



CDA for Credit
Working Group Meeting
April 12, 2022
Minutes

A meeting of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity CDA for Credit Working Group was called to order at 2:00 p.m. via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640.

Participating in the meeting were: Christi Chadwick, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Marcus Brown, Illinois Community College Board; Allison Decker, Illinois Community College Board; Melissa Batchelor, Lewis & Clark Community College; Melissa Johnson, Highland Community College; Johnna Darragh Ernst, Heartland Community College; Nichole Miller, Children's Home & Aid; Melissa Szymczak, Joliet Junior College; Marlena Constant, SDA 13, Community Child Care Connection ; Lindsay Meeker, Western Illinois University; Jason Dockter, Lincoln Land Community College; Beth White, Illinois State University; Marcy Mendenhall, SAL Family and Community Services; Jean Zaar, College of DuPage; Kate Connor, City Colleges of Chicago (Truman College); and Beth Smaka, Sauk Valley Community College.

ECACE Project Director Christi Chadwick opened the meeting by providing Open Meetings Act and public comment provisions. Chadwick asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes from the last meeting and/or if there was any discussion.

Zaar raised two questions for further discussion – whether credit can be offered for a course in which part of the competencies or objectives have been met and whether students can get credit at multiple institutions for the CDA. Brown reminded the group that “double dipping” could be addressed by documenting information on the transcript.

After discussion on clarifications, motion to approve the March 29 minutes was made by Jean Zaar and seconded by Melissa Batchelor. The group approved.

Chadwick flagged the timeline for the group’s work :

- On 4/19/22, Chadwick and Brown will report back to the Consortium on where the group stands, and then provide recommendations to the Consortium on 5/31/22.
- There are 3 remaining prior to the Consortium meeting. The Consortium approves at the June 14th meeting for implementation in January 2023.

Chadwick said as the group discusses outstanding questions, they need to think about what models are on the table, and about broader policy perspectives and not just individual institutions.

Chadwick began by reviewing the questions that were initially reviewed/discussed at the March 29 meeting (e.g., field experiences, transfer credit). Expired credit will align with academic policies.

Chadwick said the group seemed to land on the 6 initial credits, but they still need to talk through additional credit awarded via PLA. The group agreed to return to the topic.

Chadwick said the ‘timely’ piece is that a person doesn’t go through the entire degree, and that’s when they get their CDA, and doesn’t feel like it’s being offered early enough. We might have been getting stuck on the ICCB 15-hour issue. Zaar said she thought that was correct. She remembered Marcus talking about, perhaps, there are some things that can be done by ICCB to do something about that. But there was no finalization.

Connor asked whether it is timely to hold it in limbo and award when the 15 hours are earned (credit in escrow).

Marcus Brown said the group could recommend to amend the Administrative Rules if necessary. The group could make a recommendation saying, 'Students who are awarded credit for prior learning must also meet the institution's residency requirements to meet academic credentials.' Part of the 15 hours is that it meets the residency hours. We could hold them to residency requirements.

Brown said the 15 credit hours, or 25% in their certificate, are designed to be a buffer for the institutions to ensure students come in and have an expectation that they are meeting requirements for those particular credentials. What I think the proposal wants to do, or be clear about, is whether we lift the rule entirely and not just for early childhood students, but lift entirely, or can we make the requirements cleaner around awarding PLA credits? But helping institutions protect residency requirements is why it is written in that particular way.

Chadwick asked if there are differences around the way AP courses are considered.

Brown said that in AP classes, students can be awarded directly because there is some standardization awarded around how that credit gets earned around AP -those credits can be awarded right off. PLA has historically been varied from institution to institution. That's the other tension point separating PLA from portfolio credit. ICCB will consider lifting the 15-hour requirement, but wants to maintain the residency requirements. This is to make sure there is still that institutional responsibility for ICCB and HLC or any other accrediting body.

Melissa Szymczak suggested a credit in escrow model of credit, where once you finish X, then you're getting Y – the class you would have taken. On the other hand, if they take classes their first semester and fail out, they wouldn't be earning any credit. How do we deal with that if they fail and don't earn any credits?

Brown said it is perfectly ok that the Working Group recommends, via ICCB/IBHE, to review and alter policies for PLA. The group need not determine the exact solution but put forth the recommendations and pose it to the state agencies to address the issue. Chadwick said the group needs to look at this in terms of how to resolve to build by the January 2023 implementation date.

Connor stressed the importance of putting the onus on institutions in a way that they have a way of capturing competencies on CDA. She expressed concern about providing credit when significant learning outcomes are not met. Chadwick said the group is trying to get these guardrails in place at this point. One thing that wouldn't work is having students do a lot of other things to get the credit.

Brown said this is where we say it matters, 'what course at an institution.' If one institution says we don't like it in Health and Safety, has these 3 competencies in the CDA, but doesn't have these 2. They really want those 2, but they do have the space for 6 directed electives, and this is where they will use them. They are still meeting the spirit of the law. Credits are still applying even if not connected to specific course with particular outcomes.

Connor said her institution has 6 credit hours with 2 competencies in each and has created study guides and assessments people can repeatedly do, where they can get up to 6-9 credit hours. It doesn't cover the whole class, and institutions have a responsibility to the industry, the field- not just CDA-to cover all the outcomes we have covered.

