## (Transcript has been edited for readability by Patti Grey, Ohio Department of Education, and speakers.) Credit Flexibility Considerations for School Counselors Audio Transcription

## Tuesday, August 17, 2010

Tori

This web conference series, similar to the one held last spring, is intended to support your local implementation of Credit Flex and give you some tips, a little bit more detail around the guidance that's been released, and some additional resources to take a look at as you're trying to develop and then implement your credit flex processes. Our goals for today are to increase your understanding of the role and responsibilities of school counselors, recommend some possible approaches that your district or your school can take in developing and managing the credit flex processes and then to respond to your questions. With that I'm going to turn it over to Tom Rutan and Mike Hubble. They're going to start us off and talk a little bit about credit flex and areas of a quality student credit flex plan.

Mike: Mike Hubbell here.

Tom:

And Tom Rutan, and welcome to the conference and we wish you the best for this next school year. Some of you may have already started and all of you are getting ready to welcome some new kids back.

Judy:

My name is Judy Maver and I along with Tom and Mike wish good luck to everybody this year.

Tom:

One of the first things we want to start talking about is what constitutes a quality student credit flexibility plan. The question starts with the student. You, as school counselor, would simply ask this question first - What content area are you addressing? How much credit would be involved - a full credit or a half credit? When the student answers those questions, you are part of the development of the plan. You're not the architect, but you're a part of that plan. What assessment instruments or educational programs will be used to demonstrate proficiency? For that matter, what determines proficiency? Because you have two different levels with credit flexibility, one is taking advance credit work, which means demonstrating mastery, and the other is for credit recovery, where students need to be proficient. Those are certainly two different levels of performance. How will the grade be determined? Who's going to be involved with the determination of that grade? Very important and often left out of a plan is - What are the consequences if the plan is interrupted? If the timeline is not met? What is the contingency plan that takes place? How do you intervene with that? Obviously the planning team is going to identify a teacher of record that meets certain specifics. There's going to be a time frame when that credit is due. How are you going to determine whether progress is made? This is particularly important if you're dealing with athletes, to make sure that they're making adequate progress. What measures will be made to ensure that credit flexibility has been completed? If there are costs, try to clarify those costs and be real specific on that because parents don't like surprises at the end.

Mike:

What's really new in credit flexibility in Ohio is testing out. Testing out could possibly be a single paper/pencil test. But we want you to consider alternatives to that or additions to that. Is a single paper/pencil test appropriate for trying to determine equivalency of a credit of life science or credit of 9<sup>th</sup>- or 10<sup>th</sup>-grade English language arts? Those courses have not only tests and quizzes, they have papers, presentations, and there may be participation in plays, science projects, all sorts of things. So testing out may have multiple measures. Feel free as you're looking at your policies on test out to consider things such as those other parameters that may be part of an overall measure of the student competency in an area. Another issue is the integrity of that credit. One of the slides has a list of those things that Tom just mentioned that would be the minimum threshold. For mastery, a lot of the schools have probably gone with mastery levels of 80% or higher. So there needs to be some integrity to that. This shouldn't be just D minus work to earn a credit in advanced chemistry or something. It should be much higher than that. The integrity of the credit is very important. Later we talk about expectations. As school counselors, your counseling and guidance as you talk to students about developing plans really needs to explain high expectations and the level of rigor. Schools must make sure there's integrity to the credits that are offered through credit flex and that they are equal to the level of integrity of your traditional credits. So that's a key piece. Then Tom also mentioned what happens when the student doesn't meet the plan, was late, and didn't get a piece done. There really should be a contingency that's already talked about in the plan. Counselors have a huge role in helping students understand what the expectations are and what some of the ramifications may be if they're not met. But that doesn't mean that you don't meet the requirements of the original plan and automatically you have an F. You can talk about things like more time, and do overs, or an opportunity to revise the work and extend it. Is there going to be an opportunity, such as less credit or a lower grade, when it's not met? All those things need to be out there on the table in discussion and not just come up at the last minute and all of a sudden a student and a parent feel they've been surprised or blindsided.

