

Credit Flexibility: Assessment Tips for Credit Flexibility Audio Transcription

**Friday, May 7, 2010
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Jennifer: Good morning everyone. My name is Jennifer Reed with the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center at Learning Point Associates. I'd like to welcome you to today's event, Assessment Tips for Credit Flexibility, hosted by the Ohio Department of Education and Great Lakes East. This web conference is the sixth in a series designed to provide information related to the local implementation of the Ohio Credit Flexibility policy. The series will discuss the recently released guidance and will connect participants with Ohio schools, districts, and organizations that are currently working through the policy implementation. An archive is currently available on the Ohio Department of Education's website for the previous events in the series. At this time, I'd like to introduce Sarah Luchs, associate director with Student Success.

Sarah: Thank you, Jennifer. I really appreciate everybody joining us this morning. We have a very exciting topic and a couple of wonderful experts joining us. Our focus today is on assessment and assessment tips to help you all think about how to go about implementing your assessment policies and addressing assessment issues at the local level. So we are going to cover some highlights from the assessment guidance document, which is on the website. Hopefully, you've had a chance already to review it. Some of the pertinent issues were listed on the beginning slides today. We're going to recommend some approaches and give some tips to address the questions that you all submitted ahead of time as well as ones that we've been taking on the phone calls over the last several months. You also will have time for your own questions today. We'll be customizing answers to you obviously based on whatever issues you're dealing with at the moment. A couple of contextual issues; one of the big notions in terms of how we ended up with this policy is there are a lot of expectations for student success in the future and many of you have been following the common core standards discussion. What are the absolute requirements that students need to have moving forward? Increasingly states are signed on to the 21st Century skills initiative, which emphasizes critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, real world experiences. Then there are also, and these things are all related, notions about graduating college and career ready. What does that look like? What does it mean to be prepared for next level learning? On our session a couple of weeks ago on two assessment models, Marcy Raymond and Jeff McClelland, were talking about how they aligned their expectations to secondary institutions and to expectations in their course sequencing. So sometimes it's local and sometimes those kinds of expectations are being defined at the state and national levels. This particular policy really emphasizes the notion of what it means to demonstrate skills;

particularly being able to perform tasks, being able to map the skills, be able to demonstrate those things. That certainly was part of the focus of the design team's work and the State Board of Education's thinking when they adopted this policy. Then there is the idea of allowing assessments to really fit students strengths and having common expectations across the board for students, but not necessarily dictating the common conditions, common methods. With us today is Stan Heffner, associate superintendent of ODE's Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. He has a long history with the Department in shaping state policy and assessment. As well, we have Mark Hartman, with the Battelle for Kids, who is helping the sites that have signed on to the ACT end-of-course assessment work and subject area assessments. Mark was also a Credit Flex design team member, so he's one of the founding thinkers behind this policy. The first part of our conference is going to be highlighting some of the big issues in the assessment guidance document. Stan will lead that and Mark will chime in. Then in the question and answer portion, both Mark and Stan will field questions. Obviously, the notion on our end is alignment and integration, which is why we're talking about 21st century skills, common core standards, college and career readiness. Sites that have end-of-course assessments in place or sites that are part of the state's performance assessment pilot, a lot of the same thinking is embedded in that work. Those are all efforts to try to get at the same kinds of things, so they're not separate initiatives. I'm going to turn first to Stan and have him address three pertinent issues and then we're going to open it up to your questions. So, Stan, if you'd go ahead and kick us off.

Stan: Great. Thank you, Sarah, and welcome everybody. We really appreciate having this opportunity to share some information with you and to hear your questions. Hopefully, we'll be able to give you the kind of succinct answers that you need in order to continue your work as we implement the policy in the days ahead. As you all know, the Ohio core legislation changed a little bit what the options look like, but not all that much, for students who want to earn high school credits. Basically, the law says there are three ways to do it, one – you can just complete courses as you traditionally would going through the school year and attending class every day. Another way would be to show some demonstration of competency. If you stop and think about it, all the way back 20 some years ago when Senate Bill 140 was passed in 1989 I think, even then there was this emphasis on mastery, learning and competencies. So this is not really a new phenomenon; largely built on this whole idea of making sure that kids have the opportunity to earn credits through educational options. So what this policy really did, what the law did was basically expand on that history to say - you can either get the credit in a traditional way, through some kind of demonstration of competence, or a combination of the two. So one of the options that is available in the state plan is the test out. So what does test out mean? Test out means essentially that a student may wish to demonstrate that in a course, let's say for example Algebra I, the student may be far enough along that he/she doesn't need necessarily to take the course because they're really ready for the next level. So one of the very first things to think about for people who are interested in a test

