

Credit Flexibility and Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements: Web Conference Summary

Wednesday, March 17, 2010
10:00–11:00 a.m.

Opening Remarks

Sarah Luchs, associate director of Student Success with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), provided opening remarks. This was the first Web conference in a series, cohosted by the Ohio Department of Education and the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center, related to the implementation of the credit flexibility policy. ODE hopes the series will help foster communication between the Department and schools and districts. Superintendent Delisle's weekly e-newsletter, [EdConnection](#), and the educational service centers (ESCs) will continue to communicate additional updates and guidance as the work continues. A set of [guidance documents](#), currently posted on ODE's Web site, can support schools and districts as they move forward with their own policy development and implementation. In addition, five Ohio [case studies](#) are posted on the ODE's Web site and include informative examples with additional resources.

Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) Requirements

Wesley Williams, the director of Educator Equity at ODE, highlighted key components of the [HQT guidance](#), including information about HQT requirements and how these requirements should be coded in the Educational Management Information System (EMIS).

- To meet the HQT requirements, teachers must have the following: (a) a minimum of a bachelor's degree, (b) the certification/license appropriate to their core academic teaching assignment, and (c) an ability to demonstrate their subject area expertise in the core academic subject/s assigned.
- Districts and schools should use HQT for personalized learning experiences/student credit flexibility plans in the core academic subject areas.
- When a student's credit flexibility plan involves non-core subjects, HQT is not required. However, ODE strongly encourages a credentialed teacher/educator aligned with the non-core academic subject area to be directly involved in the development and implementation of the student's credit flexibility plan.
- There are existing precedents in federal law that districts and schools should refer to when instruction is delivered by someone other than a district- or school-employed teacher. ODE strongly encourages schools/districts that have artisans, doctors, college professors, business professionals, or community leaders providing instruction to use Memorandum of Understanding's (MOU) or agreements (similar to those used with dual credit) with the company or organization the individual is associated with. In these cases, HQT is not required per the federal guidance.
- The MOU or agreement should be signed with the company or organization, not the individual. HQT is required if the district/school directly employs an individual to provide instruction.

- A revised chart outlining the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) requirements related to HQT is posted on the ODE's Web site (education.ohio.gov). It is important to identify the way the student's credit flexibility plan is going to be delivered by referencing the EMIS chart, which in turn will help determine if HQT is required. For example, as you see on the chart, if the delivery method is Independent Study, then HQT is required. ODE considers the delivery method to determine the HQT requirement.

Questions and Answers

Q: *There are many local artists that could be paired up with students, but they are self-employed and not affiliated with an outside organization or parent company. Can schools/districts still use a MOU or agreement when there isn't a larger organization to contract with?*

A: It would be challenging to work with any individual artist not affiliated with an organization. Yes, you can use MOUs or agreements with individuals, but they need to be able to meet all of the HQT requirements (bachelor's degree, state certification/licensure, and subject matter expertise). If there is an HQT who is working with students and their individual plans, the HQT could bring in other local artists or community members to work with the students as long as they are not being compensated by or under contract with the school/district.

Q: *In regards to organizations that districts can develop MOUs with, does ODE have any guidance on how schools/districts should vet those outside organizations?*

A: There is no official ODE guidance on how to ensure that the company or organization is "legitimate;" it is a district determination. However, there are common-sense ways to identify "legitimate" organizations such as dealing with organizations that have a 501(c)(3) non-profit status as well as chambers of commerce and/or district and business advisory councils. Schools and districts should do research themselves into the organization that they are looking to work with to determine if the organization is reputable. Schools and districts should use their professional discretion.

Q: *Is Educational Option a credit flexibility option?*

A: Conceptually, it is a credit flexibility option. When coding in EMIS, the mechanism is Educational Option. Refer to the chart to determine when HQT applies.

Q: *If districts contract with a company, does the company have to make sure the employees have a background check?*

A: During the ODE stakeholder meetings with parents, questions around background checks came up often. It is a local decision and should be discussed when developing the MOU. It would benefit the district to have security measures in place, and it is something that the parents wanted to be assured of as well.

Additional questions were submitted during the Web conference, but due to time constraints were not addressed. ODE is reviewing those questions and will post its responses to the Web site in a separate document. Additional questions may be submitted at HQT@ode.state.oh.us