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MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Cheri Pierson Yecke, PhD

DATE: August 3, 2007

Contact Information

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K-12: 2007-129

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SECONDARY REFORM AND THE MAJOR AREAS OF INTEREST

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide school districts with updates and changes relative to Secondary Reform and the Major Areas of Interest (MAI).

With the signing of Florida Senate Bill 2092, in 2007, the following changes relative to Secondary Reform occurred:

- The one credit in fine arts needed for high school graduation now reads “*one credit in fine or performing arts, which may include speech and debate.*” [Section 1003.428 (2)(a)5., Florida Statutes (F.S.)]
- New language concerning grade forgiveness was added, as follows:
Forgiveness policies for required courses shall be limited to replacing a grade of “D” or “F,” or the equivalent of a grade of “D” or “F,” with a grade of “C” or higher, or the equivalent of a grade of “C” or higher, earned subsequently in the same or comparable course. Forgiveness policies for elective courses shall be limited to replacing a grade of “D” or “F,” or the equivalent of a grade of “D” or “F,” with a grade of “C” or higher, or the equivalent of a grade of “C” or higher, earned subsequently in another course. The only exception to these forgiveness policies shall be made for a student in the middle grades who takes any high school course for high school credit and earns a grade of “C,”

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“D,” or “F” or the equivalent of a grade of “C,” “D,” or “F.” In such case, the district forgiveness policy must allow the replacement of the grade with a grade of “C” or higher, or the equivalent of a grade of “C” or higher, earned subsequently in the same or comparable course. In all cases of grade forgiveness, only the new grade shall be used in the calculation of the student’s grade point average. Any course grade not replaced according to a district school board forgiveness policy shall be included in the calculation of the cumulative grade point average required for graduation. (Section 1003.428(4)(d), F.S.)

- The language concerning credit recovery **is now stricken from statute**. The stricken language reads ~~“Credit recovery courses shall be offered so that students can simultaneously earn an elective credit and the recovered credit.”~~ (Section 1003.428(3), F.S.)

The following is an update and reminder for the Major Areas of Interest:

- On August 6, 2007, the Web-based submission site for Major Areas of Interest at <http://fldoe.org/APlusPlus/> will be made available for all districts for the submission of new MAIs or to update existing MAIs. The site will close on October 1, 2007, to permit the MAI committee to review the MAIs and course submissions and provide recommendations to the Commissioner. The Commissioner will respond within 60 days (by December 1, 2007) to approve or deny new MAI and course proposals. Upon approval, courses will be included on the state approved list which will be posted to the Department of Education (DOE) Web site beginning in January 2008. The tentative timeline for districts to update their course availability is scheduled for January 1, 2008, through the third week of February 2008. Students will likewise be able to update their Electronic Personal Education Planner (ePEP) annually and can then include the new course(s).
- Of the eight elective credits required for graduation, students must complete four credits in an MAI but do not have to be enrolled in an MAI every semester. Students may change their designated MAI annually and are not required to complete four credits in the same MAI in order to graduate; i.e., four MAI credits may be completed in several different areas. However, those students completing four credits in a single MAI will earn the distinction of graduating with a “Major Area of Interest,” with recognition at the time of graduation.
- Remember that all MAIs must include course credit that totals at least **four credits**.
- Social Studies: There are 21 statewide majors that include specifically-named Social Studies courses required for high school graduation (American History,

American Government, Economics, and World History); and three of the 21 MAIs do not currently include enough Social Studies courses beyond the required core to meet the four required credits for an MAI. We are currently revising these MAIs to correct this situation.

- Dual Enrollment Courses: Some of the approved MAIs contain dual enrollment courses that are very limited or not relevant. There are also 256 MAIs that do not include any dual enrollment credits. Over the next several weeks, we will modify the online data entry system to include all dual enrollment courses that complement the MAIs. The online system will match a district to the local service provider/community college, allowing the college to propose available lower-level courses, Postsecondary Adult Vocational (PSAV) courses, and postsecondary courses related to the MAIs offered at local high schools. For 2007-2008 school year, districts and school counselors should approve appropriate dual enrollment courses on a case-by-case basis for eligible ninth grade students. However, plans are in place to have this system modification in place to allow dual enrollment course availability for the 2008-2009 school year.
- Only 62 high schools selected MAI #6111-AA Degree. This appears to limit student opportunities to participate in dual enrollment courses. This may be due, in part, to the title of this MAI. Because MAIs only include four credits of a student's 24 required credits, the student is not expected to earn an Associate's Degree upon completion of this MAI, but is expected to earn four high school credits through successful completion of dual enrollment courses. We are currently considering a title clarification for this MAI and will be automatically adding MAI #6111-AA Degree to every school's major offerings.
- Additional information regarding the recording of earned MAI credits on student transcripts will be released this fall.
- Remember, when students select a high school Major Area of Interest they are not selecting a college major or making a life-long commitment to a specific occupation. Selecting a high school Major Area of Interest is an opportunity for students to choose electives that truly interest them, providing a meaningful connection to coursework and time spent in school.

For assistance using the Web-based system or on the implementation of these requirements, please contact Lillian Finn, Director of Secondary Reform, at (850) 245-0509 or via e-mail at Lillian.Finn@fldoe.org.