out option is - Should the student be tested out or should the student be subject to the student acceleration policy? The very first thing is to make this decision. So if in your professional judgment, there's really no sense in testing out, the student could be accelerated. Now, the student would not have to earn the credit with the acceleration, but usually those types of students are going to earn other credits anyway and have a higher degree. But let's say a student does want to challenge a course. Here's what the policy says and some things to think about; number one – you're supposed to be communicating to parents and to students on at least an annual basis of the availability of this as one of the options. What I'm arguing is that in making that notice available, we should also be thinking about telling kids and parents what we mean by the test out and what the quality criteria are going to be if they're going to participate. So here's a couple things I'd like to have you think about. One is, if the teacher of the class that the student is asking for the test out offers up only a test, I don't know too many teachers who could distill a whole year into an hour-long bubble test. So if that course has an end-of-course exam, fine. But if those students in that course are also asked to do class presentations or they're asked to do papers, it seems reasonable that you would have a comparable set of criteria that you would want to tell students that it's not just taking a test, you have to meet these other kinds of expectations so that there are the same multiple measures for this test out option as there would be for kids in the traditional course. To that end, we should not be thinking about test out as just a single event. We don't have to think about test out happening just at the beginning of a year. It could be that if a student comes to you and says I want to test out of Algebra I, what that might mean is there's going to be a test, but maybe the student also has to show you a demonstration of some type or write a paper or engage in other things that kids otherwise in the Algebra I class would do. I would not argue that you would want to force the kids to do things that the kids in regular courses don't do to make it so onerous. Likewise you don't have to give anybody a pass. It really is intended to be apples to apples. So I would communicate not only the availability of the test out, but I would say that's only one of the criteria. There are going to be multiple measures. We will have to sit down and agree on the schedule of those multiple measures. We will have to agree on what we're going to use for the grades that are going to be given. Now it's one thing to give the credit, but we also have grades we have to think about. It really is a question of looking at a comprehensive view so you get a comparable apples-to-apples thing. I know there's concern by some teachers that the kids are going to say I don't like teacher so and so because my sister had him and I hear he's really a hard grader or he's mean or the kids just don't like this person. So I'm going to use the test out as a way to skirt the course. Or, I don't like that particular subject matter, so I'm going to tell somebody I'm just going to do an online at home and that will work. Again, offering the test out option does not mean that you surrender the fort. Offering the test out option says the same quality controls apply for this method of getting credit as would be if the kids were in regular courses. So again, one way to put a halt to kids who are going to try to use this to game the system is to really communicate your expectations for the test out options up front. I would definitely be doing that. Now, if there's

going to be a test out, and I'm talking about comparability; let's talk about the breadth of the learning that's needed. For example, if I'm looking at whatever these measures are going to be, and this again needs to be communicated to mom and dad and to the student, #1 – we have to think about a measure that really looks at everything that the course offers or requires for the credit. So again, if it's papers and expectations of readings and things like that, whatever it has to be for that test out option it needs to occur. It also needs to occur in proportion to the emphasis that you put on that context. If there are a couple of units where you really spend more time in depth because these are really the key critical pieces, then your test out option ought to reflect on the amount of proportionality that you give to the content. #2 - you need to think about not only proportion to the content, but the depth or the kind of mastery or thinking skills that you're requiring of kids. For some courses, a portion of the course may be more about awareness of things. In other aspects of the course, you expect much higher order thinking skills of kids. So again, the assessment that you design should also reflect the proportion of the thinking skills or the degree of depth that you're asking of students across the board. You're looking at it then three ways; you want to capture all of the content, you want to capture it proportionally, and then you want to look at the kind of rigor that you're really asking of kids throughout all of it. This means that you probably can't buy an off-the-shelf test; maybe you can, if the off-the-shelf test really does reflect those general principles. I'm thinking too many times teachers may already have an end-of-course exam that they've used in prior years. Maybe it's just looking to see if that's still valid against the other expectations in packaging it. But I suspect you'll end up needing to do that as opposed to off-the-shelf and, so as a result, you want to communicate all that to mom and dad so they get a full picture of exactly what it is we're asking of the student. I think for the kids who are going to try to game the system, that type of communication may convince them otherwise. But for kids who are really serious about doing that, then I think we really ought to honor their request. In each case, we get to take a look at it. Also along this same line, you don't necessarily have to buy an off-the-shelf product. For example in Algebra I, if someone just says give me the ACT, well the ACT has a part of the test that's algebra, but other parts of the test aren't. So the ACT by itself, while it's a good test, may not be appropriate for that class credit. Again, since it's going to have to be a part of a more comprehensive program that would be pretty difficult to call that test the right valid type of a measure.

