

School Finance and Credit Flexibility: Web Conference Summary

Friday, April 9, 2010
1 – 2 p.m.

Opening Remarks

Sarah Luchs, associate director of Student Success with the Ohio Department of Education, provided opening remarks. This was the third web conference in a 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 and schools and districts. Superintendent Delisle's weekly e-newsletter, [EdConnection](#), and the educational service centers (ESCs) will continue to communicate additional updates and guidance as the work continues. A set of [guidance documents](#), currently posted on ODE's website, can support schools and districts move forward with their own policy development and implementation. In addition, [case studies](#) of five sites in Ohio have been posted on the ODE's website and include informative examples with additional resources. This web conference focused on School Finance and Credit Flexibility and provided participants the opportunity to hear from staff within the Ohio Department of Education as well as from a field expert.

School Finance and Credit Flexibility

Jeff Jordan, Director, Office of Finance Program Services with ODE, and Thomas Gumpf, Area Coordinator for Region 16, highlighted key components regarding policies and considerations regarding School Finance and Credit Flexibility.

Important Information to Remember

- Students are entitled to a free education where their parents reside, based on the tuition statute, which is Revised Code (ORC) 3313.64.
- Funding allocations are still based on the traditional knowledge of what a school day is – the 5 ½ hour state minimum school day.
- The first full week of school in October is “October Count Week” and students enrolled and attending that week are the ones who determine what funding is available for the school district. *(It was noted later in the conversation that the counts taken during the October 2010-2011 school year will be used for the next year's funding.)*
- Schools and districts need to be very careful there is not the perception that the district is trying to profit and gain money as a profit center or an entitlement of education.
- Section 3313.64 and Section 3313.642 states specifically those students who are eligible for the free lunch program cannot be charged for standard fees related to Credit Flexibility.

Questions and Answers

Q: *How can we ensure that students are completing the paperwork that indicates that they are eligible for “free” lunch? It seems to be reported with less frequency and less consistency at the high school level – do you have any recommendations on how to address that?*

A: This is a very good point – How do we encourage students who qualify for this program to participate? There are a lot of funding streams that are related to how many students can participate, and the Office of Safety, Health, and Nutrition is trying to encourage school districts in different ways. (Jeff, I don’t know that this information is helpful?)

Q: *In regards to the supervision of a student, who might be beyond the regular teaching mode, are there any recommendations for how to account for an extra cost? And would that cost be recovered, if it was determined to be extra?*

A: One way that this could be done is by issuing supplemental contracts, which would be pretty easy to look at and see what the amount of dollars is and how much time is related to those dollars. It is a very structured way to define the deliverables that the teachers and students need to work through.

Q: *If a student is receiving “free” lunch and they are accessing services beyond the normal school day, what type of guidance is there on who might pay for that?*

A: ODE feels that it is the clear intent of the General Assembly and the clear intent of the law –not to charge a fee for anything if the student is eligible for “free” lunch. However, there also has to be a balance for “beyond” and “normal” school day issues. People need to understand that just because a child is receiving the benefits of the “free” lunch program, they are not given a “blank check” for unlimited resources.

Q: *A clarification – the notion of “beyond course equivalency” and the “base cost” – is there something specifically that defines what those base costs are and how people should think about them?*

A: Schools and districts have to be fairly familiar with the funding formula to see what it is providing to a school district:

- Based on instructional time
- Are there sufficient operations and materials available?
- Are all of the components within the EMB (evidenced-based model)

Q: *Is there a maximum amount of fiscal obligation, say \$500 in algebra?*

A: Each school district would have, as everybody has, a different per pupil expenditure amount.

Q: *Can there be a charge for developing assessments at the local level that might be used in a “test out” or “test in to the next level?”*

A: It might be difficult to decide over how many students you would be splitting the charge, since those test assessments will be used potentially for years to come. How do you determine the number of students to split the cost among?