

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

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MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School
Authorities

FROM: George Zegarac
Deputy Minister

DATE: December 10, 2012

SUBJECT: Secondary school completion in four years
Changes to funding after 34 credit threshold

The purpose of this memo is to provide you with information regarding supports for students' completion of secondary school in four years, and the implementation of proposed changes to school board funding when a pupil is enrolled in courses that could earn him or her more than 34 eligible secondary school credits. This memo also outlines proposed changes to improve access to part-time education when students only need one or two more credits, and provides an update on the status of changes to career planning. A number of the initiatives described here are conditional upon regulatory changes which have not been made, related to enrolment, grants to school boards and part-time studies. This information is intended to support school board planning for 2013-14.

Over ten years ago, Ontario's secondary school system was redesigned to support student completion of the credits required for graduation in four years, which is the standard across North America. Yet a third of Ontario students in the 2006-07 Grade 9 cohort (about 49,000) returned for part or all of a fifth year, including about 20,500 students who had already graduated in four years. Of the students who returned for a fifth year, approximately 10,730 earned more than 34 credits by the end of the fifth year, including about 9,000 students who had already graduated in four years and then returned.

With appropriate planning and supports, the vast majority of Ontario students can finish secondary school and make the transition to their next step in four years. A well-planned four year secondary program is an effective use of both students' time and education resources.

34 Credit Funding Threshold

Starting in the 2013-14 school year, boards would receive funding at the continuing education rate for students enrolled in courses that could earn them more than 34 eligible secondary school credits. This funding change would take effect in September 2013. The intent is to encourage students and schools to plan courses appropriately and more effectively use education resources while still allowing students to seek additional or upgraded credits.

At no point would students be charged for courses above the 34 credit threshold. Subject to the *Education Act*, school boards could decide how to best accommodate students who need or want to take courses that would put them past the 34 credit threshold.

If a student successfully completes a credit course more than once (e.g. to upgrade marks) each successful completion would count toward the 34 credit total.

Exemptions

Following discussions with and input from our partners in education, and after careful consideration, we have developed exemptions from the 34 eligible credit threshold. All successfully completed credits which can be counted toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma would count toward the 34 eligible credit threshold, except for the exemptions below.

Student exemptions:

- Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs);
- Students who are enrolled in their first four consecutive years of secondary school and have earned more than 34 credits. If these students return for a fifth year, funding for any additional credits would be at the continuing education rate.

Credit course exemptions:

- Credit courses in English as a Second Language (ESL), English Literacy Development (ELD), Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF) and Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA);
- The above exemptions would apply specifically to these credit courses. The other credit courses a student completes would count toward the 34 credit threshold.

Education and Career/Life Planning Program

To further enable students' long-term planning and decision-making, the ministry is launching a new policy for Kindergarten through Grade 12 to support students' education and career/life planning through elementary and secondary school. This is a revision of *Choices into Action* called *Creating Pathways to Success*. The section for students in Grades 10, 11 and 12, including supporting resources, will be released this Fall. The full document will follow in Spring 2013.

Data for the Four Year Secondary School Strategy

Data related to students' completion of secondary school will be collected through the Taking Stock report submitted by Student Success Leaders. Boards will be asked to report on the number of Grade 10, 11 and 12 students who are on track to graduate in four years. This is in addition to data that will be collected through OnSIS to determine reduced funding beyond the 34 credit threshold.

Access to Part-time Studies

Regulatory changes are proposed that would require principals to inform students in their final year about the option of part-time studies, if students:

- need only one or two credits in order to graduate, or
- have already graduated but need one or two credits to meet postsecondary requirements.

The regulation would come into effect in the 2013-14 school year.

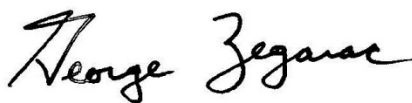
This change would respond to student input received through the 12/12+ Re-engagement Initiative. Some students who were only one or two credits away from graduation identified that being required to register for a full course load caused them to not return to school and not complete their diploma.

Students needing only one or two credits could be offered part-time studies and options such as summer school, night school and/or e-learning in addition to the option of enrolling full-time. With the focus on creating a transition plan beginning in Grade 10, fewer students should find themselves in this position.

Next Steps

Further details on the implementation of the 34 credit threshold will be released shortly in an upcoming financial memo to the school boards.

We look forward to working with you to support students' timely completion of secondary school.



George Zegarac
Deputy Minister

c: Regional Managers