North Carolina
Occupational Course of Study: Aligning Career Preparation with State Standards

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Climate for Change

- Statewide training- 9,000+ stakeholders
- 8 Pilot TA Sites- TASSEL program was developed by one site and shared
- Piloted Employment Training Specialists Position (VR)
- Parent training
- N.C. State Transition Manual
- Statewide Celebration Conference
- Mini Grants ($1,000) to establish interagency transition teams
Climate for Change

- ABCs Accountability Program
- CTE raising standards, resulting in less “hands-on” courses offered by high schools
- Lack of widespread CBT for students
- Continuing drop-out issue for students being served in special education programs
- Adoption of modified version of the TASSEL model by the state of Alabama and adoption of TASSEL within the state of North Carolina by multiple school systems.
- Good collaboration with state and local VR
The Development of the OCS

- ABCs-(High Stakes Accountability Program), 1996
- SBE Ad Hoc Diploma Committee, 1999
- SBE Concept Approval 1999
- Curriculum Writing Teams, 1999-2001
- Reviewed by internal and external content experts
- Revision

- Reviewed at school system level by teachers
- Statewide Regional Transition Input Meetings
- Curriculum Revision
- Informational Presentation to SBE 4/2000
- SBE Approval 5/2000 of first 11 courses
- Approval of science courses 2001
- Social Studies Pending
No Child Left Behind and the Occupational Course of Study

- Currently completing additional EOC performance assessments to meet federal testing guidelines (science, social studies)
- Curriculum framework meets NCLB compliance in regards to students counting as graduates
- All OCS teachers must meet NCLB “highly qualified” standards for high school content area teachers
The Occupational Course of Study …

- Is a transition-focused curriculum framework that includes extensive career preparation
- Promotes community inclusion
- Teaches self-determination
- Is appropriate for a small group of students with disabilities
Pathways to a North Carolina High Diploma

- Career Course of Study
- College Tech Prep Course of Study
- College/University Prep Course of Study
- Occupational Course of Study
North Carolina High School Exit Documents

- High School Diploma
- Certificate of Achievement
- Graduation Certificate
Alignment

- NC Standard Course of Study
- School-To-Work Opportunities Act (JobReady)
- SCANS Skills
- Elements of Work Ethic
- Career Education
Assumptions

- Vocational assessment is important to career decision-making.
- Experiential hands-on learning is an important need for students for with disabilities.
- Self-Determination is vital to successful transition planning and the obtainment of competitive employment.
- The application of functional academics to work settings is important to future career success.
- Interagency cooperation is needed for successful career development.
- Students should spend increasing amounts of time in the community as they approach graduation.
- Students who have paid work experience prior to graduation are more likely to obtain paid employment after graduation.
What Are the Benefits of the Occupational Course of Study?

- Meets all transition requirements of IDEA and NCLB
- Provides applied academic curriculum matched to post-school goal of employment
- Provides opportunity to obtain a standard high school diploma
- Provides multiple vocational training options and paid competitive employment.
- Decreases drop-out rate and behavior problems
- Emphasizes self-determination
What are some of the possible characteristics of students for whom the OCS might be appropriate?

- Severe deficits in reading and math and possibly other areas (e.g. communication skills).
- Below average social skills and/or immaturity.
- Lack of experience in making decisions, setting goals, and self-advocacy.
- Learning style that require a “do it to learn it” instructional approach.
- Difficulty in generalization of skills or in making connections between what is learned in class and present and future goals.
- A history of behavioral, attitudinal or attendance issues.
- May have disabilities in addition to cognitive disabilities (e.g. visual, hearing, physical, emotional, medical).
IEP Team Considerations When When Assisting Student with Course of Study Selection

- Desires of the student and parent
- Previous success with accommodations, modifications and supplemental aids and services in the standard course of study
- Match between student abilities and the various pathways to a high school diploma

- Student’s post-school goals in the transition domains
- Learning style of the student
- Recommendations of former teachers
- Drop-out risk
Main Components of the OCS

- **Student** and parent involvement
- **Self-Determination**
- **Applied Academic Curriculum**
- **School-Based learning activities**
- **Career Technical Education**
- **Community Work-Based learning activities**
- **Competitive Employment**

- **Computer Proficiency**
- **Career Portfolio**
Occupational Course of Study Curriculum Framework

- English: Occupational English I-II-III-IV
- Math: Occupational Math I-II-III
- Science: Life Skills Science I-II
- Social Studies: Government/US History and Self-Advocacy/Problem-Solving
- Occupational Preparation I-II-III-IV
- Career/Technical – 4 credits (recommended in same career pathway)
- Health/PE (1 credit)
- Arts – not required but recommended
- Electives – Number varies by local LEA
Additional OCS Requirements

- 300 school-based vocational training hours
- 240 work-based vocational training hours
- 360 competitive employment hours
- Career Portfolio
- Completion of IEP Objectives
- Computer Proficiency as specified in the IEP
School-Based Training Activities (300 hours)

- Vocational Assessment Activities
- School-Based Enterprises
- Student-Operated Small Businesses
- On-Campus Jobs
- Vocational Organizations and Job Clubs
- Leadership in School-Sponsored Community Service Projects (e.g. Blood Mobile, Food Drive)
- Job Fairs
- Mock Interviews by Local Employers
Work-Based Training Activities (240 hours)

- Community-Based Training (enclaves, mobile work crews)
- Situational Assessment
- Paid and Non-Paid Internships (WIA or CTE)
- Job Shadowing
- Apprenticeships
- Co-Op programs
- Industry Tours
- Interviews of Local Employers

- Part-Time Employment
- Legitimate Volunteer Experiences
- Community Service Projects/Volunteerism
Competitive Employment
(360 Hours)

- Successfully obtains and maintains a competitive employment position in an integrated community setting at or above minimum wage (with or without supported employment) in chosen career pathway.
- Synthesizes and applies all skill areas learned through the OCS to obtain and maintain competitive employment.
Career Portfolio

- Personal Contact Information
- Relevant Educational Information
- Employment Information
- References
- Resume
- CTE Courses
- Extracurricular and Community Participation
- On-Campus and Off-Campus Training
- Competitive Employment
- Work Evaluation Summaries
- Medical Information
- Financial/Tax Information
- Vocational Assessments

Note: Students decide what is shared with employers.
Computer Proficiency

- The IEP Team must determine the level of computer proficiency appropriate for each student enrolled in the OCS.
- The standard for computer proficiency should be set as high as is reasonable for a student based on ability and post-school goals.
- Computer proficiency should match a student’s needs (e.g. assistive technology)
- The IEP Team should have a “standard” procedure for this process.
- Documentation should reflect student progress toward their individualized computer proficiency requirements.
Challenges and Opportunities for Growth

- Counseling of students
- Teacher/administrator training
- Fiscal resources
- Interagency collaboration
- Transportation issues
- Communication
Questions?