Tom:

That said, when we take a look at the various options available for credit flexibility, it's our existing educational options, which has been around since about 1983. These include online accessibility, internships, credit by travel, and we've added post secondary educational options, dual enrollment and so forth. The only real new element to that is the test-out option. The test-out option has caused some consternation this year because everyone believes that they have to have all those test instruments ready when school starts. That is far from fact. You really only need the ones that the kids are going to ask for. So trying to figure those out, I realize, is going to be interesting. But most of what we have in credit flexibility already is in existence. Credit flexibility has added a new dimension to it. What's the role of the school counselor in credit flexibility? I think Judy can address that.

Judy:

One of the major opportunities that school counselors have is to be able to use the skills that we already have - which are building relationships and challenging students to rigor. Challenging them, making them, encouraging them, not just to take the lower road, but to be able to challenge themselves to defy their gravity and move ahead to what is really going to be an education that will serve them better after graduation and in their whole lives. We absolutely have the potential of collaborating in the development of the plan, not bottom line in charge of it, but to work together with teachers to work in a multidisciplinary team to help the students to create their plans. The negotiation piece is asking students to really

make sure that this plan really does fit me. If I got a D in Algebra, I'm not going to go for advanced Trig. I'm going to go back to the Algebra and work to make sure that I get that credit and get that understanding before I move ahead. Working on comprehensive academic advising allows us to use the skills that we implicitly have and that we have worked on for years.

Mike:

If you go back a couple slides ago, there was a list of things about educational options and performance plans. You'll notice that the new language in the operating standards, which is in the red part. They used to be called instructional plans. We thought it was very, very key as we move forward in Credit Flexibility to not only have instructional plan, but also a performance plan in order to issue credit. The important thing about the plan is that both pieces are there - What are the learning pieces and what are the performance pieces? Those pieces are all locally determined. You folks at the local level are going to determine through your planning teams or, however you're set up to do this, what pieces will be in the instructional plan and the performance plan as you collaborate with the student and, many times, with parents as well. So don't lose sight of the fact that you have, as a district, a school and as a counselor, some control over the pieces that go into the plan. One question that comes up is - What if no one agrees to be the teacher of record? Using certified professionals for counselors could create heavy loads. We certainly agree with that last statement, it can. One of the things that we have recommended from the beginning, and we've got guidance from our Office of Teacher Licensure, is about Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT). HQT is required only for those subject areas or content areas identified by the feds as core subject areas. Many of the credit flex pieces that you're doing will not involve a requirement for HQT in those areas. For example, if I'm doing an independent study, there is no real requirement that an HQT teacher be assigned or associated with that as a teacher of record. We are certainly encouraging, we also have to demand if the course requires HQT, then you have an HQT person involved. If it doesn't require an HQT person, we are certainly recommending that you try to have an HQT person involved, if at all possible. If that isn't possible, have someone in the same content area. You might be doing a credit flex project, and I'm a former science teacher, so you might be doing a credit flex in life science. If the life science person is unable to do it for whatever reason, maybe your department chair, maybe someone in physical science, but at least someone in a related science area can serve as the teacher of record, if need be. If that fails, then any certified staff member, whether it is a counselor, a principal, assistant principal, possibly someone in another content area, because we're looking at reviewing and overseeing the pieces of the plan to make sure that the plan is carried out properly and the student is on track. It doesn't necessarily mean the teacher or administrator has to always be a content specific specialist to serve as the teacher of record.

Judy:

It also gives the counselor the opportunity to really be an integral part of the process. It gives me a chance to talk to the science teacher; it gives me a chance to really be able to say does this plan really match the standards? Does this really match the qualifications? As an educator, I'm going to trust the teacher that says yes, or trust the teacher that says no. However, it's a great opportunity for me to be part of a multidisciplinary team, maybe not an official one, but at least a multidisciplinary conversation in the hall.

Tom:

One would hope that as the credit flexibility plan is developed that there is good communication internally with all the different stakeholders. That it is not just an administrative plan, but that the counselors, department heads, and faculty were all part of

the developmental process. When that is done, and unfortunately I can't say it's done all across the state, then everyone that has a piece of the responsibility for ensuring that this is going to take place and the issue of dealing with the teacher of record becomes a mute point. People know and understand that this is part of my responsibility as an educator to serve as an advisor to certain students and certain projects. This is just one of those assignments and an expectation that we have as professional educators.

Mike:

You already have some things in place most likely in your district. You probably have had students doing independent study for things such as early graduation or acceleration. They may have been doing independent study or some other ed option online. For example, as credit recovery, the student failed algebra or geometry and now is taking it as a summer school online class or during the school day as an online class. How has your district been handling that in terms of teacher of record? Many of these will be the same kinds of procedures that can be put in place for the new credit flex plan since these are things you've been doing really for years.

