



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Howard N. Lee, *Chairman*

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

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September 25, 2007

To LEA Superintendents
From June St. Clair Atkinson *JSA*

NC VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Thank you for your support of the NC Virtual Public School. We know that your staff and you have experienced some frustration with the operational side of the NC Virtual Public School program. We understand your need for the NCVPS to function at a high level of stability to provide your students with the courses they need. We are committed to ensuring that the NCVPS meets your needs in course delivery.

In keeping with the spirit of virtual learning, the NCVPS was designed to operate with more flexibility and more independence than a typical public school would have and we continue to see these goals as important to the long-term success of the NCVPS. Recently, the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education have moved to strengthen the procedures governing the operation of the NCVPS. This work has included a change in leadership, and we are fortunate that Jim Barber was available and interested in serving as the Interim Director. He will continue to serve in this role until a permanent director is on board.

Based on your communication with us, we want to clear up some concerns or misunderstandings about the opportunities of the NCVPS.

1. Availability "24/7"

The NCVPS is available as a 24-hour, 7 days per week learning resource for students. At the same time, all students are not equally prepared to take advantage of this feature of virtual learning. For some students who may be struggling academically, your schools may need to offer careful counseling and additional support in order for them to be successful in a virtual course. The students who excel at virtual learning tend to be self-directed and independent learners. The NCVPS does not have to be used in the same format or way for all students.

2. Course Catalog

This fall, we are offering 78 courses through the NCVPS, including some courses from out-of-state providers which we are using to help respond to student demand. We know that some educators were hoping for a greater number of courses, and students signed up accordingly. We know that this scheduling issue has forced some of you to make special

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efforts to accommodate students' needs. Thank you for your patience. With the experience of summer school and the first full academic semester under our belt, we will be better able to outline the course catalog for the spring semester 2008.

3. NCHSAA and NCAA Rules

There have been some questions about NCVPS courses and the NC High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). We have sought clarification on this issue with the Attorney General's Office. Local high schools are advised to update their course listings with the NCAA to include NCVPS approved courses. The State Board of Education's policies recognize online courses for course credit if certain requirements are met concerning the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* competency goals and objectives and nationally validated standards for Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses. State Board of Education Policy HSP-M-001 provides more detail. However, local school boards also have the authority to exceed the minimum requirements for graduation established by the State Board of Education.

The NCAA's clearinghouse says that correspondence or Internet courses may be used as core courses if

- they meet all the requirements for a core course,
- the instructor and student have access to each other during the course for teaching, evaluating and providing assistance to the student,
- the student's work is evaluated by appropriate academic authorities in accordance with the high school's established academic policies, and
- if the course is acceptable for any student and placed on the student's transcript.

NC VPS is submitting to the NCAA Clearinghouse its course list for them to include in their course catalog as an approved course.

4. Textbooks

Textbooks, when required for NCVPS courses, need to be purchased in the same manner as adopted textbooks for any class taught within a school district. The textbook allocation is appropriated to support the purchase of textbooks for all classes taught within a local education agency or through the NCVPS. As is currently authorized, for non-state adopted textbooks, you also can utilize your instructional supplies allotment. If you can document that your current allotments for textbook purchases are insufficient to support enrollment in NCVPS courses, send that information to Philip Price, Associate Superintendent for Financial and Business Services.

We continue to review options to ensure appropriate funding for NCVPS. Our reviews could lead to some formula or funding changes in the future.

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Thank you for your patience as we work through the initial growing pains of this new program. The Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education remain committed to the NCVPS. It is a model for learning that shows tremendous promise for North Carolina students, and we are working toward its success.

JSA:mw

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