

# New Emphasis on Learning



Ohio's credit flexibility plan shifts the focus from "seat time" to performance.

A Report to the  
State Board of Education

Prepared by the  
Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team

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# Our Commitment to Preparing Each and Every Student for Success

Introduction by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Deborah Delisle



In his 2009 State of the State Address, Governor Strickland said that “simply tinkering with centuries-old education practices will not prepare Ohio’s children for success in college, in the workplace, or in life.” The Governor’s education reform plan called for transformational change, but it’s based on a simple premise – that Ohio’s new education system should be designed around what works, and that it should harness research results and apply those findings to Ohio’s specific circumstances. And from this premise, the Governor has called for actions to:

1. Ensure that every student is able to benefit from 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments;
2. Expand students’ learning time and create opportunities to learn by engaging the community;
3. Improve the quality of teaching and instruction by revolutionizing teacher training, support and professional development;
4. Make the requirements for high school graduation more rigorous and relevant – and measure Ohio students’ performance against the world;
5. Heighten school district accountability and transparency; and
6. Create a school funding system that gives schools the resources needed to meet the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education system.

The Governor’s action agenda confronts the hard reality that Ohio is at a crossroads – a critical juncture in its efforts to accelerate the learning of each and every student and to ensure that all students are prepared to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy where skills in creative and innovative thinking are highly valued. Ohio is working to establish education policies and economic development strategies that drive fundamental changes in the way we live, work and nurture the talent of all Ohioans.

The future that our students will encounter demands that we continue to make significant changes in teaching and learning and school design. State legislators understood this when they enacted Senate Bill 311 and directed the State Board of Education to adopt a plan that enables students to “earn units of high school credit based on a demonstration of subject area competency, instead of or in combination with completing hours of classroom instruction.”

***This plan for “credit flexibility” aligns with Governor Strickland’s vision for education, especially its emphasis on expanded learning opportunities and real world learning environments reflective of today’s realities (e.g., service learning, senior projects, and multiple assessments).*** It acknowledges that Ohio’s competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s global economy requires that opportunities for innovation be enhanced, that our systems of learning become more flexible and more adaptive to the environments that surround them, and that our capacity and will to support student learning be expanded.

# Accelerating and Empowering Student Learning

## Senate Bill 311 and the Rationale for Carnegie Unit Flexibility



In 2006, the Ohio General Assembly established the Ohio Core Curriculum (Senate Bill 311), which raised expectations for what all Ohio students must know and be able to do to earn a high school diploma.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Senate Bill 311 directed the State Board of Education to develop a statewide plan for implementing methods for students to earn units of high school credit based on the demonstration of subject area competency. ***In addition to raising the expectations for graduation, lawmakers provided flexibility to students and educators to successfully meet these higher expectations.***

Any serious effort to improve learning opportunities for all students must be rooted in getting the conditions for learning right. It must embrace new teaching and learning strategies to keep pace with changing times. It must place greater emphasis on demonstrated competence and mastery. It must move away from industrial age production processes and structures. And it must give schools new incentives and flexibility to achieve new expectations.

With system-level changes, schools will be empowered – and encouraged – to take actions that challenge traditional assumptions, promote personalized learning, redefine institutions, adopt new ways of thinking, and create new learning opportunities and pathways to success.

The directive contained in SB 311 is clear: By March 31, 2009, the State Board of Education shall adopt a plan that enables “students to earn units of high school credit based on a demonstration of subject area competency, instead of or in combination with completing hours of classroom instruction.” And once that plan has been adopted, school districts, community schools and chartered nonpublic schools “shall comply” with the provisions of the plan, phasing them in during the 2009-10 school year.

### *Ohio’s Plan for Credit Flexibility*

- *Offers learning opportunities not found in the one-size-fits-all factory process model.*
- *Focuses on performance, not counting seats and hours.*
- *Acknowledges and addresses students’ differing learning styles, paces and interests.*
- *Offers students opportunities to demonstrate creativity, explore academic and career interests, and practice critical thinking.*

The rationale for this provision of the law is equally clear. With the plan’s implementation,

- ***Students will be able to show what they know and move on to higher-order content they are ready to learn and have not yet mastered; and***
- ***Students will be able to learn subject matter and earn course credit in ways not limited solely to “seat time” or the walls of a school building.***

<sup>1</sup> Ohio Core raised the graduation requirements to 4 units of mathematics (including Algebra II or equivalent) and 3 units of science (including a lab based science).

Credit flexibility is designed to **broaden the scope** of curricular options available to students, **increase the depth of study** available for a particular subject and **tailor the learning time or conditions needed** (to shorten or lengthen the time necessary to complete a high school diploma and/or postsecondary degree). In these ways, **students can customize** aspects of their learning around more of their interests and needs.

With this flexibility, students will be more engaged in and will have a greater sense of ownership of their learning. Dropout rates will be lower and learning will be accelerated. More students will cultivate the habits of mind that are essential for success in careers, postsecondary education and lifelong learning.

Credit flexibility acknowledges that while the system must engage learners in high-quality learning experiences (or facilitate and help certify learning), not all learning happens inside the classroom or in formal settings. Therefore, credit should be awarded based on competency regardless of the time spent in a course.

***In order to move beyond a one-size-fits-all system, students must have the flexibility, indeed the right, to exercise options that meet their individual learning needs (which are vital to their individual success and our collective success).*** In other words, students must have options to customize their learning, including flexible schedules. They must have a choice of modalities, including technology. They must have opportunities to pursue niche interest areas, combine subject areas and graduate early.

Ultimately, we want students to learn, to fulfill their potential, and to develop their skills and motivations as learners (e.g., learning how to learn). We want them to ask questions, solve problems and manage the continuous change that underscores life.

This is the basis for the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team’s efforts to allow greater credit flexibility by shifting Ohio’s focus from evaluating student learning based on an obsolete notion of “seat time” to directly assessing students’ academic performance, competence and mastery.

***The Design Team is not recommending the elimination of Carnegie units or “seat time” requirements altogether. Rather, this report and plan retains seat time as one option and expands the total number of options for earning credit by adding demonstration of subject area competency and structures that support it irrespective of any time requirements.***

### *Carnegie credit is tied to seat time.*

*“Under ORC §3313.603, 120 contact hours equals one high school credit. While useful for management purposes such as scheduling students and staff, the value of seat time as an accurate measure of student learning is limited. It’s a proxy at best. Students can earn an A or a D and still get credit. Have we really prepared a student who gets a D? There’s no question that students master content standards at different rates. To learn Algebra, I’ve seen them need as little as six weeks and as much as 20 weeks. The time doesn’t matter to me, but the mastery does.”*

*Design Team Member*

# Design Team's Findings

## The Case for Flexibility



In the course of their work, members of the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team examined the flexible time and credit earning practices of Ohio schools, and schools and districts in other states (as well as those states' policies). They looked at a variety of Ohio policies and practices, including those in the areas of educational options, dual enrollment and student acceleration.<sup>2</sup> From this research, team members concluded the following:

**1. *Carnegie structures as currently designed do not guarantee learning for each and every student.***

The Design Team reviewed graduation, dropout and remediation data. It found that Ohio's statewide aggregate graduation rate is 87 percent (although much lower for some students). Among our graduates who become first-year college students, remediation rates in mathematics and/or English run about 45 percent. Other students never make it to graduation day – about 20,000 students drop out of Ohio school every year.

