Our Vision for High Quality Public Education for All Students

The OEA Commission on Student Success

A REPORT CREATED BY MEMBERS OF THE OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

May 2016

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OEA Commission on Student Success Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

OEA and its members have been clear in pointing out problems with the current "test-label-punish" culture and have lobbied against misguided and harmful policies on testing, teacher evaluation and school accountability. The recommendations contained in this report lay out a positive vision for a coordinated system of student assessment, educator quality, and school accountability designed to set students up for success. On behalf of the 123,000 OEA members who go to work every day in service to Ohio's students, the Commission on Student Success offers in this report a model for reinvigorating a love of learning in our classrooms and changing Ohio's public education system into one that upholds creativity over standardization.

The commission's recommendations include systemic changes to address three specific objectives:

- keeping students engaged in learning and measuring their progress;

- creating a fair, supportive teacher evaluation system that facilitates continuous professional development;

- establishing a school accountability system that is equitable and fair for students, educators, individual schools, and school districts regardless of their zip code.

(Please see Appendix A for background on The OEA Commission on Student Success.)

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Mindful of purpose.** In all policy decisions the focus needs to be on what will ensure that all students are engaged in learning in a way that inspires their natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn. Education must provide students experiences that cultivate them as lifelong learners. Policies that detract from this purpose, such as overtesting that causes students to resent school, must be changed.

2. **Building high quality systems.** Student learning does not happen in a vacuum, and schools are part of a larger system that is determined by decisions made at the state and local level. All education decisions must be driven by a focus on building and supporting high-quality systems. Such systems must ensure all students have highly qualified educators with effective principals; have a relevant and engaging curriculum; start school ready to learn because of early childhood and pre-kindergarten opportunities; position themselves for the world after they graduate; and are supported in transition to higher education and/or careers.

3. **Providing a well-rounded curriculum that meets the needs of the whole child.** Standards and curriculum must be wide-ranging in order to tap into every student's interests and talents. Policies that have the effect of narrowing the curriculum to a small number of tested subjects must be changed, and resources must be provided to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, have access to a wide range of subjects and experiences that set them up for success after graduation.

4. **Assessing students to support their growth.** High quality assessment is necessary to measure student progress and to provide immediate feedback to students, educators and parents to allow for timely adjustments in instruction that help students succeed. Standardized tests that fail to provide immediate feedback in support of student learning should be reduced or eliminated. Reduced time on state-mandated standardized testing is necessary to allow for more meaningful and authentic methods of student assessment that allow students to demonstrate their thinking and learning, including student-led exhibitions, portfolios and performance-based assessments.

5. **Investing in Community Learning Centers.** Public schools are centers of social interaction in every community. In order to meet student needs and ensure all students are successful in the classroom, schools must be provided with resources and connections to the larger community to meet their needs. Schools should provide community support services like nutrition, health and after school programs for students who need them. This is particularly important in high-poverty communities.

6. **Creating an evaluation system that supports growth for every educator.** Ohio's teacher evaluation system must be structured to provide educators with coaching, support and feedback to ensure they are providing effective instruction that leads to growth for every student. Standardized test scores should not be linked to teacher evaluation, but part of how teachers are evaluated should be based on what they learn from student performance and growth to drive their instruction. Teachers who struggle must be provided feedback, support and professional development necessary to meet expectations; those who fail to do so after sufficient time is provided for improvement should no longer be teaching.

7. **Rethinking school report cards.** A new accountability system must be designed that provides the public with a balanced picture of how well districts and schools are meeting the needs of all students. How well a school is performing should be determined by a variety of factors that measure student success. Specific examples could include success in advanced coursework, percentage of teachers who are teaching in their field, and access to full-day, every day kindergarten. Assigning school/system grades must end. There is insufficient attention to the harmful consequences of labeling a school as "failing," which often results in the assumption that no learning is taking place in these schools. There needs to be a recognition that "failing" is sometimes part of learning. When schools are labeled as failing, educators are too often deprived of the chance to take effective corrective action and instead are compelled to follow the dictates of the state and federal government. It's important that parents and the community not lose faith in their schools when ratings based on test scores are assigned.

8. **Working with the community to transform struggling schools into thriving schools.** When schools are identified as in need of improvement, principals and educators must be given the opportunity to work with parents and members of the community to pinpoint problems and implement solutions that meet the unique needs of their students. It is critical that they have the time and resources needed to make improvements. Takeover and restructuring models that cause instability and silence the voice of a school community simply don't work.

CONCLUSION

A public education system that educates students from pre-kindergarten through high school also serves a larger purpose: the continued improvement of society. Toward that end, students must have the best and the brightest teachers and support staff to help them achieve success; educators should be well-prepared and have the support needed to help their students reach their full potential. The system should have the support of and be accountable to the community, and elected officials must be counted on to support our students throughout their school experience. Education has and will always be a collaboration of all stakeholders, who must share in the responsibility to deliver the best to our society.

Arthur Lard (Portsmouth)

Addressing the Needs of Ohio Students

Portsmouth High School

Marcia Holmes (Springfield)

IMPACT OF THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

Many of the recommendations contained in this report meet the new guidelines for states under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including adherence to high standards; the flexibility to create assessment systems that are not overly reliant on statewide standardized tests; the expansion of teacher, paraprofessional and specialized instructional support professionals in decision-making; and enhancement of mentoring and professional development for educators. School improvement should be determined by locally-developed improvement plans based on multiple indicators, including at least one indicator of school success/student support. In short, ESSA presents an opportunity for decisions on education policies to be made at the state and local level while dramatically reducing the number of federal mandates. The paradigm shift proposed in this document reflects the necessary changes to Ohio's system so the needs of our students are met and Ohio can move forward in a positive way under the new federal law.

(Please see Appendix B for a summary of key provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act)

WHO ARE OHIO'S STUDENTS?

According to 2014-2015 data from the Ohio Department of Education, there are approximately 1.8 million children in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve who attend public schools in the state's cities, suburbs, small towns and rural communities. More than half of Ohio's children (52.2%) live in metropolitan counties; 17% live in suburban counties; 17% live in Appalachian counties; 13.9% live in rural counties. Children comprise nearly one quarter (23.1%) of Ohio's total population, and more than 53% of those children are below the age of 10.

The racial and ethnic population of Ohio's children is growing increasingly diverse and less white. Today, 78.1% of Ohio's children are White, 15% are Black, 5.3% are Hispanic or Latino, 4.6% identify with two or more races, and 1.9% are Asian. In 2014, 38% of Ohio's children lived in single-parent households, an increase of 2% since 2010. Almost one quarter of Ohio's children live in poverty and every county has seen the number of impoverished children increase. Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties have the highest percent of children living in poverty (28.3%), and four of Ohio's cities rank in the top 15 for national child poverty rates. Youngstown has 63.5% of its children living below the federal poverty level, which is based on the number of people in a family, their ages and defined income compared to the federal threshold. Among cities in the U.S. with the highest rates of child poverty, Youngstown ranks 1st, Cincinnati (53.1%) ranks 11th, Cleveland (52.6%) ranks 12th, and Dayton (50.5%) ranks 14th. There are 53,000 more Ohio children living in poverty now than during the 2008 recession.

Percentage of Students in Poverty in 2010
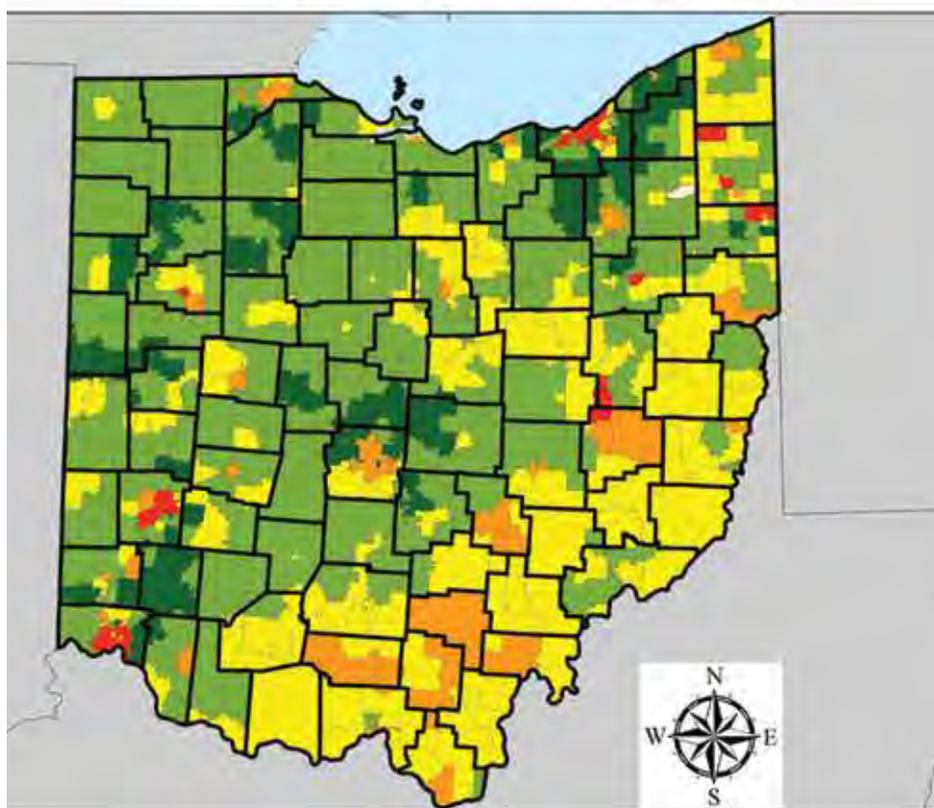
Legend

Students and Population Percent in Poverty

N/A	10 - 19.9%
Less than 10%	20 - 29.9%
	30 - 39.9%
	More than 40%

Sources: US Census Bureau, 2010
Ohio Department of Education, 2011
Prepared by: Richard Edwards
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In 2012, 29.6% of Ohio's children were eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, an increase of 1.2% from 2011. Approximately half (more than 1.3 million) of Ohio's children were enrolled in Healthy Start/Healthy Families (Medicaid) during the year, and in five counties more than 70% of the children receive Medicaid benefits. Eight out of every 100 children in Ohio in 2012 were reported to have experienced substantiated maltreatment, including neglect and/or physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Even higher rates (10.8%) were reported to have occurred in metropolitan counties. A recent study found that more than half of Ohio's children have experienced at least one traumatic experience, including a natural disaster, rape, witness to a violent death, sudden loss of a parent or hospitalization, and about one in seven has been exposed to three or more traumatic experiences before the age of 18. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 14.9% of all students enrolled in Ohio public schools in grades 1 through 12 were identified with disabilities and served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2011-12. That represents a 9% increase in the percentage of students identified with disabilities from a decade earlier.

The fastest growing group of students in Ohio is English-language learners. According to the Ohio Department of Education, more than 39,800 limited English proficient (LEP) students/English Language Learners (ELL) were enrolled in the state's elementary and secondary public schools during the 2010-2011 school year. The terms "limited English proficient" and "English Language Learners" refer to those students whose native or home language is other than English, and whose current limitations in the ability to understand, speak, read or write in English inhibit their effective participation in a school's educational program. The number of ELLs reported in Ohio for school year 2010-2011 represents an increase of 38% over the number reported five years previously and an increase of 199% over the number reported a decade earlier. Ohio's LEP students represent more than 110 different native or home languages. The top 10 language groups include Spanish, Somali, Arabic, Pennsylvania Dutch (a dialect of German used by the Amish), Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, French, Russian and Twi (a language spoken in West Africa).

Ohio also has a large number of students identified as gifted. The state of Ohio defines a gifted student as one who "performs or shows potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment." According to the 2014 Gifted Rankings, 256,341 students had been assessed and identified as gifted; however, only 23.7% of those students received gifted services. Ohio requires schools to identify gifted students, but it does not require them to provide services to meet their unique needs.

THE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN OHIO

The commission believes there are some elements of Ohio's current educational system that can contribute to increased student success and achievement if implemented correctly. Ohio's rigorous academic standards are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their zip code, have access to challenging, innovative learning opportunities that prepare them for either higher education or employment upon high school graduation. Many Ohio schools are offering up-to-date learning experiences that use the most current research-based curricular and instructional practices and provide modern technology to enhance those instructional offerings. Ohio's teachers regularly use data gathered from teacher-created assessments—before, during and after instruction—that help shape the substance and means of providing instruction. The state's educator licensure system requires ongoing professional development and provides opportunities for teachers and support professionals to expand their knowledge and refine their teaching skills. Ohio's four-year Resident Educator licensure program for early-career teachers requires support by experienced and trained mentors to help them grow in their teaching practices.

The commission also recognizes that some of the state's current education policies and practices are flawed and detract from student success and teacher effectiveness. There are multiple, unfunded state mandates connected almost exclusively to standardized test scores that influence the instructional practices of teachers, schools, and school districts. Because policymakers have too often failed to listen to the professionals who are the experts in teaching and learning, they have made too many decisions that are developmentally and intellectually inappropriate for students. Ohio's current education policies are overly dependent on the results of standardized tests that discourage students' creative thinking and diminish the effectiveness of teachers' instructional practices. While there have been modest efforts to address this problem, the state's current accountability system needs to be more balanced in determining the effectiveness of students, teachers, schools and school districts. There needs to be more time for learning and less time spent taking standardized tests. Ohio's already under-funded school districts continue to lose critical taxpayer dollars to under-performing charter schools and to a voucher system that pays for private school tuition. Ohio's narrow accountability system, which punishes students, teachers, schools, and school districts for low standardized test scores, has led to increased stress on students and families.