Tom:

And we are not oblivious to the fact that we know some collective bargaining negotiations are ongoing and this is an issue that often times is viewed by bargaining units as change of working conditions. So we're fully aware that this is taking place and, hopefully, can be resolved in a satisfactory matter. I got another question that came up that I'd like to respond to addressing the NCAA ruling that just came out. As of August 1, 2010, Division I prospective athletes need to be addressed kind of delicately with regard to credit flexibility. Since candidly every athlete today thinks he or she is a Division 1 prospective athlete, you might as well just apply this to all your athletes. The NCAA requires that a designation be made on a student's transcript of any course taken in a non-traditional manner. First, the NCAA will not accept test out as a viable alternative. So do not let your athletes use the testout option or you're going to jeopardize their athletic eligibility. Secondly, any other nontraditional accessibility to courses (in other words courses that are earned by not sitting in third row, fourth seat, five days a week from 10:02 to 11:04) are to be designated on a special transcript, even though our guidance says grades are to be entered in a non-descript way and that remains to be true. But the NCAA makes their rules and their rules say you will designate on your transcripts for your student athletes that these credits are taken in a nontraditional manner. So a special transcript is going to have to be created when you have prospective athletes, otherwise you are jeopardizing their NCAA eligibility and the possibility of receiving a scholarship.

Judy:

Another question is - Can a student complete credit flexibility at home school, a vocational program, or JVS? It is my belief that everything is on the table, providing a student can meet the rigor or meet the qualifications for the class. How they do it is what you actually do to meet the qualifications. If they do meet the qualifications, then where they do it and how they do it, provided they've had that discussion with the counselor or with teachers or whoever is on the team, then that's an okay deal.

Mike:

Are school districts going to force or require teachers to participate in plans? I think this question may have come in just before Tom gave his response about collective bargaining issues. There may be cases where staff will feel that they are being forced to do credit flexibility. I still work under other duties as assigned contract, as do most of you. But there are all sorts of options that are out there. Some have involved contracts being changed in

terms of collective bargaining and some have been things like tutor rates being applied. Then some have been, as I would have volunteered for - Would you rather have a credit flex period to work with students and plans and so forth or would you rather have bus duty? I would have always jumped at the opportunity to work with the students and do that. Those arrangements are out there. As Tom said collective bargaining may impact this in your particular district, but districts and staff are going to have to find a way to make this work locally. In some places, this is already in place and will be very easy to do and, in others, it's going to be a hill to climb.

Judy:

But doing what is already in existence for you is going to be the biggest help. If somebody is already monitoring AP, or if somebody is already in charge of something, that's something that's already built in.

Tom:

I have a general question that came in - Who's responsible for monitoring and creating the test-out materials? First of all, the credit flexibility concept calls for collaboration between the student and the school. Who is the school? The school certainly involves the counselor, not as the architect of the plan, but sort of as the choreographer; the teacher of record who is the content expert; the administrator who is going to sign off on it; and we want to involve the parent. So what you've done is you've created a team in much the same way as you'd create a team for the development of an IEP. The teacher of record should be the content expert and that person should monitor the plan. When the plan is designed, there should be some touch points along the way - Check in with me once a week and let me know how you're doing, and then the teacher can give some advice. That could be done during the teacher's conference periods, maybe before school, at lunch or during a study hall, if it works with the students. Who creates the test-out assessments? That's the responsibility of the local school district. It might be done by an individual teacher, by a group of teachers, or by a content area. It may be an assessment that is purchased by the school to be used. But I want to reiterate what was said earlier, these are not just paper/pencil tests. There could be performance-based assessments utilized, for instance, how you do you test out of instrumental music? If you play the piano and you want advanced credit, you better play something besides chopsticks, and you better be able to demonstrate your proficiency and your abilities in some ways. Likewise, how do you do a science lab without some performance base? It's like how do you demonstrate you can swim the length of the pool without getting into the pool? So there can be some performance-based expectations involved and that is usually done by the teacher of record or the content area in which the credit is being sought.

Tori:

One other question just came in - How are other schools, or what guidance do you have in terms of handling weighting of a course that's taken by credit flex?