In addition to losing the return on investment and earning potential for these non-graduates, we lose the sunk cost of nine or more years of schooling. Students who dropped out say they were bored and that school lacked relevance and meaning (State Board of Education's High School Task Force Report, 2004). Increasingly, students express this same feeling of disengagement whether or not they have dropped out, been identified as gifted, or are capable and need three or fewer credits to complete their diploma.

**2. *At least five provisions in the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) already allow some flexibility, but operate as exemptions to standard procedures and practices.***

The Design Team reviewed current and related Ohio provisions. It found that these provisions include accelerated learning, earning simultaneous academic and career technical credit, school waivers for innovative pilots, dual credit provisions and educational options (chart of provisions provided on page 8). Ohio has many precedents for meeting the individual learning needs of students, yet these are treated as exemptions to the regular education system. Not accounting for dual credit, only about five percent of all high school credit is earned through these provisions.

**3. *Most states have provisions permitting flexibility, but they are not widely used. Interviews revealed that system structures such as testing, scheduling, funding and accountability, act as barriers to greater flexibility and thus, to learning.***

The Design Team reviewed the policies of other states and confirmed that Ohio is not the only state grappling with this issue. Nearly every state allows flexibility to earn credit in the form of demonstrating competency and offering educational options with the intention of equitably meeting the individual learning needs of students. Despite permission, no states can

<sup>2</sup> Precedent also exists in General Education Examination (GED), Home-schooling, Credit Recovery, Alternative Education, Dropout Recovery, eSchools, Community Schools, Independent Study, Senior/Capstone Projects, and Adult Education.

cite data for numbers of credits earned in this way or provide more than a few examples of sites using these provisions.

Either the provisions are too new (no data are available) or examples exist and are relatively unknown (or studied) by the state. In informal interviews, educators reported that system structures such as funding, testing, accountability, scheduling, and attendance prevent them from serving more students in this way. There is a prevailing mind set about where, when and how learning occurs and increasingly a culture of fear about deviating and risking performance on test scores or attendance reporting.

Most states have developed or are in the process of developing high school redesign plans that recognize the need for policy that will result in real flexibility for meeting diverse student learning needs. States enacting this provision seek to increase graduation rates and effective preparation for a successful transition to postsecondary and careers.

**4. *Although there is evidence that schools, certain models and some states use flexibility to meet the needs of individual students and groups of students, Ohio does not record, measure or disseminate these efforts.***

The Design Team heard presentations on practices, whole school models and state models. It learned that there is evidence that credit flexibility in some form already occurs in Ohio and that the state is not always privy to this information. Though data for item #2 above is available, there is a need to identify and share successful models and practices.

At the same time, the Design Team learned that the system design and structures – especially regulations and definitions for what constitutes a school day, operating standards and conditions for learning, scheduling, funding, data collection, testing and accountability – collectively recreate outdated structures that focus on schooling (attendance, bell schedules, obedience) rather than create a focus on learning (student needs, interests and aspirations, relevance and relationships).

An example of this subtle mind set is that alternative education, credit recovery, dropout prevention/intervention, enrichment/acceleration, independent study, early college, and dual credit are all largely seen as outside the regular system. Yet, all these strategies work to address individual student needs and typically do not always adhere to seat time requirements to award credit. This over reliance on inside-school operations can be a barrier to more innovative notions of crediting proof of learning whether or not it occurred in school.

*What if ...we designed high school around students' needs?*

- *Flexible schedules were offered to accommodate working students and to acknowledge brain research that says that teenage brains are wired for late nights and late mornings?*
- *Students could test out or graduate early instead of sitting in class bored?*
- *Students could earn credit simultaneously in more than one content area through real world projects and problems that they select based on their interests?*
- *Students could earn credit for learning experiences that included postsecondary, internships, educational travel, on-line learning and community/social service?*
- *Learning experiences nurtured students' skills in understanding their own strengths, their local and global communities, and their goals and aspirations?*

## Ohio Provisions for Alternatives to the Carnegie Unit

Code	Description of the Provision	Usage
ORC 3313.603	<b>CTE articulated academic credit.</b> Core subjects delivered through integrated academic and career technical instruction can be used to meet graduation credit requirements.	No data on number of credits awarded for academic competency
OAC 3301-35-01 and 3301-35-06	<b>Educational options.</b> Alternative learning formats based on student need and outlined in an educational plan may be awarded credit for locally determined performance objectives in a manner determined by local policy.	EMIS data*: 5.76% of non-PSEO credit** awarded 07-08 SY (overestimates number served)
OAC 3301-35-06	<b>Innovative pilot program waiver.</b> Any district or school can request a waiver for an innovative pilot program to be exempted from specific laws or rules.	742 students currently served (included in Ed Options data above)
ORC 3313.603	<b>SB 311 Ohio Core exemption.</b> A student may graduate without meeting the core requirements by (a) execution of an alternative plan, or (b) by successfully completing a competency-based instructional program administered by a dropout prevention and recovery program having a waiver.	SB 311 provision – rules of use not yet determined for 09-10 SY
ORC 3313.613 & OAC 3301-44-07	Students must be awarded high school credit for college credit. Allowable methods of translating college coursework to high school credit include course equivalency determination, as well as Carnegie Unit measures.	Credit count included in Ed Options data
Other	Alt Ed Challenge Grant recipients whose waivers may have expired but continue to award credit for competency without regard to time. Districts operating under ORC 3302.05 Excellent and Effective District Self-Exemption who may award credit using a combination of some seat time and competency. Community schools permitted the same Ed Options flexibility. IEPs using competency bases for awarding credit. Alternative conditions for fulfilling high school equivalency credits specified by ORC 3313.61.4 and 3313.61.1 (1989), e.g. life experience and adult high school.	No data on number of credits awarded No data No data No data No data

\* Grades 9-12 only

\*\* 9.76 percent of credits awarded in 2007-08 used all options, including PSEO

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## The Credit Flexibility Design Team's Six Guiding Principles



Moving from a system of education that measures the length of time students have studied a subject (i.e., the traditional Carnegie Unit that uses “seat time” as a proxy measure of the knowledge and skills that learners acquire) to one that increasingly focuses on students earning units of high school credit based on performance (i.e., the demonstration of subject area competency) is not a simple task. It requires changes in the way schools are designed and instruction is delivered (e.g., learning maybe facilitated or certified). It demands that subject area competency be identified and defined, and that appropriate ways to assess competency be developed.

In developing the state of Ohio’s plan for making this transition a reality, the Design Team was guided by six principles, all of which are reflected in the plan’s core strategies and action steps.

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**PRINCIPLE 1:** The plan must address the unique needs of each student and therefore *all students* and the key elements of the plan should be designed to personalize learning in ways that make it more relevant to *students’* academic needs and non-academic barriers to learning, particularly mental and physical health disparities.

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**PRINCIPLE 2:** All credit must have *equitable value*, regardless of how it is earned, and student records and other documentation should not differentiate credit based on how it is earned.

