

(Transcript has been edited for readability by Patti Grey, Ohio Department of Education and speakers.)

Credit Flexibility: Focus on Career and Technical Education, World Languages and Physical Education

Audio Transcription

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2-3:00 p.m. Eastern

- Jennifer: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jennifer Reed and I am with the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center. I want to welcome you to today's web conference, Credit Flexibility Focus on Career and Technical Education, World Languages and Physical Education, which features speakers from the Ohio Department of Education. I'd like to start off with a quick poll. We're just going to try to get a feel of the room and information on Credit Flexibility. And while you are filling out the polls, I'd like to introduce Patti Grey from the Ohio Department of Education, who is going to be facilitating today's discussion.
- Patti: Thank you, Jennifer. Welcome to today's web conference on Credit Flexibility with a closer focus on three high interest areas: physical education, career/technical education and world languages. The information today is targeted for school counselors and other administrators, who are on the front line for receiving credit flexibility questions. We are pleased that we again have reached our maximum registration capacity. We know this topic is important to school districts and this is an opportunity to respond to your questions on these three specific areas and any other credit flex questions you might have. The format for today's web conference is that we will do the presentation in three sections. There will be a presentation on a specific topic and then we'll open it up to answer questions before we move on to the next topic. We're going to allow about 15 minutes for every topic. So if we move on and have not answered or addressed all the topics, know that we will cover them in Q & A that follows this web conference. After the three areas are finished and providing that we have time, Tom Rutan at ODE will respond to other issues that are either questions submitted prior to the conference or in the chat box. So it is my pleasure to start the web conference off with Lisa Henry, ODE's education consultant for physical education in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. Lisa.
- Lisa: Good afternoon. I'm here to discuss Credit Flexibility and the physical education waiver, and the differences between the two. Credit Flexibility is an area that is available to physical education. There are some ideas out there that maybe it's not, but it is available to physical education along with other subject areas. For Credit Flexibility, the plans are student driven so the students might go to their lead teacher or their school counselor to initiate the plan. Then they together develop the plan. Within the plan though, aspects of individual and interscholastic athletic participation can be included. So it comes down to what is occurring within the athletic participation. If the student is on a soccer team, football team, etc., that activity within itself does not constitute a plan. There are certain aspects in those activities that can be applied to a plan. However, the sport itself, the

activity in itself doesn't constitute a plan. Therefore, participation on a team can be incorporated, but the student does not receive credit just for being on the team. The plan needs to be fully developed in accordance with the district's local course of study and also along with state standards. In some cases, schools currently have aligned their courses of study with the state standards. If not, the student needs to do this. The physical education waiver is different from Credit Flexibility. Since April of 2007, school districts have had the option of adopting the physical education waiver. When a student completes the waiver, the student doesn't earn a physical education credit and is not required to complete physical education credit in order to graduate. This is something that's not required for schools to adopt, but it is an option if they choose to do so. With the physical education waiver, students are required to complete two full seasons of team athletics, marching band or cheerleading. Junior ROTC is available as part of the waiver, which is a new addition. So students, who complete the two full seasons and one-half unit in another subject area, will not be required to take physical education. Since the students aren't earning physical education credit, they're not working with the course of study. The course of study alignment will be with the class where they're earning the one-half unit. Junior ROTC is a little different because they have to complete two full school years, not seasons. Additionally, ROTC is not required for graduation, so there is no required one-half credit. These students are completing two full years of Junior ROTC. Again, the physical education waiver may apply to interscholastic athletics, such as school-sponsored athletics, marching band, cheerleading, as part of the waiver options. But when students are participating in those activities, they're not earning credit for that participation. When the students choose to participate in the waiver policy, they are taking a half unit in another selected course to earn credit for graduation requirements. We had an early question - Our school has pay to play, can we still use the waiver? This is a locally adopted policy, so if the district would choose to adopt the waiver that is a district decision.

One thing that's not part of the PowerPoint, but is available on the physical education page on the ODE website, is a planning document that can help a student develop a physical education Credit Flexibility plan. It's basically a worksheet with boxes containing the state standards, indicators and benchmarks. Students write in the alignment of what they are proposing with the local course of study. They would specifically describe the activities that they would do, not just a sport. They need to tell us what they would be doing to align with the course of study. They also need to address the assessment; how will the person who's evaluating the plan know that the student was able to successfully complete the plan? So it's a document available for students to use as a worksheet. If they fill in the boxes, it can assist with the development of a full plan.

