

# Credit Flexibility: Teacher-Led Initiatives

## Web Conference Summary

Monday, May 17, 2010  
2:00–3:00 p.m. EST

### Opening Remarks

Sarah Luchs, associate director of Student Success with the Ohio Department of Education, provided opening remarks. This was the seventh and final in the spring web conference 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. 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 to 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 Teacher-Led Initiatives and Credit Flexibility, and focused on the use of technology. It provided participants the opportunity to hear from staff within the Ohio Department of Education as well as from experts from the field.

### Teacher-Led Initiatives

Sarah Luchs, associate director with Student Success with ODE, started by providing some contextual drivers for this web conference, with some important references to:

- The recently released national technology plan called [Transforming the American Education: Learning Powered by Technology](#), which came out in March of 2010. The site also features a short video excerpt introducing the plan and how ED will use the feedback being provided.
- Ed Week has also been doing some features on virtual education and the April 28 issue had a special report and section on [E-Learning 2010](#).

Two sites featured during the web conference gave participants the opportunity to hear from Mary Beth Freeman from the Delaware Area Career Center and Mike Staggs from New Boston Local School District. The first question that was posed to both organizations was how each got started and what the Credit Flex model looked like.

- Through the course of two years, New Boston offered 16 different professional development courses, not only on technology but on how to use the technology – and this really jump started the district. Currently, all but two of the teachers have laptops and currently 60% of the classrooms have whiteboards.
- Delaware Area Career Center started by purchasing a content management system, Blackboard. They looked at how they could use this as more of an intranet to improve communications among staff members both on the same campus and between the north and south campuses.

## Questions and Answers

***Q: Looking at the classes and the pilot programs that you have put in place, tell us a little more about your program. How did the students do?***

A: Delaware Area Career Center created a pilot program with 18 seniors, who took a set of four different classes: an AP English class, a government class, a forensic sciences class, and a dual credit statistics class. The first portion of the class was a standard 40-minute class. Then after the interim, if students had a C or better in the class, they were eligible to start working on Blackboard. Students would then have four days of instruction (M-TH) and then assignments were completed between Friday and Monday, and needed to be posted to Blackboard by Monday morning. Students could work on assignments from home, at the public library or commercial sites like Panera Bread, or anywhere they could access the Internet. If students did not have access outside of school to the Internet, then they could still come into class for access. It ended up being a very interactive class, not only between students and teachers – but between student and student. The conversations and discussions were very rich.

A: New Boston Local Schools created an online class related to film and literature. The class was conducted through Blackboard, which was used for the discussion boards and turning in assignments. They also pulled a great deal from Wikis and Podcasts, as well as using video – so it was very technology driven. The class was open for students (grades 9-12) and became very individualized to their needs. There is a set of lessons that they needed to complete and a set of projects – but they were able to work at their own pace. New Boston instructors noticed that students who were typically very quiet in class and did not participate have excelled in this format and have been able to move ahead very quickly.

***Q: Looking at both of the districts, what would you say to folks who are concerned that their students don't have access either to a computer or to Internet connections?***

A: New Boston found that if you give the students the option of being in class to do the work or the option to be able to complete the work outside of class, they will find a place that has the connectivity- either at the local library or a friend's house, etc. New Boston also moved to block scheduling, providing a flex period to allow kids more time to do their work, use school computers, and receive additional assistance.

A: Delaware Area Career Center provided students with a list at the beginning of the year of local establishments with free Internet access, including Panera Bread and McDonald's. Delaware also noted that the local library has a computer lab that is free to people who visit the library. The school also owns several laptops that students can check out.

***Q: Operationally, how do you manage things like attendance and making sure that students are making progress?***

A: Delaware Area Career Center mentioned that their students are in class Monday through Thursday. They are marked as present on Friday. However, if a student fails to have assignments turned in on Monday, then the student is marked as an unexcused absence and the student would not be allowed to be out of class the following Friday.

***Q: How did the students do with the on-line format? Were they able to complete the required work? Were there any challenges?***

A: Delaware Area Career Center program had 18 seniors, all were able to complete the work and receive the credit for the class.

A: New Boston Local School class was open for students in grades 9-12. New Boston noted from its experience that the students need to be very independent and very responsible. It was not a problem for the older students, but there was a little more work required on the teacher's part for the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students who were not as on-task as the others. Due to the block scheduling though, the teacher was able to make sure that the students were working on what needed to be accomplished, at times with little more pushing than the older students. Everyone was able to complete all of the assignments and receive credit.