

WAPPINGERS

Central School District



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Middle States Association
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Member

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

January 3, 2010

Memo To: WCT Unit Members
WTAA Unit Members

From: Joanne Sereda, Director of Human Resources

Re: Online Course Standards

For the past year, the District has been communicating with various providers of professional development activities toward the goal of establishing standards for acceptable online coursework. While recognizing that activities delivered via a virtual delivery system can be effective in providing our staff with meaningful professional development, the District also recognizes the need to establish standards for providers to meet in order to assure that instruction will be effectively delivered, learning outcomes will be achieved by our staff, and equivalent seat time will be met. As a result of these concerns, our focus in establishing standards has been in the areas of instructor involvement and participation.

The Standards for Online Learning published by personnel from Nassau BOCES, the New York State Institute of Technology, and New York State Teacher Centers classify online courses into four interaction levels, which range across the spectrum in terms of instructor involvement and participation:

Definitions of the Four Interaction Levels of Online Coursework

- **Programmed Self-Paced Courses:** An instructional designer creates the course and the participants move through the material with little or no instructor interaction. Participants normally take computer or self-graded assessments as they move through the material.
- **Facilitated Courses:** An instructional designer creates the structure of the class and the course is turned over to a facilitator to help guide the participants through the course materials. The facilitator can help shape discussions and provide direction for project work but does not modify instruction and is not the content expert.
- **Instructed Courses:** These courses are created and taught by the instructor and utilize high levels of interaction between the instructor and participants. The scope, sequence, and timing of the course are dynamically modified to meet the needs of the participants. The course demonstrates high levels of discourse between and among the instructor and participants.
- **Muse Courses:** At the highest level of interaction, the instructor acts as the participant's "muse," providing guidance and inspiration. Typically the instructor and participant work to identify areas of need and the structure of the online experience is built around maximizing the use of a variety of synchronous and asynchronous tools and interactions to help the participant meet the learning outcomes. The instruction is characterized by high levels of discourse and connectivity between the instructor and participant and reflects strategies of inquiry-based learning, action research, and self-directed learning.

It is the District's policy to consider approval of inservice credit for salary purposes for all teachers and teaching assistants, and/or approval of credit toward the 175-hour/75-hour requirement for teachers with a Professional teaching certificate and teaching assistants with Level III certification, only online coursework that meets the "Instructed" or "Muse" levels as defined above. "Programmed Self Paced" and "Facilitated" courses will not be approved or recognized for inservice or 175-hour/75-hour credit. A copy of this memorandum is being forwarded to all professional development organizations that maintain a catalog accessible to our staff in MyLearningPlan.com.

Prior to submitting a request for approval to attend an online course for inservice credit and/or 175-hour/75-hour credit, check the News & Info section of MyLearningPlan.com, where a running list of upcoming online courses that have been verified as meeting the District standard will be maintained. Requests to attend an online activity for inservice and/or 175-hour/75-hour credit will not be considered for approval if the activity is not listed.

If the course is not listed, contact the sponsoring organization to confirm that the course meets the District standard and, if so, ask the organization to provide verification to Barbara Greenberg in the HR Office by e-mailing Barbara directly at barbara.greenberg@wappingersschools.org. Acceptable verification from the sponsoring organization confirms all of the following:

- The course will be taught by the instructor, who is the content expert.
- The scope, sequence, and timing of the course will be dynamically modified to meet the needs of the participants.
- The course will include high levels of discourse between and among the instructor and participants.

If you submitted a request for approval of inservice credit for an online course prior to today's date and your request is pending approval, your request will be considered for approval without the required verification if the course began prior to today's date or if you paid a registration fee prior to today's date. Please contact Barbara Greenberg if you have any questions regarding an online activity that is pending approval.

Due to contractual restrictions, at this time online graduate courses offered by an accredited college or university will be considered for approval for graduate salary credit for all teachers, and/or for credit toward the 175-hour requirement for teachers with a Professional teaching certificate, provided the course meets the "Facilitated," "Instructed," or "Muse" levels as defined above. "Programmed Self-Paced" online graduate courses that are the online equivalent of "video courses" will not be considered for approval.

Please save this document for your records.

cc: All Administrators
Barbara Greenberg
Personnel Associates