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**PRINCIPLE 3:** The plan must be focused on *supporting and accelerating student learning*, and should reflect the need for students’ readiness for careers and college without remediation.

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**PRINCIPLE 4:** The plan’s implementation should be *driven by incentives* designed to change behaviors and improve results.

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**PRINCIPLE 5:** The plan must *value the expertise and experience of education professionals* by allowing them to put what they know into practice and it should value instruction provided by teachers and school leaders who are well-trained, adequately supported and provided with ongoing professional development.

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**PRINCIPLE 6:** The plan should build on the education system’s capacity to *support the academic achievement and personal development of all students* by (a) providing educators and students with more options and greater flexibility, and (b) improving the ability of educators and school leaders to meet growing performance expectations.

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# Ohio's Plan for Credit Flexibility

Creating Learning Options, Ensuring Quality



Based on their experience and the available research, the Design Team recommends that the State Board of Education's action plan include the following provisions:

- ***The Carnegie Unit will be retained, while students will have options for demonstrating subject area competency and for earning credit.*** Students may choose to earn credits through the completion of courses (i.e., seat time). Or, they may choose to “test out” of a course or pursue one or more “educational options” (e.g., distance learning, educational travel, independent study, internship, music, arts, after-school program, community service or other engagement project and sports). In any of these cases including a hybrid approach, students can demonstrate their subject area competency for credit. In all of these instances, learning will be guided by the Ohio Academic Content Standards.
- ***All students will have opportunities to earn credits through flexible methods.*** Some students will prefer traditional methods, especially when their learning styles are well suited to the current modes of delivery, but all students will be allowed to advocate for and take advantage of this opportunity (this includes students with disabilities, gifted students, under-credited and over-aged students at-risk of dropping out, incarcerated students, English as second language learners and any student eligible to earn high school credit).
- ***Credit flexibility will pertain only to high school credit.*** At this time, the provision applies only to students who are earning high school credit. It could include a middle grades student or younger who is eligible to earn high school credit. For this reason, students may benefit from early exposure and awareness about their options for learning including demonstration of subject area competency.
- ***There is no limit to the kinds of course work, nor to the number of credits, that can be earned.*** Students can earn credit in core (mathematics, science, English) and non-core subject areas (physical education, electives), and academic and career technical coursework under this provision. As well, there will be no limit on the number of credits towards graduation that can be earned in this way.
- ***Credit will be reported on student transcripts in the same way that seat time credit is recorded.*** Transcripts should not indicate that this credit was earned in any way different from other credit or in any way that could disadvantage a student in their application to postsecondary or work opportunities beyond high school.
- ***Credit will be a local decision.*** Teachers will make determinations about learning that influence the awarding of credit (as they do now). Yet, other mechanisms may be used to “inform” a credit determination. This could involve the use of a multi-disciplinary teaching team, a professional panel from the community (e.g., business, higher education or a community expert), or a state performance-based assessment in one of the core content or technical certification areas. As with Educational Options, it is expected that teachers and

students will pre-identify and agree on the learning outcomes that align with the state’s academic content standards, and on how these outcomes will be assessed.

- ***Local boards of education will establish policy to guide implementation at the local level.*** Boards of education will adopt policies in accordance with guidelines set out in the plan and establish additional provisions as may be necessary. Local boards will be prohibited from establishing policies that negate or otherwise prohibit access to the essential tenets and intent of this “plan for credit flexibility” (guidelines provided on page 13).
- ***To ensure statewide equity, state entities should invest in and utilize technology platforms and/or consider specialized provider agreements.*** Increasingly, electronic and open source platforms provide a means for building and sharing collective knowledge. This strategy can help move the state beyond the notion that education and quality is limited by geography or the talent or specialties available in any one school, district or community. For example, Florida’s Virtual School provides statewide capacity and already is used by some Ohio districts.<sup>3</sup> The state could sponsor its own online coursework or it could assist by rating on line providers or issuing guidance documents for potential consumers – whether individual and organizational.<sup>4</sup> An open source platform is another way the state can build capacity to collect and rate locally generated assessments and rubrics to provide consistency or quality assurance. This may be especially useful with new requirements related to senior projects and service learning.
- ***Information about practices, models and research will be collected and disseminated statewide.*** The state has an opportunity to build on the good work local education innovators are already doing. These examples and illustrations can be used to quickly ramp up the capacity and awareness of educators and community partners with regard to what can be done and how to do it. Moreover, the state can begin to collect and review data to better inform the review of this plan, and it’s relationships to high school redesign and system change. The state should consider following students after high school graduation and reporting their success rates.
- ***In recognition of the changing expectations around learning, support for and investment in ongoing professional development for educators remains important.*** The Design Team recognizes that certifying and facilitating learning, especially learning that occurs outside the classroom, may require some different skills for teachers. State entities should align teacher and administrator preparation systems and seek to leverage existing professional development providers and support networks (see list of capacities for more information). At the same time, the Design Team envisions teachers and schools utilizing capacities that exist externally and continuing to work from their strengths. For example, teachers are licensed to

<sup>3</sup> The state may also consider capacities provided through eTech Ohio, Connect Ohio, iTunes U, federally funded Communities of Practice and/or other Ohio providers of eLearning platforms.

<sup>4</sup> An additional role the state may consider is establishing agreements with specific business entities to allow any training and development provided and mastered through those entities to count as credit earned towards graduation. This strategy is currently being explored in the United Kingdom and may prove advantageous for Ohio.  
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22887042/from/ET/>

teach content areas and grade levels; they have a passion for students and their learning; they understand the expectation for learning outlined in the state’s academic and technical content standards. Experts in the community, in higher education and business and online provide an additional resource – an opportunity for specialized content, relevance and mentoring connections. Teachers should not be expected to know what these experts know and do. For this reason, teachers may choose to use “experts” in determining, assessing or demonstrating the acquisition of academic, technical and soft skills (e.g., interpersonal skills, professionalism, and responsibility).

- ***Policies should be aligned in ways that help make credit flexibility actionable statewide.*** The state should remove critical system barriers where it is able and develop system capacities to better utilize credit flexibility where needed. This includes recommendations such as changing the language of the Operating Standards and Educational Options so that it can be funded and more schools will be motivated to use it with students. Additionally, the Design Team recommends a strategy for harnessing the collective wisdom, energy and leadership of those known as “early adopters” (e.g., those willing try new technologies or strategies) and using their experience to inform areas identified as in need of change. The goal of early adoption is to serve more students in individualized ways to ensure their success (and positively impact performance ratings on school and district accountability). In doing so, the state seeks to learn how to support a system designed to graduate and prepare each and every student.

Opinions differ widely on the best strategy for early adoption.<sup>5</sup> However, several possibilities exist and they all address the underlying need for policy alignment. Specific examples include (1) developing networks and guidance to inform the design of high quality performance based assessments; (2) identifying coding options to remove issues around attendance reporting for students learning offsite, accelerating or testing out; (3) pursuing a proportional weighting system and flexibility within the multiple assessment strategy so that students are assessed in accordance with their aspirations, next steps and/or transition after graduation to postsecondary and work; (4) integrating credit flexibility into high school redesign efforts and/or efforts to better define, identify and share examples of quality senior projects and service learning; and (5) authorizing use of a range of high quality assessments to build local and state “testing out” capacity.

