



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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TO: Superintendents
Directors, Exceptional Children Programs
Directors, Charter Schools

FROM: Rebecca Garland, Chief Academic Officer/Associate State Superintendent
Academic Services and Instructional Support

Angela H. Quick, Deputy Chief Academic Officer/Assistant State Superintendent
Curriculum, Instruction, Technology and Accountability Services

Mary N. Watson, Director
Exceptional Children Division

Students with Specific Learning Disabilities and Mathematics Sequence Exemption in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study

All students entering ninth grade for the first time in 2009-10, including those with specific learning disabilities, will participate in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study, with the exception of small percentages of students with disabilities who will participate in the Occupational Course of Study or will be taught on the Extended Content Standards. As preparations continue for the implementation of the Future-Ready Core, questions have arisen regarding a statute allowing for students with specific learning disabilities in mathematics to be exempted from the requirement to pass Algebra I. General Statute 115C-81b states that "the State Board shall not adopt or enforce any rule that requires Algebra I as a graduation standard or as a requirement for a high school diploma for any student whose individualized education program (i) identifies the student as learning disabled in the area of mathematics and (ii) states that this learning disability will prevent the student from mastering Algebra I." With this statute, these students are not required to pass Algebra I or any courses higher than Algebra I.

Schools that have students who may be eligible for this exemption may benefit from the following guidance:

- A student's IEP may have a primary area of eligibility other than "specific learning disability," yet the student could still have a specific learning disability in mathematics listed elsewhere in the IEP.
- Students receiving this exemption still must earn four mathematics credits, though these can be in courses less rigorous than Algebra I. Decisions on these courses for individual students are made at the local level.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

- In instances in which the exemption is considered, it should be stated clearly to the student and the parents that, although the student may graduate with a North Carolina High School Diploma, he/she might not qualify for admission to some colleges and universities (e.g., those in the University of North Carolina system) and will likely not be prepared to be successful in mathematics at the post-secondary level. Also, the student's success in required science courses may be negatively affected by the lack of mathematics proficiency.
- If a student eligible for this exemption still chooses to take the Algebra I course [or any other mathematics course with an End-of-Course (EOC) test], he/she must adhere to rules associated with these courses (i.e., student must take the EOC test; EOC score must count at least 25% toward the student's final grade for the course; etc.). Participation in one or more of these statewide assessments must be listed in the student's IEP, including all necessary accommodations and whether an alternate assessment is required.

Please keep in mind that the majority of students with disabilities will participate fully in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study with appropriate modifications described on their Individual Education Program (IEP). This letter only pertains to those students who are learning disabled in mathematics and whose learning disability will prevent them from mastering Algebra I.

Consider the above factors when making decisions about individual student participation in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study. If you have additional questions, please contact Dr. Elissa Brown, Director, Middle/High School Council, at 919-807-3987, Dr. Cindy Williamson, Director, Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology, at 919-807-3817, or Mary Watson, Director, Exceptional Children Division at 919-807-3969.

AHQ/MNW/rk

c: June St. Clair Atkinson
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