

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Cooperative Innovative High School
Exemption Request
Roanoke Valley Early College
Halifax Community College

Request:

Halifax Community College requests an exemption from applicable State Board rules to allow 7th and 8th grade early college high school students to enroll in college-level courses.

Background:

On March 4, 2009 and May 14, 2009, respectively, the State Board of Education and the State Board of Community College approved the Roanoke Valley Early College, a cooperative innovative high school program established between Halifax Community College and Weldon City Schools. The agreement between the College trustees and the local school board allows for the enrollment of 7th and 8th grade students in the early college high school.

Rationale for Request:

(See attached rationale provided by Halifax Community College.)

Considerations:

- G. S. 115C-238.50 authorizes local boards of education and boards of trustees to jointly establish innovative high school programs “that shall target: high school students. . . .”
- 23 NCAC 2C.0305(c) allows a high school student, 16 years old or older, who meets certain eligibility requirements to enroll in college-level curriculum courses.
- G.S. 115C-238.53(f) authorizes the State Board of Community Colleges to approve requests for exemptions from applicable laws and rules. Since the inception of innovative high school programs, the State Board has approved Age Waiver exemptions to allow high school freshmen and sophomores, who usually are younger than 16, to enroll in college classes. This exemption allows students to achieve the high school diploma and a two-year degree in a five-year period.
- The enrollment of 7th and 8th graders in college-level courses may jeopardize the rigor of instruction and the integrity of course content.
- 7th and 8th grade students may lack the foundational academic skills and maturity to be successful in college-level courses.
- Approval of this exception may set a precedent for similar requests from other innovative high school programs.

Recommendation:

Staff has reviewed this request and recommends that the Board does not approve the exemption to allow 7th and 8th grade students to enroll in college-level courses.

Contact:

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Roanoke Valley Early College

All early college students across the state have the opportunity to take college level courses upon enrollment in their early college. Roanoke Valley Early College (RVEC) has afforded this same opportunity for our early college students as well. However, in order to better prepare our 7th and 8th grade students for the academic rigor and curriculum expectations at the college level, they do not begin taking their college transfer courses until 2nd semester.

The State Board of Education has approved that middle school students are eligible to take some high school courses. Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, middle school students were eligible to take any high school science, social studies, mathematics and foreign language course. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, English I has been an approved course that middle school students will be eligible to take as well.

Therefore, while our early college may begin with middle school students, we provide our students with both middle and high school level courses. During the 2009-2010 school year, RVEC offered Integrated Mathematics Course I as a middle school course in which our 7th and 8th grade students enrolled in this course receive high school credit. Next year, the mathematics course along with English I and World History will be offered to our middle school students as well.

In addition, we provided our early college students with community college courses beginning with the 2nd semester of the 2009 – 2010 school year. Thus far, the majority of our students have been able to handle the academic rigor at both the middle/high school and college levels. We are expecting to be able to continue to offer the college level courses to our students with one adjustment. In conjunction with their daily seminar course, new students will have an additional college course offered during their first semester, ACA 111 (once per week) in order to better prepare them for their early college experience. In the table below, beginning courses are outlined and the purpose/rationale for offering these courses to our students are stated.