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<sup>5</sup> Acknowledging the evolving fiscal climate, state policy makers may want to re-visit the focus and purpose of early adoption to ensure alignment with priorities identified in the final approved State Budget (expected June 2009), Federal Stimulus Funding and/or strategic priorities related to Department of Development and Board of Regents.

## State Guidelines Checklist for Local Board Policy

Based on research from other states and feedback from Ohio stakeholders, the following elements should guide policy at the local level to make credit flexibility as accessible and effective as possible.

- Local boards ***must communicate*** the aspects of Credit Flexibility (the policy and programs) ***with students and parents on an on-going basis*** using multiple communication methods.
- Local board policies **must allow** demonstrated proficiency options **on an on-going basis**.
- Local board policies **shall allow graded options** for demonstrated proficiency and should count in GPA/class ranking (because pass/fail may disadvantage a student during transition to postsecondary).<sup>6</sup>
- Local board policies must allow demonstration of proficiency to ***count toward course requirements for graduation*** (may not be restricted to elective credit).
- Local board policies **must determine credit equivalency** for Carnegie Unit.
- Local board policies **shall not cap or limit the number of courses or credits earned** through Credit Flexibility.
- Local board policies **must allow simultaneous credit** (e.g., academic and career technical, more than one academic content/course area, secondary and postsecondary) **and partial credit** to be earned.
- Local board **policies must not prohibit access** to on-line education, postsecondary options or services from another district approved by the board.
- Local board policies **may accept credit** from other districts and educational providers including on-line providers **in accordance with the operating standards**.
- Local boards **must establish provisions** for instances when 1) students do not or cannot complete requirements, for instances when 2) students transfer between districts and for 3) early graduation.
- Local boards **must establish a review process and submit data to the state** about the methods and frequency of communication with students and families. Boards must collect performance data including the number of participating students, total credits earned and extent to which student participation reflects diversity of the student body.<sup>7</sup>
- Local boards **may want to consider the maintenance of a “library” of courses** that were previously accepted to assist students, parents and teachers with understanding available options (or those unique to local contexts and regional economic development interests).
- Local boards **may reference the OHSAA bylaws (441, 448) that guide student eligibility for athletics**. The policy should demonstrate alignment in upholding the standard of students making progress towards academic achievement and graduation.

<sup>6</sup> Examples from other states recommend benchmarks for local assessments of at least C+ or 80% proficiency/mastery of the academic and technical content standards. Local authorities will need to determine benchmarks. The Design Team did not seek to establish a higher standard for this option relative to other options at this time. Revision of content standards as outlined in the Governor’s proposed education plan is anticipated.

<sup>7</sup> The State Board intends to use this information to see if “all students are being served” and to make any needed adjustment in the plan and/or related policies. These indicators may become part of the regular data reporting in EMIS.

## Elements of the Plan



*Local boards of education must adopt a plan pursuant to state requirements no later than the start of the 2010-11 school year.*

### **State requirements for local boards include the following:**

- Any student is eligible to be considered for alternative ways for earning credit, but students must be capable of meeting the conditions necessary to earn the credits. The state's policy is intended for any student. Accordingly, local boards are prohibited from restrictive language such as eligible students "must have a B average" to participate.
- Local boards must review policy (suggested two-year time frame) and collect performance data including the number of participating students, total credits earned and extent to which student participation reflects diversity of the student body. This information should be publicly available and provided to the Ohio Department of Education for purposes of statewide evaluation.

### **Local policy must provide for the following:**

- Students may earn credits through any of the following or a combination thereof:
  - a) the completion of courses;
  - b) testing out or otherwise demonstrating mastery of the course content; or
  - c) pursuit of one or more "educational options" (e.g., distance learning, educational travel, independent study, an internship, music, arts, after school program, community service or engagement project and sports).
- Issuance of credit will be determined locally, by teachers or through the use of:
  - a) a multi-disciplinary team;
  - b) a professional panel from the community; or
  - c) a state performance-based assessment.
- Courses and educational options may be counted for full or partial credit and/or credit in more than one area, such as multiple academic areas or academic and career-technical credit, if partial mastery is demonstrated.
- Students who "test out" of coursework can use one or more mechanisms from the state's pre-approved list, including various commercial assessments or performance-based means. This includes locally developed assessments generated in accordance with quality guidelines and/or through peer reviewed processes.

- Schools and students who choose educational options style learning will pre-identify and agree on the learning outcomes.<sup>8</sup> Using a personalized learning plan is highly recommended.<sup>9</sup>
- An appeals process must be available should a student's proposed alternative learning credit be denied by the school or district.
- Credits earned through this alternative means will be reflected on students' transcript in the same way as traditional credits earned via seat time.
- Local boards of education must communicate this provision annually to parents and students. As part of the policy review process, local entities must submit data to the state about the methods and frequency of communication with students and families.

*The Ohio Department of Education, State Board of Education or a representative authority<sup>10</sup> will do the following:*

#### **Assessment and Quality Assurance**

- Identify assessments for immediate use and test out or demonstration purposes. These may include:
  - a) Advanced Placement (AP) exams,
  - b) ACT course assessments
  - c) Industry-specific certificates/credentials for career and technical courses
  - d) College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams
  - e) Nationally recognized foreign language performance assessments.
- Identify and implement a strategy (e.g., rubrics, models, standardized review process, and/or an open source platform) for developing capacity around high quality, locally developed assessments in a variety of content areas. For example, an "open source" platform where sites submit and reviewers access, rate and share would allow repository to be improved over time and would prevent the use from being restricted by Department capacity (staffing and budget allocations).
- Establish an appeals process for individuals who have local level complaints about having access to or implementation of the policy. The Department's appeal may be conducted by a third party and will evaluate the extent to which students were given fair and equitable treatment or process.

<sup>8</sup> Precedent for planning already exists in Education Options, and Career Technical Credit Transfer Policy (CT2).

<sup>9</sup> The state supported Ohio Career Information System includes an on-line planning tool called the Individual Academic and Career Plan. This tool (and others like it) support personalized learning for students and can provide additional capacity to schools and districts with over-burdened counseling resources.

<sup>10</sup> ODE may partner or collaborate with foundations, private entities, regional comprehensive centers or related third parties to support or execute the recommended steps in the plan.

### **Collaboration in Support of Policy Alignment**

- Collaborate with associations such as Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) to build capacity and accelerate access to policy and provisions with consistency and quality.<sup>11</sup>
- Collaborate with Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) to remove barriers to students participating in innovative and flexible learning formats.
- Authorize transcription of credit in alignment with the proposed electronic transcript system. Guidance or additional communication may be needed (in consultation with the Ohio Board of Regents) and should include recommendations for students transferring prior to program completion or graduation.
- Amend Ohio Revised Code (ORC) for Operating Standards pertaining to Educational Options so that these options qualify as “under the supervision of the school” and therefore are eligible for funding and to allow students to earn credit in a school day that may include non-contiguous hours of instruction (e.g., 8-12am and 3-5pm).
- Address state and national calculation formulae for graduation and accountability on the Local Report Card (LRC)/accountability system.
- Work with institutions of higher education partners around issues of teacher preparation and professional development needs. Credit flexibility places a greater emphasis on facilitation and certification of learning.