➤ CONTINUED

Some of the most innovative educational practices are happening only in Ohio schools that have been awarded state grants from the "Straight-A Fund," creating islands of innovation and best-practices. Most critically, Ohio's over-reliance on standardized test results fails to address the emotional and developmental needs of students and does not adequately measure the creative skills of students. A recent decision by the Ohio State Board of Education to eliminate the so-called "5 of 8" rule requiring an adequate number of licensed school counselors, social workers, school nurses, library media specialists and elementary art, music and physical education teachers is one example of a decision that shortchanges the educational needs of every student.

Underlying the shortfall in needed personnel and services for Ohio's diverse student population is a school funding system that remains inadequate and inequitable even after the Ohio Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional four times.

(Please see Appendix C for additional background information on the recent history of school funding in Ohio.)
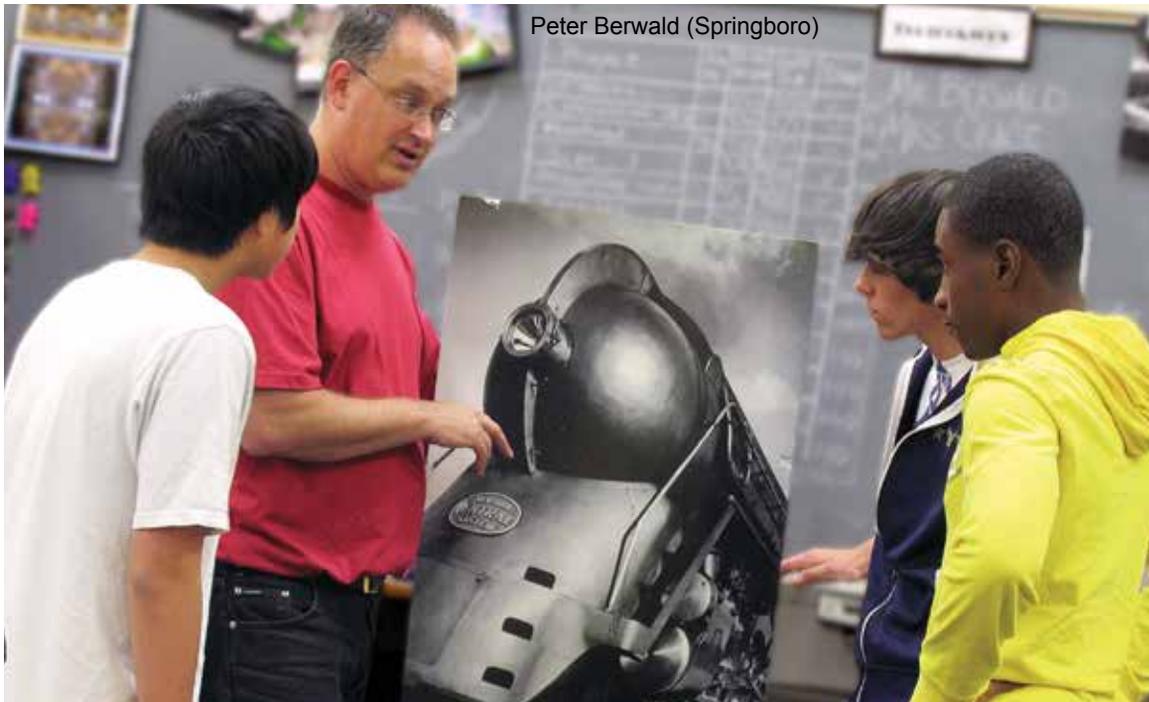
Peter Berwald (Springboro)

WHAT KIND OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF OHIO'S CHILDREN?

A high-quality, high-performing state-wide educational system is needed to address the increasingly diverse cultures and economic status of Ohio's public school students. This high-quality educational system should offer clearly-defined, easily-understood and developmentally-appropriate academic standards for all students at every grade level. Ideally, sufficient resources would be provided to meet those academic standards. The curriculum would address not only the developmental needs of all students, but also include a focus on the skills needed for life beyond the world of school. Additionally, addressing students' developmental needs includes the important role that support staff play in daily interactions. Whether on the bus, in an office or in the cafeteria, school support staff can help ensure students have a safe learning environment, free from bullying and physical intimidation. Collaboration between support staff and teachers would bring about needed interventions to ensure children's safety. Public schools would continue to attract the best and brightest into the education profession. Teachers and support staff would be thoroughly prepared and command the respect of their colleagues, their students, and the community. Teachers would be seen as leaders in the education profession and be encouraged to be visible. Student assessments would be developmentally appropriate, in keeping with the curriculum, and be used to measure student growth and identify instructional needs. A statewide accountability system would reflect the level to which districts engage students in learning and prepare them for success following high school graduation. Finally, this high-quality, statewide system would provide the resources needed to deliver an exemplary education to all of Ohio's children regardless of where they live.

Measuring Student Success

Measuring student learning is the first component of a statewide, high quality assessment system. The objective of such a system should be to enhance student success while steering educators and students toward the supports needed for increased student growth and development. This assessment system should ensure that multiple measures (for example, writing samples, classroom performances, and traditional tests) are used by educators to provide students with varied opportunities to demonstrate a grasp not only of academic concepts but also of social and emotional developmental milestones. The needs of the whole child must be addressed. That means ensuring all students are provided the resources and services needed to keep them healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged to meet their full potential, and empowered as citizens in our democratic society.
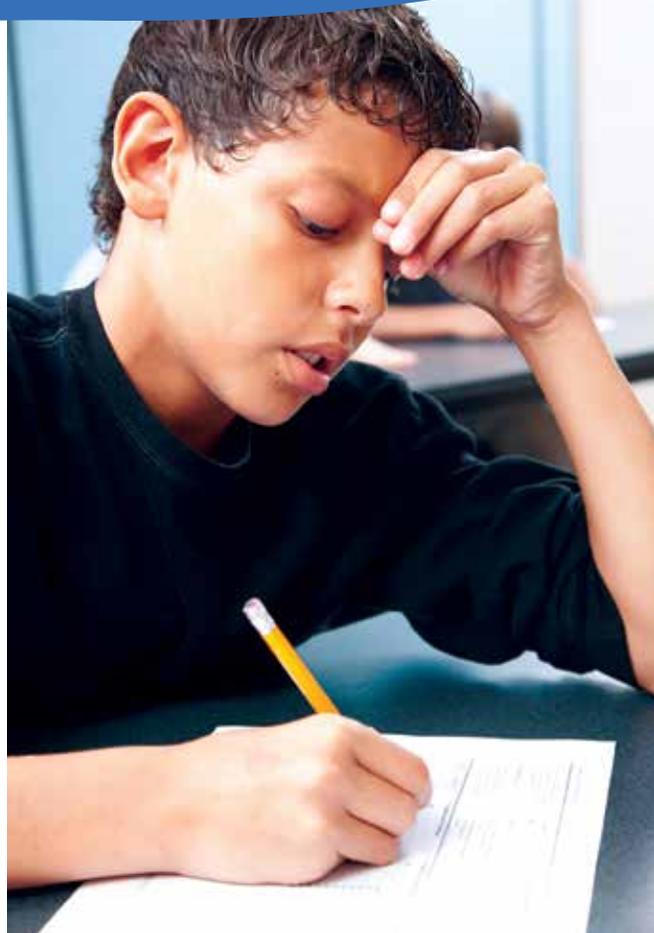
WHAT IS WRONG WITH OHIO'S HIGH-STAKES TESTING SYSTEM?

In Ohio's current high-stakes assessment system, when student achievement falls below a legislated bench-mark, teacher and school autonomy is stripped away and "improvement plans," often under- or unfunded, are put in place for schools to follow. This system takes already limited resources from schools and forces educators to focus their time on preparing for and administering standardized tests, virtually none of which yields information that teachers can use to raise student achievement levels. As federal and state mandates for testing have increased, Ohio's testing landscape has grown increasingly complex and has had a negative impact on the educational climate across the state. This misguided focus takes away valuable learning time for students simply to meet state mandates, district goals and educator evaluations. Students would benefit more from regular assessments that teachers are able to administer before, during, and after instruction. The immediate feedback these assessments provide would enable teachers to make immediate adjustments so students can confidently learn the skills and concepts needed to keep growing.

Teachers are under increasing pressure to ensure their students do well on tests or risk having a lower evaluation score. This pressure is felt by students because of the amount of time spent on test preparation. Rich and varied learning experiences for students that address the emotional, physical and intellectual needs of the whole child must often be set aside to focus on the one test that is given each year to measure students' mastery of state standards. Furthermore, these assessments are often developmentally inappropriate. For example, young children may be required to use a computer to answer questions, special needs students may be subject to tests that are cognitively and physically inappropriate, and tests may take students many hours to complete. Punitive consequences for test score results, including the 3rd grade reading guarantee, can cause high stress levels for students, leading to results that may or may not be an accurate reflection of a student's abilities. Educators, just like policy-makers and elected officials, want our students to be prepared for college and careers, but the current system puts too much emphasis on a student's readiness and skills through multiple choice and short answer questions.

WHAT DOES A HIGH-QUALITY, FAIR, COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

A high-quality assessment system includes the means of measuring student growth and development before, during and after instruction is offered so teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents can provide a rich instructional program for all students. Educators pay attention to how their students are adjusting to school and to the development of their cognitive and social skills. Students should have opportunities to demonstrate their ability to think critically and to use their skills in solving problems through various assessments, ranging from paper-pencil tests to performance-based demonstrations. Educators should be able to design and incorporate these assessments into classroom experiences so that time spent in the classroom is used primarily for instruction. Such an assessment system would clearly demonstrate to parents and the community the many ways in which student growth can be measured. Most critically, this kind of assessment system would underscore the meaningful ways in which students are learning and would help teachers to plan for rigorous and relevant instruction of all their students.

The focus on preparing students to take tests must be sharply reduced in order to allow more time for educators and paraprofessionals to teach, inspire creative thinking and instill a love of learning. Adequate resources should be allocated to ensure all schools have the curriculum and other materials needed to achieve high academic standards. To help address their broad array of interests and needs, all students should be challenged by a diverse, relevant, and integrated curriculum that includes art, music, physical education, foreign language and technology instruction in addition to language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

A key indicator of a system's success is the extent to which students are prepared to enter the world after high school graduation. Whether they attend college or move into a career, students should be able to take full advantage of the opportunities that await them. To achieve their aspirations, they need rich and varied academic experiences that give them opportunities to explore their interests and passions. Students should only be limited by their choices and not by limitations in what classes are offered, how well prepared they may or may not be, or a perception that they cannot fulfill their hopes because of where they live or family circumstances.

A high-quality, comprehensive system of measuring student growth and achievement will ensure that all students have the chance to demonstrate their ability to think critically and have the problem-solving skills needed to succeed as productive members of a democratic citizenry. Students will then be in an optimal position to make informed decisions about their college or career choices as they pursue their interests and passions.

In a high-quality system, students:

- **Have highly qualified educators.** All students are taught by highly qualified educators that facilitate a positive learning culture characterized by a safe, supportive, productive and nurturing environment and by rigorous, relevant expectations.

- **Have a relevant curriculum.** All students have access to a culturally relevant curriculum that is aligned with rigorous standards. There should be multiple pathways for students to meet these standards as well as achieve some of their personal goals.

- **Own their learning.** Students should have the awareness, encouragement and skills to advocate for themselves. Students should be encouraged to identify their own strengths, weaknesses and learning styles and then be provided appropriate support to achieve their goals. Their ability to think critically enables them to make important personal decisions about which courses to take in middle school and high school and to benefit from varied academic disciplines.

- **Experience school and family partnerships.** Families should be partners with educators in addressing the educational needs of their children. When families and educators communicate with one another and work together to ensure students are motivated to work hard, they can help students meet their educational goals.

- **Are given early childhood and pre-kindergarten opportunities.** Students should have access to researched-based, developmentally appropriate, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs because they help to address inequities in community resources before students begin kindergarten and ensure all students start school ready to learn.

- **Position themselves for the world after they graduate.** What is gleaned from assessments should give educators, families and students the information they need to monitor student progress and achievement. Ideally, students take responsibility for developing the skills needed to achieve their goals, whether from high school to college or high school to a career.

- **Are supported in transition to higher education or careers.** Students should have access to comprehensive services that help to keep the focus on their personal learning needs as they advance toward a college degree or to employment in their area of skill and interest.

Patrick Laughlin (Lakeland Community College)

HOW SHOULD STUDENT SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

Student success should be determined through multiple sources of information and varied assessments. It is crucial that all student assessments be aligned with the learning standards and that those assessments be developmentally appropriate. Equal attention must be given to academic success and to social and emotional development. Measuring the academic progress and developmental growth of students provides a more complete picture of students' full academic profiles.

State or locally developed assessment choices should include:

■ Assessments that integrate disciplines in realistic and developmentally appropriate ways, such as a research assignment completed for a social studies class that measures both knowledge of history and language arts skills;

■ High-quality classroom assessments that are interwoven with daily instruction, such as a guided class discussion used to identify and correct student misunderstandings from the previous day's lesson, and are used to design instruction that is both timely and relevant;

■ Standardized tests used for accountability purposes at less frequent intervals with scientific sampling of students, rather than testing every student every year

in every subject. This approach would provide the information needed to monitor any gaps in achievement between subgroups of students while minimizing loss of instructional time. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures student achievement and rates states in comparison with one another, uses this method.

■ Portfolios that demonstrate student learning through a full school year and are assessed using procedures with clearly-defined achievement levels;

■ Performance-based assessments that include student-led exhibitions;

■ Assessments that incorporate content from multiple academic disciplines in projects that connect classroom learning to real-world problems.

