

Credit Integrity Work Group Report

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Credit Integrity Work Group Report

The Work Group requested by Provincial Council at the November Provincial Council meeting (PC Minute Item #130) and established by the Provincial Executive on December 8, 2006 had as its mandate “to establish parameters that define “real” student success versus “artificial” student success ... with a final report to the April 2007 meeting of Provincial Council.” The Work Group met twice (January 10 and January 31, 2007) at Mobile Drive and focused on the issues related to Credit Integrity.

The following members were appointed to the Credit Integrity Work Group:

Jon Cowans, District 13
Terry Hamilton, District 6A
Kerry Houlahan, District 25
Ken Jeffers, District 12
Richard Long, District 29
Terry Murphy, District 19
Dave Russell, District 11
Tracey Selkirk, District 18

Desiree Francis, Executive Officer, Provincial Office
Jack Jones, Vice-President, Provincial Office
Marc Robillard, Executive Assistant, Provincial Office

The Work Group spent much of the first meeting discussing what was meant by “real” vs “artificial” student success and little consensus could be reached on this topic in order to establish defining parameters. Nevertheless it was clear that most of the anecdotes and examples provided in the discussion dealt with Student Success initiatives such as Credit Recovery and Student Success Teachers.

The following are the Guiding Principles of Teacher Professionalism that the Work Group founded its discussions on and then used to formulate its recommendations:

- All credit courses shall be taught by certified teachers with access to specialized professional support staff to improve student success;
- All marks, grades, and credits shall be true and accurate indicators of student achievement;
- The Subject Teacher shall have the right and responsibility to give a failing grade, including zero, to a student when warranted;
- The Subject Teacher shall be respected and supported by school administrators as the primary evaluator of student achievement; and
- The Subject Teacher shall be consulted when school administrators are considering a mark change for a student.



Since it is the responsibility of the government to establish educational policies the Work Group looked in documents from the Ministry of Education and Training such as the Ontario Secondary Schools Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements 1999 and memos from the Ministry of Education dealing with Student Success Teachers, Credit Recovery Guidelines, and the Implementation of Credit Recovery in order to define some of the key terms and concepts.

A credit is defined by the Ministry as “a means of recognition of the successful completion of a course for which a minimum of 110 hours has been scheduled.” A student is granted a credit “by the principal of a secondary school on behalf of the Minister.” A course is defined, in the same document, as “a set of learning activities that enable students to attain the expectations related to courses that are developed from the Ministry of Education and Training curriculum policy documents.” The June 28, 2006 memo from the former Deputy Minister of Education Ben Levin on Credit Recovery provides the following information for all Credit Recovery programs:

1. *All Credit Recovery programs must be consistent with the following Guiding Principles:*
 - *Credit Recovery is part of a whole school culture and has equal status with other forms of credit delivery.*
 - *Programs must be pedagogically sound and have real and educational value. The integrity of the recovered credit must be preserved by the student demonstrating achievement of the overall course expectations.*
 - *Students must have an opportunity to meet course expectations. Students must have an opportunity to demonstrate achieving course expectations in a variety of ways.*
 - *Within a Board's capacity to deliver Credit Recovery programs and adhering to the terms and conditions of collective agreements, Credit Recovery programs should be available to every student in publicly-funded schools and are delivered by members of the Ontario College of Teachers employed by the Board.*
 - *Eligibility to gain access to a Credit Recovery program shall be based on a variety of indicators and not solely on a mark designation.*
 - *The final mark should reflect the achievement of all course expectations. Depending on the student's Credit Recovery program, the mark may be based solely on performance in the Credit Recovery program or may include results from the initial course and/or measures of prior learning. Regardless of the method used to determine the final mark, the evaluation practices must be consistent with Ministry and Board policy.*
2. *All Credit Recovery programs must be based on any current Ministry of Education approved courses.*
3. *Local courses and resources that support viable Credit Recovery and are consistent with the Guiding Principles should continue to be used and developed.*



Based on the definitions for Credit and Course and the Guiding Principles for Credit Recovery Programs, it is apparent that they do not contradict each other and actually complement each other quite well. Unfortunately the implementation of Credit Recovery, as an example of other Student Success initiatives, has caused much frustration and confusion for our members.

In order to successfully implement new initiatives there is a need to meet, as a minimum, the following factors:

- Consult the stakeholders;
- Provide adequate funding for staff and resources;
- Establish clear policies and regulations; and
- Offer ongoing training to front line educational workers.

The current Liberal government did consult with the stakeholders to develop their Student Success initiatives and they did provide additional funding for Student Success Teachers in the last round of negotiations. Unfortunately, the government did not provide adequate funding to hire the needed support staff to help all students.