Mike:

The simple answer is it's a local decision. If a class is weighted, it's probably weighted because of the rigor that's required or the level of the class. Is it an advanced class versus a general or introductory class? So, if a student wants to credit flex out of one of those advanced courses, or wants to earn the equivalent of an advanced credit, it would be weighted. It would be up to the plan to determine what the objectives are, what are the content standards that are being met, what are the performance measures and the expectations of those performance measures, and weighted grades could be given the same as with any other class. It's going to be a local decision at the end though.

Tom:

And it should be specified in the development of the plan. If I'm taking a physics course, whether or not this is going to be a weighted grade, should be specified in the plan. The piggyback question that goes on to that is: How do credit flex courses factor into the determination of valedictorian, salutatorian? That is a local decision. Keep in mind, except for the NCAA, when the grades go on the transcript, they go on in non-descript ways. So when you look at a B in physics, it's a B in physics. You don't say, well, this is a B in credit flex physics, which is different from a B in laboratory physics. So it's a local decision whether or not you weight grades and how you determine your valedictorian, salutatorian.

Judy:

Adding one more thing to what Mike said about weighted and more. You can also go the other direction. If I as a student want to negotiate or barter for just a part of a credit, you can do that direction too. Granted, it's much more negotiating, it's many more issues in that direction, but it doesn't always have to be weighted on the advanced placement or the honors side. It can also be what the student chooses - I'm going to take a half credit of life science and put that with a half credit of geometry, which goes in a whole different direction.

Mike:

One of the responsibilities of counselors in this whole credit flex thing is going to be making sure, as they do now, that students are ready to graduate. They have to have a certain number of credits in certain areas. So a student can't get 12 credits in fine arts at the expense of English and math, those credits have to be there. But having said that, sometimes students might want to credit flex for total enrichment purposes and they might want to do a half credit of fine arts; such as, photography that your district doesn't offer. It's not going to be used for graduation specifically because they've got more than enough credits to graduate already, or will have. So sometimes credit flex is an enrichment opportunity, and for a lot of those opportunities you probably are going to find somebody who will be willing to work with you as a teacher of record because he or she has that same interest. But again, partial credit is perfectly allowable. The other piece that ties in with this too is - Does it have to be graded? Does it have to be pass/fail? If you offer a student the opportunity to take a science course pass/fail, that same opportunity should be made available to students who want to credit flex for that credit. However, making all credit flex automatically pass/fail really does put the student at a disadvantage. It impacts GPA; it may raise questions - Why did this student take all these credits pass/fail? What were the performance levels for pass/fail? But again, local policy would determine how that's handled.

Dusty:

This is Dusty Graham, assistant principal at a high school. How many students are you seeing taking this option?

Jennifer:

That's a good question. Actually, what we'll do is we'll poll everyone while Mike and Tom and Judy answer another question, and we'll have an answer for you shortly.

Mike:

The question came in about home schoolers going to high school for two courses and aspire to Division I. There are a couple things about this. One is, you as a district have total control over whether or not you allow home school or home education students, under the home education rule, to participate in your classes. You set the requirements for what that's going to be. Is it going to be one class, two classes, whatever? However, once you do that, it does allow that student to become eligible to participate in extracurriculars. That doesn't

necessarily make them automatically eligible for Division I. They're going to have to have certain requirements for Division I in terms of credits and so forth. Can home schoolers go to Division I, I don't think there's a prohibition for that, but you're going to determine that. If your policy is that students must enroll and take two classes, sit in two classes, you have the authority to do that because home schoolers attending public school is an option under the total control of the local district. You have control of that. It's not a right of a home schooled student to attend public school. They've opted out of that already.

Tom:

One of the things you might want to consider, if you have questions on this, and there seems to be a lot of concern about this, is to go to <a href="www.eligibilitycenter.org">www.eligibilitycenter.org</a>. That's the NCAA eligibility center and it'll give you some specific answers to that. Likewise, if you have questions about Ohio high school athletic association eligibility, I would refer you to Roxanne Price who is the assistant commissioner in charge of eligibility. If you go to our guidance page, our resources for credit flex and scroll down near the bottom, there's an excellent PowerPoint from OHSAA that explains the role of credit flexibility and high school athletic eligibility.