Sarah: You've covered the highlights here on the first segment of the guidance. I would just turn to Mark Hartman. Mark, obviously you have end-of-course ACT assessments or subject area content assessments in some schools. Do you want to offer any thinking on how that's going or how these kinds of things align? Obviously, since you're a design team member, any other thoughts you might want to offer at this time?

Mark: Thanks Sara. I guess just a brief history on the end-of-course exams with ACT. We are working with 45 schools in Ohio and we are using the ACT end-of-course

exams. In our project, we are using nine subjects, although ACT does offer 12 and some of the schools are picking up those extra three tests as well. But the subjects of curriculum that's offered from ACT end-of-course exams include Algebra I, Algebra 2, Geometry, and pre-Calculus; English I, English 2, English 3 and English 4. Then in the sciences, they offer biology, chemistry, physics, and in social studies the only one they offer is United States History. As far as taking one test at one given time, different schools are approaching this in different manner. When you purchase the ACT end-of-course exam, you get a suite of materials called a quality core and within that there's a course objective booklet, there's a blueprint to the test, there is a sample syllabus, sample instructional units, banks of formative assessment questions, etcetera. We have some schools that are saying - all right, here are the objectives, here's a textbook that you can read, and you have to take these three quarterly assessments along with the end-of-course exam. Others are just giving the end-of-course exam and they're saying if the student projects towards college readiness, they're counting that as the course. If they're not projecting towards college readiness, then there are some other things that the kids need to be able to do and demonstrate. So there's not a one size fits all. Having said that, the ACT end-of-course exams and the AP tests, they are really difficult tests. I don't think it's going to be the norm where you're going to have a line of students out your front door wanting to say, "Hey, let me take those tests to get out of the class time." Because the tests are very rigorous. We have students that sit in the class all year long with the tutelage of an instructor and struggled passing the end-of-course exam test. So I think the idea that we're just going to be able to buy an off-the-shelf test and that's going to meet the needs of all our students. It goes against what the original design team components were around Credit Flex. I'll put my principal's hat back on, as I sell myself sometimes, the recovering high school principal and think about some of the things that used to frustrate me. I would lose students from my school district for other educational options that they could choose. Now students and their parents have the option of home schooling or online learning or sending their kids to a public school or private school, etcetera. Credit Flex allows us to adopt some of those things that are appealing in some of those other options. Some of the stories I like to share is where I see real value. Obviously, you have kids who can test out through a test; even though they're rare, every school has those types of kids. So that does take care of a percentage of the students as far as their needs. From the career tech area, there are schools that can't offer the whole suite of opportunities that might be available within career fields. An example in my area, in Canton, Ohio, there's a company that just posted that they're going to hire 150 welders. Well, not every school has a welding program. But if you were to work with that student and that employer to get that student a credential working through an apprenticeship program as a welder, could that kid get high school credit? Most people think that makes sense. Another thing that people have done and this is pretty wide spread already, people use some sort of credit recovery software to allow students to get credit once they've already completed the class and maybe have not been successful. They take portions of that class over again that they need to demonstrate mastery rather than taking the whole course over

again. That's another example. Credit flex allows us different ways to utilize resources. If I put my principal's hat on, one of the things that scares me with House Bill One is the four credits of mathematics that are required to graduate. I think how do I build more time into struggling students' schedules to help them be successful? The only variable I have is to give students more time with a professional maybe in mathematics to help that kid be successful. But how do I free up their schedule? They still need X number of credits to graduate; I've got to keep the student credit rich. I look at things like - Is the kid employed? Is there a business credit that he might be able to get through his employer? Does he have to write papers, does he have to reflect, maybe meet with a teacher to log what experiences he's learning in that particular job? If they're doing that outside the school day, then it frees up time within the school day to help that student be successful in a curriculum they're struggling with. The other example, a kid that's training to run in a marathon or something like that, could a student get a credit in phy ed if they're training to run in a marathon? They bring the ticket in with their time for completing a marathon. Some people would say yes, some people would say that doesn't work in our district. But I think the Credit Flex does allow for those types of opportunities. Then the last story that I'll share is dating back to when I had a pregnant student who was out of school. By our attendance policy, the student missed too many days to receive credit. I scratched my head at times because I've seen those home ec classes where the kids have to carry eggs around for weeks at a time. We give students a grade, if they take care of the egg. Something tells me that a student, who's been out of school for three weeks with a newborn baby, might be able to get that same type of credit for taking care of the baby. Could she reflect with a teacher or counselor or journal or whatever the local district decides that these are the things that we want to make sure this student understands and is able to do? What is the proof of learning for this particular student? It does give us options. I think sometimes when we get these new laws, we look at them as we have to do this and we have to do that. It really does give us an opportunity to help different types of students be successful in non-traditional ways and not dilute the learning experience. Many times when students sign up to take a course in a non-traditional way, you sit down with that student to allow them to reflect on their experience. Most of the time, what they say, "If I would have known it would be this much work, I might just have sat in class and done it the traditional way." They usually work a whole lot harder than what they think they're going to work.

