards, completion of required instructional activities and employability skills.
- A six-part webinar series, which is available for ongoing access at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/gradrequirements/home.html>.
- Staff presentations to numerous State and local organizations (see Attachment 1)
- In collaboration with the Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC), development of a series of regional conferences. Since the March meeting, the RSE-TASC facilitated three regional conferences on the CDOS Commencement Credential and are planning seven more between now and November 2014.
 - Each of these full-day conferences were attended by over 250 people, including parents, educators, administrators, community agencies, students and employers.
 - Presentations were provided by State Education Department (SED) staff and other State and local partners including the SED funded CTE Technical Assistance Center; RSE-TASC Transition Specialists; New York State (NYS) Department of Labor (DOL); Work Experience Coordinators Association; and New York Committee on Safety and Health.
 - Topics focused on the requirements of the credential, career planning, strategies for instruction in the CDOS Learning Standards, and requirements related to CTE coursework and work-based learning experiences.
 - Each conference also included a workshop specific to what parents and students should know about the credential and featured a panel of employers who provided very valuable information about the skills expected of today's workforce.
 - Feedback regarding the conferences has been very positive.
- Regional information, professional development, technical assistance and facilitated interagency meetings provided by the RSE-TASC transition specialists.
- Information provided by the State-funded Transition Services Professional Development Support Center at Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute on resources for educational programs and agencies to advance the post-school outcomes of secondary students with disabilities (<http://www.transitionsource.org>). The site includes a map (<http://www.transitionsource.org/allqual/resource-map.cfm>) of NYS community-based agencies that can assist students in preparing for employment, education and community living.

In addition to continuing the work identified above, the Office of Special Education is also:

- Developing a Request for Proposals for school districts to support development and implementation of increased opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in CTE courses and work-based learning activities.
- Developing a brochure for parents, in collaboration with representatives from the Special Education Parent Centers who continue to provide training on the credential for parents.
- In collaboration with DOL, developing informational materials for employers, which will include a joint release by SED and DOL of an article about the credential in a newsletter to employers and providing information regarding the credential to the NYS Business Council. SED and DOL have also committed to working together to connect RSE-TASC transition specialists and ACCES community employment specialists with DOL's Regional Business Service Teams. The RSE-TASC also collaborated with their ACCES-Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office and local chambers of commerce to identify employers for the panel presentation at the CDOS Commencement Credential conferences.

2. Preparing Students for Work-Readiness Skills: Panel Presentation

Panel Members:

Nancy Avery
 Director of Special Education
 St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES

Yvette Goorevitch
 Director Special Education
 New Rochelle School District

Representative from the New York City Department of Education

Discussion Questions:

In addition to questions from the Board, the panel's discussion will be focused on the following questions.

1. What are the specific activities/strategies your district has taken to ensure that students are engaged in the appropriate instructional and work-based learning activities to prepare them to reach the standards to earn the CDOS Commencement Credential?
2. What have been the challenges to implementation?
3. What benefits have you seen to date for students working toward this credential?

4. What steps have you taken to ensure that students continue to receive access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum in order to graduate with a regular high school diploma in addition to the CDOS Commencement Credential?
5. What are some ways SED can continue to support the field's efforts to ensure schools are appropriately preparing students to earn the CDOS Commencement Credential?

3. Connections for Employment

A. Facilitating ACCES-VR Services

Students who exit with the CDOS Commencement Credential, either as a supplement to a regular high school diploma or as the student's exiting credential, are in a better position to transition to employment services because they have explicitly had instruction toward the essential career and work readiness standards and have engaged in work-based learning activities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Some students exiting with this credential may still need ACCES-VR services to further prepare for employment. When a student is referred or applies for ACCES-VR services, eligibility needs to be determined prior to the development of an individualized plan for employment (IPE). The ACCES-VR counselor conducts an assessment that is the basis of eligibility, identifying an employment goal and the services that will lead to achieving the goal. The CDOS Commencement Credential provides the ACCES-VR counselor with critical information. The compilation of documentation of all the activities and observations that support the attainment of skills for entry level employment are of great value in the VR assessment process. Using the Career Plan, including the student's self-identified career interests, will assist the student and the ACCES-VR counselor in setting long-term career goals as part of the IPE.

The employability profiles and the student's exit summary identify student's strengths, needs and achievements upon graduation. This information will further assist the ACCES-VR counselor to identify the most appropriate Youth Employment Services (YES) for the student. For example, if the student showed aptitude for a type of job, that information could be used by an ACCES-VR provider to develop a provider-assisted community work experience opportunity. The ACCES-VR counselor is targeting services to meet identified needs. If the information indicates the student would benefit from additional work preparation and soft skills training, YES services could be used to respond to those identified needs through the provision of work-readiness service. If there was need for additional opportunity to test work aptitude for certain skill sets, a diagnostic vocational evaluation and/or a community-based workplace assessment could be provided.