Patti: If there are no more questions about physical education, I have a question that could apply to any subject. Tom, does the state-certified teacher have to be the one signing the documents for credit?

Tom: The school's going to award the credit; so yes, it must be a licensed educator, a credentialed educator. In the case of the core content areas (there are eleven of those), a highly qualified teacher must serve as the teacher of record. So I'm not quite sure what is meant by signing the document for flex credit. Our recommendation is that the teacher of

record signs, the counselor signs, possibly even the school administrator signs, and each of those should be a licensed educator in the state of Ohio. If it's a core content area, they need to be highly qualified.

Patti: We will move on to the next section and I am pleased to introduce Dan Stacy, who is with Career Tech Education at the Ohio Department of Education. Dan.

Dan: Good afternoon. I have some other experts with me this afternoon. I want to introduce Dr. Kathy Shibley, the director of Career Technical Education, who is here to also answer questions and has a few things to say and Sharon Enright, assistant director in Career Technical Education, who is here due to her expertise the data side of the work that we're doing. We've worked together in putting the career technical guidance document on the web. If you haven't had an opportunity and are interested in the career technical education Credit Flexibility guidance, it's on the ODE webpage. The easiest way to find that series of documents is in the search box in the top right hand corner. Type in Credit Flex and it will bring up all the Credit Flex guidance documents; you can click on the one that says CTE and it will take you right to that guidance document.

As we've worked through Credit Flex and Career Technical Education, one of the things that we wanted to be clear was how it could be put into place so that it didn't violate any of the rules, regulations or state laws that are already in place or federal laws as well. On that guidance document, I want to refer to a paragraph or a sentence that I think could be helpful in explaining this. It's in the overview section and it says the following: "Credit Flex is not intended to change or circumvent the parameters of a state career technical education statute, state administrative rules, and state career technical education funding eligibility or federal career technical education grant requirements."

Kathy: We looked at Credit Flexibility in terms of a unit, a state-approved course in place to be flexed. So a flex plan is always a reflection of an already existing approved course that the career center is planning to deliver differently for a student or students. I'm going to answer one question that came in advance was around the 450-hour requirement for workforce development programs. The fact is that career centers teach our work in programs over a deep sequence to ensure that a student has a plan for at least those 450 hours. However, under credit flex that would not apply. Some portion of that credit or all of that credit can be flexed without attending the 450 hours.

Dan: Students can't come up with an idea and say I'd like to get career tech education credit for something based on the state rules and the federal rules all combined, which requires certain things that have to be taking place. It has to be based on a course that's already in effect, and that's what the first slide says. That's basic to the career tech credit flex potential and really sets kind of a standard. It's a little different than maybe some academic standards or maybe those non-career tech standards, because it is requiring that there be some basis for that credit to be granted. When we talk about credit granting, that's an interesting situation in Ohio. Credit granting is really based on the relationship that the career center or the career education delivery program has with the home school/district. We're actually in the process of getting some legal opinions on that. But the best way to handle this is through the credit granting relationship that is already clear and established with a JVSD or CPTD. This point is a much bigger issue than

credit flex. It's really about credit granting across the whole system. Again, I'm going to ask Kathy or Sharon if they might want to address that credit granting piece and where we are with that right now in Ohio.

Sharon: I do get the question - Does a student have to be enrolled in the school district that offers that particular CTE program in which the student is interested in? Yes, the student does need to be enrolled in that district. So, let's take the case that a student resides in a career tech planning district that has a joint vocational school district, but the student currently is only attending or enrolled in the home district. The student must enroll in the joint vocational school district in order to do flex credit with a career tech program that the joint vocational school district offers.

Kathy: Each credit flex request should be reviewed student by student. Of course, parents also should be involved in the whole process as well. Each request is considered parent by parent or guardian by guardian, as well as student by student. However, this does not preclude that you might have a group of students doing an arrangement that you are working under credit flex. Let's say you have ten students doing a certain kind of work that is non-seat time based. If you do end up with a situation like that, each student must have an individual credit flex plan, even though that might be the same basic plan with the same requirements for learning activities and the same type of documentation. We're merging the idea that it's an individual plan with a plan that could benefit more than one student, if students desire it.