Judy:

There's also a question about AP while we're talking about real specifics - If a student tests out in AP, can they get AP credit? AP you can negotiate, you can do the plan to test out of it; however, you still have to meet the AP requirements, you still have to make that as part of your plan, you still have to go through all of their red tape and all of their pieces and parts in order to get that credit. The AP course that you would test out of, or to participate in a high school, will give you that portion of the credit, but not necessarily the AP college board piece of the credit.

Tom:

We just received some guidance yesterday from the College Board on that point. If you use the AP test as a test-out instrument, it must be given in May when all the other AP tests are given. If students score a three or higher on that test, then they're eligible to receive that AP credit.

Mike:

They're automatically eligible to receive the college credit, but they first have to enroll in college and go to college, otherwise they don't get it. So if the AP test is something you want to use as test out, we'd also remind you again, there may be other performance measures besides that test. The students that sit in the AP class probably have a lot more experiences that they've had than just to take the test.

Judy:

Which has to be part of the negotiation, because however long it takes, however many hours it is, does not equal the same kind of rigor of sitting in a class or doing projects or papers or other activities in an AP course.

Mike:

The other piece of that is, AP test results are not going to be, and I just talked to one of the gentlemen from AP about a half an hour before this webinar started, released until July. So, if a student is counting on that as a test-out credit and schedules classes probably in March or April or February, you may have someone who doesn't make the cut and now has to be rescheduled. It's definitely not going to be a benefit to seniors. If seniors want to test out to receive credit, they'd have to do it at the end of their junior year, or spring of their junior year, because they're not going to be able to get any credit because it's not made available until July, which is the next academic year.

Tom:

We have polled our audience and it appears that about 52% of those on the call have received requests for credit flexibility and the majority of them have had anywhere between one to five requests. So there is some activity on this, but the question that I frequently ask people when they have that look of a deer in the headlights about this credit flex thing - How many educational options did you have last year? The vast majority of requests are the same kind, then you have the test out. So it's going to be a little different initially, but I don't think it's going to be the ground swell that everyone thinks.

Troy:

Hi, this is Troy. I'm the principal at Fairview. My question is about the NCAA Division I, does credit flexibility requirements apply only to Division I?

Tom:

What the NCAA put out was Division I. The earlier advice, the guidance they gave us was Division I and II and didn't apply to Division III at all. The earlier advice for Division I and II, and the most recent one that came out effective August 1, is just Division I prospective athletes. But keep in mind, those Division II kids think they're Division I athletes, so they're going to be in the hunt for that scholarship as well.

Troy:

Okay. Thank you.

Bruce:

This is Bruce Reilly from North Royalton. I'd like to be absolutely clear about the teacher of record and about HQT. I attended a presentation where ODE made a pretty big deal about HQT and making sure that the teacher was HQT. So if I'm a student and I come to an agreement with the district and I'm going to do a flex credit in chemistry, and the only teacher of record I can get is a teacher that has a biology-only certificate or license, is that going to create an HQT problem for our district when this grade gets posted by a teacher that has a biology-only license for a chemistry class?

Mike:

Let me go back up to the premise. First of all, I would question whether or not as a district I would jump on board as administrator to say I would approve a plan that doesn't have someone who has the appropriate background to serve as the mentor or teacher of record for a student. It's not just that a student makes a request and the student is granted the credit flexibility option. There needs to be some basis for that person serving as the mentor and not just a teacher of record so that the student can move forward. We're talking about someone who needs to work with that student, and he or she would be an integral part of developing what the student will do as part of that plan. There may be a lot of folks out there who have the expertise and background in chemistry who are certified or licensed in biology to do that; however, if that person is not licensed in chemistry, you have to make the determination of whether or not that educator is an appropriate mentor. Requesting something doesn't mean it's automatically granted. So that would be where I'd start that conversation out. Having said that, if this is an independent study that the student is doing, then our guidance from educator licensure and EMIS says that there's not going to be a requirement that a HQT teacher be the teacher of record for that educational option. Other cases might be that a student wants to do chemistry and is working with a college professor or someone from a recognized local community resource, such as experts at a research center, veterinarian medicine or something like that; those people can qualify, or actually do meet some of the federal requirements for HQT that the feds allow. A college prof who's

working with students on science for projects throughout the course of the year might actually qualify as HQT because of the association with the university. I don't know that I've got a clear cut yes or no answer in every case for you. But typically if it's an educational option, our guidance says that there's not a technical requirement from the feds that it must be an HQT teacher of record. We are certainly encouraging it, and we recommend it.