The guidelines, dealing with Credit Recovery and Student Success Teachers, were not issued until June 28, 2006 and June 30, 2006 respectively. Boards and individual schools had Credit Recovery Teachers and Student Success Teachers effective September 2005, a full year before any of the guidelines were released. The addition of more Student Success Teachers in September 2006 did not allow enough time for Boards and schools to establish Credit Recovery programs that would comply fully with the Guiding Principles released in June 2006. These professionals were not given specific job descriptions or adequate resources to work with students at risk. Consequently, they had to improvise strategies in order to help their students. Many excellent programs were established in many Boards across the province, but there are still many members who are struggling with Student Success initiatives.

Work Group Recommended Strategies and Activities

The recommendations from the Credit Integrity Work Group can be broadly categorized as parts of a three stage strategy:

Short Term Strategies:

- Helping our members immediately by providing practical resources and legal advice to deal with emerging issues related to Credit Integrity.

Medium Range Strategies:

- Informing our members and the general public on the issues, and potential consequences, relating to the lack of integrity of secondary school credits/diploma.
 - Providing information to the public and our members by such methods as School Council Chat, Staff Room Rap, Labour Council Chat, and additional articles for *Update* and *Forum*.
 - Preparing and conducting lobbying of OPC, OPSBA, and Trustees to clearly explain the
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position of OSSTF in regards to Credit Integrity.

Long Term Strategies:

- Addressing Credit Integrity workload issues through negotiations.
- Continuing to monitor proposed government legislation and working at various levels to ensure that the regulations put forward by the government do not contradict the policies of OSSTF or the OSSTF's Students' First Plan.

A. Legal Opinion on Changing Student Marks:

1. The most common question asked by our members about Credit Integrity is whether they must comply with an administrator's request for them to change the marks of a student. The answer is NO provided that the teacher has complied with all areas of their professional standards. Teachers are professionals and should be treated as such by administrators. According to Regulation 298 Section 20 (a) teachers "are responsible for effective instruction, training, and evaluation of the progress of pupils ... and [to] report to the principal on the progress of pupils on request;" and (i) "ensure that report cards are fully and properly completed and processed". If the Subject Teacher has followed Ministry, Board, and School Assessment and Evaluation policies and assigned a mark to a student that can be explained then there is little risk of disciplinary action from the administrator if the teacher refuses to change a mark. If disciplinary action is taken, immediately contact your local Federation representative and assistance will be provided.
2. Another common question dealing with the changing of marks is the right of the Principal to change a student's mark. According to the Education Act Section 265 (g) "It is the duty of a principal of a school, in addition to the principal's duties as a Teacher ... to promote such pupils as the principal considers proper and to issue to each such pupil a statement thereof." This section has been used by most principals to change a student's marks from a failing mark to a passing mark. Some principals have also changed marks from a passing mark to a higher mark. According to legal counsel there has not been any legal challenge to this practice.

Principals should respect the professionalism of Teachers and consult with the subject Teacher before they make any changes to student marks. This issue will be addressed in a future meeting with the Ontario Principals' Council.

B. Credit Integrity Negotiations Issues

3. The Ministry has issued sample templates for "Credit Recovery Learning Plans", "Credit Recovery Profile", and "Recommended Course Placement Form" in the December 13, 2006 Credit Recovery Implementation - Template and Process as a follow up to the Credit Recovery Guiding Principle #8 "The Teacher of the initial program (Subject Teacher) must provide the Credit Recovery Team with relevant information to be considered when placing the student that appeared in the June 28, 2006 Credit Recovery memo from Ben



Levin. Teachers are legally required to fill in these documents if they are requested by their Board or Principal. The Work Group recommends that the Collective Bargaining Committee prepare model contract language that would reduce the workload on Subject Teachers associated with the completion of “Recommended Course Placement Form”, Credit Recovery Profile”, “Credit Recovery Learning Plan” forms and any other mid-term or end of term forms.

4. The Work Group recommends that the Collective Bargaining Committee prepare model contract language that would establish and/or protect the working conditions of Credit Recovery Teachers and Student Success Teachers.
5. The Work Group recommends that the Collective Bargaining Committee prepare model contract language that ensures appropriate levels of support staff are assigned to all Student Success initiatives.
6. The relationship between the Credit Recovery Teacher and the Subject Teacher is described in the June 28, 2006 memo from Ben Levin that “Both the Subject Teacher and the Credit Recovery Teacher should be encouraged to consult with each other as needed to provide the maximum support for the student. It is understood that this is voluntary and will be in direct relation to the availability of time and resources.” The Work Group recommends that the Collective Bargaining Committee draft model contract language to codify the voluntary nature of the relationship between the Subject Teacher and the Credit Recovery Teacher.
7. The Work Group recommends that local staffing committees work on remediating any current workload issues affecting Student Success Teachers, Credit Recovery Teachers, and/or Subject Teachers for the next contract year.