Dan: Thank you, Kathy. This is an opportunity that some of our career centers have inquired about. Can they have a group of students, five or ten students, and put them all in a credit flex class? Our response is yes, but each student still has to have an individual plan. You can deliver the experience for the students as a group. This is somewhat different than what we originally thought about credit flexibility, but seems to be a viable alternative. We'd be willing to work with any school or career center who's interested in putting that together, not as if we're granting permission, but supporting in the right sense to make sure it has the right value. One of the other key components to career technical education and Credit Flexibility is that a valid credential to teach the program is required. There's been discussion about the credentialing of that individual. Under the rules of Credit Flexibility - career technical education or any Credit Flex course - there is a requirement that a credentialed educator be involved in the process and planning, in the setting up of the work, in the assessment, and in the approval of the final credit that is delivered or granted for a student. However, you can still use a local business person as the person who provides some of the content, as long as that person is going to be under the supervision of a credentialed and certified professional, which could be a career technical education teacher, a career technical education counselor, or a career technical education administrator. So, a credentialing piece is essential for Credit Flexibility. Someone who has some technical skill, is a business person, or a community person with some other opportunity, does not mean that piece about the credentialed educator is set aside. That's essential to this discussion.

Patti: Thank you very much, Dan, Kathy and Sharon. We will move on to World Languages and it is my pleasure to introduce Debbie Robinson.

Debbie: Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I'd like to have the polling function work to find out how many of you have had students come forward asking about credit flex for world languages. Okay. It's about 50/50. Alright, well that's good. We have some typical student populations who may be great candidates for Credit Flex. We have heritage languages in schools throughout Ohio where children speak home languages such as Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Russian, Hebrew, and Japanese. We also have students who are highly motivated language self-learners, and those who may do junior year abroad through Rotary or other exchange student programs and are immersed in a language of the country in which they're living. Many times this language won't be offered in your home school, but students might want credit for what they've learned. The fourth category is the group of online learners and, I will also say, "boxed set" program learners. If students use this option, please be sure that they are truly meeting the spirit across our standards, including interpersonal communication, which is real time communication with the possibility of negotiation of meaning. Many of the online and "boxed set" programs do not do that. And finally, you may have folks who move into your district or you may be in a district that offers early language learning. These students have had early language programs, let's say K-8 or 5-8, and you might want to determine whether some of those learners might be able to earn credit for the first level, second level, whatever. So know that just like with algebra one, if language is given in middle school, if it's taught by a certificated person in just a traditional setting, and the content is similar to that of a high school program, you can already offer credit for proficiency for these courses. But let's say you had a child that moved in and participated in one of these programs, but your district doesn't have that and a student comes forward to ask for language credit. So those are the five categories of learners that may have approached you about Credit Flexibility. I know that, in most cases, we want to ensure that students pre-identify and agree upon the learning outcomes and how these will be measured against our state standards in world language in an early language situation. But, I ask that you be flexible in awarding credit based on prior learning, even without a plan in place. We'll talk about specifics as we move on. We are very fortunate in our field to have a way to talk about language and measure language proficiency that is agreed upon across the profession. We call this our performance or proficiency guidelines. They've been in place since 1986 and actually come out of the Foreign Service Institute at the national level whereby we send diplomats and service people abroad. These guidelines have been drilled down to the school level. This is kind of a yardstick that we use to talk about proficiency. I want you to look at the bottom because this is the most germane to our student population of K-12 learners. The novice and intermediate levels are further subdivided into novice, low, mid, high, and intermediate low, mid, high. So that's about all we can expect with learners in your courses. We also have a way to determine perhaps, where our learners fall in terms of seat time versus proficiency. But you'll notice the question marks here because across our modes of communication - interpersonal, interpretive and presentational - there may be variation. For example, a student started learning Chinese, but can only listen and speak. The student can't read and write at all. Well, student can recognize the sign on the ladies room, but that's about it. So, should the student get credit? No. The student can't demonstrate proficiency yet across all of those four skills, but is working towards it. You could use your discretion and offer half a credit, if the student could listen and speak at a certain level. Notice too that it does depend on the difficulty of the language. I've given you examples for a level one difficulty language, like Spanish, and then the difficulty of Chinese or other languages. There are also levels two

