

Flexible Credit Policy for Lawrence County Schools

An effective educational program is one that provides opportunities for student learning, both within the classroom and beyond the traditional classroom and school day. In the fall of 2010, a flexible credit policy must be in place for every school district in Ohio. Credit flexibility will afford students opportunities to demonstrate proficiency to count toward course requirements for graduation. All students are eligible to be considered for credit flexibility.

The Lawrence County Flexible Credit Policy was designed by a committee representing each of Lawrence County's high schools and career center, as well as additional input from guidance counselors, principals and superintendents not represented on the initial writing team. The policy is truly the work of all districts reaching a consensus for outlining a fair and consistent process for offering all students flexible credit options. The Lawrence County policy was designed to meet the diverse needs of high school students, from the academically advanced students to those students who may be credit deficient.

The policy addresses each of the eleven required elements identified in the Ohio Department of Education policy design:

1. Identify the multiple methods of communication and frequency of each method the district will use to communicate the aspects of the Flexible Credit policy and plan to students and parents on an ongoing basis.
2. Allow for demonstrated proficiency options on an on-going basis.
3. Allow for graded options for demonstrated proficiency.
4. Allow demonstration of proficiency to count toward course requirements for graduation.
5. Determine credit equivalency for a Carnegie unit.
6. Prohibit capping or limiting the number of courses or credits earned through flexible credit.
7. Allow for both simultaneous credit and/or partial credit to be earned.
8. Not prohibit access to online education, postsecondary options or services from another district, as approved by the board.
9. Allow if so desired, for the acceptance of credit from other districts and educational providers.
10. Establish provisions for instances when students do not or cannot complete requirements.
11. Establish a review process and submit data to the Ohio Department of Education about the methods and frequency of communication with students and parents.

1. Identify the multiple methods of communication and frequency of each method the district will use to communicate the aspects of the Flexible Credit policy and plan to students and parents on an ongoing basis.

The seven districts, which includes the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that the following methods of communication will occur in each local district:

1. At least one student and parent informational meeting will be scheduled in the spring. Where available, announcements of the meeting may be posted on the local public school access television channel.
2. The Flexible Credit policy may be posted on each high school's website. This will remain indefinitely on the local websites.
3. Information about Flexible Credit will be included in the school handbook and/or course description booklet.
4. Where available, information about the Flexible Credit options will be included in the announcements on local public school access channels. This will remain indefinitely through the calendar year.
5. An informational brochure, developed by the Lawrence County Educational Service Center (ESC), will be distributed to all seven high schools. The brochure will be revised and updated during the year as needed.
6. An informational meeting will be digitally recorded and shared with schools. The CD can then be shared with parents and students as needed.

2. Allow for demonstrated proficiency options on an on-going basis.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that the following procedures may support demonstrated proficiency:

1. Online end of course assessments may be completed for academic core courses.
 - a. Credit option assessments will be available to students at the beginning (generally 2-3 weeks prior to the beginning of the course, such as early August) and at the end of each core course (generally 2-3 weeks after the course has ended, such as mid-June).
 - b. A consent form signed by both the high school representative and a parent will be provided to the student prior to the administration of an end of the course exam.
 - c. Once the consent form has been signed by both parties, it will be the student's responsibility to schedule an end of course exam through the Lawrence County ESC.
 - d. Credit option exams will be administered in one location for all Lawrence County students.
 - e. End of course exam fees:
 - i. If a student receives a free lunch, the school will pay the exam fee on a one time only basis.
 - ii. If a student does not qualify for a free lunch, it is the student's responsibility to pay the exam fee.
 - iii. If the school pays the exam fee for a student and the student does not receive the necessary score, the student will then be responsible for paying the fee for a second exam.
2. Students engaged in independent study will formally demonstrate ongoing learning at least twice during the academic school year. A consistent form of application will be used county-wide.
 - a. A subcommittee, based on the subject topic and identified by the local education agency (LEA), will determine if adequate learning has occurred to merit course credit.
 - b. The LEA will determine a due date for independent studies.
 - c. A student's independent study may include:
 - i. documentation of learning from an intense lab experience

- ii. a learning portfolio that meets learning criteria from a travel and study abroad experience
- iii. a learning portfolio from a career related internship
- iv. a performing arts experience
- v. a learning portfolio that meets criteria and demonstrates mastery learning from an independent learning project