When used, standardized assessments should be given early enough in the school year to provide results that can be used to inform instruction before the end of the school year. The results of district assessments should be factored into strategies and interventions to promote student growth and to meet the professional development needs of educators. There is no need for the double-testing of content and disciplines. As time for testing is capped, students will be provided more time for instruction. Test results should be used to guide instructional practices and not to punish students, educators, or schools.

HOW WILL WE RESPOND WHEN STUDENTS ARE NOT YET MEETING EXPECTATIONS?

A partnership between a school and a family is the backbone of a strong, accountable system of student success especially for students who are not yet meeting expectations. If students are struggling academically, socially, or emotionally, there should be a support system that can address each of those areas. Students would be linked to a well-prepared team of educators who are qualified to help them address their needs. Support would be based on an individual student's learning curve and would be subject to continued monitoring.

There needs to be greater communication between educators and families when students begin to struggle or miss academic benchmarks, are too frequently absent, or experience social, emotional or behavioral problems. All students, no matter their zip code or level of growth, should be in schools with sufficient resources to provide support systems that ensure students' needs are addressed. These supports should include but are not limited to health and wellness programs, counseling and mental health services, and interventions necessary to overcome non-academic barriers that so many students in our public schools face.

It is important to note that deeply embedded educational practices, such as the way student discipline is administered in schools, often perpetuate inequality of opportunity for students based on factors even beyond wealth and poverty. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, "zero tolerance policies often criminalize minor infractions of school rules," and the presence of police in schools can lead to students being "criminalized for behavior that should be handled inside the school." A high-performing system designed to meet the needs of all students must be intentionally designed to eliminate conscious and unconscious practices that perpetuate discrimination based on race, sex, English language proficiency, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or physical ability. School policies and practices that contribute to a disproportionate number of African American male students being "pushed out" into the criminal justice system (i.e. the "school to prison pipeline") must be identified and eradicated. So, too, must educational practices that cause any student to feel unsafe due to bullying or harassment.

Student achievement can be best realized when there is a vital and valued partnership of educators and families. Highly qualified educators who are passionate about student growth are eager to initiate and maintain regular communication with families so all students receive the support they deserve.
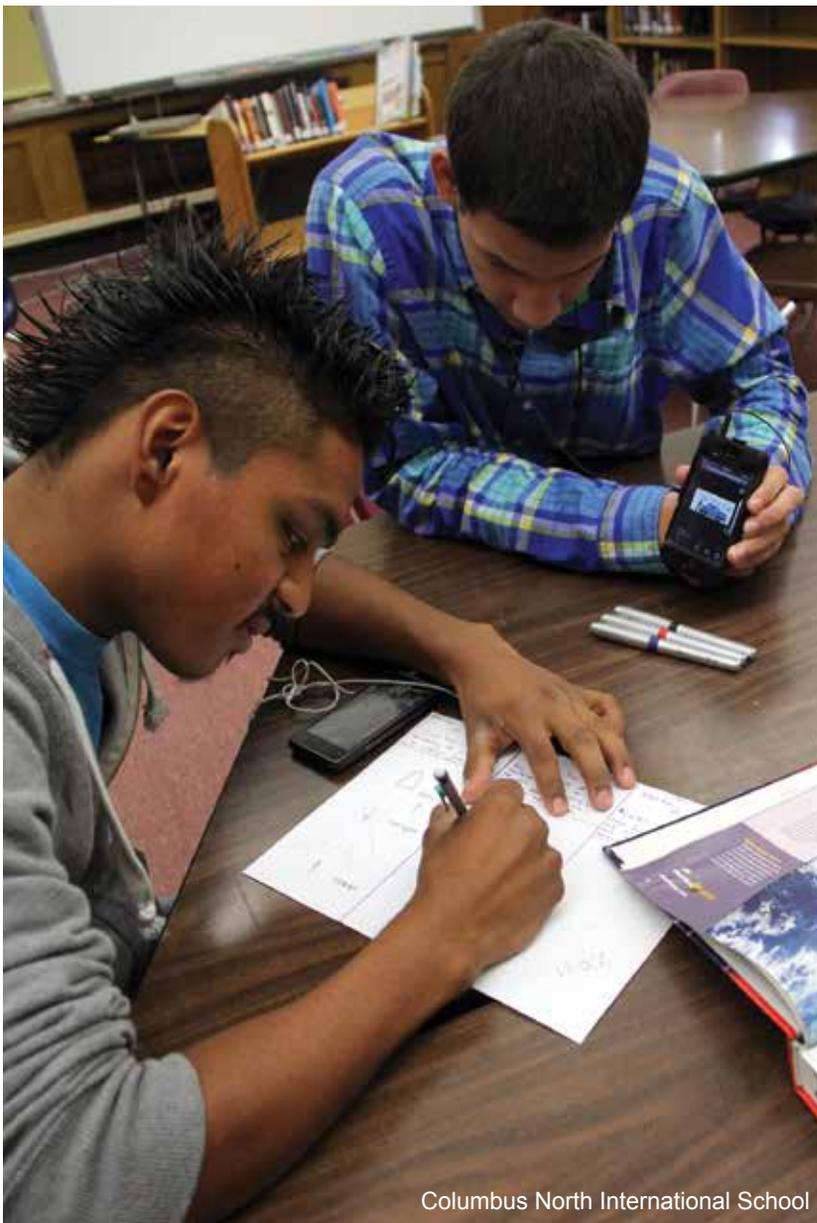
Columbus North International School

MAKING ASSESSMENT MEANINGFUL

Providing students the opportunity to make what they have learned visible to others is a powerful way of demonstrating their understanding of concepts. It also helps to ignite passion and student engagement. Examples of making learning visible may include student exhibitions, portfolios, and performances.

In such settings, students are able to show a true understanding of what they've been taught. For example, students studying light and sound could be given the opportunity to design an interactive exhibit that proves that light and sound exist. This exhibit could then be shown to a specific audience where learning is further assessed. Likewise, students, with the coaching of their teacher, might choose to wonder about something that they are passionate about. This could be designing a new type of football stadium to give fans a different type of experience, or investigating the environmental effects of oil pollution in our oceans by means of designing a plan for a self-sustainable device to maintain the ecosystem. Evidence of other skills such as reading, art, research, informational writing, and the scientific design process would be assessed. The same method of assessment should be applied to the arts. Students can be assessed on their growth as individuals and learners through the use of interactive art making, music, and physical activity.

These types of assessments can occur at any age or grade level. For example, sophomores in high school may be asked to show their understanding of a historical novel, such as *The Count of Monte Cristo*, by putting the protagonist on trial for alleged crimes; students first have to draw upon their understanding and knowledge of Napoleonic Code to determine what constitutes a chargeable offense and then examine the alleged crimes to determine if they are criminal or civil matters. Furthermore, students would need to research federal and state laws to seek an appropriate contemporary equivalent for the offense committed in the novel. Working together, students undertake role-playing: witnesses (characters from the novel) draw upon their understanding of the reading while prosecution or defense teams conduct independent research into the justice system and corresponding laws. All students are responsible for compiling written documentation, such as witness statements and/or legal briefs. Likewise, students collaborate on developing direct examination questions for trial. Students in this context draw upon multiple learning standards from both English/Language Arts and social studies.

Students in College Credit Plus courses can, likewise, be asked to meet both the rigorous expectations of the university while demonstrating their ability to collaboratively research, co-author, and present findings to resolve a local, state or national problem before a panel of educators, administrators, board members, and other community members. These students can choose issues to resolve and develop real-world solutions to societal problems.

This process of demonstrating and assessing learning, regardless of grade or content, can be made visible to parents, community members, or within the school itself to celebrate learning through the use of public exhibitions. Not only does this highlight the learning that was accomplished, it provides a means for assessment that is documented and authentic. This natural process also commands a creative and empathetic approach to assessment and motivates students to learn more as a result of this experience.

This student decided to connect isolated skills such as informational reading, research, and fractions to explore her passion of sewing. She then created blankets to donate to local nursing homes.

Connecting science with making their knowledge of ecosystems visible with a design of a real life ecosystem and its components.

Student sharing the process of creating a new design of a robot with his family. Made his learning visible including his research, expository writing, failures, scientific design process, and mathematical calculations.

Measuring Educator Success

Sherise Thompson (Hilliard)

All students should have highly qualified educators who care for and engage them in relevant learning, provide challenging instruction based on rigorous standards, provide appropriate support, and collaborate with colleagues to ensure that all students learn and grow. An educator in a high-quality system is part of a team of teachers, para-professionals, support staff and administrators working together to ensure student success. The commission recognizes the value of having a strong evaluation system for all Ohio educators while also recognizing that there should be a system of shared responsibility for the success of students. Educators benefit from family and community support, having consistent and relevant professional development, adequate time to plan and teach, and access to high-quality instructional resources. Educators must be responsible to their students, to the community, and to their profession, while setting and maintaining high standards for themselves as professionals.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH OHIO'S CURRENT TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM?

Under the current Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), fifty percent of the evaluation is comprised of teacher performance and up to fifty percent of the evaluation is based on student growth measures (SGMs). OTES was created by legislators with little educator input. While the teacher performance section of the evaluation is based on Ohio's Standards for the Teaching Profession, much of the evaluation focuses on test scores and data rather than on planning and instruction. The part of the evaluation that measures student growth, depending on the teaching situation, may rely on value-added measures from standardized state tests, data from locally-chosen assessments produced by commercial testing companies, data from student learning objectives (SLO), or a combination of all of these measures. The evaluation scores are combined using a complicated formula to produce a summative rating. Depending on the summative rating, the teacher may not be evaluated again for a number of years or could be evaluated annually, placed on a growth plan, or be subject to an improvement plan that requires monitoring by an administrator.

Those parts of the evaluation system that provide growth and instructional opportunities for teachers, including the self-assessment and conferences before and after an evaluation, are optional for teachers and administrators to complete.

In addition, teachers do not have many opportunities under the current evaluation system to demonstrate their expertise or demonstrate how they know their students and their students' needs. The ability to work successfully with students from diverse cultural, economic and racial backgrounds is minimally addressed. With two legislatively-mandated observations per school year, evaluators, who are typically administrators, often struggle to implement the reflective and professional growth portions of the evaluation and provide limited written feedback to teachers. Because evaluators often lack training and experience in the subject area of teachers they evaluate, feedback tends to focus on classroom environment, how time is managed, the interaction with students and communication with parents, but very little on ways to effectively teach the subject matter at hand. Unfortunately, professional development for teachers is not frequently aligned with their areas of needed growth and development. Far too much of the evaluation system focuses on data and standardized tests and pays little attention to the experiences and educational practices that help students develop as a result of using the most effective means of instruction. (Please see Appendix D for an overview of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation Framework.)

WHAT DOES A HIGH QUALITY, FAIR AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATOR EVALUATION SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

A high-performing system should include a means of evaluating the performance of educators that encourage the growth and development of all educators over their entire career. In such a system, educators would receive timely feedback that is grounded in the best-practices of the profession that will help students to learn and grow. Educators should be culturally responsive to and engaged with their students, schools and communities. The professional development, coaching of and support for educators would be driven by student growth measures. Because low performing educators are not acceptable to anyone in the profession, colleagues should coach their peers toward improvement. A supportive culture of coaching and feedback would replace the competitive nature of the test-and-punish paradigm that currently drives our educator evaluation system.

WHAT DO EDUCATORS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

Educators benefit from continuous professional development that helps to inform and improve the way in which they offer instruction and inspire students to learn. All students deserve kind, caring, and committed educators who welcome productive feedback. Because the growth and development of educators are not linear, educators can be more confident in some areas of instruction and less confident in others. Growth and learning for educators should be recognized as a continuing, career-long endeavor.

Such a system would provide multiple avenues for professional growth and advancement, including peer-to-peer support, mentoring, and training that encourages the development of high quality teaching practices. Educators would have opportunities to demonstrate their leadership capabilities, their thorough knowledge of their area of expertise and their understanding of the community in which they carry out their work.

Effective school principals are also essential in supporting the success of classroom teachers and other education professionals to advance student achievement. Principals play numerous critical roles, including promoting best instructional practices, hiring quality staff, setting expectations for school climate, managing school operations, leading outreach efforts with parents and community members, assessing instructional quality through the evaluation process, and providing feedback and resources to nurture the growth of educators. Highly performing systems must be intentional in recruiting, training, hiring and supporting principals and other educational leaders in order to ensure all educators are set up for success.

HOW SHOULD EDUCATOR SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

A high-quality system should honestly and clearly address areas of challenge, celebrate successes, and identify the means by which improvement can be made. In such a system there would be more peer-to-peer accountability and less top-down, administrative-driven evaluations. A peer-driven collaborative model would include administrators and master teachers who coach, support, and evaluate other teachers. In this model, educators become more responsible to each other, their students, and the profession.

Elements of this high-performing system include:

■ Structured self-assessments that spur educators to reflect on their practice and share success and struggles with their peers;

■ Timely, reflective feedback from a qualified educator that includes regular conferencing and that is focused on student growth and learning:

■ Relevant professional development designed to promote growth in the teaching profession;

■ Planned evaluations that are collegial and designed to facilitate educator growth in academic subjects and the method of instruction.

To implement this high-quality evaluation system, a community of fellow educators and the education association would support the advancement of educators' careers from the time they first enter a classroom. A system of high-quality support and shared responsibility would include the means for educators to grow in multiple phases, including ones used in the current state teacher licensing system: Pre-service, Induction, Professional, Accomplished and Leadership. In all of these phases, especially the Pre-Service Phase, there should be appropriate compensation for all experienced supervisors.
(See Appendix E for a description of each phase.)