Sarah: Mark, you're really doing a nice job of articulating both sides of assessment. On the one side, this is akin to last week's web conference on individualized student Credit Flex planning - the planning, the learning, embedding the assessment, what's appropriate, what makes sense for what's being proposed. Then, on the other side is, I've already learned it and the school maybe has not even provided the learning. We need to do, you called it, the proof of learning. We need to assess your skills and knowledge base to see what level you're at and what you're ready for. Sometimes it's not a whole scale notion. It's not that you're ready for the whole next course, it's that you've mastered a portion of what is currently offered

and you need to accelerate by getting the next portion that's missing as well as taking on the new learning possibly of the next course or the next level. I just want to make clear to all of our listeners that the assessment really does run the gamut on both ends, the learning has already occurred and also we're planning for the learning. Mark, you said sometimes you have students who do well on an assessment but again don't master it all. Stan said if you're going to choose something off the shelf it may not fit exactly the course expectations. So I wonder, for both of you, and I want to start with Stan, would we be recommending that you could use an off-the-shelf assessment for a portion of the credit, so it might be part of the package, but not be a one-to-one relationship?

Stan: The answer to that would be yes, if the assessment had a pretty decent relationship to what the course content was. So you might want to piece that together with others to get a total package. That's really the important thing. If someone does come to you and say they want to do the test out and you don't think acceleration is the right avenue, then you can go the test out route. I would put in my notice to parents and students that yes, you can do test out and these are the criteria. We would need agree on the package that includes the assessment and the off-the-shelf part of it. Another quick question that I've heard. Let's say your high school offers 70 courses for grades nine through twelve, you do not have to start the school year next year having 70 exams ready to go. Instead you want to have general criteria because if you're only going to have kids who are going to approach you for maybe two or three of these, you don't want to kill yourself, but you do want to be able to have the criteria in place. So, do you have to have an exam ready to rock and roll, the answer would be no. Have your criteria ready and announced to people. Another question - can you advise us on how to translate the end-of-course exams or whatever these assessments would be into the course grade? The answer is we don't have a set of tests on the ODE website to say here, use these. Each one of your courses are going to be so unique that we couldn't possibly do that. Likewise, all of you have different grading policies and to the extent possible, you want to try to be as consistent with your grading policy with traditional classes as you would be with these assessments for the test outs. An exam, like a CLEP, could be pretty rigorous so do you really want to have the same point system apply to that? Eighty-four percent on that would be pretty tough to get as opposed to 84% on a teacher-made test. That becomes part of the whole discussion you have with the students up front. You're not only going to be looking at how much can I apply this apples to apples for our district grading policy, but then how much weight am I putting on an exam, how much weight am I putting on a presentation a student is going to do, how much weight do I put on the paper? That all has to be teacher judgments. I would argue that those judgments ought to be fairly consistent with how the teacher would generally weight them in her course anyway. There really is no hard and fast rule, other than it really is a professional judgment. You want to weight those things in accordance to the way you would during the normal course of the year. Another is - There's a lot of talk going on out among the districts about whether or not there'll be waivers available for this whole Credit Flex policy. The answer is it's

the full intent of the Legislature and the State Board of Education that the Credit Flex program be fully implemented starting the next school year. We know that there are parts of this that may be causing difficulty for some of you. So, we're having internal discussions at this time. One thing we have to do is see whether or not if a waiver is even legally permissible. But we do understand, and we do want to be sensitive to the fact that some aspects of this may be causing you heartburn, because the clock is running and you're going to have a lot of people gone over the summer and you're worried about how you're going to be ready on the first day of school. The first thing I can tell you is we are discussing it. If it were to happen, it would be limited to only the aspects of the policy that you probably are having the most difficulty with, but it would not say that you don't have to do it at all. I can tell you that will not be happening. The second thing is that if you focus on the criteria that you're going to use to make the judgments for the test out and you look at that against what you've already offered for ed options, you really should be in pretty good shape. It's really more of a question of saying - here's the process and the quality criteria we're going to use as opposed to worrying too much about getting all the mechanics in place. Nonetheless, if you do have trouble with it, we're sensitive to that, we're discussing it, but no final answer yet is available.

Sarah: Thank you, Stan. I think you said earlier in the response about having a process in place; some people have thought they need an assessment in every area. You're recommending, it may not be that you determine what the assessment is, it may be that you put a process in place to consider or have a conversation about what that could be. I think that's helpful for folks to think about how to be situating this. Mark, was there anything that you wanted to offer about handing a percentage of the course or anything from your experience to date with that ACT quality core in your 45 sites?