and three. If you access the guidance on our ODE website, you'll have a better idea of which languages fall into which categories. In terms of assessment results, there is a free project that's been going on here in Ohio since the early 1990s whereby students of third level French, Spanish and German have been able to have an assessment across those modes of communication. The data show that in 18 years of research, after level three (three years of high school language), most of the learners are targeted at intermediate low. So that gives you an idea of what the expectation should be. Three years equals intermediate low. We also have data from the College Board on the AP exam and you'll see again how that range across the modes is encapsulated in this visual. Most of the students after five years plus of language are falling somewhere in that intermediate range. It may be intermediate low on some of the skills, but it could be all the way up to the pre-advanced level. That's why it's not a one-to-one correspondence. It really depends on the skills and where students fall across listening, speaking, reading and writing. We also have some valid and reliable national assessments that we can use to put into our credit flex plans. But that alone may not suffice, so here's a way that we can get around and ensure that our standards being met. Let's say you have a student in Northwest Ohio who is an Arabic heritage speaker and he wants to earn credit for his Arabic speaking ability. You might have him take what is called oral proficiency interview and writing proficiency test from our learned society, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. But that isn't necessarily going to demonstrate everything that a student might need to do to meet the standards. So you might want to put in some sort of service learning or project-based task, such as coming up with a brochure that explains medical services to the Arabic speaking community in Northwest Ohio. We would like to see some type of test out for these heritage speakers in combination with some sort of service learning or project-based task. In many of the languages that students will come forward to ask credit about, you may need to garner the support of a community member as Dan talked about with the business people. Although the teacher of record for this may be the Spanish teacher, our standards are generic across languages. If the teacher does work with a heritage speaker of let's say Arabic, Korean, whatever, the assessment could target what is appropriate as an intermediate mid, intermediate high level for these heritage speakers. So it works fairly easily for world languages, as long as you use the guidelines - a teacher who's familiar with the guidelines, one of our nationally valid and reliable assessments, and then some sort of task. On the last page of my slide presentation, it asks you to ponder who will be involved with the pre-identification of learning outcomes and measures of success, then how will the student demonstrate what he or she knows and can do and apply learning or document performance. Which existing assessments and performance tasks will be used to measure success? What scoring criteria will be used to measure proficiency or performance if you're using locally designed tests? The ones that are nationally valid and reliable already have that built in. Then what score does the student need to obtain to earn X number of credits? Although we have not determined finitely that if you target intermediate low, you get three Carnegie units, which certainly is how our data are shaking out. The Ohio Foreign Language Association is working in concert with us to bring forward some of the scenarios of best practice from the districts and we'll be posting that information not only on our website, but also on the Ohio Foreign Language Association website. I can take questions at this time as well. In terms of commercial assessments or any of these nationally reliable and valid assessments, yes - there is a list of them on this website that you can download in the world languages section. Or, go to the ODE website and you type Credit

Flexibility Guidance into the search engine and then go to the world languages implementation section where you'll find those documents.

Patti: We're taking a look at the pre-submitted questions to make sure that the presenters feel that they have addressed the questions in their presentations. Tom, are there some questions that you would like to specifically address?

Tom: There were a couple questions on athletic eligibility. First, if you have a question on OHSAA athletic eligibility for your student athletes, there is an excellent PowerPoint on the ODE Credit Flex website that was created by Debbie Moore and Roxanne Price from the OHSAA. Go to that PowerPoint (it's near the bottom of the page under athletic eligibility) and view it. It's excellent. Bottom line is – for eligibility, your students must have passed five full credit courses, which would be at least half credit a semester, during the previous grading period. In other words, last spring to be eligible this fall and in order to be eligible during the next grading period, the student must pass five classes during the current grading period. Be very careful about physical education, that's a quarter credit course. That one does not count. So it's going to have to be the full credit course. Secondly, on NCAA we did have a recent ruling that applies only to prospective Division 1 athletes. They will accept Credit Flexibility or credits earned in non-traditional ways, but not the test-out option. They do require a special transcript to be created and sent to the NCAA clearinghouse designating which of those courses is taken in a non-traditional way/Credit Flexibility. That runs counter to the state advice of making everything nondescript on the transcripts, but we do not control athletic eligibility, nor do we control the awarding of athletic scholarships. We would never want to put a student athlete in a situation where they would be ruled ineligible and lose a scholarship because we failed to comply with NCAA regulations.