In a high-quality system, all who work in a school would have responsibility to demonstrate leadership. Principals and other school administrators play a critical role as instructional leaders and managers of school operations. Teachers and other licensed educators lead in the classroom and on a variety of school-based teams to understand students and deliver instruction to meet their needs. Education support professionals provide leadership to ensure a safe and nurturing learning environment. Regardless of individual role, there would be unity of purpose in ensuring the success of every student. Ideally, there would also be adequate resources to ensure the success of this educator-driven system, and educators would be empowered to maintain high professional standards and expectations. In such a system, educators would be supported and coached by their peers with a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and low performance would not be tolerated.

One example of an evaluation system in which teachers provide feedback, support and accountability to one another is the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program in Columbus. PAR provides structured mentorship and observation, along with a rigorous, standards-based system that has teachers evaluate fellow teachers.

(Please see Appendix F for information on effective peer support and accountability and the Columbus PAR Program.)

WHAT IF EDUCATORS DO NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS?

A high-quality system of shared responsibility among educators does not accept low performance of peers. If some educators experience difficulties or challenges, colleagues should provide support that leads to improvement in identified areas. If support does not lead to improvement, then educators should help those individuals to exit the profession.

Support and interventions for struggling educators should include:

■ Peer observation of the struggling educator by an accomplished educator and administrator with specific feedback and coaching that leads to improvement in student and teaching performance;

■ Opportunities to observe accomplished colleagues and to analyze exemplary teaching practices;

■ Professional development that meets the needs of the struggling educator;

■ Improvement plans with observable and measurable outcomes;

■ Sufficient time and support for the struggling educator to meet the necessary teaching standards and expectations;

■ A collaborative exit process, with peer support, for educators who have demonstrated chronically poor performance and have not demonstrated sufficient improvement after a reasonable and agreed upon length of time as determined by the local collective bargaining agreement.

It must be stressed that if schools have continued experiences with low-quality delivery of instruction, a systemic problem exists. An individual who is assigned to teach a classroom of students without clear direction, proper training, and ongoing support is being set up for failure. That cannot be allowed. Educators who have successfully completed quality teacher preparation programs and met credentialing requirements have proven that they are ready to teach. If a school experiences continued poor performance, it is incumbent upon professionals, including other educators and the union, to work together to create a means for making an improvement that provides better educational outcomes for students. There should be appropriate funding for this high-quality accountability system to ensure that all students and educators are successful.

Measuring School Success

Trotwood Madison

The commission supports a high-quality accountability system that provides adequate funding, time for all students to learn, and tests that accurately assess a student's academic growth and social and emotional development. In this system, schools offer services that address the needs of the whole child, including, when necessary, medical clinics, psychological services, nutrition, counseling, and child care. Communities value public education and provide the funding needed to support high-quality public schools, sharing responsibility for meeting the needs of students and their educators. This system requires an understanding of poverty and its effects and ensures that educators have an understanding of the cultural differences of their increasingly diverse student populations. In this system, authentic learning programs and advanced-level courses are available, and every child has an appropriate, high-quality pre-K through grade 12 education.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH OHIO'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM?

Ohio's complicated school accountability system drives the overuse and misuse of standardized testing. The 2014-2015 state report card included results from 35 separate grade level and subject area tests that were used to produce an overall "performance index" used to rate the achievement level of each district. These results were compared against the same students' prior test scores to calculate four separate "progress" grades. Two of the three "gap closing" measures were determined by test scores. Ohio's "K-3 literacy" measure is linked to standardized diagnostic tests, and the new "Prepared for Success" indicator relies heavily on ACT and SAT scores. The report card is dominated by test results; in fact, the only indicators of quality on district report cards not in some way tied to standardized test results are the 4-year and 5-year high school graduation rate.

Ohio's students currently spend far too much time taking standardized tests to meet state and federal mandates. State tests are administered on top of dozens of district-mandated tests, often given at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to determine student progress. State-mandated end-of-course exams for high school students are required on top of a different set of final exams required by school districts. The results of many of these standardized tests are used to rank schools and school districts, assigning and publicizing an overall grade of A - F.

Marion A. Howard (Trotwood Madison)

The testing of Ohio's state standards has proven to be problematic. There has been wide discussion across the ideological spectrum that the tests used to determine student, teacher, and school success are either not aligned to the standards, are developmentally inappropriate, or both. Frequently, schools do not have the curricular and technological resources needed to support the teaching of Ohio's new state standards. Ohio's educators see student enthusiasm and love of learning being tested away as the state continues to put too much emphasis on testing over teaching.

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated a direct correlation between the grade a district receives on the state report card and the level of wealth of the district. The more impoverished a district is, the lower its report card grade tends to be. This pattern has remained consistent even as Ohio has added new measures to its school and district report cards. In a study commissioned by the Ohio Education Policy Institute (OEPI), Dr. Howard Fleeter found "stark differences among school districts in the college and career readiness of their students as measured by new indicators on Ohio's school district report cards. Districts with a high percentage of students who come from low socioeconomic circumstances generally score much lower on the new Prepared for Success measures." A school accountability system that simply reveals what the public already knows about the link between poverty and student achievement does little to promote actual school improvement.

WHAT DOES A HIGH QUALITY, FAIR AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

As Ohio moves forward, we must embrace the idea that successful schools are places where children want to learn and where parents are proud to send them. The community would have a clear vision of why public education exists and what is needed to provide a strong public education. Labels of "excellent" or "A" and "failing" or "F" would not be necessary, and a grade would not determine the destiny of a school's students. It would be acceptable, and even expected, for students to struggle and for educators and students to learn from challenges. Schools would be accountable for keeping students safe and providing rich learning opportunities for all students.Communities would feel invested in their schools, and embrace and hold to high standards the students and educators who are learning and working in their neighborhoods. Educators would be recognized as the leaders and experts in their schools. Ultimately, accountability would shift from a system of testing and punishing to a system of shared responsibility among students, educators, parents and the community.

There is insufficient attention to the harmful consequences of labeling a school as "failing," which often results in the assumption that no learning is taking place. There needs to a recognition that "failing" is sometimes part of learning. It's important that parents and the community not lose faith in their schools when ratings are assigned. When schools are labeled as failing, educators are too often deprived of the chance to take effective corrective action and instead are compelled to follow the dictates of the state and federal government. These forced requirements usually mean more test-preparation, less time for recess and the administration of more tests, often weekly, in the quest to monitor student progress.

2014 - 2015 Report Card for
Ada Exempted Village School District

| Overview | Achievement | Progress | Gap Closing | Graduation Rate | K-3 Literacy | Prepared for Success |

DISTRICT GRADE

Coming in 2018

DISTRICT DETAILS

VIEW SCHOOLS

Financial Data
These measures answer several questions about spending and performance. How much is spent on Classroom Instruction? How much, on average, is spent on each student? What is the source of the revenue? How do these measures compare to other districts and schools?

VIEW DATA

Achievement
This grade combines two results for students who took the state tests. The first result answers the question – How many students passed the state test? The second result answers the question – How well did students do on the state test?

Performance Index 81.1%	B
Indicators Met 87.9%	B

2015 Modified Achievement Measure

COMPONENT GRADE

Coming in 2016

VIEW MORE DATA

VIEW GIFTED DATA

Progress
This is your district's average progress for its students in math and reading, grades 4-8. It looks at how much each student learns in a year. Did the students get a year's worth of growth? Did they get more? Did they get less?

Value-Added	
Overall	A
Gifted	A
Lowest 20% in Achievement	A
Students with Disabilities	B

COMPONENT GRADE

Coming in 2016

VIEW MORE DATA

Gap Closing
This grade shows how well all students are doing in your district in reading, math, and graduation. It answers the question – Is every student succeeding, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, or disability?

Annual Measurable Objectives 84.0%	B

2015 AMO Download File

COMPONENT GRADE

Coming in 2016

VIEW MORE DATA

Graduation Rate
This grade answers the question – How many ninth graders graduate in four years or five years?

Graduation Rates	
96.2% of students graduated in 4 years	A
98.7% of students graduated in 5 years	A

COMPONENT GRADE

Coming in 2016

VIEW MORE DATA

K-3 Literacy
This grade answers the question – Are more students learning to read in kindergarten through third grade?

K-3 Literacy Improvement 46.7%	D

COMPONENT GRADE

Coming in 2016

VIEW MORE DATA

Prepared for Success
This grade answers the question – Are students who graduate from your district ready for college or a career? There are many ways to show that graduates are prepared.
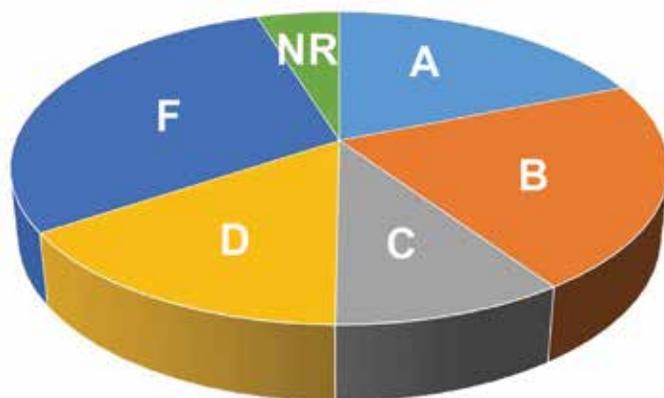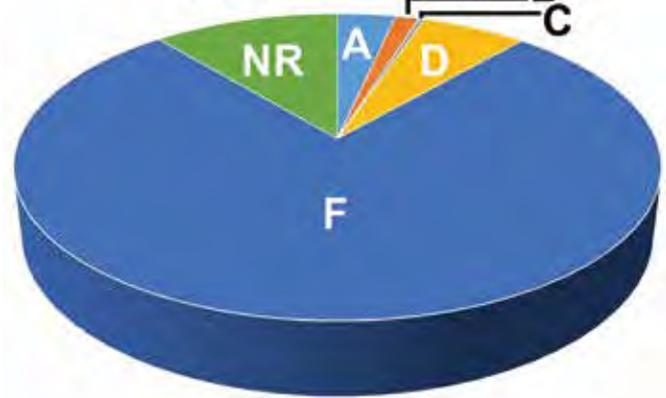
COMPONENT GRADE

Coming in 2016

VIEW DATA

Traditional Public Schools Indicators 2015 Report Card Grade vs Community (Charter) Schools Indicators Report Card Grade

Traditional Public Schools — A B C D F NR

A	593	18.96%
B	672	21.49%
C	304	9.72%
D	485	15.51%
F	922	29.49%
NR	151	4.83%
	3127	100.00%

Charter Schools — A B C D F NR

A	10	3.47%
B	4	1.39%
C	1	0.35%
D	18	6.25%
F	223	77.43%
NR	32	11.11%
	288	100.00%

(Source: Ohio Department of Education)

Traditional Schools—2015 Report Card Indicators Grade by District Poverty Level
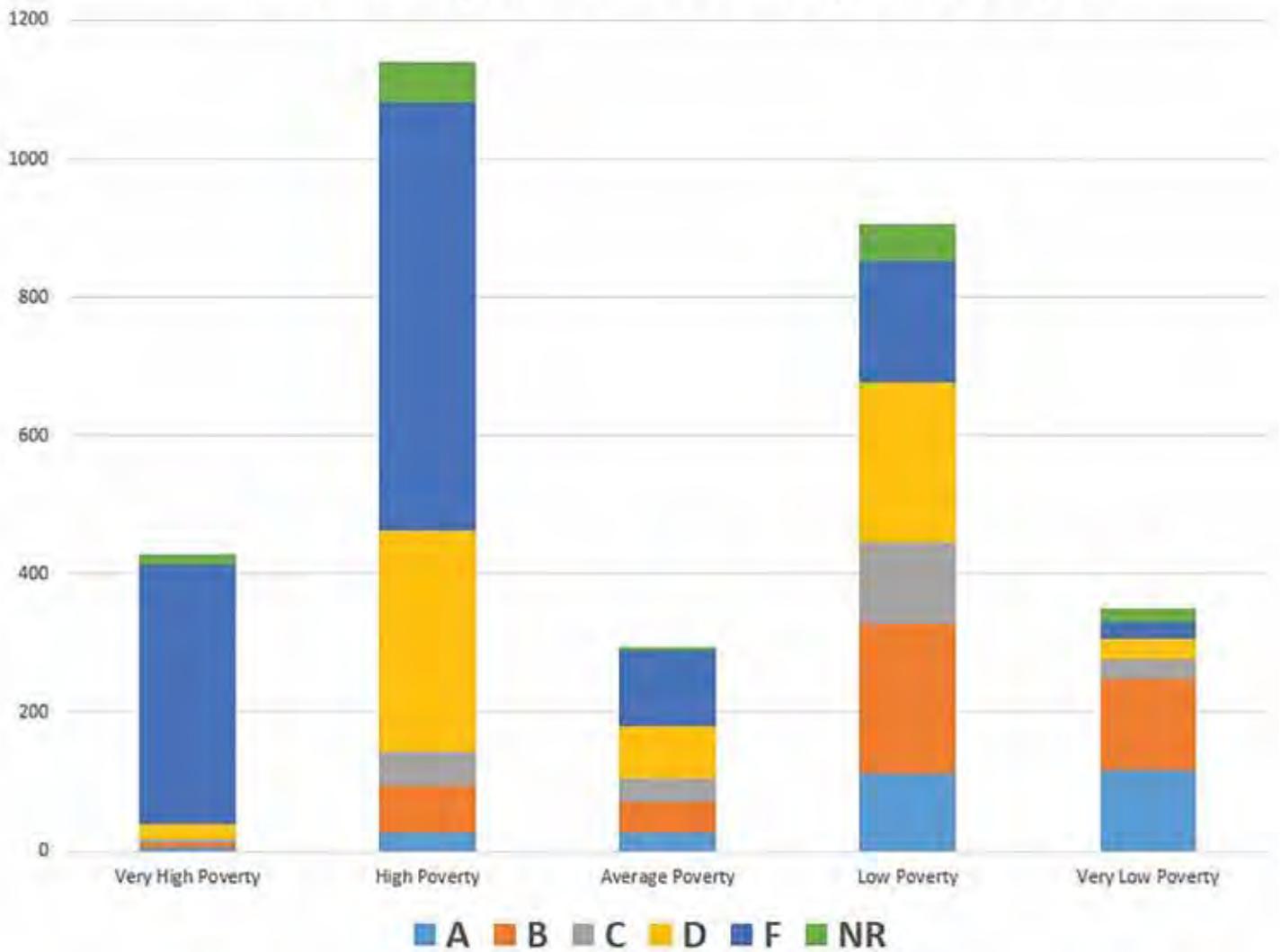
	Very High Poverty		High Poverty		Average Poverty		Low Poverty		Very Low Poverty	
A	6	1.40%	28	2.46%	28	9.46%	111	12.24%	116	33.14%
B	6	1.40%	68	5.96%	43	14.53%	217	23.93%	133	38.00%
C	6	1.40%	47	4.12%	33	11.15%	119	13.12%	28	8.00%
D	22	5.14%	319	27.98%	77	26.01%	230	25.36%	31	8.86%
F	374	87.38%	620	54.39%	110	37.16%	176	19.40%	23	6.57%
NR	14	3.27%	58	5.09%	5	1.69%	54	5.95%	19	5.43%
	428	100.00%	1140	100.00%	296	100.00%	907	100.00%	350	100.00%