C. Consultation with Educational Partners

8. The Work Group recommends that discussions be held with all of the other Teacher Affiliates (OECTA, ETFO, and AEFO) and OTF to determine the common issues related to Credit Integrity and Teachers’ Professionalism in order to develop a common lobbying strategy with the government and local trustees.
9. The Work Group recommends that discussions be held with the Ontario Principals’ Council to present our members’ concerns about the lack of adequate numbers of Support Staff for Student Success initiatives and the perceived lack of respect for Teachers’ Professionalism.

D. Communications with Members

10. The Work Group recommends that articles be prepared and published in OSSTF publications such as *Update*, *Monographs*, *Forum*, and *Staff Room Rap* to highlight the issues related to Credit Integrity. These may include but are not limited to the lack of support staff for Student Success initiatives, the attack on the professionalism of Teachers, and the real cost of allowing the social promotion of students.



E. Credit Integrity Conferences

11. The Work Group recommends that a Credit Integrity workshop/roundtable be prepared for the August 2007 Summer Leadership.

12. At the February 20, 2007 Provincial Executive Meeting the following motion was passed:

THAT the Provincial Executive approve a Credit Integrity Symposium to be held with OSSTF members and external expertise/stakeholders in attendance, with the understanding that the format for the Symposium would be similar to that used this year for the P3 Symposium. Cost \$40,000.00.

A meeting of the Credit Integrity Work Group is scheduled for May 7, 2007 to prepare for the Credit Integrity workshop/roundtable for Summer Leadership 2007 and for a future Credit Integrity Symposium.

Conclusion

Support for teacher professionalism, professional support staff and financial resources to ensure real success for students will continue to be a major challenge into the future.

OSSTF must work to educate all education stakeholders and the public regarding this important issue.

The current OSSTF Policy Statements relating to Credit Integrity are attached as information.



OSSTF Policy Statements Relating to Credit Integrity

Policy #	Policy
2.1.6	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that credit course medians and other statistical data should not be used to evaluate the performance of a teacher or to compare the performance of teachers, and that there should be no expectation, either explicit or implied, that class or course medians must fall within a specific range. (A.06)</u>
6.1.9	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that once a course of study has formally concluded, the course teacher's workload will not be increased by the requirements of any future program involving students from that course attempting to recover credits. (A.06)</u>
6.2.4.15	It is the policy of OSSTF that cooperative education students should not be used in any way which would result in fewer job opportunities for educational workers. (A.04)
6.2.5.6	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that teachers should not be assigned to 'student success initiative' duties which are already provided by or should be delivered by other OSSTF members or other unionized educational workers employed in the schools. (A.06)</u>
6.2.14.10	It is the policy of OSSTF that collective agreements should include provisions to protect teachers of multigrade and/or multi-level classes against unreasonable workload.
7.3.2	It is the policy of OSSTF that the Ministry of Education should ensure sufficient funding to allow for program viability in single secondary school communities.
7.3.3	It is the policy of OSSTF that the per pupil expenditure grants should be set at realistic levels corresponding to current actual program costs.
7.4.4	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that the Ministry of Education should ensure that there will be adequate sustained funding to support curriculum programs for public secondary school education. (A.06)</u>
8.1.1.4	Accountability - value for all
8.4.2.5	provisions for research and pilot projects into curriculum development in alternative delivery systems.
8.4.5	It is the policy of OSSTF that teachers should have the responsibility and the right to adapt and in special cases amend curriculum policy to the advantage of students.



Policy #	Policy
8.5.2	It is the policy of OSSTF that learning expectations in secondary education should be organized and delivered through subject disciplines and subject-based credits, such that an adequate range of subject options should be offered, in addition to the core curriculum, in all secondary schools of Ontario, and that, if necessary, special funding arrangements should be made to enable such a range to be offered.
8.5.3	It is the policy of OSSTF that school boards should offer and deliver through school board personnel all appropriate support services for students. (A.02)
8.5.4	It is the policy of OSSTF that the Ministry of Education should provide, along with curriculum policy, appropriate course profiles, adequate funding for texts and other learning resources in both official languages, and appropriate professional development well in advance of the date of implementation. (A.04)
8.5.8	It is the policy of OSSTF that the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition [PLAR] program for regular day school students other than mature students should be withdrawn. (A.04)
8.5.9	It is the policy of OSSTF that statistical data collected by the Ministry of Education from school boards should be made available to educational stakeholders in a timely fashion. (A.05)
8.5.11	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that courses or programs which are recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Education as counting towards the successful completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) should be taught by teachers who are members of the Ontario College of Teachers and employees of Ontario's publicly funded school boards.</u> (A.06)
8.6.4	It is the policy of OSSTF that student assessment instruments should be developed by the Ministry of Education and/or district school boards in collaboration with the teaching federations during all stages of planning, development, implementation and review.
8.6.5.9	employ a transparent and consistent passing standard, which is similar to that required for any secondary school credit, and which is established and released prior to the administration of the test (A.03)
8.6.6.1	the classroom teacher should be the primary assessor/evaluator of student progress