Another question - How does a student or educator document the hours spent in order to determine an equivalent credit that is 120-clock hours? First of all, Credit Flexibility does away with that hour requirement. It's a mindset that has to change. Secondly, when the Credit Flexibility plan is developed collaboratively between the student and the school, a design must be put in place to ensure that the student adequately covers the course content and is rigorous enough to justify the awarding of credit. That could well require the student to meet with the teacher of record on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to monitor the progress, particularly if it's an athlete because you're going to have to ensure that the student is eligible and that way you would have a way of measuring that quantity. Also, we had a question earlier, could a student have all credit flex courses? Feasibly yes; practically no. You can require that student to come into the school to meet periodically with the teacher of record to monitor adequate progress on each of those courses.

Debbie: We had a question earlier - We require three years of language. If a student receives flex credit for Spanish, can we make him take three more years? As I tried to lay out, if you equate the proficiency with Carnegie units, you may find that a student already has enough of the credits. That's the beauty of using the yardstick of the performance and proficiency guidelines. So unless it's a beginning student and they're performing, let's say, at the first level online; then yes, if you have a three-credit requirement, maybe they'll need to fulfill that requirement through credit flex or a traditional class for the

other two or three credits. But if you're granting credits to a heritage speaker, chances are if they're proficient across listening, speaking, reading and writing, they will certainly test out and demonstrate their proficiency with some sort of brochure, project or presentation at least at that intermediate low which we're saying pretty much equates to three Carnegie units.

Tom: Another question deals with a comment that was made earlier that in order to receive career tech credit, the career tech course had to exist. That's true. Then the next question is well what about Arabic, we don't teach it, but an Arabic course does exist. It may not exist in your program of studies, but it does exist somewhere else in Ohio. So that course does exist and, when you look at EMIS, you're going to find a course code for Arabic. If that is an online program from a university, the student has every right to access it. If a career tech program exists and a center may not particularly offer that one, the student can still access it through credit flex. But they're going to have to do in a little different manner. The program has to exist first before you can grant career tech credit for it.

Dan: I think that another way to address that is, foreign language is not going to be taught at any career tech center. It's not prohibited, but it's just not going to fit into the schedule very well. So it would seem the most appropriate way for a student to access that Arabic course, if they were a career tech student, would be to work through the home school to get that flex credit and use the foreign language department at the home school, rather than try to get it at the career center where there's not going to be a foreign language program there in the first place. Kathy, do you have any thoughts on that?

Kathy: I wouldn't be quite as sure that that doesn't exist in some of the career centers. It just depends on which one, certainly not in all of them as Dan was saying. I think working through the home school is the answer to that one.

Tom: I totally concur with that answer. I think it makes good sense to do it that way. We've got another question up there regarding what are districts doing about teacher time for credit flexibility. Well, first of all this is so brand new we're not quite sure what districts are doing, but we have heard that some districts are looking at the credit flex as an additional assignment or one of their teaching assignments is credit flex instead of a supervisory assignment. We've heard that some are issuing supplemental contracts. We've heard that some are utilizing the collective bargaining agreement that says teachers are paid X number of dollars per hour and affixing an hour payment to that. But that doesn't get passed onto the student. That's a negotiated agreement. All of those questions are local negotiated issues that have to be resolved between management and your bargaining unit at the local school level and, candidly, they're handled differently in different schools. What about the issue of credit flex causing teachers to lose jobs? That's highly speculative at this point since credit flex is about one-month old or less. We realize that since teachers of record are required this could possibly put a little different demand on teacher time rather than traditional classroom instruction. But it's a little premature to draw that conclusion. We'll probably know a lot more at the end of this school year than we know right now.

