

Credit Flexibility: Engaging Families and Community in Credit Flexibility

***Wednesday, November 17, 2010
2-3 p.m. Eastern***

Opening Remarks

Patti Grey, Ohio Department of Education (ODE), introduced the fourth and final web conference in the fall series, co-hosted by ODE and the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center. The web conference series relates to the implementation of the credit flexibility policy and ODE hopes the series will help foster communication between the Department and schools and districts. The goal of the web conference is to discuss the supports districts and schools need from parents and the community in order for students to have a successful experience with Credit Flexibility.

Highlights

- *Local boards must communicate the aspects of Credit Flexibility (the policy and programs) with students and parents on an on-going basis using multiple communication methods.*
- *The state requires that local boards of education must communicate this provision annually to parents and students. As part of the policy review process, local entities must submit data to the state about the methods and frequency of communication with students and families.*

What needs to be communicated?

- Purpose of credit flexibility
- Benefits of credit flexibility
- How the option enhances their child's education experience
- Information on district policy, how to access it, costs, safety and transportation

What are the benefits of engaging families in the process:

- Engages families as partners in their child's learning
- Promotes service learning
- Increases efficiencies and capitalizes on district resources when coordinating efforts with the FCE team
- Encourages school and community partnerships and strengthens relationships
- Provides for overall school improvement

Additional resources mentioned during the web conference included:

For additional resources on family and community engagement visit www.education.ohio.gov and search:

- ODE Framework for Building Partnerships Among Schools
- Families and Communities
- Family and Civic Engagement Professional Development

Questions and Answers

Q: *What are some examples of how districts are sharing information?*

A: During the web conference, [Nordonia Hills School](#) shared examples of ways they communicate with parents and families, such as:

- Using PTA and PTO meetings
- Using the local Board of Education meetings
- Presenting at freshmen orientation and the 8th-grade orientations for students and parents
- Publicizing in district newsletters and local papers, and the schools course catalog

Q: *What are some examples of how community organizations in the district, such as a local park system, can communicate Credit Flex Opportunities to students and parents?*

A: One successful communication strategy is the fairs that schools host. Have community partners come in and set up booths to talk about resources available to families and students. It is beneficial to provide this opportunity at several different times throughout the year, and not just once a year at an open house. Also, find times that parents are already planning on being at the school – such as parent/teacher conferences, which happen several times throughout the year. Another strategy is to involve the local libraries by distributing materials at their locations.

Q: *Are there any examples of ways to increase family involvement in the process?*

A: Nordonia Hills noted that understanding the parents' communications preferences and knowing parents' reading levels and abilities are extremely important. Providing several different types of communication is a must. It is also important to realize that schools might need to adjust to help parents. Since parents may work during the day and not be available for meetings or calls on a 9-5 basis, schools may need to offer meetings on Saturday mornings, for example, to help meet the family's schedule.

Also – knowing the language that is read/spoken in the home is essential to good family involvement. If a letter is sent home, but is not in a language that the parents or family can comprehend, the family's involvement will likely suffer.

Q: *Were there any obstacles faced in the creation of the Credit Flex plans and is there any advice that can be given when working in the Credit Flex environment?*

A: It is important to remember to look at both internal staff communications as much as external communications. While parents need the information, the staff at the schools needs to feel comfortable and be on board. Great ways to make sure staff is on the same page and comfortable with the process is have them provide input and participate in the creation of the guidelines and the standards.