

PSEO Barrier Issues to be Resolved

While most recent PSEO reform efforts have mostly been attempts to restrict the program, there are areas that do require attention. These underlying issues need to be fully addressed to ensure equitable access to the program. So what are the underlying issues concerning PSEO? And, how can they best be resolved?

1. **Poor or Inaccurate PSEO Counseling:** Some districts and colleges do a very poor job counseling PSEO students. Some information provided is, frankly, contrary to the law. Some basic information about the benefits and risks of the program could very well decrease the number of courses taken that some districts consider inappropriate. Parents and students need to be aware that not all college courses will be accepted by four year universities, that a student's PSEO college record could affect their entrance to four year colleges, that some exclusive colleges will accept AP credit but not college level credit and vice versa, that taking courses at college may not specifically prepare students for the OGT. *ODE/OBR or the PCL should develop specific guidelines to better prepare PSEO students and parents to make better informed decisions about participation.*
2. **Overly Restrictive Credit Requirements:** ODE has set rules for the amount of PSEO participation -- roughly 1 college semester course or 2 college quarter courses is equivalent to 1 year of high school credit. Some districts in an effort to discourage participation in PSEO require 1 full year (2 semesters or 3 quarters) of college credit to receive a full year of high school credit. Some districts refuse to accept specific similar coursework taken through PSEO to count for high school subject credit. *ODE/OBR or the PCL should develop specific rules (articulation agreements?) that allow for fair acceptance of credit for PSEO coursework taken by a student. Procedures for complaints or waivers for both students and districts should be developed as well as there is currently no recourse for parents and students to dispute a district's decision to accept or reject credit.*
3. **Unequal entrance requirements for PSEO students in colleges:** There are some post secondary institutions that require substantially higher level test scores and GPA for PSEO students than for admitted freshman. For example, Wright State University requires that ninth graders wishing to participate in PSEO have a 3.75 GPA and a composite score of 26 on the ACT or 1190 on the SAT. The average incoming freshman to the main campus of Wright State has a mean GPA of 2.99 and a composite score of 20.9 on the ACT or 1005 on the SAT. This is blatant age discrimination. In addition, some universities do not accept PSEO students below junior class-standing, even if they are qualified. *Entrance requirements should be no more rigorous for PSEO students than for incoming freshmen. All state-funded post-secondary institutions should be required to follow PSEO laws.*
4. **Discrimination Against PSEO Students:** Some districts, in an effort to discourage PSEO have developed restrictive policies for students which make it difficult or impossible for these students to participate in extra-curricular functions such as sports or clubs. *District policies discriminating against PSEO should be prohibited.*
5. **Lack of ODE/OBR data gathering/oversight:** While ODE gathers financial data on PSEO and some coursework information, very little information that is helpful to policymakers is collected to assist oversight. *Many states have done extensive studies on the use of PSEO. Ohio should do likewise.* Otherwise, state policy will be continued to be crafted on this issue on the basis of anecdotal evidence. ODE/OBR need to begin gathering data to answer policymakers questions about this program:

- a. What types of students are take advantage of PSEO? What are the reasons students are attracted to this option. How well are they doing relative to similar students in their districts not involved in the programs?
 - b. How do PSEO students fare in college? Are they more easily admitted to more exclusive universities? Are they better prepared to make the transition from high school based on their PSEO experience?
 - c. What are the differences in PSEO entrance requirements from different colleges? Are there formal orientation sessions? Are some colleges abusing PSEO? If so, how?
 - d. What is the overall financial impact of PSEO? Is there a better way to fund the program?
 - e. How do other states monitor PSEO? Who oversees the program?
6. **“Seat-time” restrictions of Carnegie units make PSEO an attractive option:** Many students who should be able to accelerate through course work using curriculum compacting techniques are unable to do so because of a seat time requirement. These students are often attracted to PSEO even when their high school offers comparable coursework because PSEO allows them to accelerate the experience at a more appropriate pace. *ODE should determine a method for waiving the seat time requirement for credit in appropriate situations. ODE should also allow credit by examination for high school courses taken by students above and below the 9th grade. Only students who are taught high school courses by secondary licensed teachers are currently allowed to receive course credit and that is at the discretion of the district. For those students not taught by secondary licensed teachers, a credit by exam option should be developed by ODE. High school credit for high school work taken below the 9th grade should be at the option of the student and the parent, not the school district.*
7. **Weighted Grades:** Even while some students are taking much are higher level courses through PSEO than are offered at the high school, districts very often will not offer additional weights that are offered for Honors level or Advanced Placement courses. This highly discourages students, especially those who depend on scholarships, from taking more rigorous PSEO coursework. *A formula for determining whether PSEO courses are weighted needs to be part of any articulation agreement developed.*
8. **Incentives for Districts:** While it might be useful to develop a formula for more adequately addressing the funding issues for PSEO students, perhaps it is also useful to look at providing districts non-monetary incentives. The State Board of Education of Ohio recently included new items on the state report card to report AP and PSEO participation. However, there is no accountability incentive for districts to encourage students to elect AP or PSEO courses. *Districts should be rewarded on the annual district report card for students who elect AP and PSEO courses.*
9. **3.00 GPA Requirement and Payment for Failed Coursework are Barriers:** If it is desirable to encourage students whose families are not college-educated, *the current GPA 3.0 grade requirement and the requirement to pay for failed PSEO coursework needs to be removed.* This last requirement, in particular, is highly discouraging for students from poorer families.
10. **Disparate Funding Systems for Public and Non-public Students:** If Ohio is really going to fully reform PSEO, than policymakers will need to address the issue of PSEO participation for non-public students. Currently, the rules and funding mechanism is completely different for non-public, chartered and non-chartered (09 homeschool) students. Non-public students have access to PSEO only through a limited funding stream. When the funding stream is exhausted, students are turned away. This situation unfortunately pits different factions of non-public students against one another. For example, the Ohio Catholic Conference lobbied in the last biennial budget to eliminate

home schooled students from access the funding stream for PSEO. *The issue of non-public school funding for PSEO needs to be resolved so that all students have equitable access to PSEO.*

11. **District deadlines for PSEO Participation:** Currently, the law requires that parents inform districts by March 31st of the prior year that their children will access PSEO the next school year. Unfortunately, many students who are not currently enrolled in the district are told that they cannot enroll in the program even if they plan to enroll in the district for the following school year. Other students have been informed by school districts that they never received the student PSEO forms. *Students and families should have equal access to enroll in PSEO regardless of where the students are currently enrolled. Perhaps, PSEO enrollment should be controlled at the state level.*
12. **Remedial Coursework:** While it appears on the surface that students should not take remedial coursework through PSEO, it might be useful to revisit this issue. With a college remediation rate of 40% in math and reading, perhaps it might be useful to eliminate duplicated coursework that may be ineffective at the high school level. For some students who do not fit well in the high school environment, taking a remedial course through PSEO might make the difference between staying in school and dropping out.