Mark: Just a couple things, but not specifically to that. There are questions coming up about bulk purchasing of the ACT end-of-course exams and I know that ODE does not have a role in that. Again, I am not ACT. I want to make that understanding clear. I purchase assessments from ACT, the end-of-course exams. I know that there is an effort on ACT's part to sell the end-of-course exams to ESCs. For example, an ESC might buy a packet of Algebra I assessments to serve 20 schools in their region. I do know that ACT is marketing them through the ESCs. The other question that I get frequently is - How do we assign a grade to these end-of-course exams by ACT? This could be a whole webinar in itself on how to do that, but let me give you this example. On the ACT end-of-course exam, if a student gets 50% of the questions correct, they are college ready. So, obviously, a traditional grading system does not work. When you give high stakes, high rigor tests that have great stretch that can test all levels of college readiness, you're not just going to be able to say this student got an 85% on it, so it's a B. You're going to find that your assessments and your grading scale won't be student friendly so nobody will do it. I don't think that's the mission here either. When you're looking at AP tests or the ACT end-of-course test or the

CLEP test, you need to be really careful to focus in on where the college readiness line is. If I were a high school principal, I don't think I could in good conscience tell a kid that he was testing out of a course if he wasn't projecting to some sort of college readiness; in other words, being able to go to college and take a course without remediation. In articulating that to districts, some districts are handling it differently. Some people are saying that actually the college readiness line is an A. Some people are saying that college readiness line, that's the entry point. In other words, if I'm projecting to an 18 in English on the ACT, that may get you into a college English course without remediation, but it's not going to get you accepted into many public institutions across the state of Ohio. So we have others that have done projections and they say all right, if they're projecting to the elite colleges in Ohio, then we'll make this score an A. If they're projecting to the next rung down, we'll make this score a B. If they're college ready, we'll make that score a C. I don't claim to say that that's the best way to do it. Nor would I claim to give 613 districts in the State of Ohio advice on how to establish their grading scale. Try to move your grading scale by one point in your community and see what happens. Those of you who have done that know what I'm talking about. There just really needs to be some conversations on where you are in your district, where you are as far as sending kids to college, where you are as far as sending kids to college without remediation, and then set your bars from there. If you're sending 100% of your seniors to college and 50% of the class is going to elite universities either in Ohio or across the country, you may have a different bar than somebody who is only sending 50% of their kids to college and 40% of them need remediation. The bar may be different, just as grading scales in those school districts and their traditional exams might look different. You may want to talk about how you're going to grade these a little bit differently as well.

Sarah: Mark, your comments are spoken like a true former principal. A lot of what I'm hearing in your comments relate to a couple things; the relationship between courses and graduation, the individual nature of where students are headed, which speaks to customization. So consider lots of different influences and factors, but potentially there are gray area ones that need some professional interpretation. While 50% technically is college ready based on the kind of assessment the ACT is - what kind of relevance and meaning does it have for this particular student and where he/she are headed. I know the design team was really focused on the capacity for the system and professionals in the system to customize to students' individual needs and make it truly meaningful for them. That probably requires some communication with parents and students about why a straight out cut score may not be an aspirational goal for them as an individual.

Mark: To further complicate things, I did bring up the English 9 example. If you get half, you won't be college ready. I'm not the psychometric expert, but when people scale tests they scale out at different things. So it might be 50% of the test on the English 9 test, but on the chemistry test, it might be that you have to get two thirds of the questions right.

Stan: I'm always a little reluctant about off-the-shelf tests. I know it sounds like this is the easy way to do it, the fastest way. But like the English 9, it just hit me that if you look at what is in the test blueprint and what the test questions are and then you look at your course syllabus, you might find that there's a variety of questions that have nothing to do with what got taught. So sometimes that's really difficult because you're testing kids to a standard that they didn't get the instruction in or they weren't aware of. It's always important to know what really is in that test and how well it matches up with your course syllabus.

Sarah: I know, Mark, in your case you are using that end-of-course ACT to directly align to instruction and to change instruction; so in your 45 sites, it's going to make a lot of sense. But for others, they do need to consider these aspects of what kinds of off-the-shelf exams they're using. We want to turn to the second half of the assessment guidance and turn it back to Stan. The question is about the teacher's role, schedule and overall work investment. So we'll start with who is assessing, how often, and those kinds of teacher impact issues. Stan, if you would start us off again please.

