



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

28-010



MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

Renewed

September 7, 2007

Dr. Jayne H. Mohr
Associate Superintendent
Traverse City Area Public Schools
P.O. Box 32
Traverse City, MI 49685-0032

Dear Dr. Mohr,

On behalf of Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS) you have requested my approval to waive most of the provisions in section 50 of the Pupil Accounting Manual in order to expand online independent learning options for your high school students. I am pleased to accept your proposal under the conditions described below. The TCAPS district is approved for the 2007-08 school year with the possibility of a two year extension to the waiver.

My waiver includes the following:

1. Section 50 part 2 specifies that "50% of the postsecondary course or career and technical preparation course must fall within the school district's academic year" in order to count an online course offered at a postsecondary institution to count for dual enrollment. TCAPS may count a postsecondary online course for dual enrollment even if the overlap between school district and postsecondary school year is less than 50%. But in order to count as dual enrollment, there must be some overlap noted in student or district records.
2. The TCAPS district may allow up to 25% of their enrolled, full time high school students to take all of their coursework online if the following conditions are met:
 - a. A student's online coursework may not be exclusively delivered in a non-instructor-led (self-study) format;
 - b. Students must be in attendance on the appropriate pupil membership count dates or student participation must be confirmed by the online instructor(s) on the count dates; the method used to confirm student attendance must be documented.
 - c. The district develops criteria to be used in selecting Traverse City Area Public Schools high school students that request to receive all of their coursework online;
 - d. For online dual enrollment courses, the district specifies the percentage of concurrence in scheduling if it will be less than 50%;

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- e. The district requires students to take secondary credit assessment(s) at the conclusion of each Michigan Merit Curriculum core course taken online to demonstrate that the student is proficient in the high school content expectations for that course; the district must inform MDE about the assessment(s) that are used and the cut scores in a report at the end of 2007-08;
- f. The district participates in an MDE grant-funded evaluation study to gauge the effectiveness of the program and to determine successful implementation strategies that can be shared with others;
- g. The district submits an annual report for each year the waiver is in effect that includes input from students, teachers and parents;
- h. The district agrees to utilize highly qualified teachers (as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) for all instructor-led online courses that require highly qualified teachers or agrees to secure instructor-led online courses only from online education providers that are accredited by a nationally recognized organization when delivering courses that are required under the Michigan Merit Curriculum.

All other provisions of section 50 and of Michigan School Code remain in effect. Several pupil accounting rules were discussed in regard to TCAPS recruiting high school students for the 100% virtual learning program. For clarity, I am reiterating the details.

For high school students who live within the district but were not previously enrolled in TCAPS, the students must be enrolled as full time students by the first pupil count date in order to receive a full foundation grant. For high school students who live outside the district but were not previously enrolled in the district, the students must be enrolled as full time students by the first pupil count date and must be released by their home districts in order for TCAPS to receive state aid for the student.

The virtual learning program is considered an approved alternative education program and is similar to a school within a school. For purposes of required state reporting, all juniors in the program must take the Michigan Merit Exam and will be counted in membership for the high school report card and adequate yearly progress (AYP) reporting.

It is my understanding that TCAPS will count a student participating in the 100% virtual learning program as full time if he or she takes a full course load that leads to earning six credits for the school year. The description of e-teachers that you sent as support documentation includes the description of e-teacher contracts. It is my understanding that TCAPS e-teachers will be certificated teachers employed by the district and not contracted through a third party and that, in addition to its own e-teachers, TCAPS will use online education providers that are accredited by a nationally recognized organization. E-teachers may provide mentoring face to face, online, or via phone.

I am excited about your innovative instructional plan and appreciate your willingness to see how we can best use technology to change and enhance high school education. Our evaluation study will help you to document your processes and outcomes to share them with others who will want to follow your pioneering efforts.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Flanagan