3. Allow for graded options for demonstrated proficiency.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that the following graded options that demonstrate proficiency may include completion of work through:

- 1. distance learning opportunities
- 2. post-secondary coursework
- 3. career internships
- 4. virtual learning opportunities
- 5. travel or study opportunities that include immersion into a different language and culture

4. Allow demonstration of proficiency to count toward course requirements for graduation.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that the following demonstrations of proficiency may count toward graduation requirements:

- 1. Depending on the assessment instrument, a score of 85% or above on an end of course exam may exempt a student from taking the course. A consistent mechanism will be in place for administering end of course exams --
 - a. a single county-wide location will be selected where all students will take an end of course exam.
 - b. the same end of course exam will be administered to all students.
- 2. Students engaged in independent study will formally demonstrate proficiency at least twice during the academic school year. The independent study may include:
 - a. documentation of learning from an intense lab experience
 - b. a learning portfolio that meets learning criteria from a travel and study abroad experience
 - c. a learning portfolio from a career related internship
 - d. a performing arts experience
 - e. a learning portfolio that meets criteria and demonstrates mastery learning from an independent learning project
- 3. Students who have not earned credit for an academic core course in which they were enrolled may opt to take an end of the course exam and receive credit by earning a score of 65% or better.
 - a. The student may register to take the exam in mid-June or early August.
 - b. The exam will only be administered at the same scheduled times during the year.

5. Determine credit equivalency for a Carnegie unit.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that the following demonstrations of proficiency will equate to credit equivalent to a Carnegie unit:

- 1. A score of 85% or better on an end of course exam in core subjects will be equated into Carnegie units.
- 2. Students who are engaged in independent study options must provide evidence of learning at least twice during the academic school year. Some processes that will ensure consistency with the independent study option include:
 - a. Consistent county-wide dates for submitting applications to seek approval for an

independent study that would equate to a Carnegie unit.

- b. A preconference and the student-designed learning plan are required before approval will be granted so that a student may proceed with an independent study option.
- c. The preconference will help to determine how "nonseat hours" for the corresponding course will be equated into Carnegie units.
- d. Evidence of learning will be the student's responsibility. The student-designed learning plan must fully address the learning goals, the learning activities in which the student will be engaged, and a complete description of how the student will account for his/her learning progress.
- e. The LEA will determine how feedback will be provided with the student.

6. Prohibit capping or limiting the number of courses or credits earned through flexible credit.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that a student may not be limited to a set number of courses or credits earned through flexible credit. Although there is no limit or cap, certain factors and considerations will be in place, which include:

- 1. A recommendation from the department may allow a student to take more than one core course concurrently.
- 2. A student must fulfill course requirements or other educational option before progressing to the next level.

7. Allow for both simultaneous credit and/or partial credit to be earned.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that a student may earn simultaneous and/or partial credit through options outlined in Elements 2 and 4.

8. Not prohibit access to online education, postsecondary options or services from another district, as approved by the board.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, agree that students in Lawrence County will participate in available educational opportunities that support flexible credit, such as:

- 1. Online educational coursework
- 2. Interactive distance learning courses
- 3. Postsecondary options
- 4. Specialized courses offered in other locations
- 5. Local board policy will determine the financial responsibility of students participating in flexible credit options.

9. Allow if so desired, for the acceptance of credit from other districts and educational providers.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that a student may transfer credit earned through flexible credit options at other districts and/or educational providers.

10. Establish provisions for instances when students do not or cannot complete requirements.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that a student's transcript will:

- 1. not reflect the outcome of failure to demonstrate student learning;
- 2. not reflect the outcome of failure to achieve a passing score on an end of course exam;
- 3. reflect all attempts at earning credit through flexible credit options.

11. Establish a review process and submit data to the Ohio Department of Education about the methods and frequency of communication with students and parents.

The seven districts, including the career technology center, in Lawrence County agree that

1. A Flexible Credit advisory committee be established for the county. The advisory committee will include a minimum of one representative from each district, the career tech center and the ESC.
2. The Lawrence County Education Service Center will serve as the reporting agent to the ODE regarding methods and communication with students and parents.