

To: UMAEA
From: Office of Curriculum and Instruction
Re: Flex Options for the 2019-2020 School Year
Date: April 2019

Flex Professional Learning: “Flex” is defined as providing choice for an educator’s own professional learning. The Upper Merion Area School District and the UMAEA provide three days (18 hours) of flex time for teachers. **Flex professional development must meet the PDE criteria as defined by ACT 48** (see attached document, ACT 48)

Teachers may choose from the following options or any combination of these options to obtain three (3) flex* days. Please note that a “flex” day is in place of a District in-service professional development day. In order to “flex out” of a work day, the professional learning may not be funded by the District.

The four types of professional learning acceptable for flex for the 2019-2020 school year are listed below:

UMASD Summer Academy Workshops

★ *Register for a workshop in MLP in the district catalog in MLP, “**2019 Summer Academy Workshops.**”*

Out of District workshops/courses/conferences: (Must be a PDE ACT 48 approved program and pre-approved by the C & I Department)

Some examples of programs:

- Intermediate Unit Offerings: See MLP
- Solution Tree Online PD Online Mini and CEU & Graduate level courses:
 - <https://www.solutiontree.com/online-pd/mini-courses.html>
 - <https://www.solutiontree.com/online-courses.html>
- Eduplanet 21:
 - <https://www.eduplanet21.com/marketplace/browse/>
- University Graduate Level Courses
- Professional Conferences

★ Fill out a **“Conference Request”** form in MLP. Submission of attendance/completion certificate required for final processing of credits.

Curriculum Development:

Curriculum development is defined as the an ongoing improvement process of curriculum study and writing. In the process to plan and develop curriculum, grade/content level teachers take specific steps. *Creating lesson units of study and planning specific lessons is not considered curriculum development and will not be approved for flex.*

Curriculum development is to be aligned with Pennsylvania standards and UMASD curriculum cycle. Curriculum cohorts are to be approved by the Curriculum & Instruction Department.

Some examples of possible curriculum activities:

- Principal facilitated initiatives such as PBIS building committee work.
- C & I team facilitated curriculum writing

★ Fill out a **“Curriculum Development PRPSL”** form in MLP.

In-service Flex Opportunity Day during school year:

- **October 9, 2019**
- **February 14, 2020**
- **April 13, 2020**

★ Register for the specific flex day in the district catalog in MLP.

****All flex work must be done outside of your school hours and the district does not reimburse your costs.***

Please make sure that you have pre-approval for all selections!

ALLOWABLE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES
Pennsylvania Department of Education
ACT 48 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PLAN GUIDELINES

Content Area:

All early childhood, elementary and secondary educators will be expected to participate in content-specific professional development within their area of certification or assigned work over the course of the Professional Education Plan. All teachers certified in Special Education are encouraged to obtain at least half of their required hours for Act 48 in one or more academic content areas.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Building knowledge of literacy, mathematics and science-specific content
- Building knowledge of specific content in other areas covered by the Pennsylvania academic standards, for teachers who are assigned to those areas
- Curriculum development aligned with Pennsylvania standards
- Data analysis training (all aspects of assessment and evaluation)

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Courses taken outside of an area of certification or work assignment, except for school administration
- Any courses/programs for personal growth or an alternative career
- Repeat of awareness-level introductory courses, e.g., Introduction to Computers
- Teacher/parent student conferences, grade book analysis, and preparation of report cards
- Repeating a course or program unless it has significantly changed its focus or approach

Teaching Practices:

All early childhood, elementary and secondary educators will be expected to participate in professional development activities that advance high-quality classroom instruction over the course of the Professional Education Plan.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Training in assessing students and analyzing student data to implement effective change in instruction
- Observing exemplary school and classroom practices and collaboratively designing instructional strategies based on analysis of the observed experience
- Training to align and embed literacy, mathematics and science standards and instructional strategies within other academic content areas
- Acquiring technology skills and designing strategies to integrate technology into the instructional setting

- Creating shared lessons that help students learn specific skills that assessments identify as weak or lacking
- Acquiring secondary strategies to increase student engagement and personalize learning
- Training in how to create safe and welcoming learning environments
- Improving understanding of the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of all learners.
- Developing knowledge and skills in how to involve families and other stakeholders in the educational process
- Training in dealing with non-academic issues that may affect learning (grief counseling, intervening in student-on-student harassment, etc.)
- School or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology, student support, and wellness)

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Instruction time, serving as a mentor or cooperating teacher
- Attending administrative faculty meetings with superintendent or principal
- Supervision of school field trips
- Tutoring
- Tours of school buildings
- Preparing and presenting college course lessons
- Extra curricular assignments (coaching or advising of sports, drama, debate, clubs or student government)

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners:

All teachers certified in early childhood, elementary or secondary education (including special education) should participate in continued education focused on enhancing their ability to teach diverse learners in inclusive settings – with a focus on students who are below proficient or below grade-level – i.e., those who, because of gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, learning styles, limited English language proficiency or disabilities, may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to help them learn. An inclusive setting is the placement of students with disabilities and English language learners in a regular classroom setting.