Stan: One of the biggest issues for school management people is how burdensome is this going to be on teachers and what are we really asking of them. If you have a student who wants to do this assessment and you determine that there's going to be some kind of paper/pencil exam and a couple of other things, the criteria to identify that, of course, would be in that meeting you have early on where you identify when you're going to do those things. In your criteria, you may say that it is the burden of the student to have the stuff produced. It is not the requirement of the teacher to go chase after it. This is a privileged alternative route, so the responsibility does need to fall on the student to do these things. Hopefully, that won't be terribly burdensome to monitor a test and while you're doing some lesson planning anyway or things along that line. The idea is not to overburden teachers. If there's a question between who is monitoring while the student is doing a paper/pencil test, you probably don't have to be highly qualified as long as it's just somebody to make sure the kid's not cheating. But if there's a demonstration or a paper and there's actual scoring involved, then the teacher with content knowledge does need to be the one ultimately who makes the decision. It's like any situation where you can have others involved in the mechanical sides of assessment, that's one thing. But the judgments and the scoring really do need to happen with the teachers who are licensed to give the credit in the first place. Another question - what if a student wants to do a test out and just quite frankly fails, what do I do? My advice is, this is equal to anything else that goes on. So if, in fact, somebody attempts to do this and they get a grade that's less than passing, then that's the grade. Many of you have in your policies or your practices, the student who takes a traditional course maybe fails it the first time, takes the course the next year and passes it with a C, the higher grade is what gets recorded. So it may well be that could happen here too. If students want to challenge it, that's the consequence. So again, the work would have to be scored by teachers who are highly qualified. Do you need rubrics? I think for

presentations, the rubrics are important. I would argue you could really sit down and think generically across all disciplines about some aspects of student performance rubrics. What are the kinds of things generally speaking that you're asking students to do and to demonstrate. Then teachers may have to specify a few things to their individual courses. But you want to talk about such things as the depth, the number of resources that someone has had, their ability to defend the position, how many reasons are you asking people to give, or are you asking them to give counter points if it's an advocacy type of presentation. The idea of having a rubric is a good one, a sound one, and one that could probably be in a generic form and apply across the board. You want to look at - what is it that I'm looking for and what is it that I expect that you have done - and that should be communicated to the student as well. It's only fair and right. That just helps everybody in the final decisions. One other issue is about the cost. I've had people come to me and say, "Well, we offer English I and this kid doesn't like this teacher and so he wants to take this online course that he found. It's really a great online course, and it only costs \$1500 so here's the bill." The answer I have is, if the coursework that you are offering for the alternative, if they're going to test out, and they're testing out in coursework that is part of your general course of study, that is your responsibility. But if the coursework that's being proposed is outside of what you're offering, then your student fee policy kicks in. So in this case, this has to be something that's agreed to by everybody. It's not like kids come in with a plan and you're stuck with it. So if you really think that online course is good or if you've got a better alternative, if it's online, that's something that you all agree to up front. They don't just come in and dump that on you. You're really not asked to be stuck with bills any more than you would for any other aspect of the program. So where your student fee policy applies, in my opinion, would apply here as well.

Sarah: Thank you, Stan. We're going to turn now to your questions. The notion that Stan mentioned that a student makes a proposal and it's a negotiation. The school's responsibility is still to look at the standards, the course equivalency, the next level expectations and that forms the basis of the conversation. That's the role then that occurs in terms of between the student, family and the school officials. He also mentioned rubrics and obviously rubrics being a part of our performance assessment pilot, rubrics taking on a lot of new interest in getting to the 21st century skills, so looking for dimension of demonstration and content knowledge and using those in combination with sometimes end-of-course assessments or bubble-type assessments seems to be something, the multiple methods that are being encouraged. I want to reference the school finance webcast earlier. It's on our website and the cost guidance will help those of you who are struggling with these issues. There is some language that says we generally discourage any kind of fee associated with this, but if there's a circumstance where fees are appropriate, you would justify why they're appropriate. Jeff Jordan, in our school finance office, spoke to those kinds of issues. So Stan gave one scenario, the cost of an online course. In some cases, you're going to have parents who actually want to pay those costs because they

want their student to have these options. You'd probably be wise, if that's the case, to draw up some kind of formalized agreement. Then, related to the notion of a student failing a course – obviously, the assumption here is that you have some options and you have some policies already around this. In some schools, if a student comes in and wants to test out but doesn't pass the test but they do demonstrate some knowledge, that an ed option like learning plans gets constructed. The things that they mastered are essentially a credit in abeyance until they master the rest of it and then that course is transcribed with a grade or not a grade if that is what was agreed to. So that certainly is an option. To give an automatic F is obviously going to create a barrier for some students. So you can do that, but just understand that might be one of the things that could happen. Another question - what's the role of the standards in determining these kinds of assessment issues? I'd open that up to Stan who is our expert on standards and, then Mark, I'll turn to you if there's anything that you want to offer there. Go ahead, Stan.