(Source: Ohio Department of Education)

WHAT DO SCHOOLS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

A high-quality, comprehensive system of accountability ensures that students, educators, school leaders and policymakers are held to high standards where all students have access to high quality, relevant and engaging learning opportunities that build a foundation for lifelong learning. When schools are successful, parents want their children to attend, and children are happy to be at school. In successful schools, children have time to learn and teachers have time to teach. Teachers and administrators share decision-making for curriculum, testing, and resources. A system like this must have school environments where the intellectual and developmental needs of those students in attendance are met.

Columbus North
International School

Successful schools must also have:

- **Communities with a culture of high expectations.** In a successful school, everyone—students, educators, administrators, families, and community members—holds high expectations. School staff demonstrates the belief that all students can learn and achieve. Everyone in the school community meets expectations through collaborative and growth-oriented teaching and learning practices.

- **A climate that is conducive to teaching and learning.** Schools need to be safe and supportive learning communities for students and educators. School facilities need to be well-maintained and have up-to-date technology. Everyone who enters these schools—students, educators, administrators, families and community members—should be heard and valued, and feel welcomed, trusted, and engaged in the school.

- **Academic programs that are well-rounded, of high quality, and meet the multiple needs of the students in attendance.** Successful schools ensure that all children are able to meet their potential. Curriculum, core and electives, for all students and all content areas, is consistent with high standards. All assessments are developmentally appropriate and aligned to the subject being taught, and the results of assessments are used to inform instructional decisions for children rather than to punish students and teachers.

- **Equitable, appropriate and reliable funding and resources.** Elected officials at the state and district level would see to it that each school has adequate funding and appropriate adjustments are made based on the size, location and type of school. Political dynamics would not prevent adequate funding from occurring, and funding should not be subject to the political whims of elected officials.

Ohio's students would be well served if policymakers in this state emulated systemic educational improvement efforts that have had success elsewhere. One widely acclaimed success story comes from Finland, a once poorly ranked low-quality bureaucratic system that was transformed into a model of a high-performing system known for its commitment to equity, inclusion and professionalism.

(Please see Appendix F for more information on Finland's transformation.)

WHAT OHIO CAN LEARN FROM FINLAND

In researching successful education systems, the Commission paid particular attention to the Finnish success story. As measured by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Finland saw its students' scores rise dramatically between the early 1970s and the late 1990s. Unlike the general western model of education, which is based on standardization, emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and consequential accountability, the Finnish system is built on principles of flexibility and diversity, an emphasis on learning a broad knowledge base, and trusting the professionalism of teachers and administrators.

As cited by Stanford education researcher Linda Darling-Hammond, a recent analysis of the Finnish system summarized its core principles as follows:

- Resources for those who need them most.

- High standards and supports for special needs.

- Qualified teachers.

- Evaluation of education.

- Balancing decentralization and centralization.

According to Darling-Hammond, the "process of change has been almost the reverse of policies in the United States. Over the past 40 years, Finland has shifted from a highly centralized system emphasizing external testing to a more localized system in which highly trained teachers design curriculum around the very lean national standards. This new system is implemented through equitable funding and extensive preparation for all teachers." She further notes that the focus of the limited testing, conducted with samples of students as is done with NAEP exams in the United States, is "to drive learning and problem-solving, rather than punishment."

HOW SHOULD SCHOOL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

A high-quality accountability system must provide a complete picture of school success. It should encourage shared responsibility among all stakeholders—students educators, administrators, families, community members—and would make elected officials and policy makers accountable to the communities they serve. Information on the success of a given school should include the voices of students, educators and families in addition to attendance rates and standardized test scores.

HIGH STANDARDS OF SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS CAN BE MEASURED BY:

- **Access to a well-rounded, high-quality, and inclusive curriculum.** The primary purpose of schools is to educate students, with curriculum that includes language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as foreign language, business, engineering, visual art, music, physical education and other electives. That curriculum would be assessed using multiple sources of evidence such as portfolios, projects, demonstrations, and diagnostic assessments. Assessments must be used to guide instruction, to measure student learning and growth, and as something that students can learn from as they determine where they need to focus their attention.

- **School and community safety records.** Schools must be intellectually, emotionally, and physically safe to be productive places of student learning. Students need safe ways to travel to and from school. School facilities must be well-maintained and clean to ensure an optimal learning environment.

- **Learning and working conditions that are monitored.** Bullying and harassment rates are addressed with an eye toward prevention. Student attendance rates are also monitored in order to intervene early when habitual absence indicates disengagement from learning or problems at home.

- **Measurement of student, family, and community engagement.** When students are meaningfully engaged in learning, they are more likely to do well in school, graduate, and achieve success beyond graduation. There are a wide variety of research-based student engagement measures, including those based on self-reporting through surveys and observation by teachers. However measured, paying close attention to the degree to which students are actively involved in learning is essential. Additionally, there are multiple opportunities to invite and engage parents, guardians, and community members who may or may not have children attending school but who have time and talent to share in the work and activities of schools.

- **Behavior and discipline record transparency.** Records on student behavior and discipline show whether a school is a healthy and inviting place for students to learn and educators to work. Where differences in addressing discipline issues exist, particularly when those differences fall into race, ethnic, gender and poverty categories, more professional development must be implemented with a special emphasis on alternate methods of addressing student behaviors such as restorative discipline or Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS).

- **Complete and accurate reporting to the public:** School success should be reported to the community and should provide a complete picture of the educational opportunities available to the children, not just results of standardized tests. Rather than a standardized report card with letter grades, every school and district should make public a report that includes an array of data that measure how they are ensuring all students are provided the opportunities they need to be successful. Student demographic information should include the number of times a student moves; the number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches; initiatives that address the emotional and social needs of students; measures of student engagement; achievement levels of all students; the number of fully-qualified educators delivering instruction; the number of education specialists in a school; the number of para-educators who are supporting students; student attendance and graduation rates; and the access student and staff have to technology. Schools could also report on the access that is available to high-quality, publicly-funded early childhood programs, access to full-day, developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs, access to higher-level or higher education courses, parent and community engagement activities, and career and technical program opportunities.

- **Sampling assessment options:** Use of sampling methods of standardized tests so groups of students, rather than all students, are tested, such as those used to measure state-level education progress by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT ALL SCHOOLS CONTINUE TO SUCCEED?

This high-quality system is designed to promote the educational growth of all students and the professional growth of all educators; provide support to children, educators and schools that demonstrate need; ensure that adequate and equitable resources are allocated for schools; and encourage and support educators to have the authority to promote educational excellence. Through the collection and reporting of meaningful data, the community will understand the needs of the students and educators in a school and can help to advocate for needed resources.

To ensure continued growth for schools a high-quality system engages in:

■ **Annual reviews for all schools.** All schools collect and report meaningful data annually. Educators analyze that data to build upon successes and to determine where more support is needed. Reported data includes opportunity indicators like those listed in the NEA Opportunity Dashboard. (See Appendix H.)

■ **Regular reviews of curriculum and assessments.** To ensure that all students are reaching their full potential, curriculum, assessments and experiences must be regularly reviewed so the learning program is aligned with current, high standards, is developmentally appropriate, and engages students and educators in learning and teaching.

■ **School-based, collaborative inquiry with community support.** If reported data highlights areas of challenge, educators would work with each other and, if necessary, with an external school improvement support team to create a plan for corrective action. Support and resources would be provided to ensure that staff can carry out needed steps.

Melinda DePietro (Boardman)

■ **Implementation of a collaboratively created, externally monitored corrective plan.** If a persistent challenge exists, school staff will implement a corrective plan that has been created collaboratively. Staff would agree to work on meeting specific benchmarks and would have support in meeting those goals. The corrective plan would be externally monitored by a locally selected group of stakeholders. If the corrective plan is deemed ineffective, potential changes to the school system would be formally presented to the community that would then engage in a consensus decision-making process with all stakeholders to begin the process of change.

When schools are identified as in need of improvement, principals and educators must be given the opportunity to work with parents and members of the community to pinpoint problems and implement solutions that meet the unique needs of their students. It is critical that they have the time and resources needed to make improvements. Takeover and restructuring models that cause instability and silence the voice of a school community simply don't work.

A high-quality system would acknowledge that there are struggling schools and that they should be given appropriate resources and support to improve. This system assumes that educators can effectively help to diagnose school problems and suggest solutions. The goal is for all schools to be able to provide the best educational program for all students.

CONCLUSION

A public education system that educates students from pre-kindergarten through high school also serves a larger purpose: the continued improvement of society. Toward that end, students must have the best and the brightest teachers and support staff to help them achieve success; educators should be well-prepared and have the support needed to help their students reach their full potential. Ideally, the system would have the support of and be accountable to the community and elected officials can be counted on to support our students throughout their school experience. Education has and will always be a collaboration of all stakeholders, who must share in the responsibility to deliver the best to our society.

WHAT SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LOOKS LIKE

The Center for Popular Democracy, in its February 2016 report *Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools*, notes that for over a decade, "the dominant idea about how to improve outcomes for children and youth has focused on control and compliance; holding adults accountable for raising test scores." This is the approach that undergirds Ohio's law requiring that Academic Distress Commissions be given extraordinary powers to restructure schools when a district's report card rating falls below an acceptable level for an extended period of time. This approach has not proven to help our most vulnerable students—particularly students in high-poverty communities—find success.

The Community Learning Center model, by contrast, produces tangible positive results. (Because the term "community schools" is used to describe charter schools in state law, using the term "community learning centers" may help avoid confusion in Ohio; the two terms are used interchangeably in other states.) Community Learning Centers "combine challenging and culturally relevant learning opportunities with the academic and social supports each and every child needs to reach their potential."

Wolfe Street Academy, a public elementary school in Baltimore, Maryland, is an example of a successful Community Learning Center. Nine years ago, 90% of its students were living in poverty, 60% spoke a language other than English in the home, and student mobility was over 50%, with less than half of its students remaining at the school for three or more years. Wolfe Street Academy was ranked 77th in the district in academic measures, and only half of its children were proficient in reading in 5th grade.

In 2014, after eight years as a Community Learning Center, Wolfe Street ranks 2nd in the city academically, its mobility rate has fallen to 8.8%, and 95% of 5th grade students are reading at a proficient level. This transformation occurred because school leaders and staff worked with community partners to identify and provide resources that students needed. This community engagement process led to an expansion of after school programming, including private tutoring for identified students and field trip experiences for all; the opening of a fully-stocked reading room and creation of student book clubs and lending programs; breakfast, lunch and dinner provided daily at the school and quarterly fresh food distribution for families in coordination with the Maryland Food Bank Emergency Food Pantry site; the addition of a Community School Site Coordinator to connect social work and mental health services to students who need them; and a new partnership with the University of Maryland School of Dentistry to provide annual dental screenings for all students.

Similar successes have happened as a result of public-private partnerships in schools around the country, including here in Ohio. Common research-based strategies that have proven successful for all of them include having curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging; an emphasis on high-quality teaching, not high-stakes testing; wrap-around supports and opportunities that support academics; positive discipline practices; authentic parent and community engagement; and inclusive school leadership.

For additional information, please see the full report at http://bit.ly/TransformStrugglingToThriving.
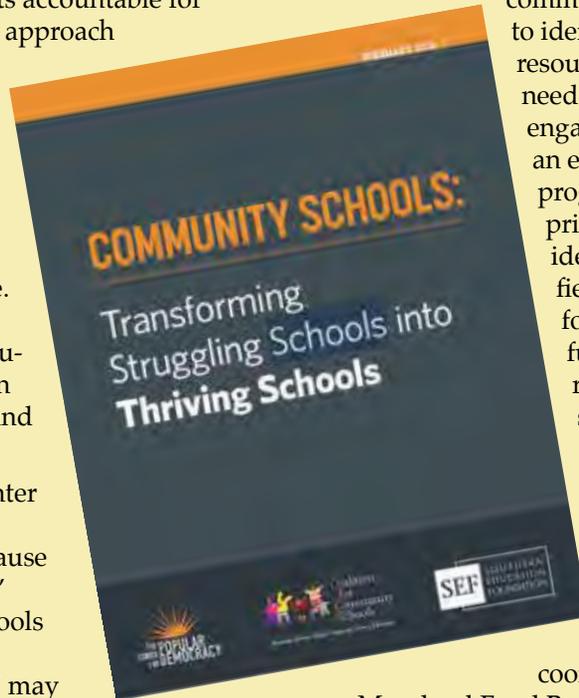
Resources

2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Trends in Child Well-Being,
The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015.

