



September 28, 2006

Presentation to Provincial Council and SCOPs

Re: Student Success Commission – Dual and Equivalent Credits

Dual credit and equivalent learning: Or McCredits to get McJobs faster and cheaper

At the last meeting of the Student Success Commission (SSC) (September 21, 2006) the only topics for discussion on the agenda were Dual Credit/Dual Program, Equivalent Learning, High Skills Major and External credits. The Executive Lead of the SSC had invited several representatives to speak on these issues. In attendance for a portion or the full day to discuss dual credits were: Grant Clarke, Ministry of Education; Terry Murphy, Manager, HR Development, Landscape Ontario; MaryLynn West-Moynes, President of Mohawk College and a member of the SCWI Co-Management Team; Shamira Madhany, Director, Colleges Branch, TCU; Ginette Plourde, FLEPPB.

Ministry spin and hard sell

It was evident from the outset of the meeting that the various guest and representatives were completely in favour of government direction on these initiatives. They made a concerted effort to underscore the merits of dual credits and equivalent learning. We heard that these program choices will benefit all students because not all students can go to university. Fast tracking and introducing them to college early by offering them dual credits, therefore, will increase college registration and will reduce the dropout rate. The industry representative talked about the need to train students early on specific career paths in order to augment their employability once they graduate from high school. The idea is that students who are destined for the workforce can gain skills that could be taught through the Secondary High Skills Majors (SHSM) stream by teachers or industry instructors on letters of permission. There would also be a significant practical component to the course through co-ops or practicums.

Grant Clark from the Ministry told the Commission that, in his view, the Commission did not have the mandate to limit or “kill” Bill 52. The Ministry has “been mandated to make this work” by Cabinet and Dalton McGuinty in particular, and the Commission, while it can help by working “on standards,” it cannot reduce the number of credits that will be offered (higher limit of eight including two equivalent credits) nor limit the extent to which the program will be offered – to all students. What was also made clear is that the granting of secondary school credits is no longer the sole purview of secondary school teachers in their view.

Where does the idea of equivalent learning come from?

The School/College/Work initiative has been in place since 1997 with a mandate to assist in developing a seamless transition from secondary school to college. In 2005-2006, projects were developed to provide dual credits and dual programming for secondary students. The outline of the philosophy for the latest pilot projects



took root under the former Tory government and can be found in a document called *Building Pathways to Success, Grades 7-12 (2003)*.

Proposed government policy

1. Equivalent learning, as set out in current draft legislation, is learning which occurs outside the Ontario curriculum and is recognized by the Ministry for credits toward OSSD.
2. Ministry staff indicated that upward limit of a total number of **eight** dual credits (including two external of the 4H type) will likely not be reached in the short term. An initial target of four has been set with movement toward the upper limit in subsequent years.
3. The Ministry wants to expand the number of agencies that grant external credits. They are planning to set policy that would establish standards to approve various organizations to provide credits for equivalent learning. They recognize that by opening the door to external credits they will get applications from a number of institutions including private colleges, private universities, faith-based institutions and private industry and while not necessarily prohibiting these applications, they want to set the standards themselves to maintain control. Once the registry is established it would allow school administrators and the broader public to have access.
4. They are seeking to encourage and increase partnerships between co-terminus school boards and post-secondary institutions to ensure that all students have access to dual credits and SHSM within a reasonable distance from their homes.
5. They want to draft policy that equivalent learning increases options to all students and not just disengaged and underachieving ones.
6. They are planning to provide “**incentives**” to school boards through funding in order to promote expansion of dual credits and Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM).
7. The initial rollout would be November, 2006 and would include instructions to boards to offer Equivalent Learning (dual credits, credits for external credentials, sector developed and delivered courses and sector recognized certifications). They anticipate that the first year roll-out would be more or less voluntary. In 2008, however, participation by all boards would be required.
8. They state that all secondary school curricula will be delivered by certified secondary school teachers or **instructors employed on a letter of permission**. In this regard, they anticipate that other forms of Ministry approved equivalent learning which are recognized for credit toward the OSSD will be delivered by a qualified instructor.
9. In their plan, students will be awarded credit toward an OSSD for each successfully completed first year college course leading to a certificate or diploma and Level 1 in-school apprenticeship training courses. Credit value for pre-college and pre-apprenticeship courses, as well as credits for external credentials, will be assessed and a credit value determined based on a series of criteria that have not been nailed



down but they would include hours of instruction. They state, however, that hours of instruction as the criteria for equating post-secondary course credit value to secondary school credits could result in a college credit being worth one-half of a secondary credit and this would not be perceived in a positive light by post-secondary institutions as they would consider a full post-secondary credit equal in value to a secondary credit. They also anticipate that in the future, the Ministry may consider some types of equivalent learning, such as dual credits, for **compulsory credits** as well.

