

What Credit Flexibility Offers Gifted Students

Credit flexibility moves the focus from teacher instruction and “seat time” to student learning and demonstrated mastery. It is a huge step forward for *all* Ohio students doing high school work. However, there are some benefits particularly relevant to Ohio’s gifted learners.

Credit flexibility:

- Allows them to learn and earn credit at a faster pace
- Honors what students already know in a course, awarding partial credit for prior mastery
- Re-engages students who have underachieved due to a poor academic fit
- Ensures younger, subject-accelerated students doing high school work are awarded credit
- Can provide simultaneous credit for interdisciplinary studies and experiences
- Guarantees access to learning opportunities in different modalities and settings, such as online courses and college coursework
- Can alleviate scheduling conflicts, allowing students to earn some credits independently, out of school, or over the summer and fit more advanced courses into the school day
- Provides means for students to pursue novel knowledge and skills not addressed in regular school courses
- Adapts to student needs over time, allowing demonstration of proficiency on an on-going basis
- Ensures protection of GPA, class rank, and transferability of credit through identical transcription of credits and prohibition of disincentives
- Removes all limits on types (elective or graduation requirement) and number of credits earned through credit flex
- Assures fair implementation of the plan through families’ right of appeal to the Ohio Department of Education

Gifted advocates may wish to discuss with policymakers several provisions for gifted students in district credit flexibility policies:

- Acceleration policies and practices should align with credit flex requirements to award credit to subject accelerated students below grade 9 who are doing high school level coursework
- Credit flex options will need to be integrated into some students’ individual WEPs and WAPs
- Students now must be awarded credit for equivalent courses when they complete recognized and accredited programs for gifted students offered elsewhere (online or around the country). Students enrolled in programs like EPGY, CTD, CTY, and Duke TIP routinely master a full honors course-worth of material in a compressed timeframe—precisely in keeping with the essence of credit flexibility—and those students should be awarded credit, complete with weighted grades in those schools that weight grades.
- Since ODE specifically forbids that credit flex credits go on the transcript "in any way that could disadvantage a student in their application to postsecondary or work opportunities beyond high school," students doing advanced work through credit flex must have grades and/or class rank weighted consistent with any weighting the school does for traditional courses
- Various personnel may need to be tapped to develop criteria for mastery, especially for credit flex coursework beyond the school’s regular offerings