2015 Report Card data broken down by district/school type:
http://bit.ly/OHReportCardsDistrictandType

ASCD source on qualities of effective school principals:
http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108003.aspx

Beyond Differences site—example of a program that combats social exclusion/bullying:
http://www.beyonddifferences.org/about/

Census Data on Students in Poverty in Ohio (map)**:**
http://bit.ly/OHCensusDataStudentPoverty

Center for Popular Democracy report on Community Schools
(referenced in Baltimore school sidebar feature): http://bit.ly/TransformStrugglingToThriving

Children's Defense Fund Brief, ***Addressing Children's Trauma: A Toolkit for Ohio's Schools***,
July 2015.

Current Sample District Report Card from ODE site:
http://bit.ly/OHDistrictReportCards

Current State of Education in Ohio:
An Ohio Education Association Report to the OEA Commission on Student Success,
July 31, 2015.

Fall Enrollment (Headcount)—October 2014 Public Districts and Buildings,
The Ohio Department of Education, Enrollment Data

Howard Fleeter/Ohio Education Policy Institute Analysis of 2015 School District Report Card Results:
http://bit.ly/OH2015ReportCardAnalysis

Improving Student Learning: Applying Deming's Quality Principles in Classrooms
by Lee Jenkins (ASQC Quality Press, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1997)

NCES website article on NAEP sampling process:
http://bit.ly/NAEPSamplingProcess

NEA Accountability Task Force Report:
http://bit.ly/NEAAccountabilityTaskForceReport

***NEA Accountability Task Force Report*, NEA Center for Great Public Schools.**

NEA ESSA Fact Sheet on State Accountability Systems:
http://bit.ly/ESSAAccountabilityFactSheet

NEA Foundation summary of Columbus PAR Program:
http://bit.ly/NEAFoundationPAR

Notes and comments from the Commission on Student Success Task Force members,
October, 2015.

ODE School District Typography Map:
http://bit.ly/OHMapDistrictStudentPoverty

***Ohio Testing Report and Recommendations*, Ohio Department of Education**,
January 2015.

OTES Framework:
http://bit.ly/OTESFramework2015

Teacher Unions and Educational Reform: A Research Review,
Bascia, Nina and Osmond, Pamela.
National Education Association, Center for Great Public Schools, Research Department.

Appendix A: Background on the creation of The OEA Commission on Student Success and its members

The Ohio Education Association established a Commission on Student Success for the purpose of recommending a set of comprehensive policies as an alternative to Ohio's current standardized test-driven system of public school accountability. The driving force behind this report came from the approval of the following New Business Item at the May 2015 Spring Representative Assembly in Columbus, Ohio:

The Ohio Education Association establishes a Commission on Student Success for the purpose of recommending a comprehensive policy agenda as an alternative to Ohio's current standardized test-driven system. The commission's charge will be to make recommendations on key components of a high quality system of public education that inspires students' natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn.

The commission will recommend legislation to specifically address and align the following three components: (1) elements of student assessment system designed to provide educators data they need to support meaningful student learning; (2) elements of an educator evaluation system that ensures every student has a caring, qualified and committed teacher; and (3) elements of a school accountability system that ensures equitable access to support, tools and time to learn for all students.

The commission shall draw from research on best practices and utilize the guidance of external experts when making its recommendations, and such recommendations shall be consistent with OEA's mission, vision, values and policies.

The OEA President shall invite nominations and applications from a diverse mix of OEA members with expertise on issues related to the charge of the commission and shall recommend approximately twelve members to the June 6, 2015 meeting of the OEA Board of Directors. Following Board approval, the commission shall commence its work with the support of appropriate staff in order to present recommendations to the Board by January 2016.

The OEA President invited nominations and applications from a diverse mix of OEA members with professional educational expertise on issues related to the charge of the commission. The following educators were approved for appointment to the Commission at the June 6, 2015 meeting of the OEA Board of Directors: Chairperson Debra McDonald (Wayne County Career Center), Jillian Baker (Springfield-Lucas County), Cassandra Daniels (Columbus), Matthew DeMatteis (Dublin), Tricia Ebner (Lake-Stark County), Julia Fischer (Kings), Tracie Helmbrecht (Columbus), Deborah Jackson (Princeton), Melissa Kendralla (South-Western), Lori Michalec (Tallmadge), David Miller (Retired), and Kari Walchalk (Field). The three OEA officers—President Becky Higgins, Vice President Scott DiMauro and Secretary-Treasurer Tim Myers—were appointed as ex-officio members of the Commission. The commission commenced its work with the support of appropriate staff and the final report was approved by the OEA Board of Directors at its March 19, 2016 meeting.

MEMBERS OF THE OEA COMMISSION ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Debra McDonald (Chairperson), teaches at the Wayne County Career Center, preparing high school students as future early childhood educators. The 2014 Ohio Teacher of the Year, Debra serves on the Ohio Educator Standards Board and chairs its Licensure Committee. She was recently awarded the prestigious NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence, the highest national honor given by the NEA Foundation, and will be joining some of the top educators from across the country as part of the Foundation's Global Learning Fellowship program in Peru in the summer of 2016. Debra is an active member of the Wayne County Joint Vocational School Education Association where she has led her district's Employee Performance Evaluation Committee.

Dr. Cassandra Daniels teaches Science and Social Studies at Champion Middle School in Columbus, where she serves as a Resident Educator mentor and a member of the NEA Teacher Leadership Initiative team. Cassandra holds a Doctorate of Arts degree in early education and is currently studying for a second Doctorate in administrative education. A successful foster parent for seven years, Cassandra has deep connections to her community that have enabled her to build strong relationships with students and parents throughout her 14-year teaching career. Cassandra is an active leader in the Columbus Education Association.

Matthew DeMatteis, a fifth grade teacher at Eli Pinney Elementary in Dublin, Ohio, is an accomplished teacher of 14 years. He has aided in growing and changing the delivery model in Dublin City Schools to one that focuses on the whole child. Matt is a well sought after presenter at national and local conferences and was featured in a recent documentary about teaching students to think divergently. As a teacher leader, Matt is a lifelong learner who has studied the social and emotional aspects of learning. His unique assessment practices include the introduction of student led exhibitions of learning, where the process of learning is celebrated with parents and the community.

Tricia Ebner, a National Board Certified Teacher, is a gifted intervention specialist at Lake Middle School in Hartville. Tricia has served on Ohio's Educator Leader Cadre, supporting implementation of Ohio's new learning standards and assessments. She has also worked with Student Achievement Partners, the Center for Teaching Quality and the Collaborative for Student Success, supporting fellow educators in understanding assessment literacy. With 24 years of experience in reading, English Language Arts and gifted education, Tricia is also active in her local union, the Lake Local Education Association.

Julia Webb Fischer brings the perspective of both classroom teacher and local school board member to the OEA Commission on Student Success. Since 1986, Julia has taught at J.F. Burns Elementary School in the Kings Local School District, with all but one of those years in first grade. A certified reading specialist, she has expertise in early literacy and the impact of standardized testing on young children. Julia has served on numerous committees for her district regarding curriculum, literacy, and standard-based report cards. She is currently serving on her district and school PBIS committees. Active in her community, Julia also serves as chair of the Bellevue (Kentucky) Independent School District Board of Education and City of Bellevue Education and Quality of Life Committee.

Tracie Helmbrecht is a National Board Certified Teacher in the Columbus City School District where she teaches 7th grade social studies at Arts Impact Middle School. A proud first-generation college graduate, Tracie has a wide range of professional experience, including service as a reading specialist, literacy coach, curriculum coordinator, and mentor. Tracie was part of the inaugural cohort of Columbus Education Association members participating in NEA's Teacher Leadership Initiativeand has extensive experience training active and pre-service teachers, including as an adjunct instructor at Columbus State Community College.

Dr. Deborah Jackson, a longtime association activist at the local, state and national level, currently serves as an elementary music educator in the Princeton City Schools. In addition to classroom teaching experience, Deborah has also served as a principal in an urban Title I elementary school with a student poverty rate of 98%. Deborah has a wealth of experience using data to support student success which informs her advocacy for a balanced approach to student assessment. Dr. Jackson is an adjunct professor at Central State University, a historically black university located in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Melissa Kendralla, chairperson of the OEA Professional Efficacy Core Function Committee, serves as a teacher of marketing at Westland High School in the South-Western City School District near Columbus. Melissa is a third-career teacher who has provided extensive leadership and training to her colleagues on the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, Student Learning Objectives, and Resident Educator mentoring. She has achieved "Master Teacher" status in her district and been actively involved in her local and district associations as well as with the Ohio Center for Law Related Education and the Grove City Kiwanis.

Lori Michalec is the 2015 Ohio Teacher of the Year. A high school English teacher from Tallmadge, Lori has taught all levels of students in grades 9 through 12 during her 15-year education career. In her building, she spearheaded a building-wide initiative on reading assessment across grade levels and curriculum. This is but one example of the extensive experience she has leading the profession in curriculum development, assessment, evaluation, and the use of data. A published author on differentiated instruction, Lori's work has taken her to Columbus and Washington, DC to advocate for student-focused education policy improvements.

David Miller retired in 2015 with 52 years of education experience, including 35 in the classroom at the high school and college levels and 17 as a trainer in the corporate world. He has developed K-12 curriculum in alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) prevention, character development and service learning and conducted teacher training workshops in all 50 states and six other countries. A longtime mentor to other teachers, David spent the last 17 years of his career teaching English at Worthington Kilbourne High School.

Kari Walchalk, a Title I reading teacher from the Field Local School District in Mogadore, is a longtime association leader. She is a former president of the Field Local Teachers Association and current chairperson of the North Eastern Ohio Education Association Resolutions Committee. Her leadership on professional issues is wide-ranging, including service providing professional development on reading assessment, teacher evaluation, and effective classroom instructional strategies. Kari has a particular interest in accountability systems, having studied the works of Douglas Reeves, James Popham and James Stronge in her professional learning journey.

Becky Higgins (Ex Officio), serves as OEA President. She is nearing the end of her first three-year term of office after spending 19 years teaching first grade in the Copley-Fairlawn schools near Akron. Becky has served as President of the Copley Teachers' Association, Member of the Board of Directors and President of NEOEA. She chairs the OEA Board of Directors and FCPE State Council. Becky also represents the OEA as a member of the Executive Committee of We Are Ohio and Support Ohio Schools.

Scott DiMauro (Ex Officio), OEA Vice President, is a 25-year veteran educator. Scott is a high school social studies teacher with the Worthington Schools, now completing a three-year term as OEA Vice President. Previously, he served as President of the Worthington Education Association and as President for Central OEA/NEA. Scott chairs the OEA Legislative Committee, leads Healthcare and Pension Advocates for STRS, and serves as liaison to numerous coalition groups. He is past chair of NEA's Legislative Committee.

Tim Myers (Ex Officio), a 36-year veteran middle school science and technology teacher from Elida, is now in his fourth year as OEA Secretary-Treasurer. Tim served on the OEA Board of Directors as a Northwest OEA representative for five years and as an NEA Director for six years. He has represented Ohio's current and retired educators on the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio Board of Trustees since 2008. He served as Board Chair from July 2010 until September 2011. He is currently Chair of the NEA's Pension Trustees Caucus.

Susan Larson (Newark)

Appendix B: Background on the Every Student Succeeds Act

After 14 years of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) places the power of decision making with those who know students' needs the best—local educators, parents and communities. ESSA gives these stakeholders the opportunities to influence policy dealing with student, educator, and school district accountability. While the details of the new law are still unfolding, the Ohio Education Association has identified key opportunities for stakeholders to develop and advocate for changes to Ohio's current test and punish accountability system.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF STUDENTS

STAYS THE SAME

ESSA maintains the NCLB requirements that states test students in reading and math annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school. In science, districts must test students at least once in grades 3-5, grades 6-9, and grades 10-12.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF TEACHERS

STAYS THE SAME

States are still required to report on teachers' professional qualifications which includes percentage of teachers who are inexperienced, hold temporary credentials and/or teach outside their field. The state must use this data to ensure low income and minority students are not served at a disproportionate rate by ineffective, out of field and/or inexperienced teachers. Ineffective replaces 'unqualified.' Maintains para-educator qualifications.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

STAYS THE SAME

States must still report graduation percentages, test participation rates and results for schools and districts disaggregated by race, gender, poverty, English Language Learners, gifted, and students with disabilities.

Each state must set college and career standards.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

The federal Department of Education (DOE) may not require or mandate the type of assessment. This allows states to choose assessments driven by teaching and learning. It streamlines the amount of testing to remove unnecessary and/or duplicative tests under a state cap on standardized tests. It also requires parents to be informed of opt-out policies where state and local policies permit.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

Prohibits the DOE from mandating teacher evaluations or defining teacher effectiveness. Eliminates the federal requirement of Highly Qualified Teacher status. Strengthens teacher induction and mentoring.