School Counselors:

All elementary, middle and secondary school counselors will be expected to participate in content-specific professional development applicable to their assigned level of work over the course of the Professional Education Plan. This professional development should include studies to build capacity to address the needs of diverse learners who are below proficient or below grade-level – i.e., those who, because of gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, learning styles, limited English language proficiency or disabilities, may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to help them learn.

Professional Development Options Applicable at All Levels (Pre-K – 12):

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for students
- Training that provides an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues and trends in a multicultural, diverse society
- Study of developmental disorders
- Training to disaggregate data in relation to student achievement
- Working with instructional teams to develop curriculum/lesson plans
- Training that builds capacity to collaborate with teams of teachers, school leadership and parents
- Design and implementation of a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program
- Training in the facilitation and evaluation of advisory programs
- Training that deals with special needs like homelessness, adolescent depression, etc.
- Career development program: planning, organization, implementation, administration and evaluation
- School or district-wide planning and team planning activities (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology, student support, and wellness) with other professional employees, where those professional employees are receiving Act 48 credit

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Undefined counselor workshops
- Sheltered workshop visitation
- Undefined district meeting
- Sorting PSSA reports
- Undefined hot topics seminar
- Supervision of visits to career sites/colleges
- Career Day monitoring
- Parents Anonymous Meeting
- Community center evening work
- Undefined independent studies abroad
- Lesson Development

Educational Specialists, excluding School Counselors:

Educational specialists, other than school counselors, must participate in professional development activities that enhance their ability to meet the demonstrated needs of the students and families they serve in order to increase the ability of students to succeed academically. Content knowledge for education specialists may include training in how to reduce health problems and prevent health risk behaviors that delay student learning.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Identifying the health and social services needs and assets of students, families, schools and communities by using various types of data

- Training to acquire health risk reduction and prevention strategies
- Study of school-based health programs at state and national levels
- Student Assistance Program training
- Learning how to implement school-wide programs and classroom management strategies designed to improve student conduct
- Studies related to cross-organizational professional development on social and health services issues
- Prevention training on contemporary health issues affecting school age children
- Training for emergency preparedness: CPR/AED training and certification updates
- Professional education programs that grant Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for purpose of licensure
- School- or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, technology and student support, wellness)

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Independent studies
- Non-ACT 48 Courses/Workshops/Conferences
- Union related bargaining behavior studies

FAQ

1. What educators must do to comply with Act 48?

Educators must earn six credits of collegiate study; or six credits of PDE-approved continuing professional education courses; or 180 hours of continuing professional education programs, activities or learning experiences; or any combination of the above every five years to maintain active certification status.

2. What type of collegiate study courses, continuing professional education courses, or noncredit programs and activities can be used to fulfill Act 48 requirements?

Act 48 requires that collegiate courses, continuing professional education courses (offered by intermediate units), and noncredit continuing professional education programs, activities or learning experiences be “related to an area of the professional educator’s assignment or certification.” (24 PS 12-1205.2(c)). PDE interprets this language as follows:

- Courses or noncredit activities in the content area of the educator’s certification.
- Courses or noncredit activities in instructional methods, pedagogy, strategies/tools for the classroom, classroom management, assessment or evaluation.
- Courses or noncredit activities that enable an educator to help students improve their performance in the area of reading/writing/speaking/listening, verbal skills, English or literacy, regardless of the educator’s certification.
- Courses or noncredit activities that enable an educator to help students improve their performance in the area of mathematics and mathematical reasoning, regardless of the educator’s certification.
- Courses or noncredit activities in the area of inclusive classrooms (i.e., those which:
 - Teach educators how to provide effective instruction to students with mild to severe disabilities within a classroom setting;
 - Address research-proven strategies and methods to help special needs learners gain meaningful access to elementary and/or secondary curriculum content; enable teachers to assess the success of instruction with special learners and improvement of outcomes for all students; or
 - Teach methods of motivation and classroom management in settings with special needs learners).
- Courses or noncredit activities in the area of instructional technology that improve the educator’s capacity to deliver instruction in a 21st century learning environment through the use of computers, computer software or internet technology.
- Courses or noncredit activities in the area student health, interpersonal skills in a school environment, safe and supportive schools, and resiliency.