Roberta:

I just want to make sure that I clearly understand - I thought I understood that AP had seat time requirements and you could not give a student an AP credit simply by having taken the AP test.

Mike:

The guidance that we have as of yesterday and my conversation today is that this is no longer the case. They had the guidance you discussed earlier, three months ago this was the case. Because of what Ohio and some other states are doing, they've expedited a decision on this and we have guidance from AP as of today and yesterday that they are going to allow a student to test out, or only take the AP test. If the student gets a 3, 4 or 5, they will allow AP credit to show up on the school transcript, if that AP test is part of, or stands alone as the test-out option that the school chooses as part of the plan. If a student goes and takes the AP test and it's not part of their credit flex plan that was prearranged and collaboratively developed, the answer is going to be no. They still might qualify for college credit, but there's not going to be any high school credit given for this. I hope that answers the question. This is just new guidance that we got as of yesterday from the College Board folks themselves.

Roberta: Thank you.

Tom:

I have a question on some information about appeals. Each credit flex plan at the district must have an appeals process built into it. If a student gets denied the opportunity to utilize credit flexibility or if they feel they've not received the proper credit or award from the labors that they put in, they can appeal it at the local level. There's one district in the state that I know has three levels of appeal at the local level. The first appeal goes to the building principal. Failing that, the appeal will go to the superintendent or designee. Failing that, to the board of education. Then failing that, it would come to the Ohio Department of Education. Appeals that are forwarded to the state will essentially be judged on due process. Were the appeals followed properly at the school level and was equity and fairness administered throughout? It will not be judging the merit of the credit flex plan per se.

Mike:

Another question: Does a credit flex resource center exist in Ohio and what is the website? I guess the quick answer to that is no. However we have, if you search for credit flex on the ODE website, a multitude of FAQs and guidance documents on everything from HQT to gifted, students with disabilities, finance, and all those pieces. So we have a lot of guidance out there already. We also have, although in its infancy, a community of practice. We're going to be piloting some things I think more publicly in the weeks and months to come, which will allow districts and counselors to kind of go back and forth and submit to the community of practice, questions that they have to see how other folks have dealt with those issues or overcome problems, share pieces of plans that they would like opinions on, share what they consider to be a piece of a credit flex plan and get comments on. It will be moderated by some folks who have some training. But that's a piece for the future and we

would hope that counselors would be very, very active in that community of practice as it becomes public and moves forward.

Judy:

We also have, speaking as an OSCA member, Ohio School Counselor Association board member, on our website the possibility of becoming part of the OSCA community, which already provides answers to questions, dialogue between members to be able to put out ideas, plans and programs of practice. So if you would go to the Ohio School Counselor Association website, that's ohioschoolcounselor.org, there is already a possibility of joining that and being a part of this right at the ground level.

Tom:

I have two EMIS questions that are kind of related here. Does coding exist for the internship option? It does under the educational options program, although I'm not exactly sure what that coding is. Then, how do you enter data in EMIS? You would enter data into EMIS the same manner you would enter any course information that you would submit to EMIS in the annual report. So if you had a credit flex plan that is social studies (because I'm a social studies person) use "other social studies 150000" and enter the HQT social studies teacher who serves as teacher of record and the credit will go in, in the same manner that any other submission to EMIS would take place through your registrar or from that person who's responsible for submitting EMIS reports.

Mike:

Apparently there are some counselors out there who have been assigned EMIS duty. [CHUCKLE] And I know that as a high school principal, you folks are relied on for an awful lot of things. There are only a few actual educational option pieces that are actually in EMIS and the ones that are actually listed in the operating standards have never all been in EMIS, only some of them have. So you need to be flexible on how you look at that. There is a mentorship that is in EMIS. An internship isn't a lot different than a mentorship, neither is it really more than an independent study. Travel abroad and all those sorts of things really become independent study. So you can use those kinds of coding right now. We are convening an internal work group to look at EMIS codes to try to simplify this. We want to make sure that it's not overly burdensome. As a matter of fact, we'd like to relieve the burden that's there right now and make it a little bit simpler and a little more intuitive, which doesn't always seem to be the case. I hope that over the months ahead you may see some guidance on how you can do this coding a little bit easier. But as you know, the guidance for this school year is already done, nothing can be changed on that. It will be at least a year before we have any major changes to EMIS that will be really of help to you.