Defines professional development based upon research-based standards. Allows district funds to be used for enhancing collaboration and teacher-led professional development. Expands the reach of collective bargaining upon targeted supports, Title I, Teacher Incentive Funds and similar provisions.

Requires consultation with associations representing educators in multiple places to ensure voice in decision making.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

School Improvement Grant (SIG) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) end. Prohibits the US Secretary of Education from mandating accountability parameters and criteria. Requires another state determined indicator for elementary and middle schools. Requires at least one indicator of school success or student support.

Struggling schools fall into two categories:

1. Comprehensive support and improvement identified every three years by being the lowest 5% of Title schools or High Schools where less than 67% students graduated, or

2. Targeted support and improvement identified annually where any subgroup of students consistently underperforms or performs as poorly as the lowest performing schools in the state.

For lowest performing 5% of schools, states and school districts must develop and implement a support and improvement plan in partnership with stakeholders (including teachers, school leaders and parents). These plans must be approved by the school district and state and must include evidence based interventions, be based upon school-level needs assessments and identify resource inequities. Such schools have up to four years as determined by the state to address challenges. After that time, the state may take more rigorous actions.

State-designed Accountability Systems

The Every Student Succeeds Act calls for state-designed accountability systems, ends the era of No Child Left Behind's one-size-fits-all approach to accountability, and severely limits the U.S. Department of Education's power to make policy—e.g., by granting waivers to the law.

▶ New **state-designed accountability systems** must include:
  ○ Reading and math assessments
  ○ High school graduation rates
  ○ Another state determined indicator for elementary and middle schools
  ○ English language proficiency
  ○ At least one indicator of school success or student support
    (Note: the first 4 indicators in the aggregate must weigh more than the 5th on school success/student support)

▶ Each state must set **college- and career-ready standards,** as well as goals and targets for progress within student subgroups on some measures.

▶ Struggling schools are divided into two categories:
  ○ **Comprehensive support and improvement,** defined as the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools; high schools where less than 67 percent of the students graduate; and schools where a subgroup of students (e.g., low-income, special needs) consistently underperform on indicators in the aggregate. Schools are identified every three years.
  ○ **Targeted support and improvement,** defined as schools where any subgroup of students consistently underperforms or performs as poorly as the lowest-performing schools in the state. Schools are identified annually.

▶ School improvement plans—developed by districts for those in the comprehensive category and by the schools themselves for those in the targeted category—must include **evidence-based interventions** and address **resource inequities.**
  ○ If a school in the comprehensive category fails to improve within four years, the state must take more rigorous action.
  ○ If a school in the targeted category fails to improve, additional action must be taken after a district-determined number of years.

▶ Prohibits the **U.S. Secretary of Education** from mandating accountability parameters and criteria, the weight given to different elements of accountability plans, how teachers are evaluated, what constitutes teacher effectiveness, and more

December 2015

Student Opportunity

For the first time in ESEA's long history, the Every Student Succeeds Act requires state accountability systems to include at least one indicator of school success or student support—a major improvement over No Child Left Behind's one-size-fits-all approach to accountability and the U.S. Department of Education's criteria for granting waivers to the law.

KEY PROVISIONS

▸ To help ensure **resource equity and opportunity for all students,** regardless of ZIP code, state-designed accountability systems must include at least one "dashboard" indicator of school success or student support—for example, access to advanced coursework, fine arts, and regular physical education; school climate and safety; discipline policies; bullying prevention; and the availability of counselors or nurses

▸ Requires elementary, middle, and high schools to use **multiple measures of student success,** not just scores on statewide standardized tests

▸ Enhances access to **early childhood education**

▸ Creates a full-service **community schools program** to address health, nutrition, and other needs that can undermine student learning

▸ Takes steps toward increasing **transparency and accountability in charter schools**—for example, requiring input from parents and community members

▸ Continues **"maintenance of effort"** requirements to ensure that federal funds are not used to reduce state and local investments in education

▸ Does NOT include **Title I "portability"**—a misguided approach that would dilute the impact of Title I, harm students attending Title I schools, and do nothing to address the real issue: providing adequate funding to help the students most in need succeed

December 2015

In March 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in DeRolph v. State that Ohio did not "provide for a thorough and efficient system of common schools" as required by the Ohio Constitution. The Court ordered "a complete systematic overhaul" to remedy the state's unconstitutional school funding system. The Ohio General Assembly responded with a number of changes, but the Court ruled in May 2000 that further work was needed, and it gave the General Assembly an additional year to address deficiencies.

The "complete systematic overhaul" ordered in DeRolph I and II was supposed to include but was not limited to: 1) determining a base level of per-pupil funding predicated on the resources required and outcomes expected of a thorough and efficient system; 2) adequate funding for education in every school district; 3) reduction in reliance on property taxes; 4) elimination of forced borrowing to meet ordinary school district expenses; 5) adequate funding for school facilities; 6) elimination of unfunded mandates; 7) elimination of phantom revenue; 8) provision for a statewide school facilities assessment; 9) provision for strict statewide academic standards, including input and output standards.

Two subsequent Ohio Supreme Court decisions upheld the DeRolph I and II decisions and found that the state's school funding system was still unconstitutional.

On May 19, 2003, the Court released the case from its jurisdiction, essentially ending further litigation in the case, but it reiterated its earlier findings and directed the General Assembly "to enact a school-financing scheme that is thorough and efficient, as explained in DeRolph I, DeRolph II, and the accompanying concurrences."

Currently, Ohio's public schools receive money from taxes levied at the local level, from the state based on a complex formula, and from the federal government. The State Share Index (SSI) ranges from 5% for wealthier districts to as much as 90% for poorer districts. SSI impacts total state funding for districts by reducing calculated state funding in several areas by anywhere from 10 to 95%, depending on the district's wealth. For example, Allen East Local School District (Allen County), a relatively low property wealth district, obtains only 25% of its funding from local sources; whereas, Cuyahoga Heights Local School District obtains 57% of its funding from local sources.

It should be noted that significant amounts of the funding a district receives from the state may be deducted for students who attend charter schools or private schools. In practice, these per-pupil deductions by the state are almost always more than the per-pupil amount the state sends to the district, which increases the burden on local funding as more students attend charters or use vouchers.

A DECADE OF SCHOOL FUNDING SHARES AND STATE RANKINGS

OHIO	Local %	Rank	State %	Rank	Fed %	Rank
2013-14	42.2%	#24	48%	#27	9.8%	#24
2012-13	42.8%	#25	47.6%	#27	9.6%	#26
2011-12	44.8%	#24	45.9%	#27	9.3%	#30
2010-11	44.6%	#22	45.5%	#27	9.9%	#33
2009-10	45.7%	#21	44.1%	#28	10.2%	#30
2008-09	46.4%	#22	45.4%	#29	8.2%	#35
2007-08	48.3%	#19	43.6%	#33	8.2%	#30
2006-07	50.3%	#17	42%	#34	7.7%	#34
2005-06	47.2%	#22	46%	#28	6.4%	#45
2004-05	47.8%	#20	46%	#28	6.3%	#46
2003-04	48%	#18	45.7%	#30	6.3%	#44
2002-03	48.6%	#17	44.9%	#33	6.3%	#43

Ohio school districts have experienced little to no increase in their share of state funding and continue to depend heavily on local sources of revenue.

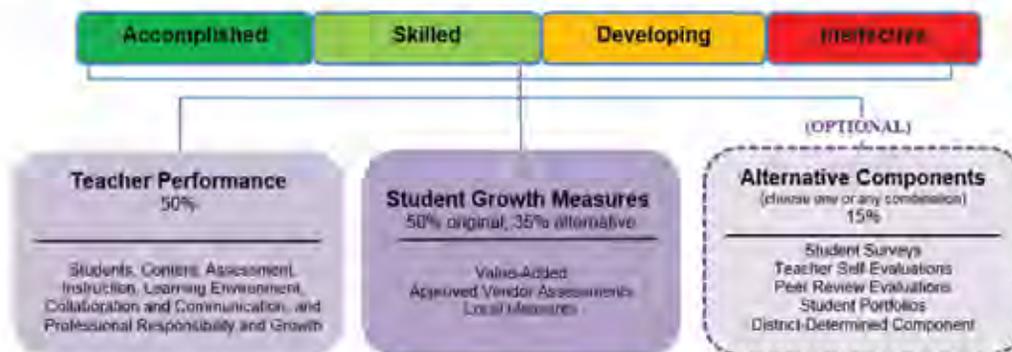*Source: NEA Rankings of States & Estimates of School Statistics; 2004-05 thru 2014-15.*

Evaluation Framework with Optional Alternative Components for Professional Staff (Teachers)

The State Board of Education recognizes the importance of evaluating teachers for the purposes of rewarding excellence, improving the quality of instruction students receive, improving student learning, strengthening professional proficiency including identifying and correcting deficiencies, and for informing employment decisions.

Each teacher will be evaluated according to Ohio Revised Code and the Evaluation Framework with Optional Alternative Components (see below), which are aligned with the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* adopted under state law. Each teacher will be evaluated using the multiple factors set forth in the State Board of Education's teacher evaluation framework.

Final Summative Evaluation Rating

Accomplished	Skilled	Developing	Ineffective

Teacher Performance
50%

Students, Content, Assessment, Instruction, Learning Environment, Collaboration and Communication, and Professional Responsibility and Growth

Student Growth Measures
50% original, 35% alternative

Value-Added
Approved Vendor Assessments
Local Measures

Alternative Components (OPTIONAL)
(choose one or any combination)
15%

Student Surveys
Teacher Self-Evaluations
Peer Review Evaluations
Student Portfolios
District-Determined Component

The evaluation factors are weighted as follows:

1. If a district chooses the original framework, the teacher performance measure and student growth measure shall be 50% each.

2. If a district chooses the alternative framework:
   - The teacher performance measure shall account for 50%;
   - The student academic growth measure shall account for 35%; and
   - The chosen alternative component(s) shall account for 15%.

Student academic growth will be measured through multiple measures that may include value-added scores from state assessments administered during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years on evaluations for teachers for which value-added scores are available if a memorandum of understanding is in place. For teachers of subjects where value-added scores from state assessments are not available, local boards of education may administer assessments chosen from the Ohio Department of Education's approved assessment list and/or local measures of student growth using state-designed criteria and guidance.

The teacher's performance rating will be combined with the results of student growth measures and if selected, the alternative component, to produce a summative evaluation rating according to ODE requirements.

Teachers with a final summative rating of accomplished will develop a professional growth plan* and may choose their credentialed evaluator for the evaluation cycle.

Teachers with a final summative rating of skilled will develop a professional growth plan* collaboratively with their credentialed evaluator and will have input on their credentialed evaluator for the evaluation cycle.

Teachers with a final summative rating of developing will develop a professional growth plan* with their credentialed evaluator. The administration will assign the credentialed evaluator for the evaluation cycle and approve the professional growth plan*. Teachers with a final summative rating of ineffective will develop an improvement plan with their credentialed evaluator. The administration will assign the credentialed evaluator for the evaluation cycle and approve the improvement plan.

*Districts have discretion to place a teacher on an improvement plan at any time based on deficiencies in any individual component of the evaluation system subject to collective bargaining.

Additionally, at the local level, the board of education will include in its evaluation policy, procedures for using the evaluation results for retention and promotion decisions and for removal of poorly performing teachers. Seniority will not be the basis for teacher retention decisions, except when deciding between teachers who have comparable evaluations. The local board of education will also provide for the allocation of financial resources to support professional development.

For districts choosing the alternative framework, the Ohio Department of Education has approved instruments available for optional use for four of the five alternative components including student surveys, teacher self-evaluations, peer review evaluations and student portfolios. Districts may also choose to use any other fifth component determined appropriate by the district board or school governing authority; however, districts may not use the teacher performance or student growth measure component as the alternative measure.

Adopted October 9, 2012   LEGAL REFS. ORC 3319.111; 3319.112; 3319.114
SBOE amended September 2013, September 2014 and November 2015

- **Pre-Service Phase:** this covers the time when an undergraduate teacher is preparing to enter the profession and should include opportunities for classroom experiences and to be supervised by an experienced, compensated teacher;

- **Induction Phase:** during the first four years of residency, there should be one-to-one mentoring and the means for mentors and new teachers to collaborate and observe together. with the gradual release of new educators as they grow more skilled and confident in their teaching practice through the earning of a professional teaching license;

- **Professional Phase:** from the time an educator first earns his or her professional teaching license and throughout the remainder of a teacher's careers unless they choose to earn additional credentials toward their license;

- **Accomplished Phase:** after several years of teaching, the obtaining of a Master's Degree, and demonstration of effective practice and is sharing professional skills, knowledge and expertise with colleagues;

- **Leadership Phase:** after several years teaching, the obtaining of a Master's Degree, and demonstration of effective teaching practices specifically by holding active National Board for the Teaching Profession certification, OR successful completion of the Master Teacher portfolio and by holding the Teacher Leader Endorsement, and through the sharing of professional skills, knowledge and expertise with colleagues.

Source: NEA Accountability Task Force Report, page 15

Katie Baldner (Little Miami)

Peer Assistance and Review: All Teachers on the Road to Instructional Leadership in Columbus (OH) "100% Project Schools"
Source: The NEA Foundation, 2011 (republished with permission of The NEA Foundation)

Great teachers may be born, but they are also made, requiring many years of training and experience and commitment to the field and to students. They provide instruction that is both "learning centered," focused on the development of knowledge acquisition and content, and "learner-centered," responding to individual students' experiences, interests, talents, needs, and cultural backgrounds[i] (Darling-Hammond, 2006). A tall order indeed given class sizes, the diversity represented in classrooms today, and the variable quality of pre-service teacher preparation. Great teaching is possible, seen every day in thousands of schools where expert veteran and new or novice teachers have come together to prepare their students for college, work and life.