10. Students in a Specialist High Skills Major could potentially have college, university or apprenticeship dual credits as well as credits for external credentials including sector delivered courses and sector recognized certifications. The Ministry would establish a central registry and process for accepting Credits for External Credentials.
11. For francophones, the **Federation of Franco-Ontarian Students** would be recognized for 2007. In other words students would be giving credits to students.
12. In their report, the Analytical Review Workgroup recommends that “program pathway development should be continued, extended to school boards across the province and used in course selection and career planning beginning in **Grade 7.**” These types of recommendations are also found in the *Building Pathways to Success 7-12* published in 2003 but they actually commented on **ways students would be streamed** into these programs: EQAO scores (1 or below), low marks (50s or 60s), poor attendance, suspension rates, students who have accessed early intervention programs, remediation or tutoring.
13. The credit structure for Ontario secondary schools would allow “other learning experiences” that would qualify under the category of equivalent learning and would count toward the 30 credits required for the OSSD.
14. With respect to standards, they believe that university, college and apprenticeship dual credits are already required to meet provincial standards through TCU and therefore would **automatically qualify** to be high school credits or equivalent learning. Credits from other agencies or institutions would have to meet Ministry developed standards and guidelines with respect to course content, performance, assessment, reporting, safety, legal qualifications of leaders and or instructors etc.

Who is the target audience?

As stated in Ministry documents, the target audience includes all students but at-risk students in particular. The report on the *Analytical Review of Phase 9 - School/College/Work Initiatives - Pilot B - Dual credit Program 2005-2006* states in Chapter 7, “There has been a significant attrition rate at the secondary school level and also a learning gap. The fastest growing populations (**i.e. aboriginal, Francophone, immigrants**) in our society have the lowest secondary school graduation rates and lowest post secondary completion rates. The secondary school reforms were intended to create clear pathways to college and work but have had limited success.... Therefore new methods are needed...”



Educational concerns

Equivalent Learning

- Equivalent Learning is learning which occurs outside the Ontario curriculum and is recognized by the Ministry for credit towards the OSSD.
- A maximum of eight equivalent credits is being considered (27% of the 30 credits needed for an OSSD).
- These credits could be offered as dual credits, external credits or as part of a Specialist High Skills Major package.

Dual Credits

- college, university and/or apprenticeship credits earned by secondary students along with secondary credits
- could be team-taught by a college instructor and secondary school teacher
- could be credited toward an OSSD for each successfully completed year one college course leading to diploma, certificate or apprenticeship training course

External Credits

- currently two credits out of the 30 needed for an OSSD can be obtained through the Royal Conservatory of Music
- other credits could be offered by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) through 4H programs, by the Federation of Franco Ontarian Students (FESFO), and could be offered for WHMIS, First Aid/CPR, and industry work experience (e.g. landscaping)

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)

- Packages of credits with concentration on a sector such as arts and culture, construction or manufacturing and applied to earn a specialized designation within the OSSD

Dual credits or Specialist High Skills Major credits offered within the secondary school system or taught at external sites with the direct involvement of certified secondary school teachers do not raise serious concerns, nor do college/university/apprenticeship credits earned by mature students and retroactively applied to qualify for an OSSD.

Credits, however, obtained through instruction offered at external sites by uncertified instructors without the direct involvement of certified secondary school teachers do raise serious concerns regarding the quality of teaching, the quality of learning, and the cost to the students and their families, as described below:



	Dual Credits	External Credits
Quality of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College/University instructors will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not be OCT certified • not have the breadth of OSS curriculum knowledge to be able to make connections to other OSS courses, avoid duplicating course expectations in other OSS courses, or make assumptions regarding what prior knowledge students may/may not have • not have a same range of instructional, assessment and evaluation strategies required by OSS • not have the Special Education knowledge necessary to adapt/modify lessons for special needs students • not be subject to the Teacher Performance Appraisal process • not have access to OSRs • not be subject to the OCT Standards of Practice and the Ethical Standards • not have specialized training in teaching adolescents, and on such things as Sabrina's Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external credits will be delivered by a "qualified instructor" and not by the "certified secondary teachers" delivering credits in secondary schools • instructors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are not certified teachers • have no professional teacher training in essentials such as assessment and evaluation, working with special needs students, or boundary issues • are not subject to Teacher Performance Appraisal by their employers • are not subject to the requirement for criminal background checks • are not subject to scrutiny, discipline or censure by the Ontario College of Teachers • have no opportunity to receive the New Teacher Induction Program • have no legislated responsibility to communicate with parents



	Dual Credits	External Credits
Quality of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSS courses are 110 hours; dual credit courses could be 45-65 hours • dual credit courses taught externally will not have the same standards as OSS courses in terms of curriculum expectations and instructional/assessment/evaluation practices • students will not have the same access to professional support services (guidance, educational assistants, professional student services personnel) • there will be a scheduling impact on the rest of the student's program, if the dual-credit course is taught at an external site • if the course is not taught by an employee of the board, parents will have much reduced access to the instructor or to information regarding progress, attendance, etc. • health and safety conditions for students could be compromised at external sites without the supervision of a certified teacher, as seen in the high injury rate for student workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no monitoring by a certified teacher to ensure that external sites are suitable and safe locations for learning • no developed standards for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the screening of providers in the future • the review of course content offered by providers • course content consistency between providers • defining the length and rigour of course content • the monitoring of attendance of students • the replacement of absent instructors • health and safety conditions for students could be compromised at external sites without the supervision of a certified teacher, as seen in the high injury rate for student workers
Costs to the Student / Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there could be additional costs related to transportation to and from an external site • students incur significantly higher costs for course materials, books, resources within the college/university sectors • it is unclear who will bear the liability and costs for accidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are significant fees paid by students and their families for external credits currently taken through the Royal Conservatory of Music • expansion of external credits will involve added costs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fees for access to other providers • transportation to and from external locations • high costs for specialized supplies such as tools and materials • fees for support services currently offered by support staff in schools