Courtney: I had a specific question that was from a parent that I talked to last week. I think I might know the answer, but I just want to check for sure. She was asking about the options that are not PSEO. If it costs money, is there any type of reimbursement that's available for parents for the cost of that credit flex option?

Tom:

We're developing some guidance on that right now that will be forthcoming to the field. There are some instances when the school would be responsible for covering those costs, such as if the credit is needed to meet a required graduation requirement, or an online course that's taken during the school day, or a recommended program that the school is urging students to take. Those costs should be borne by the school. But if the student and parent choose to go to a program that is beyond school hours, outside of the school week and incur costs, those costs should be directed back to the student and/or parent. In similar fashion, if they don't want Mr. Hubbell for chemistry, because my older son had Mr. Hubbell for chemistry and we want to do it another way. Fine, you can do it another way, but the cost is yours. Finally, when you deal with those situations, you need to make certain that if a student wants a program or a course of study that is not currently carried within the school's program of study, for instance, a child wants Mandarin Chinese and you offer French and Spanish, that the credit flex plan can be developed. But providing access to Mandarin Chinese online, that cost should be borne by the parent, rather than the school district. So we're coming out with guidance to hopefully clarify when the cost is paid by the school and when it is paid by the parent. There's nothing that's going to reimburse the parent, no.

Megan:

I'm calling because the timeline is what we're most confused about here. I don't know if other schools have set up this wonderful timeline about testing out. We just can't decide what a good time of year is to do test out so that we don't do all of our scheduling in January and February and then all of a sudden in March or April have all these kids test out and have to redo everything. We're not quite sure what other school districts are doing and just wanted some feedback about that. Thank you.

Mike:

Perhaps we could poll participants on it. Do they have something in place now? Are they testing out and when will it happen - before school starts or early in the year, midyear, end of year, or if they have a window? I think maybe those four options we might be able to get some information from. You need to think about, if you go ahead and assume that all of those students who say they want to test out when they schedule in February - What happens if they don't test out and now you have to schedule them, or they come to you after you've scheduled them, and they want to test out? We don't feel that there's anything wrong with having a suggested window for testing out. A student who is interested in testing out should ask what's available, when would I have to do it? We think that's okay. But you may have a student whose request is early in the year. What about the student who by November, everyone including the teacher agrees that this child could probably test out of this class. So when is the next opportunity for that child to test out and get that credit and move on to the next level. Then the other issue is, a student just tested out at the end of November, so what does he or she do now? Will the student almost be forced into something like an independent study or just a semester of the next class or something like that? Those things are all out there. I don't know that we have any guidance on it other than if you're going to be using some things like end-of-course exams as pieces of testing out, it makes sense that those are going to be in the spring and not in the fall, because you don't want to show what's going to be on end-of-course exams ahead of time. What about students who want to test out in geometry in the fall? Will they not have an opportunity till the end of the school year? Maybe they should have a window where they have to request the test out in the spring of the prior year to see if they can make it. If they make it that's fine, then move on to the next class. If they don't make it, they're scheduled into the class. That does still create some problems for you because you may have classes that have to be rearranged.

Jennifer: Okay. We do have a few questions that we'll still answer, but I'm going to ask Judy to wrap up our thinking and talk a little bit about some of the opportunities for counselors.

Judy: I keep hearing - Where's the "yes" in this. I haven't heard those exact words in this conversation, except I hear it in attitudes. I hear it in what we're doing as counselors, looking

for opportunities for kids, supporting them in their brainstorming. This gives us such a great opportunity for focusing on the academic counseling and on the academic advising that we have learned and that is so much a part of our job description. It keeps us moving and it keeps us as an integral part of faculty. It keeps us an integral part of lots of conversations and, if we're not a part of them, it gives us an opportunity to initiate them. It gives us an opportunity to show what we do know and the backgrounds that we do have in working for kids. Supporting a culture of high expectations is not just our piece of the pie. But very often because we are one of the few people in a school that have a global view of the school, we can really look at a culture of high expectations and support those high expectations in conversations that we have; in opportunities that we have in faculty meetings. A group of students that I had last year had scholarship parties and they would fill out all their scholarship applications together. They were overnight parties. Being a part of that, I enjoyed being part of the refreshment or part of the entertainment for them. But that kind of culture of expectation doesn't just take place in one area or when somebody is standing in front of a class as an educator or as a teacher. Credit Flexibility gives kids opportunities to be much more a part of the decision of what they want to do and to be a part of their learning. I know it goes back to the relevance and the rigor and the relationships, but that really truly is what we're a part of and what we need to be a part of. It also gives us greater collaboration with families, so it's not just a discipline call that a student will get at home or a parent will get at home. To be part of a meeting, a collaboration for here's what's going to be best for your student to be prepared for career and for life beyond graduation, because graduation isn't an end ticket necessarily, but it's literally a commencement into the rest of their lives and into what's going to make good citizens for Ohio, as well as our world. So therefore, to be part of that, and an integral part of that and not just an ancillary part of that is really, really a great option that's coming along parallel with the credit flexibility program.