The diagnostic vocational evaluation generally takes place in an agency setting and includes standardized work samples and testing. It may include some hands-on work with direct observation and it can be provided in a group setting. The community-based workplace assessment must be individualized and must take place in a community location. The evaluator accompanies the individual to the work and

community site to observe. The evaluator may also interview significant others (family, friends, teacher, etc.) to gather additional information. A group planning session, which includes the individual, the evaluator, the ACCES-VR counselor and significant others, is conducted to summarize findings from the observations and to further develop and refine the vocational profile.

In addition to direct work with the student, ACCES-VR needs to be connected to community education provided about the CDOS Commencement Credential. It is particularly important that ACCES-VR is involved with the link to employers. Currently, the RSE-TASC transition specialists are providing training on the CDOS Commencement Credential to ACCES-VR counselors throughout the State.

B. What are Employers Saying?

Through their participation in the discussions advising SED during the credential development process and in recent panel presentations, various employers have provided the following comments about the CDOS Commencement Credential.

- Instruction specific to the skills necessary in the workplace is essential for successful employment. The work-based learning experiences and coursework which students must complete to earn the credential provides them with realistic information about workforce expectations and an opportunity to practice their own skills.
- The employability profile is described as a “terrific framework and an outstanding tool” to document student skills. The universal foundation or “soft” skills that are documented in the employability profile (e.g., punctuality, accountability for actions, work-ethic, problem-solving abilities, appropriate response to supervision, ability to take direction, respect for others, safety awareness, and an understanding of where the students “fits” within the organization) are those that employers are seeking in an applicant.
- Students should have a good understanding of their own strengths and be working to improve their weaknesses. Employers recommend using the employability profile as a tool early on to inform instruction and provide the students with important information about their developing skills. Additionally, rating student skills, as required in the employability profile, is similar to the process employer’s use in a performance evaluation.
- The skills documented in the employability profile are the same as those that employers attempt to ascertain during the job interview process. Two to three employability profiles documenting a student’s successful demonstration of these skills will provide employers with invaluable information and assist in informing decisions regarding employment.
- The CDOS Commencement Credential will create a pool of potential employees with the skills employers are seeking. A student with the CDOS Credential will “stand out” from others who do not have such a credential.

A local Army recruiter indicated that the CDOS Commencement Credential, awarded to a student in the absence of a diploma, would be considered a Tier II level certification and that he would accept the student in consideration of the specific jobs available provided that the student was able to pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. Additionally, it was indicated that the Armed Forces require many references for enlistment and employability profiles could serve that purpose. The recruiter did indicate that each recruitment center has unique needs and recommended that the student would need to inquire at his/her specific center.

- Section 55(b) of NYS Civil Service Law is a specialized program to place individuals with disabilities in entry-level State jobs and requires no written or oral examination. Candidates must submit a formal application along with a medical evaluation. Section 55(b) authorizes State agencies to designate up to 1,200 positions in the noncompetitive class to be filled by qualified people with disabilities. For individuals applying for a position under Section 55(b), the NYS Department of Civil Service has indicated they could hire an individual awarded the CDOS Commencement Credential in the absence of a diploma.
- Over time employers will be able to determine the credential's success based upon their hiring experiences for those earning the credential. As such, it is essential that districts award the credential consistently, with fidelity and in recognition of a student's readiness for entry level employment.

Attachment

**Staff Presentations on the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS)
Commencement Credential to State and Local Organizations**

P-12: Office of Special Education

State and Local Adult Agencies and Community Service Providers

- Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) District Office Managers, Counselors and Integrated Employment Specialists
- ACCES-VR Workforce Development and Business Relations Team;
- New York State (NYS) Commission for Blind
- NYS Rehabilitation Association

Parents and District Personnel

- Coalition of 853 Schools
- 4201 Schools Association
- Special Act Schools Coalition
- State-operated and State-supported Schools
- Special Education Parent Centers

Advisory Councils

- Commissioner’s Advisory Panel for Special Education Services
- State Rehabilitation Council

Statewide Organizations

- Council of NYS Special Education Administrators
- Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
- Council for Exceptional Children: Division of Career Development and Transition
- NYS Partners in Policy Making

Employers and Youth Employment Professionals

- NY Association of Training and Employment Professionals
- NYS Department of Labor Workforce Investment Act Youth Professionals Network

**Presentations and/or Webinars provided by Office of Career and Technical
Education (CTE) Staff and the CTE Technical Assistance Center**

District and State Education Department Personnel

- Capital Region Guidance Counselors
- Western New York Guidance Counselors
- Western New York CTE Directors and Administrators
- NYS CTE Supervisors
- NYC CTE Teachers
- SED CTE Team Staff

Statewide Organizations

- Association of Career and Technical Education Administrators
- Business Teachers Association
- Work Experience Coordinators Association
- New York Committee on Safety and Health Youth Worker Safety Committee
- SkillsUSA CTE administrators and CTE teachers
- CTE Technical Assistance Center