Policy #	Policy
8.6.9	It is the policy of OSSTF that the Ministry Identification Number of the Ontario secondary school that grants each credit should be shown on the Ontario Student Transcript. (A.05)
8.6.10	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that OSSTF opposes, in principle, the use of the Blended Mode Assessment Process imposed unilaterally by any school board.</u> (A.06)
8.6.11	<u>It is the policy of OSSTF that district school boards should accept zero as a mark when teachers, in their professional opinion, believe this is the appropriate mark.</u> (A.06)
8.7.6	It is the policy of OSSTF that there should be no arbitrary or unilateral removal of learning materials or units of study.
8.9.2.2	the need for work-study programs, co-operative education programs, linkage programs and apprenticeship programs, designed, co-ordinated, and evaluated by teachers and, where appropriate, in consultation with management and labour, to suit the vocational aims and expectations of students;
8.9.3	It is the policy of OSSTF that all students should be encouraged to take a well-rounded program composed of both compulsory and non-compulsory subjects.
8.9.12	It is the policy of OSSTF that a parent's expression of concern about any aspect of a student's program and the suggestion of alternative contents and methods should be a fundamental right of the parents of the student.
8.9.14	It is the policy of OSSTF that policies, programs, curriculum and learning resources should be in place to ensure that all students have an opportunity to obtain and Ontario Secondary School Diploma. (A.03)
8.9.15	It is the policy of OSSTF that there should be no implementation of alternative or substitute Ontario Secondary School Diplomas. (A.03)
8.10.1	It is the policy of OSSTF that the delivery of secondary school credit courses to adults should become a mandatory responsibility of district school boards.
8.10.3	It is the policy of OSSTF that the Ministry of Education in conjunction with teacher federations should develop and promote prior learning assessment programs to assist adult learners in achieving an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.



Policy #	Policy
8.10.4	It is the policy of OSSTF that adult and continuing education secondary school credits should be taught by qualified secondary school teachers through publicly funded school boards.
8.10.5	It is the policy of OSSTF that secondary school graduation diplomas and/or their equivalency in adult and continuing education should be granted by secondary school principals of publicly-funded school boards.
8.11.3	It is the policy of OSSTF that integration of an exceptional student into regular classes should be a flexible goal which means to the greatest degree possible; the degree of integration should change as the child's needs change.
8.12.1	It is the policy of OSSTF that for each secondary school credit offered as part of a co-operative education program, the sum of the actual hours of in-school instruction and off-school site placement should be at least 110 hours.
8.12.2.3	the evaluation of potential placements and the placement, supervision and evaluation of students should be the responsibility of the co-operative education teacher;
8.13.1	It is the policy of OSSTF that skills training should be developed within the context of the goals of education in Ontario.
8.16.1	It is the policy of OSSTF that all teachers who teach credit courses in Ontario should be required to hold an Ontario Teacher's Certificate or equivalent qualifications as allowed by the Ontario College of Teachers.
8.18.2.1	guarantee that OSSD credit courses or their equivalent offered under programs covered by the agreement be provided by qualified secondary school teachers employed by the district school board;
8.20.1	It is the policy of OSSTF that any electronic and distance education in Ontario should be delivered by certified, fully salaried teachers, using curriculum developed in Ontario, and with controlled class sizes no larger than in comparable courses in a regular secondary school.
8.20.3	It is the policy of OSSTF that any electronic or distance education program should be developed in the context of the Ontario curriculum and assessment policy. (A.01)
8.20.6	It is the policy of OSSTF that any distance education courses which offer Ontario secondary school credits be delivered by district school boards or provincial school authorities and be fully funded by the Ontario government. (A.01)



Policy #	Policy
8.20.7	It is the policy of OSSTF that electronic or distance education credit courses should only be offered to students for whom a comparable course is not available in the regular day school program. (A.01)
8.20.8	It is the policy of OSSTF that no student should be offered electronic or distance education as the only way to obtain a secondary school credit course. (A.01)
8.20.12	It is the policy of OSSTF that the Ministry of Education should develop clear indicators for evaluating the quality of secondary school credit courses offered online. (A.04)
11.9.4	It is the policy of OSSTF that a student's transcript should indicate when a secondary school credit has been awarded by a private school, including the name of the school. (A.04)
12.8.4	It is the policy of OSSTF that there should be the creation of specific community-based programs for secondary school credit, and the facilitation of such courses through timetable and administrative flexibility.