Tom:

Someone is having trouble finding that OHSAA PowerPoint. It's on the ODE website, not the OHSAA website. It's at the bottom of our credit flexibility resource page. I met with Wesley Williams out of the Center of the Teaching Profession prior to meeting to clarify HQT as far as that requirement was concerned. If you're dealing with one of the core content areas, HQT is expected. If you're using an educational option, you need to utilize the policy that your school district has adopted for educational options and not just whitewash a credit flex plan to become an educational option to avoid the HQT process. So certainly work through that. HQT is not required for correspondence course, for educational travel, for online delivery if it's an educational option; but in other cases it is. It's not required at all for interactive distance learning. But for independent study, for home instruction, face-to-face classroom, in typical if the areas are core content, then HQT is expected. Otherwise, you can use a credentialed educator for the non-core areas.

Mike:

I would urge you, we don't want to bombard Wesley, but contact Wesley Williams about HQT. [CHUCKLE] There was a request for a clarification on where credit flex fits with ed option. Credit flexibility is really four things and one of them is <a href="traditional classroom work">traditional classroom work</a>. That's one of the options that's out there for earning credit. Then we have <a href="dual credit">dual credit</a> programs such as PSEO, seniors to sophomores, many of you have your own locally contracts or agreements with local universities and colleges about earning college credit not through PSEO. Maybe your staff is actually involved in teaching on campus and the kids are getting dual credits. You're required to offer dual credit, PSEO courses are the most common example of that. Then you have test out, that's the only brand new piece that hasn't been

allowed in the past. Then, of course, <u>educational options</u>. If you look at the actual plan that was adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2008, the plan only lists those kinds of things. Nothing is really new. Educational options are part of credit flex. So look at the operating standards and the revisions that were just approved by the State Board at the July meeting. Those mark ups are actually posted online - I think part of them was on one of the slides and has some of that markup language. If you look at educational options, the educational option rule language has been written to make it under the umbrella of credit flexibility. So the relationship is - educational option is part of credit flexibility and it's probably been around the longest, it's been around since 1983. Pieces were around before that, but they were first called educational options in 1983. PSEO and dual credit came after that and, of course, test out is the newest piece, which has really only been allowed for less than a year, and this year will be the first one statewide.

Judy:

I just keep going back to communication. The internal communications among staff, principal communication, and communication with the family, are going to be the answers to everything. If not an answer, it's certainly a part of the solution.

Tom:

I want to reiterate, the role of the counselor in the educational process is critical to the success of the school. You're the in-between person, you're the advocate for the student working with the teacher of record, you're the interventionist when dealing with the home, and you deal with the administration. They're coming at you from all directions and we applaud you for your fine efforts and wish you the very best, because without you the opportunities for young people would not be nearly as great as they are today.

Mike:

You have an opportunity to not only educate parents and students about all these things, you also have an opportunity to educate your colleagues in the content areas as well as the administrative arena about credit flex. What it's about, how it can benefit students, as well as benefit the school.

Tori:

All the web conference materials will be available on the ODE website including the video link, which you can share and post to your own site, if you'd like, or forward it along with the PowerPoint, a transcript and a short summary. We have archived web conferences from the spring, if you weren't able to join us last spring. There's a lot of good information in there regarding HQT, regarding school finance, the elements of a quality credit flex plan. We have events scheduled through November. So this is just the first of many events for ODE and other associations and partners, like Judy will be able to be on the phone to answer questions and have a discussion with you regarding some of the common challenges you might be having as credit flex implementation goes forward. I want to thank Tom and Mike and Judy again today. Thank you all for listening and have a great afternoon.