Debbie: Another language question - If a student tests out of level three, can we issue the credit for one and two? Most definitely. We have a means in our field to actually document proficiency using the performance and proficiency guidelines. So if a student tests out and does a project at the level three I'll say, at intermediate low, then you definitely want to give them credit for one, two and three.

Tom: We had a couple questions come in with regard to Credit Flexibility and students on IEPs. The key, as is in all cases with IEPs, follow the language of the IEP. If there are specific accommodations that are factored into the IEP, they should be factored into the Credit Flexibility plan in similar fashion. If there's a requirement in the IEP for a student to access a particular educational initiative that incurs some costs and that's part of the IEP, then the obligation rests with the school to cover those costs. If the IEP requires a student to receive transportation or tutorial services and the credit flex plan is also requiring transportation, then the district is obligated to pay that. But if the credit flex plan is greatly divergent from the existing IEP, incurring additional costs or other factors, then that's the student's responsibility. The key is to follow the language of the IEP as it directs the Credit Flexibility plan.

A question is on how to communicate Credit Flexibility. There is an upcoming webinar next month on October 12 to address communicating the availability of Credit Flexibility. As you all know, by law, every school district in the state was to have notified parents and students last spring that the option that credit flexibility would be available this fall – some communicated through a parent newsletter, some did it on the grade card, some put it on a website, some did it at PTA open house, some did it in scheduling. There's a variety of different ways of doing that. Different districts will do it different ways depending upon resources and the availability of technology.

Patti: Tom, there is a question on EMIS. Does this mean that we are responsible for any course offered anywhere in the state of Ohio?

Tom: The concept and philosophy of Credit Flexibility is it gives students an opportunity to earn credits in non-traditional ways. The law does not limit which credits are affected. So if there is a course that exists and the student has access to it in a viable manner (which means the school does not have to accept every credit flex proposal as presented), then the answer is yes. Those of you who work with EMIS know full well that in the major core areas there's that catch-all code, that's what I call it, that "other" social studies class, that "other" math class, that "other" English/ELA class, that doesn't have a specific EMIS number, but can fit under that particular category. So in a sense the answer to that is yes, but again the school can exercise prudence and good judgment in determining whether or not proposals are viable.

Kathy: Can I add also one more thing about career technical education? Again, because we are structured around both state and federal law, we look a little bit different in this respect. Students must access career technical education through their career technical planning district. They might have some ancillary options through open enrollment, which are still inside of CTPD, career technical planning district, or maybe paying tuition at a given institution because they have to enroll where that program they desire is at. But, obviously, their access is somewhat limited. If there's a program up in the northern edge

of Ohio and this student is down in the southern edge of Ohio, they're not going to be able to enroll where that program is. So unless that program is somewhere in the near geography that allows the student to use open enrollment or they're in home school access or tuition paying access, that's just not going to be available for them.

Patti: We're going to take one last question. Can fees be charged to students to cover costs of credit flex?

Tom: Yes and no. How's that for taking a firm stand? You will find on our website under guidance documents, a guidance document entitled *Who Pays for Credit Flex?* In a nutshell, if it's a program that is not part of your program of study, if it's not taken during the school day, school week, school year, if it is way out there (non-traditional), the student is going to pay for it. But if it's part of your program of study, if it's something that's required for graduation, then the school pays. The College Board recently came out with an interpretation on the utilization of AP tests for credit. In a nutshell, you can use AP tests to test out. If the student scores a three, four or five, it may go on the transcript as AP credit. However, the test-out option must be taken during the week in May when all the other AP tests are given and those grades won't be available until July and then you still have to determine the letter grade, A, B, C, D. To recap other resources we've discussed today, the NCAA interpretation I mentioned earlier is on the web. There is physical education guidance document on the web. And there's a new HQT document on the web that clarifies when you need a teacher of record who is highly qualified, especially when you deal with that third-party community provider, that artist, that internship and so forth. So check the website on the guidance documents. Look for the most current dates, I think the date is like 9/15 or something.

Patti: We again want to thank everybody for their time. We thank you very much for participating today and if questions were not answered know that we will go over all the questions and incorporate them into the Q & A document that will be added to the website along with the recording of this web conference.