Stan: Of course, the biggest issue is what does the course syllabus tell us? Because you want to make sure that whatever it is that you're assessing matches what the learning expectations are for kids in that course. We would assume that many of your high school courses are grounded in the academic content standards. Many of you probably have things that are in addition to what you find in the standards and that's all packaged together. So again, the biggest issue would be to look at the relationship to the course syllabus or the course description that you have.

Sarah: Mark, did you want to offer anything either based on those earlier slides and comments or anything about the standards?

Mark: I guess I'm the expert on the ACT end-of-course exams because I've given a few of them. There is a process within the quality core tools that ACT where you take your syllabus and the ACT syllabus and you actually go through and check exercise. It's called the rigor and relevance template, more or less just to see if it does match your curriculum. I don't know where they are as far as pushing these products out to the ESCs. But if I were considering some of those end-of-course exams, I would be doing that cross walk, again because I think nobody wants to assess things we're not teaching. The other thing I wanted to add, goes back a little bit about what Stan said as far as the performance rubrics. I think another way that we need to look is when we develop these new possibilities for students, these things also strengthen the day-to-day instruction in all our classrooms. So it's not developing the performance rubrics for specifically Credit Flex, it's about building those tools to help all of our students succeed whether that be in a traditional setting or a non-traditional like Credit Flex.

Sarah: Mark, because you were part of the design team and there were many conversations about different scenarios where students might use this and how it might be beneficial to schools and districts to engage students in these options, do

you want to speak at all to what schools and districts should be considering in terms of their own strategy and approach to this kind of policy?

Mark:

Wow, that's a pretty broad question. I'll try to break it down as easily, easy for me to explain it, let's put it that way. I think that when we're dealing with any Credit Flex option we have to identify, as we look at our curriculum, what pieces and parts of our curriculum are we going to offer for Credit Flex? As Stan mentioned, we're not going to open up the curriculum guide and make it let's have it our way with Credit Flex, it's a monster piece. But we do want to have set forth well, what's the proof of learning; what courses do we know and understand really well what the proof of learning could be. You may have some excellent assessments, excellent projects or excellent things that you use to assess students throughout the year. So it could be in English 9 you expect them to read these things, you expect them to write these papers, you expect them to do this project, and take this end-of-course exam to demonstrate that you know this. So what's the proof of learning? The next piece is, what's the reflective piece? In other words, as the educator, what's the reflective piece on how we need to do this better the next time. But, more importantly for the student, what is the reflective piece for the student to expand their knowledge around a content area and not just around the various projects of tests and assessments and papers and so on and so forth. Then lastly, who's the review committee? Hopefully, there's a highly qualified teacher on it, there could be a principal, there could be a counselor, there could be a community member, there could be a local tradesman through the career technical route, because you don't offer it in your vocational system somewhere for your students. So really the three big things are, what's the proof of learning? Then what's the reflective piece? And lastly, who sits on that review committee to say that the kid did what they expected they would do or to say - you're not there yet. You need to go back and redo this section or redo this paper or redo this project because you didn't hit the mark here. You've got it done, but we're not counting just getting it done. You've got this rubric and we're not accepting this type of work for this project. So go back and do that. This isn't keep bringing it back and bringing it back, this is the last chance for you to finish this stuff. Can you get it done in X amount of days? Yes or No? The kid brings it back and you decide if it's done and complete and demonstrates what you expect out of that class. The biggest fear on the design team was there's going to be bad practice out there where people are going to be giving out grades. That's the biggest fear when I go out and talk to schools. Somebody's just going to be giving away grades. I say we hope that wouldn't happen, but as I go out and talk to schools I say, "You know what, does anybody know what subjects or which teachers give the easy As?" All the heads start nodding. So I guess there are easy As in traditional classrooms that we need to try to work with and make sure that they're covering the content and meeting the expectations of the class. I'm sure we're going to find some of this with the Credit Flex too, where maybe it's not as rigorous as we would like. Hopefully, we would make those adjustments and move forth accordingly, just as we would find that if we were walking down the hall and the standards weren't being taught in any class.

Sarah: Thank you Mark. We've gotten a couple of questions. I want to offer one clarification and then do one last question for Stan, because we're nearing the end of our time. But for clarification, our understanding of the provision is that a student could ask to do Credit Flex in any course area that a local district is offering. The flexibility that the district has is to negotiate what that looks like and, as Stan referenced earlier, to put in place a process by which those course requests be handled, especially for assessment. So the notion that a district needs to offer a set exam in every single class is what Stan would say, "Not so much." It's how would you handle a request for those kinds of things and how the assessment could technically look different. As long as it's meeting the standards and the course equivalency, that could be fine; meaning that if Stan is a student and I'm a student, Stan might take a portion of the ACT end-of-course assessment plus do a work sample, presentation, project or written while I might have work samples, but take the teacher's assessment in addition to my package. So the district would have the opportunity to be flexible about what the test out looks like, but it's still meeting the same expectations of rigorous standards. Then we also got a question, this I think is for Stan. If a student asks to test out, doesn't pass the assessment, could the student then take the course?