### **Capacity Building**

- Offer districts an early adopter strategy to pioneer these alternative options so that the findings can be applied to any needed revisions to the State Board’s plan. The Design Team recommended that this strategy address a diversity of school and district circumstances reflective of Ohio’s demographic and geographic characteristics.
- Through the early adoption strategy, address issues of Educational Management Information System (EMIS) data coding, calculation and allowances for reporting attendance and testing, as well as Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements and funding as allowable by federal requirement and within the capacity of the state to waive.
- If appropriate and warranted in the focus of early adoption, create a network for sharing practices and supporting professional development.
- Use a web-based mechanism to communicate and share research and to serve as a clearinghouse for examples of models and practices of what works, where and the stories about making it happen.
- Use partnership agreements with Educational Service Centers (ESCs) to build local capacity including identifying regional learning opportunities tied to regional economic development, brokering relationships, acquiring necessary safety checks and Memorandum’s of Understanding for partners, communicating/marketing opportunities, and providing professional development and supports.

<sup>11</sup> For assistance in developing local policy see the following: 1) guidelines listed on page 13; 2) the summary chart of states policy (separate PDF); and, 3) the report from stakeholder engagement meetings produced with support from Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center (separate PDF).

- Communicate and encourage additional regional entities (e.g., P-16 councils, Business Advisory Councils) also to identify regional learning opportunities, and assist with multi-district efforts. The state may engage Chambers of Commerce, Regional Economic Development Councils, Third Frontier and Edison Centers, and community networks including faith-based councils and character education associations around these partnerships and/or communications efforts.

### **Communications and Marketing**

- Provide guidance/communication for students eligible for early graduation including continuing education in work-based learning, higher education, on-line courses or certifications, and study abroad.
- Launch multi-faceted statewide communications strategy. This could include community dialogs in collaboration with entities such as KnowledgeWorks Foundation and Ohio Grantmakers Forum.

## Expected Timelines: Moving Forward



Following the State Board of Education's review and adoption of a credit flexibility report and plan, which is statutorily required by March 31, 2009, work will begin on implementing this innovative strategy for giving students alternative ways to demonstrate subject area competency and earn credit. While the State Board adopts the general framework of the report and plan, the implementation details will continue to be worked out and evolve in the context of the

Governor's Education Reform Plan and budget proposal. Components of the implementation plan depicted here will serve as a working document and can be expected to evolve over time. This is necessary given the pace of change in our environment. Thus, the chart below outlines a basic timeline for this work, as we know it to be at this time.

Activity	Comments	Collaborating Partners	Expected Date
<b>State identifies a list of approved assessments</b>	Students may test out using these assessments as early as the 2009-10 school year or as soon as approval can be made by the state. This work can continue on a rolling basis if more time is needed for review and/or new assessments become available.	<i>College Board, Career Technical Certifications, Association for Foreign Languages, CLEP, and ACT</i>	Review starts immediately after SBOE/State Budget approval
<b>Identify draft language for use in local board policies</b>	Draft language will be provided to help build capacity and consistency among districts. Some language is contained in this report.	<i>Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA)</i>	Already underway with focus at the May 2009 Institute and continuing thru December 2009
<b>Local boards of education adopt local policy</b>	Local policies will incorporate state recommended elements, including the necessary programs and services.	<i>Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA)</i>	In time for the start of 2010-2011 school year
<b>State makes available models, relevant research, and practice</b>	This information will be made available in an electronic format and will include literature reviews, national and state school models, and practices and policies generated for the design team.	<i>Great Lakes East/Learning Points, and the Alliance for Excellence in Education, National Governor's Association</i>	Resources will be phased in on a continuing basis for school years 2009, 2010 and 2011.
<b>State initiates a change in Ohio Revised Code for Educational Options</b>	This change would allow schools to receive funding for Educational Options defined as "supervised learning" and to amend definition of school day and subject to JCARR's review process.	<i>ODE offices of school improvement, school finance, JCARR and public testimony</i>	Pending JCARR approval if needed rule change available for the 2010-11 school year.

<b>State provides guidelines to assist local entities in developing “test out” options and performance based assessments</b>	Could take form of frameworks, rubrics or a self-sustaining “open source” platform or Web 2.0 environment to catalog and rate locally generated and peer/professional reviewed assessments. This work could inform senior capstone and service learning, or be part of the online capacity.	<i>Office of Gifted education, Great Lakes East or regional support center, possible foundation partner, Ed Tech centers or OH Super- computing Center</i>	These guidance documents or tools are targeted for phase in beginning 2010-11 school year.
<b>ODE and OHSAA collaborate to ensure policy congruence for student eligibility in athletics</b>	Identify policy to ensure that students who exercise Credit Flexibility can retain eligibility for sports. Standards include academic achievement and progress towards graduation.	<i>Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA)</i>	In place by the start of the 2010-11 school year.
<b>Pending decision of what form early adoption should take, ODE releases guidance document for strategy</b>	Early adoption could allow for specialized data coding for participants and/or address a cohort focused on high school redesign and/or a strategy to define and ramp up quality service learning and senior projects.	<i>Foundation, comprehensive center, ODE</i>	Announcement available no later than Dec 2009
<b>The State, ODE/SBOE review the implications of early adoption</b>	SBOE and related local boards to review early adoption and consider system barriers and incentives to inform policy.	<i>SBOE, ODE, SBOE, regional entities</i>	Review will be completed no later than 2011-12 school year.
<b>ODE/SBOE provides guidance to local entities on transcription credit</b>	This guidance will be designed to ensure that transcription of credit will be treated like any other credit.	<i>OBR, and a variety of selected K-12 entities as case studies, ODE, possibly PCL</i>	An electronic transcript will be operational no later than 2010-11 school year.
<b>The State, ODE/SBOE designs appeals process</b>	Statewide appeals and local appeals process must go into effect roughly at parallel time so that students have a process and safety net to pursue.	<i>OSBA, SBOE/ODE, mediation services or Attorney General consultants</i>	Available beginning 2010-11 school year.
<b>Phase in Communications strategy</b>	Communications planning is needed to engage multiple stakeholders about the changing needs of students and implications for the education system.	<i>Foundation partners, collaboration with associations and/or regional entities</i>	Phase-in will start in 2009 and continue through 2011.

SBOE State Board of Education  
 ODE Ohio Department of Education  
 OBR Ohio Board of Regents  
 PCL Partnership for Continued Learning

OSBA Ohio School Boards Association  
 JCARR Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review  
 OHSAA Ohio High School Athletic Association  
 ESC Educational Service Center

## Building Community Awareness and Support



Extensive and ongoing marketing and communications will be needed to ensure that stakeholders understand how flexible and performance-based routes to credit accumulation can expand and accelerate student learning. Often communications of new state provisions become a district responsibility and can be burdensome or result in unequal levels of awareness. During this time of transition and transformation, the state and collaborating entities should play a supportive role.

