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How education will take place this fall - Joseph Camilo

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Joseph Camilo

A lot of attention has been focused on how education will take place this fall. Classes will be online at ABC's Gould Construction Institute (GCI), but GCI has used the summer to maximize the effectiveness of virtual schooling. All instructors have received training on how to transition from in-person to virtual classes, as well as how to use the Zoom platform. To keep virtual classes manageable for instructors, class size has been capped at 20 students. If there is additional demand, we will create another virtual class. GCI team members have been taking part in the virtual orientations with the students and instructors and will continue to monitor the progress of the classes.

When it comes to hours missed last spring due to COVID, any student who was unable to complete their hours will have an opportunity to take free make-up classes this year. They can double up on classes and go four nights a week by registering for a class at a different location on opposite nights. For trades that allow it, we are offering online Penn Foster construction-related courses at no cost for students who need 24 or fewer additional hours to sit for their exams.

As another means of providing additional hours to make up for COVID interruptions, we have expanded our trade programs to include 159 hours of curriculum, up from 150 hours.

There are two ways you can help Gould continue to grow and improve. We are reaching out to member companies to recruit instructor candidates willing to teach virtual classes this fall, and also for companies that would be willing to host our hands-on shop hours at their location in small groups of 10 or less. For any apprentices who experience Internet issues at home, we are also looking for member companies to help by allowing those apprentices to participate in the virtual class from their office.

I also want to take this opportunity to point out something that does not get much attention: the licensing requirements for apprentices. Apprentices in most licensed trades in Massachusetts are required to be licensed with the state while they are completing their apprenticeship. While extensions for some licensing requirements have been provided due to COVID, it is important to

understand that the requirement for apprentices to be licensed with the state Division of Professional Licensure remains in effect. This means it is not enough for apprentices to simply accumulate their OJT and school hours; several trades require all apprentices to be licensed with DPL in order to be eligible to sit for their journey person's exam.

Some trades also require an additional step of apprentice registration with the Division of Apprentice Standards. With so many other challenges today, the last thing any of our apprentices or their employers need is to discover they are not eligible to take their exam because they failed to meet one of these requirements. The website for the Division of Professional Licensure has all the requirements for the licensed trades, including for apprentices. Spend some time reviewing the requirements so you are sure of what is required. If you are unsure or have questions, contact ABC.

This new school year is different from anything any of us can remember. But ABC and the GCI are working to ensure that there is a pipeline of qualified workers for our members.

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