Stan: Yes.

Sarah: That was easy.

Stan: I think I mentioned that as an example earlier. The same rules apply here on the test out that might to the testing in all your regular courses. So whatever your grading policy is, and your plan, if the student attempts something and does not pass, it goes on the record that the student took the course and did not pass. So then, if the student wants to say, I guess I need to take this course after all and they want to enroll in it, then the same policy would apply and say the student gets a C in the course, then that becomes the grade.

Sarah: The important aspect for listeners on the call, don't make this really burdensome, keep the needs and interests of the student in mind. There's no need to punish them, if they don't pass. If they thought they knew something that they don't actually know yet, you can choose to give a percentage of what they know and then draw up a learning plan using ed options for the rest of it. You can offer them to sit for the class now, maybe there's a third, fourth or fifth option. So your opportunities here are really locally defined and not defined within the policy. Obviously, the notion of customization has run through the thread of our conversation today with heavy emphasis on students being able to demonstrate skills, whether that's using some kind of formal assessment, a locally developed assessment, a rubric, there are lots of options. There really is no one prescriptive way to go about implementing this policy and that is very much by design. We're a locally controlled state and many of you already have excellent assessment practices in place. You already consider students needs. In that regard, this

would not necessarily be different. In cases where you are going to customize assessment options and you're going to look at your policy of using a range of assessments, certainly you've heard Stan strongly emphasize to consider the scope, equivalency issues, alignment issues, next level learning types of issues and certainly using multiple methods to get to the emphasis on both content and skills moving forward. We do have an upcoming web conference that's going to be on Teacher-Led Initiatives Using Technology. You can contact Stan or Mark Hartman and we've offered here also Terrance Moore. He's part of the internal team that does Credit Flex at ODE. So if you're having trouble tracking down Stan, Terrance works with Stan directly and could field any kind of additional questions and he has expertise in this area. All of these resources are available online. They're all archived. Please go to them, read through the guidance, watch the web conferences, and contact us with additional questions if you have them. I want to thank our speakers today, both Mark and Stan for your expertise. I want to open it up for any last comments from either of you and then we're going to wrap up. Mark, do you want to start?

Mark: Sure. I think when we, as a design team, started talking about this originally, we were really focused on a test out. As I go out and meet with schools, that's kind of the mindset - what's the test out look like and thinking that a student is going to be able to sit down and take a rigorous test on their own and be able to pass it and move forward. We all have a small percentage of students who are able to do that in every school it seems. What I see this Credit Flex evolving to is really how to free up time in students' schedules to help them spend more time with, for example, math and English and science and social studies. I don't see this as people flying through the core curriculum as designed by House Bill One. What I think it's going to evolve to is trying to figure out a way if somebody is in a church choir, to get a credit for being in choir because we can't fit it in to his/her traditional schedule. It's those types of things where I think people are going to get creative about those extra things that we all believe are important in a student's life, especially if a kid becomes credit deficient and they have to start doubling up in credits. We still want to be able to give them those things that they enjoy doing as part of growing up as a high school kid. I think it's going to be interesting for all of us to share our best practices as this evolves and rolls out. There are a lot of schools that are doing some real interesting things. I think it's going to move away from taking a test to get a grade transcribed to these are the series of things that you're going to have to do. One is to help advance kids in curriculum and the other thing it's going to do is to free up time within students' schedules so they can get the help they need and to be successful in their tougher classes that they don't understand.

Sarah: Thank you, Mark. Stan, any last parting thoughts?

Stan: Just in general, I really want to encourage everybody to think about what the criteria needs to be for students to participate in Credit Flex and then be sure that everybody knows the rules of the game up front. If we focus a little bit on the

quality controls and the process, then the mechanics will come piecemeal. You don't need to feel a need to have everything ready for every possibility because I can guarantee you - if you tried that, someone would come up with something no one thought about. So my advice is - it really is just a matter of having good professional conversations with faculty, looking what those criteria will be and then announcing those again up front as the overall part of the announcement of availability to parents and to students.

Sarah: An excellent comment, how we engage parents and students and setting expectations and being clear about the processes. Again, thank you to both of our speakers and to all of you joining the call this afternoon. This web conference will be archived and you'll be able to reference it in about a week's time. Thank you. Good bye.