The Design Team sees a need for all Ohioans to understand the significance of changing times and mental models impacting our work, learning and life. It pointed to changes in technology, globalization and demographic factors.<sup>12</sup> It cited generational differences. While this is not the focus on their charge, the Team believes that video's like "Did You Know" (found on YouTube) are valuable in helping parents see why they might want their student to exercise options for Credit Flexibility as a means to experiential learning and developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

At the request of the Design Team, this communications and outreach process has already begun. Between December 2008 and February 2009, a series of 14 constituent group meetings were conducted across the state. These meetings gave key stakeholders an opportunity to learn more about the plan and its purposes, and provided potential early adopters with critical information to get them started on their planning initiatives.<sup>13</sup> These meetings also helped to generate a list of stakeholder benefits worth communicating (provided on page 20). In addition, a website with video illustrations, brochure, presentation materials and an online survey were available. State Board members thus gleaned valuable information about stakeholders' issues and concerns.

With respect to longer-term communication issues, the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team recommends that a comprehensive communications plan be designed and implemented to expand awareness, understanding and support for efforts to redefine the Carnegie Unit. Additional stakeholder organizations (both public and private) should be engaged in this effort. The state and its partners should alert students and educators to the benefits of redefinition of the Carnegie Unit as Flexible Credit including a focus on performance based assessments through (1) multiple communication channels, including, but not limited to: internet, mass media, professional associations, community-based organizations, the employment community, and direct communication; (2) model communications for use by schools and districts to inform students and parents about the available opportunities for flexibility,<sup>14</sup> and (3) an Internet site that makes immediately available the current research and successful school models and strategies (Ohio and national), as well as informational support for other best practices and personalized learning strategies.

<sup>12</sup> For a broader understanding of these anticipated changes or future trends see 2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning produced in part by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> Note that the report from stakeholder engagement meetings produced with support from Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center can be found as a separate PDF.

<sup>14</sup> Communication and outreach is a key issue in ensuring equity of this provision. See also parent concerns/recommendations expressed at stakeholder engagement meetings. In the case of Postsecondary Enrollment Options, some districts curtail communications about the program to limit participation (and thus, revenue loss to the school or district).

# Anticipated Benefits of Credit Flexibility by Stakeholder Group



## For students and families ...

- More choice and autonomy in deciding how, when and where students learn
- More options for individually suited pathways to post-secondary and career goals
- Acceleration and convenience including more options for courses in school schedule (especially for fitting in electives)
- Better preparation for the world beyond secondary education, including college

## For teachers and counselors ...

- Increased flexibility and autonomy to choose the best paths to support individual learning
- Increased opportunity for collaboration and interdisciplinary work
- Increased capacity and added convenience of being able to support learning alternatives through business, community and technology resources
- Shared accountability for student learning and performance

## For schools and districts ...

- Ability to broaden and deepen access to electives that engage students
- Ability to maximize community resources to meet student needs (share true costs and benefits of learning)
- Flexibility to determine how to best meet the needs of students and other community stakeholders as well as increase Local Report Card rating and thus, the community support for schools
- Ability to market the district's best assets and tailor strategies to the needs and resources of a particular school or district

## For business and community ...

- Ability to educate and build relationships with students and educators about industry opportunities, competencies, and trends
- Opportunities to attract and retain Ohio students as future employees and community partners
- More and better information about student interests, capacities, and preferences for current and future employment and community involvement especially growing young local talent
- Opportunity to directly add value to the education system and engage in meaningful partnership in support of education, workforce development and community outcomes

## For the State of Ohio ...

- Better return on taxpayer dollars invested in education (reduction of dropout numbers)
- More and better prepared workers and post-secondary students
- Increased well-being of communities from success of its members
- Increased efficiencies for all parties from increased involvement of community, business, and postsecondary partners in high school preparation

## About the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team



Assembled by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team was charged with developing an action plan for presentation to the State Board of Education. With diverse membership that included K-12 teachers and administrators, career-technical educators, the Partnership for Continued Learning, business leaders, representatives of Ohio's public colleges and universities, and workforce education and training professionals from the Ohio Department of Development and Ohio Board of Regents, the Design

Team reviewed research and other information provided by policy experts from Ohio and other states.

The Design Team's proposed action plan also benefited from early stakeholder meetings that were conducted at the Medina, Allen, Southern County and Ohio Valley Educational Service Centers, and at the October 2008 meeting of the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators. During December 2008 -February 2009, additional constituent outreach forums were conducted throughout the state. *A summary of the stakeholder engagement meetings conducted with support from the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center is available as a separate report.*

Members of the Design Team were:

Name	Title	Representation
David Burns	Executive Director Secondary Education and Workforce Development	Ohio Department of Education
Barbara Gellman-Danley	Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs and System Integration	Ohio Board of Regents
Deborah Gavlik	Executive Director	Partnership for Continued Learning
Lisa Patt-McDaniel	Director, Workforce Development	Ohio Department of Development
Bruce Busby	Vice President, Academic Services, Owens Community College	Two-year Community Colleges
Lillie P. Howard	Senior Vice President for Curriculum and Instruction, Wright State University	Four-year Public Universities
Bob Sommers	Superintendent, Butler Technology and Career Development Schools	Career-Technical Centers
Bill Tacon	Senior Director, Workforce & Education, BioOhio	Business Leaders
Denise Callihan	Superintendent, Lancaster City Schools	K-12 Superintendent
Mark Hartman	Principal, Plain Local	K-12 Principal
Melissa Cropper	President, Georgetown, Ohio Federation of Teachers	Ohio Federation of Teachers
Bill Leibensperger	Vice President, Ohio Education Association	Ohio Education Association

## APPENDIX A:

## Summary of Design Team's Conclusions

In the course of its work, the Design Team examined the credit earning practices of Ohio schools as well as schools and districts in other states. It explored relevant portions of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) and Ohio's administrative practices at the state and local levels. Here are some of the things the Design Team learned:

The Carnegie unit isn't a reliable measure of learning. It focuses on inputs (i.e., seat time) as opposed to the actual results of learning. Historically, Carnegie units were used to account for teachers' time and in determining pay and retirement.

National Education Commission on Time and Learning. (1994). *Prisoners of time*. U. S. Department of Education: Washington, DC.

Shedd, J. M. (2003). The history of the student credit hour. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 122, 5-12.

Schlosser, C., & Watkins, R. (2002). Moving past time as the criteria: The application of capabilities-based educational equivalency units in education. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 5(3). Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://www.westga.edu.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/%7Edistance/ojdl/fall53/watkins53.pdf>

The Carnegie unit is widely recognized as an organizing force in the design of our current education system. The Carnegie unit favors direct instruction, fixed course structures and uniform class periods. This pedagogy holds time as a constant. This works well for students whose learning styles are well suited to lecture formats and limited blocks of time, but does not meet the needs of all students.

D'Agostino, J. J. (1984). Concern for the future, ghosts from the past for American high schools: the Carnegie unit revisited. *American Secondary Education*, 13(3), 2-5.

Levin, B. (1993). Students and educational productivity. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 1(5). <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v1n5.html>

Maeroff, Gene I. (1994) The assault on the Carnegie unit. *NCA Quarterly*, 68, 408-411.

