Credit Flexibility Considerations for School Counselors Web Conference Summary

Tuesday, August 17, 2010 2–3 p.m. EST

Opening Remarks

This was the first web conference in the fall series, co-hosted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center, related to the implementation of the credit flexibility policy. ODE hopes the series will help foster communication between the Department, schools and districts. This web conference focused on School Counselors and the roles they play in regards to the development and implementation of credit flexibility processes, and provided participants the opportunity to hear from staff within the Ohio Department of Education as well as from a field expert.

Credit Flexibility Considerations for School Counselors

Goals for today's web conference:

- Increase the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of school counselors.
- Recommend possible approaches the school and district can take in developing and managing the credit flex process.
- Respond to participants questions.

Roles and responsibilities for school counselors <u>include</u>:

- Collaboration in the development of a student credit flex plan;
- Facilitation in the implementation of the student credit flex plan;
- Providing comprehensive academic advising.

Roles and responsibilities for school counselors do **not** include:

- Sole responsibility for the development of the student credit flex plans;
- Instructional delivery;
- Assessments of student learning.

Organizations and resources mentioned during the web conference include:

- NCAA Eligibility Center
- Ohio Department of Education Credit Flexibility Resources
 - o Credit Flexibility Guidance
- Ohio High School Athletic Association
 - o Credit Flex PowerPoint
- Ohio School Counselors Association
 - o OSCA Network

Questions and Answers

- Q: What if no one agrees to be the teacher of record? Using certified professionals or counselors could create a heavy load.
- A: ODE agreed that it could increase the load of certified professionals; however, they recommended that participants review the HQT guidance from the Office of Teacher Licensure. There are some credit flex pieces that will not involve HQTs. For those core course areas where an HQT is required and one is not available, then you would be able

to use someone in the same content area if need be (e.g. If a student wants to take physics through credit flex and the school does not have a physics teacher, the chemistry teacher can serve as the teacher of record). For those areas where HQT is not required and a teacher from the content area is not available, it would be possible to have a certified staff member (e.g. teacher, student counselor, or principal) be the one who helps to ensure all the pieces of the student credit flex plans are carried out properly and to make sure that the student is staying on track.

Q: Can you respond to how the new NCAA regulations affect credit flexibility?

- A: As of August 1, 2010 Division I prospective athletes have new regulations regarding requirements for courses and transcripts. NCAA now requires that a designation be made on student grade card/transcripts for any courses taken in a "non-traditional" manner. It is very important to note:
 - NCAA will NOT accept "test out" options as a viable alternative. Inform parents of the NCAA rule and that athletes who select to "test out" of courses will jeopardize their athletic eligibly (applies to Division I only).
 - The NCAA requires that any course taken in a "non-traditional" manner MUST be designated on a special transcript. The Ohio Department of Education has required that no distinction be made for traditional v. non-traditional classes; however, due to the NCAA requirement, districts/schools will need to make special transcripts available for any athlete looking to be active in the NCAA (applies to Division I only). Failure to do so will jeopardize their athletic eligibility and potential athletic scholarships.
 - Other questions regarding NCAA eligibility can addressed at www.eligibilitycenter.org. For questions regarding high school eligibility you can contact Roxanne Price, the assistant commissioner in charge of eligibility with the Ohio High School Athletic Association at (614) 267-2502.

Q: Can a student complete credit flex for home school, vocational school, or Joint Vocational School students?

A: In general, yes. The granting of credit for credit flex plans is the same as granting credit for Carnegie-unit-based programs/courses. Career and technical education guidance, which provides more detail, is posted on Credit Flexibility page of www.education.ohio.gov.

Q: Who is responsible for monitoring and creating the test-out materials?

A: Credit flexibility requires collaboration between the student and the school. The credit flex plan should be developed by a team that includes the school counselor, the teacher of record, and the administrator who is going to sign off on the plan and, of course, the student and parents. The teacher of record should be responsible for monitoring the plan and progress of the student. The creation of test-out materials is the responsibility of the local school district. The assessment could be developed by a teacher, a team of teachers, or it could be purchased. The thing to remember is that it that "test out" is NOT just a paper pencil test. The students need to be able to demonstrate mastery.

Q: How are other schools handling the weighting of courses?

A: This is a local decision and should be determined when students are developing their plan.

Q: Is it true that AP Courses have seat time requirements and would not be eligible for "test out" options?

A: With the new information released by the College Board on August 16, it is ODE's understanding that this is no longer the case. The new guidance states that students taking AP classes and scoring at a 3, 4 or 5 may receive credit as long as the grade card/transcripts stipulate that the AP test was written into the credit flex plan. Note: ODE has posted an update from the College Board on the use of AP exams on the Credit Flexibility page of www.education.ohio.gov.

Q: How are other districts handling the appeals process?

- A: Each credit flex plan must have an appeals process written into it so that the student can appeal at the local level, if the student is denied the opportunity to use credit flexibility or feels that credit should have been received for an established credit flex course. For example, one district established a three-tier appeals process with the fourth and final level reaching ODE. The process is:
 - 1. First appeal would be with the building principal;
 - 2. Second appeal would be with the superintendent;
 - 3. Third appeal would be with the local Board of Education;
 - 4. The final step then would be a review by the Ohio Department of Education.

An appeal to the Ohio Department of Education will be judged on due process. Was the appeals process followed properly at the school level and was equity and fairness carried out? ODE will not be judging the merits of a credit flex plan.

Q: Regarding options that are not PSEO, if there is a cost involved, is there a reimbursement plan for parents?

A: ODE is currently developing additional guidance regarding school finance issues that will be coming out soon. There are some instances where the school will be responsible, but there are also times that costs could be left to the student/parents. The upcoming guidance will help determine who is responsible for payment, but there is not a reimbursement plan in place.