Other Issues

- The high regard for the OSSD, based on the rigour and value of the curriculum and the quality of teachers, will be lost with the inclusion of external credits taught by uncertified instructors and not subject to recognized Ministry standards.
- Any reduction in district school board funding as a result of the transfer of funds to external providers will result in lost opportunities for students remaining in an underfunded system, especially in specialized courses in the arts and technology areas which will be offered as external credits.
- The mandatory inclusion of dual-credit courses could lead to the cancellation of other optional courses.
- It is not clear who will bear the responsibility to do the administrative work associated with these courses.
- Direct costs to the district school board for transportation, materials and supports will be significant and not supportable within the current funding model.
- As seen in the British Columbia model, most external credits will be offered in music, dance and fine arts with few offerings in areas that would serve the interests of those students who are at high risk of not achieving an OSSD.
- Profiling of students could result from Specialist High Skills Majors.
- Uncontrolled expansion in the number and nature of external providers could exacerbate all of the concerns outlined above.

Union issues

Unlike support staff bargaining units, teacher bargaining units have never been under the threat of their services being outsourced. The closed shop for teaching positions that currently exists in the *Education Act* would be overridden by Bill 52. The following are sample articles from OSSTF teacher collective agreements. The relationship of the teacher and their employer as spelled out in recognition clauses may not apply to the proposed external and dual credits.

Recognition articles in OSSTF TBU collective agreements

The board recognizes the OSSTF as the bargaining agent authorized to negotiate on behalf of its members employed to teach by the board and assigned as teachers, including temporary teachers, to one or more secondary schools or to perform duties in respect of such schools all or most of the time and occasional teachers who are on the board's list of occasional teachers and who may be assigned to a secondary school.



The board recognizes the OSSTF as the exclusive bargaining agent for all secondary school teachers, not including occasional teachers, employed by the board as teachers, as defined in the *Education Act*. For purposes of clarification, a teacher who is seconded to the Central Office shall be considered to be a "teacher" for purposes of this agreement.

The Board recognizes the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) as the bargaining agent authorized to negotiate on behalf of its members, employed by the board and assigned as teachers, to one or more secondary schools, or to perform duties in respect of such schools, other than occasional teachers.

From the *Education Act*:

277.1 (1) In this Part,

“Part X.1 teacher” means a teacher employed by a board to teach but does not include a supervisory officer, a principal, a vice-principal or an instructor in a teacher-training institution;

277.3 (1) Each district school board has the following bargaining units:

One bargaining unit composed of every Part X.1 teacher, other than occasional teachers, who is assigned to one or more secondary schools or to perform duties in respect of such schools all or most of the time.

(2)

2. For each of the secondary school teachers' units at an English-language public district school board, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation is the bargaining agent.

Funding Impact of Bill 52

The government has proposed that the implementation of Bill 52 will have a net increase in enrolment in the secondary system. They take the position that students who have not thrived in the secondary school environment may re-engage with the help of external and dual credits.

With up to eight credits that can be achieved from external sources and no restrictions on which students can use these credits towards their diploma, there will be an inevitable loss of enrolment to the secondary system. A key piece of the expected regulations attached to Bill 52 is an “incentive” based funding structure. This funding that follows the credit in the secondary system will be the start of voucher education in Ontario. Colleges and universities along with private and religious organizations will be free to access public education funding from these credit vouchers. These institutions have been lobbying aggressively for access to this funding. There is no expectation that the funding leaving the elementary and secondary system will be replaced with other core funding. The resulting funding loss to the public system could be staggering.

The Funding:

In 2006-2007, the base per-student funding averaged over the elementary and secondary panels is over \$8,400. The Foundation Grant and parts of the Pupil Accommodation Grant provide more per-student funding at the secondary level than at the elementary level due to the requirement for additional staff support and more specialized facilities. Therefore the per-student grant in the secondary panel would be closer to \$9000.



The 30 credit requirement for an OSSD over a four- year term (assuming no change in per-student funding over that period), means each secondary credit would be funded at \$1200.

The projected enrolment for 2006-2007 is 680,954 secondary students. Currently secondary students require 30 credits over their four year term to achieve a diploma. Assuming the funding will follow the credits (as reported in government documents) and the maximum of eight credits per-student are moved outside of the public system, over \$6.5 billion in funding would exit the district school boards. The \$1.63 billion yearly loss to the district school boards would have a dramatic effect on their budgeting process.

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