Research about generational characteristics indicates that today's "Gen Y" students are motivated by having flexibility, focusing on topics of personal interest, being mentored, meeting their own goals, and preparing for self employment. They are technologically savvy and expect to use technology to learn. The culture of pushing kids through classes with an assembly line mentality and pouring in knowledge (whether it sticks or not) isn't resonating with today's student. It's also not producing problem-solving, pro-active, self-managing, risk-taking skills or global competence needed in our communities and workplaces.

Center for Digital Education. (2007). Strategy paper: Teaching the millennials.

<http://www.centerdigitaled.com/story.php?id=104514>

Oblinger, D. G., & Oblinger, J. L., Editors. (2005). *Educating the net generation*. Boulder, CO: Educause. <http://www.educause.edu/educatingthenetgen/>

Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

The growing interest in performance-based learning approaches is reinforced by current research in the fields of learning styles, social-emotional learning, brain development, and student motivation (e.g., autonomy afforded in self-directed learning motivates students).

- Black, S. (2003). Engaging the disengaged. *American School Board Journal*, 190(12), 58-60, 71.
- Committee on Increasing High School Students' Engagement and Motivation to Learn. (2003). *Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' engagement and motivation to learn*. Board on Children, Youth, and Families Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council. Washington, D. C.: National Academies Press.
- Dana Consortium Report on Arts and Cognition. (2008). *Learning, arts, and the brain*. [http://www.dana.org/uploadedFiles/News\\_and\\_Publications/Special\\_Publications/Learning,%20Arts%20and%20the%20Brain\\_ArtsAndCognition\\_Compl.pdf](http://www.dana.org/uploadedFiles/News_and_Publications/Special_Publications/Learning,%20Arts%20and%20the%20Brain_ArtsAndCognition_Compl.pdf)
- Smilkstein, R. (2003). *We're born to learn: Using the brain's natural learning process to create today's curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

To the extent that Ohio is moving to end of course assessments in core subject areas, and these assessments are largely paper and pencil tests, pressures are placed on students to learn content in seat time/direct instruction methods that fit with assessment methods. This may not be appropriate or suitable for all students. Demonstration based assessments which allow students to apply, show, produce, build and exhibit skills and knowledge in ways commensurate with experiential learning is an important flexibility to offer. Equity can be addressed through a range of high quality learning opportunities and assessment strategies that meet individual needs.

- Darling-Hammond, L., Rustique-Forrester, E., & Pecheone, R. L. (2005). In Andree A. (Ed.), *Multiple measures approaches to high school graduation*. Stanford, CA: The School Redesign Network at Stanford University.
- Davidson, J. (2008). Exhibiting authentic achievement. *Principal Leadership*, 9(1), 36-41.
- Gronlund, N. E., & Waugh, C. K. (2009). *Assessment of student achievement*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Marzano, R. J., & Kendall, J. S. (2008). *Designing & assessing educational objectives: Applying the new taxonomy*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Effectively used, technology can be leveraged to build system capacity to individualize instruction and accelerate learning. Technology can provide additional capacity to schools and districts. High school coursework provided on line is predicted to grow significantly over the next decade.

- Christensen, C. M.; Horn, M. B.; & Johnson, C. W. (2008). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Metiri Group. (2009). National Trends Report: Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) Round 6, Fiscal Year 2007. The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA). Washington, DC. Available online at [www.setda.org](http://www.setda.org).

Language "permitting" flexibility is not enough to bring strategies that individualize learning to scale to serve all students well. Most states have adopted such language around flexible time and demonstration of mastery, but permission alone has not produced significant results. In order to bring about the desired results, these policy provisions need the support of other kinds of incentives and infrastructure to make them an attractive/viable option or part of an actionable agenda.

State chart reference (see the Credit Flexibility webpage at [education.ohio.gov](http://education.ohio.gov))

At least five provisions in Ohio law allow for flexibility. Yet, educators – many of whom report that they are comfortable with multi-disciplinary, inquiry-based and hands-on approaches to learning - indicate that they are unable to use them due to a variety of system constraints such as rigid course structures, fixed-time school days, the absence of transportation resources, attendance patterns, testing and funding practices. State policies and practices are needed that create the conditions for success and remove the barriers to innovation (especially in the areas of accountability, technology and funding).

Provisions table (see p. 8 of this document); Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools, (2006). S. 3301-35

Teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is difficult under the Carnegie model. Carnegie structures shape methods of instruction and limit time spent on learning (e.g., six-seven, 40 minute periods allowing little or no planning time to teachers). Time limitations make it especially challenging to provide teaching and learning experiences that include interdisciplinary and project-based study, exposure to right-brained activity, and use of integrated technologies for development of higher-order reasoning and reflective thinking.

O'Toole, J., & Lawler, E. E. (2006). *The new American workplace*. New York: Palgrave MacMillian.  
National Center on Education and the Economy. (2007). *Tough choices or tough times: The report of the new Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.  
Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. Great Britain: Capstone Publishing Ltd.

The role of relationships is deemphasized in the Carnegie, mass-schooling model. We know that relationship building plays a critical role in teachers' ability to reach and motivate students. Students cite the lack of caring and trusting relationships as a primary reason why they drop out. Again due to time constraints, coaching, mentoring, and collaboration for students and teachers are important elements often squeezed out under a Carnegie structure.

Glazek, S. D., & Sarason, S. B. (2007). *Productive learning: Science, art, and Einstein's relativity in educational reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.  
Mitra, D. L. (2008). Amplifying Student Voice - School improvement efforts get off the ground when students are invited to participate. *Educational Leadership*, 66 (3), 20.  
Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Because Carnegie structures are so recognizable (acting as a kind of currency) the plan should be grounded in a broadened definition of allowable credit. This means that a student can still earn credit as has always been the case through seat time, but that students can also access credit in ways outside of or in combination with seat time. Very simply, the plan should not remove students' and families' options – it should help create options for a “best fit” between student and learning.

*“If experience, research and common sense teach nothing else, they confirm the truism that people learn at different rates and in different ways with different subjects. But we have put the cart before the horse: our schools and the people involved with them – students, parents, teachers, administrators and staff – are captives of clock and calendar. The boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules for bells, buses and vacations instead of standards for students and learning. “*

*National Education  
Commission on Time and  
Learning, 1994*

## APPENDIX B:

## Policy Alignment

Credit Flexibility is not intended to be an “add-on” nor a stand alone provision. Below are listed excerpts of related policy or vision documents (recently released) with relevant information highlighted to provide the context in which this provision also should be considered. This section is meant to help the reader identify how these policies are related or align with one another.