Brown said financial aid depends on how the student is enrolled in the course. Programs can modularize courses. If one breaks apart the course, then you can only charge for those two credits in that module. It depends on how registration occurs.

Zaar said she didn't believe we should provide 6 credits for core courses. It was left open so the group would have time to develop the elective coursework and have those 6 credits be elective.

Brown said, yes, in looking at some models that circled around certain sets of courses, there is potential for suggestions, but we're not advocating it has to be those courses. Rather, just trying to learn and see if there is consistency anywhere in these other state models.

Chadwick said consistency and transparency questions are probably ones the group needs to address at the end once they go through all the models.

Chadwick then turned to Reprove vs. Validate. At one point, the group said they wouldn't require students to reprove their competencies but talked about validating competencies through certificates or conversations.

Szymczak said we're validating the documentation that they (students) are not just saying 'I have it,' but those competencies that we know they have met through the CDA. We are not asking them to reprove the CDA competencies. If we have more flexibility statewide, then institutions are going to come up with some creative ways for pathways for students that are intentional and appropriate.

Connor said if we have 5 outcomes in the course, and the CDA competencies hit these 2, the only thing CCC would be confirming with PLA would be knowledge of these other 3 – not the two outcomes that meet the CDA already.

The idea that there is some base level of credit or award that happens for the student that allows institutions to meet the letter of the law. We've been playing around with 6 hours for that. It sounds like Kate's example is the variability we want institutions to have.

Chadwick said it comes down to contingencies, guaranteed award, and variability. These are still the sticking points in the ways pathways are provided to students. Chadwick then said she thought the group seemed in overall agreement on reprove and validate.

Chadwick said the group could delve into the different types of CDA's next time. Maybe members could brainstorm around the different options in small groups?

Chadwick referred back to the remaining questions on transcripts; credit at 4-year Institutions/4-year representation on the Committee; training quality; and funding.

Connor said she's not worried about the PLA piece because that's not going to be the issue. This is a bigger Consortium challenge. That is to say that needing to meet the residency requirements of a home institution does not feel like a big ask – it feels pretty appropriate.

Chadwick said at one point there was conversation about – and the legislation refers to it – if you are enrolled at your home institution, but you access the coursework through another consortium, or are course sharing, but enrolled at your home institution, whether that meet the residency requirements.

Connor said credit hours are not assigned by the home institution. You can't take a Child Family Community class at Elgin and have it count at Truman – it doesn't count toward your GPA (at Truman).

Chadwick said she would flag this as a bigger Consortium issue.

Chadwick asked whether, specifically, in terms of language on the transcripts, it will vary in terms of going through as PLA or however AP courses go through? Brown said it depends on the school. Generally, a transcript will have notations like AP exam/credit for X. It's going to be critical how we report that on the transcript and flag that for other institutions that the student was awarded credit for the CDA, so we don't get into the unintentional re-awarding of credit.

Chadwick asked if Brown could come up with a recommendation on this topic for the model. Brown said he thinks it's as simple as saying credit was awarded for the CDA on the transcript 'as such.' The credit was awarded through this process. You don't generally get a grade. AP doesn't award you a grade, it awards you competency. Institutions need to indicate that. On the other hand, in a portfolio, an institution may still determine whether to award a grade, or just credit.

Chadwick turned to discussion on whether the proposed models meet the fundamental principles established by the group. These models include:

1. Courses aligned to CDA competencies and students get credit for those courses. (Jefferson State working toward that).
2. Credit for X courses that seem to align with current curriculum. In other states, we heard them say, 'We've looked at those competencies, we think these are the best fit, and we think students come in needing these outcomes as the best fit.' Then they can continue to help students in their abilities.
3. Modularized courses for credit for those competencies attained.
4. Offer credit for electives required for the AAS and BA in ECE. (Have to be required and not random).
5. Offer standard # of credits (some version of above) and then award additional credit for competencies within other courses. Students could also 'test out' and receive credit beyond the CDA.

Szymczak said she would just look at these models and go back to today's conversation in the view of, are any saying we are not giving credit in a timely manner.

Meeker said that maybe it was Massachusetts that basically said we know these courses most closely align. We also know that if they're missing competencies, we can identify those holes and cycle back through those competencies again knowing that not every single thing is met, but we put those standards back in.

Chadwick said she thought they said they have a foundational level of competence around these. Although they may not achieve a level of excellence, they believe they are competent. It's good enough for course completion. That's what we've seen in a lot of states. Generally, students have a foundation level of competence that would get them through the course.

Connor asked about the idea is of 'good enough?' Courses are good enough to award credits by, but what are the other courses that maybe aren't good enough but get you over the hump?

Szymczak asked if the group was only talking about the Preschool CDA, which she thinks they need to decide on. I think it will be easier if we look at Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA, separately. Otherwise, it will get messy in terms of coursework.

Meeker said they offered a separate track that was not credit-bearing, so it could be completed through a university partnership that was professional development. If they decided later to turn it in, there was a difference in the way it was received depending on institution. They had a PD version of CDA that could be earned at that college and also had a CDA On the Way that could be earned through credits.

Chadwick said Jefferson State modeled theirs, so the first 2 courses are CDA. So, they get portfolio, but they will take others who get training as long as it's an approved trainer. We couldn't do that for people who already had the CDA, but this group could recommend some standards around training going forward.

There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 p.m.