

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**Dr. Eric J. Smith**  
Commissioner of Education

**Dr. Willis N. Holcombe, Chancellor**  
Division of Community Colleges

July 7, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

TO: EPI Coordinators

FROM: Dr. Kathyrine Scheuch  
Director, Academic Programs and Teacher Preparation

SUBJECT: EPI Course Substitutions, Updated Communication

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We are updating and reissuing a March 6, 2006 Division memorandum regarding “acceptable” course substitutions for EPI curriculum modules.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this memo is to urge caution in this matter.

The EPI modules are competency-based. Students must demonstrate specific competencies and be evaluated using the specific methods and assessment tools that were proposed in the model that was selected for use by your institution, and approved by the Florida Department of Education (for most EPIs this will be the community college collaborative model).

Assessing students prior to EPI program entry to determine if they already possess required competencies, and modifying the student’s EPI experience based on the outcome of that assessment, is acceptable. However, to simply substitute a prior course with similar content for a competency-based EPI module is not enough. Some of the problems with substituting a college credit course for a non-credit EPI module may include:

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<sup>1</sup> Please locate the March 6, 2006 Memorandum on EPI Course Substitutions previously sent by Ian Neuhard, which is currently in **Section 10 of your EPI Program Coordinator’s Manual**, and replace it with the current memorandum.

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- Little evidence of competency demonstration beyond credits earned or “seat time”
- Time elapsed between when the course was taken and the start of the EPI program
- Alignment of course content with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices
- Compliance with the assessment plan of your institution’s approved EPI model
- Diminished opportunities for discussion, reflection, and consideration of emerging research and best practices

Be sure to review your approved EPI application and institutional information. You can review the community college collaborative model at <http://www.fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/APTP/epiAdd.asp>.

Because the EPIs are a form of competency-based *alternative certification*, they are designed to deliver content and develop skills differently from traditional teacher preparation coursework. Acceleration is already an inherent element of the EPI experience. For these reasons, the standard operating procedures for course substitutions may be insufficient.

If course substitution is desired, the minimum recommended approach is to evaluate a portfolio of the student’s work from the prior course to determine if equivalent artifacts for competency demonstration exist at an acceptable level of quality. A more rigorous approach would be to have the student demonstrate the competency in real time and produce/reproduce the exact artifact required by the EPI program.

Ultimately, institutions will be held accountable for the performance of the teachers that they produce. While it is important to produce teachers quickly to address the current shortage, it is even more important to produce highly-effective teachers with the skills to successfully implement the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices. Mid-career changers, especially, will be better served through a full EPI experience, rather than accelerating them through the program on the basis of credits they earned as college undergraduates.

Please continue to communicate on this and other EPI matters with your institution’s academic and student development leaders. Your registrar, admissions, advising, and financial aid staff need to be aware of the policies and practices at both the state, and institutional levels, to serve EPI students. This is also true for your reports coordinators, business officers, institutional effectiveness staff, and data collection personnel. Ongoing meetings with these and other key stakeholders are strongly recommended.

If you have any questions about course substitutions or other EPI issues, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Kathyrine.Scheuch@fldoe.org](mailto:Kathyrine.Scheuch@fldoe.org). Thank you for your continued efforts with your programs.

KS/sb

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