**Excerpted from the Governor’s Education Reform Plan (January 2009)**

Revise the academic content standards

- Infuse 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including technology and media
- Demonstrate connections through interdisciplinary models
- Foster creativity and innovation
- Develop a life and career readiness course for middle school students

Reform assessment system to include multiple measures:

- Align assessments to new 21<sup>st</sup> century standards
- Replace OGT with ACT; use End of Course (EOC) exams (science, mathematics, English language arts and social studies); service learning project; senior capstone project

Provide student supports:

- Provide enhanced intervention services in schools with high dropout rates
- Create the Ohio Academic Olympics: statewide competitions organized by ODE to recognize talents in science, math, writing, debate, arts and technology

**Excerpted from the State Boards’ *Education and the Global Economy* (December 2008)**

This provision is aligned to the work of the State Board’s subcommittee on *Education in the Global Economy* (EdGE), specifically the (2008) “Top 10 List,” and resolution to adopt supporting strategies needed to bolster the quality and capacity of learning experiences necessary to prepare students for success. Two of these strategies “Create Capacity for Personalized Learning” and “Engage The Business Community” address the need to “provide students more opportunity for practical application of knowledge, skills and behaviors so that education has real-world relevance.”

The following is a Top 10 list of the most important skills, knowledge and behaviors students will need to provide Ohio with a competitive advantage in the new global economy. Credit Flexibility provides one strategy for developing these skills.

1. Critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and applied knowledge for practical results
2. Mastery of rigorous academic content, especially in literacy, mathematics, and information technologies

3. Innovative and creative thinking, including entrepreneurial skills
4. Communication skills, both oral and written
5. Team learning and work, relationship building, and interpersonal social skills
6. Alignment of education with the needs of economic development, including better communications and cooperation between educators and business people
7. Personal responsibility, including good work habits, work ethic, knowing how to be flexible and continue learning, and financial literacy
8. Global awareness, languages, and understanding other cultures (including history, economics and geography)
9. Communications and better interfaces between K-12 public education and postsecondary/ higher education to make high school graduates better prepared for the next stages of their education and lives
10. Teacher education, preparation, and professional development to support content mastery and skill development, including applied learning (or problem-based learning) across disciplines in a global context

### **Excepted from final report of the Public-Private Collaborative Commission (August 2008)**

The Public-Private Collaborative Commission called for four “game-changing” actions that blend the higher expectations of a standards-based education system with a set of comprehensive, coherent and cohesive learning supports.<sup>15</sup>

### **Excepted from recent report of the Adult Transition Plan (August 2008)**

Ohio’s plan for transitioning adult workforce education and Adult Basic and Literacy Education programs into the state’s system of higher education, which is presently being implemented, includes an innovative “Stackable Certificates” initiative that opens new venues for adult Ohioans to earn college credit, in part for work and life experiences.

### **2006 report from Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/RTM2006.pdf>

“Given the results that matter today for high school graduates, academic standards are too low and inadequate to reflect 21st century knowledge and skills. Many states and school districts allow students to earn a high school diploma with 8th- or 10th-grade knowledge and skills — or less — in core subjects. Higher standards are essential. Students should master 12th-grade knowledge and skills before they leave high school. Twenty-first century content, learning and

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<sup>15</sup> The Commission’s report entitled *Supporting Student Success: A New Learning Day in Ohio* called for an “anytime, anywhere, anyone culture of learning” and recommended actions designed to support the personalization, extension and acceleration of learning for all students. And importantly, the Commission applauded efforts to develop a statewide plan for implementing methods for students to earn units of high school credit based on the documentation of subject area competency.

thinking skills, ICT (information and communication technology) literacy and life skills must be incorporated into the curriculum as well. Accreditation policies should reflect high schools' performance in helping students achieve the results that matter. *In addition, the Carnegie unit of accreditation of course taking, which is outdated, must be revisited. The Carnegie unit measures seat time, not proficiency, so it does not reflect the results that matter.*"

**January 2009 Ohio Grantmakers' Forum report, *Beyond Tinkering***

<http://www.ohiograntmakers.org/FileDownload.cfm?file=OGF%5FREPOR%5FFINAL%5F1%2E20%2E09%2Epdf>

While we have chosen to focus on K-12 assessments, we are acutely aware of the importance of early learning. We support efforts to guarantee that all children in licensed out-of-home settings, regardless of special needs and hours of care, are in safe and healthy learning environments that promote their development and readiness for school. We acknowledge that the state's Early Learning Content Standards are considered to be among the best in the nation. We agree with the School Readiness Solutions Group's call (2006) for better program and professional preparation standards to ensure that all children are being nurtured by competent professionals. We believe that the assessments used in all early-learning settings should be developmentally appropriate and linked to the state's content standards.

- Credit would be awarded for proficiency using a new "credit system" that shifts Ohio's focus from evaluating student learning based on an obsolete notion of "seat time" (i.e., the traditional Carnegie Unit) to directly assessing students' academic performance, competence and mastery. Students would be able to "test out" of classes and earn credit.
- EOC exams should be used to measure value-added progress at the high school level. Attention should be paid to the high school value-added pilot developed by Battelle for Kids in partnership with 40 of Ohio's school districts.
- Where possible, Ohio should adopt existing EOC exams or work with other states in the development of EOC exams to limit costs.

## Acknowledgements

This report and plan would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time, energy and expertise made by many individuals and organizations. We, the Design Team would like to call a few out by name.

“What are other states’ doing?” is the question any state policymaker will ask when you engage in work like this. We are grateful to two experts for helping us answer that question from the perspective of their own state and for providing on-going guidance to us.

- Fred Bramante, Former New Hampshire State Board Member
- Joe Graba, EducationEvolving

The question that follows is, “are there any Ohio schools or educators already doing this?” There are several and two in particular came to share their story and answered all our questions.

- Aimee Kennedy, Metro High School
- David Taylor, Dayton Early College Academy

Next, like you, we want to know, “what does the research say? What was the intent of the legislative mandate? And, is there a policy precedent?”

- Cynthia Clingan, ODE, Middle and High School Transformation

Answering the questions about what’s already out there always uncovers lots of connections to current work and of course to implications moving forward. Below are people who are skilled at taking the conceptual and transferring it to their specialty content areas. They shaped the policy and continue shaping implementation.

- Kathy Shibley, Steve Gratz and Ike Kershaw, ODE, Career Technical Education
- Chris Downey and Kevin Duff, ODE, Performance Based Assessments
- Nancy Pistone, ODE, Arts Education
- Debbie Robinson, ODE, World Languages
- Mike Hubbel, ODE, Educational Options
- Jennifer Vargo, ODE, Parent Engagement

Even though our vision was developed with considerable input, we still truth tested it in stakeholder meetings. These meetings require a skillful facilitator and good listening skills to capture the feedback. In addition to the meeting notes, we also had on-line survey data to crunch, so we are grateful to the individuals below for helping us process both.

- Victoria Cirks, Frank DeRosa and Mark Mitchell, Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center
- Alyson DeAngelo and Erin Joyce, ODE, Policy Research and Analysis
- Sarah Luchs and Cynthia Clingan, ODE, Middle and High School Transformation
- Patti Grey and Pat Huston, ODE Communications

Leading a newly formed Design Team through a relatively short and intense process to generate a thoughtful, useful, and equitable report or plan is no easy task. So for helping us maintain focus on students, positively connect our ideas, integrate the research and our personal experience, and actually generate the end product by the deadline, special thanks to:

- David Burns, Stan Heffner, Sarah Luchs, Cynthia Clingan and Debbie Cox, ODE staff in Secondary Education and Workforce Development, Middle High School Transformation, Career Technical Education and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Eric Calvert, ODE, Gifted Education
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