

January 22, 2014

Dear District Administrator:

As you may know, 2013 Wisconsin Act 20, the 2013-15 biennial budget act, eliminated Part-Time Open Enrollment and, in its place, established a new program for students entitled [Course Options](#). Course Options still provides a means for Wisconsin students to take courses offered by other Wisconsin school districts, but now also includes the opportunity for students to enroll in courses offered by charter schools, various institutions of higher education, and approved nonprofit organizations at no cost to the student.

Through Course Options, students across the state will have new opportunities to accelerate their learning and earn college credits while in high school. For example, students could take advantage of unique courses offered by a neighboring school district or earn dual credit for courses offered by a university or technical college. It will also create opportunities for high schools to build or expand their own concurrent enrollment or transcribed credit programs in partnership with local institutions of higher education at no cost to the student.

Specifically, the new Course Options law allows a pupil enrolled in a public school to take up to two courses at any time from an educational institution. Educational institutions are defined under the new law as:

- A public school in a nonresident school district;
- the University of Wisconsin System;
- a technical college;
- nonprofit institutions of higher education;
- a tribal college;
- a charter school; and
- a nonprofit organization that has been approved by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Under the law, a parent of a pupil who wishes to attend a course under Course Options may submit an application, on a form provided by DPI, to the educational institution the pupil wishes to attend no later than six weeks prior to the date on which the course is scheduled to commence. The educational institution must send a copy of the application to the pupil's resident school board and, no later than one week prior to the date on which the course is scheduled to commence, the educational institution must notify the applicant and the resident school board whether the application has been accepted or rejected.

Similar to the previous part-time open enrollment law, the statutes require resident school boards to reject a student's application to participate in Course Options if the course conflicts with a student's individualized education plan, and allow the school board to reject an application if:

District Administrator

Page 2

January 22, 2014

- The course does not satisfy a high school graduation requirement; or
- The course does not conform to or support a student's academic and career plan, if one exists.

Also similar to prior law, all Course Options courses must be made available to public school students **at no cost to the student**. The resident school board is required to pay the educational institution an amount equal to the cost of providing the course to the pupil, calculated in a manner determined by DPI. The educational institution may not charge to or receive from the pupil or the pupil's resident school board any additional payment for a pupil attending a course at the educational institution.

Due to the broad scope of this change and its intersection with other state laws, including Open Enrollment and Youth Options, DPI has been working to develop materials to support local implementation of the program, including initial guidelines and a student application form. In addition, DPI is developing an application and approval process for nonprofit educational providers as required by law. DPI plans to make these materials available on the DPI web site in February to allow students the opportunity to begin taking advantage of Course Options for the 2014-15 school year.

We look forward to working with you and other stakeholders to implement and refine this law in the coming months and the school years ahead. If you have additional questions regarding Course Options, contact Kevin Miller, dual enrollment education consultant, at Kevin.Miller@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 267-3161.

Sincerely,



Mike Thompson, PhD
Deputy State Superintendent

MT/sw