A question that continues to loom in districts nationwide is how best to support the professional growth of novice teachers, so that they become experts in their field and instructional leaders in their classrooms and the greater school community. Other professions use well-developed and structured apprenticeships, residencies and induction to ensure that novices receive ongoing supervision and support for improvement of their practice. The practice of medicine—with its well-supervised field experiences and extended residencies—is a good case in point. The education and resulting life opportunities of our children create stakes that are just as high as good medical care. We know that providing new teachers with support in the form of induction programs, mentoring and coaching, and standards-based teacher supervision and evaluation improves teaching quality and outcomes for students. **Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), a program of structured mentorship, observation and rigorous, standards-based evaluation of teachers by teachers, is among the strongest ways to develop great teachers.**

PAR: MORE THAN EVALUATION

Districts such as Columbus City Schools have instituted PAR as a comprehensive professional growth system that reflects the complex enterprise of teaching and learning. Like other districts that have implemented PAR, Columbus designed its program to improve teaching quality by having expert teachers evaluate and mentor their novice peers. Although novice teachers generally receive between 15 and 20 formal visits per year by the expert teachers assigned to them, actual contact time can be much higher, with daily formal and informal communications depending upon the novice teacher's needs.

The Columbus union and district leadership understand the need for a solid foundation for ongoing development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to teach effectively, and for over 20 years now, have instituted PAR for first year teachers. With funding from the NEA Foundation's Closing the Achievement Gaps Initiative, Columbus has developed a second year of PAR (PAR II) in selected schools that comprise the 100% Project to help teachers tackle head-on some of the more nuanced aspects of their practice.

Columbus City Schools Superintendent, Dr. Gene Harris, articulates the power of PAR to build teachers' capacity to deliver the complex and differentiated instruction required for 21st century learning:

> We started PAR for new teachers in their first year more than 20 years ago—so Columbus recognized early on that teachers do not simply finish their pre-service education and are ready to go. The expert teacher provides support, guides, observes, gives feedback, and models effective teaching. This is the "assistance" in PAR. As for the evaluation component, when new teachers are evaluated, it as much about how far they have come along in a year...In the second year of PAR, novice teachers become more reflective and focus their attention on specific areas for improvement—again, under the close guidance of their expert, supervising teacher. (G. Harris, personal communication, August 29, 2011).

These practices are validated directly and indirectly by research. For example, findings from a study on standards-based teacher evaluation conducted by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education illustrate the benefits for students. The study found that teacher scores produced by these evaluation systems are positively associated with the achievement of their students (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Milanowski, Kimball & White, 2004). A seminal study conducted by the Center for Organization and Restructuring of Schools found that the development of a shared vision for high quality instruction and learning, possible through, for example, PAR's standards-based evaluation and structured time for teacher-to-teacher support and exchange, is also positively associated with higher student achievement (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Current research on PAR programs specifically is underway at the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Early findings relate increases in student learning to increased retention rates of novice teachers (Papay & Johnson, 2011).

INCREASING NEW TEACHER RETENTION

Upon their assignment in schools as licensed teachers, many novice teachers find themselves isolated professionally— left to sink or swim. The cycle of teacher isolation is perpetuated by a lack of opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful exchange with and learning from their more expert colleagues. (Heider, 2005)

The consequences of isolation are well known: high teacher attrition from the profession. This is not surprising given classroom environments characterized by dramatic increases in diversity represented in public school classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011) combined with heightened standards and accountability for student learning. However, studies demonstrate that new teacher turnover rates can be cut in half through comprehensive induction—a combination of high quality mentoring, professional development and support, scheduled interaction with other teachers in the school and in the larger community, and formal assessments for new teachers during at least their first two years of teaching (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004 as cited in Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Reflections captured in an external evaluation report (Upton, 2011) by both PAR II expert and novice teachers in Columbus reveal important dynamics about how and why novice teachers participating in PAR are less likely to leave: they are not isolated, they become more confident in their practice, and reflect on—and own—the ways in which they need to improve.

Participating novice teachers see these benefits too.

Columbus City Schools goes even further to integrate PAR with other reforms in participating schools to bolster teacher effectiveness. The current literature on effective schools stresses the importance of ongoing and data-driven professional learning in the context of structured, collegial and sustained interaction among teachers (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Herman, Dawson, Dee, Green, Maynard, Redding & Darwin, 2008). Learning Forward (n.d.) (formerly the National Staff Development Council), for example, asserts that:

The most powerful forms of staff development occur in ongoing teams that meet on a regular basis, preferably several times a week, for the purposes of learning, joint lesson planning, and problem solving. These teams, often called learning communities or communities of practice, operate with a commitment to the norms of continuous improvement and experimentation and engage their members in improving their daily work to advance the achievement of school district and school goals for student learning.

Columbus has taken this to heart. Through development of its professional learning communities, novice teachers participate in grade-level and content area teams during and well past their second year. This holds great promise for their development as instructional leaders within their classrooms and beyond.

PAR is a powerful tool for increasing new teacher retention and effectiveness; it also represents a powerful tool for building the teaching profession as a whole.

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT THROUGH UNION AND DISTRICT COLLABORATION

As discussed earlier, PAR formally taps teachers' expertise to build the capacity of their peers and recognizes teaching as a complex endeavor that requires many years of growth and support. But it also allows a greater measure of regulation of the profession by those deeply committed to and engaged in the profession. It creates an enduring structure that supports teacher empowerment and union-district collaboration as tools to improve student success. By helping to regulate who stays and who goes in the classroom—with ownership and accountability for the quality of their teaching practice—a PAR program ensures that teachers are at the table for conversations of teacher quality and student achievement.

An empowered workforce is good for our kids: empowerment is strongly correlated with teachers' task motivation, higher levels of organizational commitment, meaning, self- determination, and sense of efficacy (Dee, Henkin & Duemer, 2003). While an understanding of how factors such as these directly affect student achievement is limited by the existing research, similar qualities and dispositions have been examined in research on teacher leadership and school-based management, and have been found to positively impact student achievement (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2005).

PAR promotes teacher empowerment through several processes, codified as policy in the union contract.
PAR provides for:

■ shared union/district governance and administration of the PAR program;

■ union identification and hiring of expert teachers;

■ teacher co-development of and/or agreement on the standards of effective instruction as articulated in the observation rubrics used to assess instructional capacity and growth; and

■ co-equal teacher and administrator input to summative assessments of novice teachers' effectiveness.

Rhonda Johnson, president of the Columbus Education Association, reflects on the role of the union as a collective voice for professional empowerment of teachers:

Through PAR, the district recognizes teachers as professionals and unions as the collective body upholding standards of professional conduct and development. The principal plays a "minor" role in PAR compared with that of the PAR expert, supervising teachers. These teachers work with the principal to make sure that he/she is helping meet the novice teachers' goals or if the novice teacher is having difficulty in a certain area. The principal prepares a short summative evaluation that actually has little weight in employment decisions. So, the collaboration really takes place at the level of the PAR panel. We—the union and district—are colleagues with clear roles to play. (R. Johnson, personal communication, August 29, 2011).

Two core structural elements create an enduring collaboration between the union and the district—the PAR Panel and the consulting teachers. Based on its research of several PAR programs, the Harvard Graduate School of Education Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (n.d.) describe these elements:

■ **The PAR Panel** is a joint labor-management group consisting most often of an equal number of representatives from the teachers union and administration (with some including a slight majority of teachers). The Panel designs or refines the program's components, manages the budget, and is responsible for selecting, training, and supervising the consulting teachers.

■ **Consulting Teachers**, typically known as the supervising or expert teachers, evaluate and mentor new teachers and assist low-performing veteran teachers. They are chosen through a competitive selection process conducted by the PAR Panel.

In most districts, consulting teachers are released full-time from classroom teaching for three to five years and are responsible for a caseload of 10 to 20 teachers.

KIDS FIRST: PROMOTING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

With empowerment, support for teacher professional growth, and the rigor and richness of standards based teacher evaluation comes greater accountability for student achievement. These dynamics drive the NEA Foundation's continuing investment in Columbus and have led the Foundation to hold a convening on the subject, supporting interested communities in the design and development of their own PAR systems. Harriet Sanford, President and CEO of The NEA Foundation, observes:

Our continued investment in Columbus and in our other "Closing the Achievement Gaps Initiative" sites is based on our firm belief that teaching effectiveness is the most important school-based factor driving up outcomes for children. This belief is supported by the research evidence that has emerged over the last 20 years. Our investment is also a testament to the critical role unions play as professional associations, where accountability for quality teaching and student outcomes is generated equally from within the ranks of the teacher force and its leadership.

PAR, though only one strategy for accomplishing this in K-12 public education, is nonetheless a powerful one worthy of consideration by districts and unions working together across the nation.

Appendix G: "What we can learn from Finland's successful school reform," by Linda Darling-Hammond, 2010

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What we can learn from Finland's successful school reform

Finland came from behind to become the world leader in student achievement. Their strategy is the opposite of what we're doing in America.

BY LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

One wonders what we might accomplish as a nation if we could finally set aside what appears to be our de facto commitment to inequality, so profoundly at odds with our rhetoric of equity, and put the millions of dollars spent continually arguing and litigating into building a high-quality education system for all children. To imagine how that might be done, one can look at nations that started with very little and purposefully built highly productive and equitable systems, sometimes almost from scratch, in the space of only two to three decades.

As an example, I am going to briefly describe how Finland built a strong educational system, nearly from the ground up. Finland was not succeeding educationally in the 1970s, when the United States was the unquestioned education leader in the world. Yet this country created a productive teaching and learning system by expanding access while investing purposefully in ambitious educational goals using strategic approaches to build teaching capacity.

I use the term "teaching and learning system" advisedly to describe a set of elements that, when well designed and connected, reliably support all students in their learning. These elements ensure that students routinely encounter well-prepared teachers who are working in concert around a thoughtful, high-quality curriculum, supported by appropriate materials and assessments— and that these elements of the system help students, teachers, leaders, and the system as a whole continue to learn and improve. Although no system from afar can be transported wholesale into another context, there is much to learn from the experiences of those who have addressed problems we also encounter.

THE FINNISH SUCCESS STORY

Finland has been a poster child for school improvement since it rapidly climbed to the top of the international rankings after it emerged from the Soviet Union's shadow. Once poorly ranked educationally, with a turgid bureaucratic system that produced low-quality education and large inequalities, it now ranks first among all the OECD nations (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—roughly, the so-called "developed" nations) on the PISA (Program for International Student Assessments), an international test for 15-year-olds in language, math, and science literacy. The country also boasts a highly equitable distribution of achievement, even for its growing share of immigrant students.

In a Finnish classroom, it is rare to see a teacher standing at the front of a class-room lecturing students for 50 minutes.

In a recent analysis of educational reform policies, Finnish policy analyst Pasi Sahlberg describes how, since the 1970s, Finland has changed its traditional education system "into a model of a modern, publicly financed education system with widespread equity, good quality, large participation—all of this at reasonable cost." (Sahlberg, 2009, p. 2.) More than 99 percent of students now successfully complete compulsory basic education, and about 90 percent complete upper secondary school. Two-thirds of these graduates enroll in universities or professionally oriented polytechnic schools. More than 50 percent of the Finnish adult population participates in adult education programs. Ninety-eight percent of the cost of education at all levels is covered by government rather than by private sources.

Although there was a sizable achievement gap among students in the 1970s, strongly correlated to socio-economic status, this gap has been progressively reduced as a result of curriculum reforms started in the 1980s. By 2006, Finland's between-school variance on the PISA science scale was only 5 percent, whereas the average between-school variance in other OECD nations was about 33 percent. (Large between-school variation is generally related to social inequality.)

The overall variation in achievement among Finnish students is also smaller than that of nearly all the other OECD countries. This is true despite the fact that immigration from nations with lower levels of education has increased sharply in recent years, and there is more linguistic and cultural diversity for schools to contend with. One recent analysis notes that in some urban schools the number of immigrant children or those whose mother tongue is not Finnish approaches 50 percent.

Although most immigrants are still from places like Sweden, the most rapidly growing newcomer groups since 1990 have been from Afghanistan, Bosnia, India, Iran, Iraq, Serbia, Somalia, Turkey, Thailand, and Vietnam. These new immigrants speak more than 60 languages. Yet achievement has been climbing in Finland and growing more equitable.

STRATEGIES FOR REFORM

Because of these trends, many people have turned to Finland for clues to educational transformation. As one analyst notes:

"Most visitors to Finland discover elegant school buildings filled with calm children and highly educated teachers. They also recognize the large autonomy that schools enjoy, little interference by the central education administration in schools' everyday lives, systematic methods to address problems in the lives of students, and targeted professional help for those in need." (Sahlbert, 2009, p. 7)

Leaders in Finland attribute the gains to their intensive investments in teacher education—all teachers receive three years of high-quality graduate level preparation completely at state expense—plus a major overhaul of the curriculum and assessment system designed to ensure access to a "thinking curriculum" for all students. A recent analysis of the Finnish system summarized its core principles as follows:

- **Resources for those who need them most.**
- **High standards and supports for special needs.**
- **Qualified teachers.**
- **Evaluation of education.**
- **Balancing decentralization and centralization.**
  (Laukkanen, 2008, p. 319)

The process of change has been almost the reverse of policies in the United States. Over the past 40 years, Finland has shifted from a highly centralized system emphasizing external testing to a more localized system in which highly trained teachers design curriculum around the very lean national standards. This new system is implemented through equitable funding and extensive preparation for all teachers. The logic of the system is that investments in the capacity of local teachers and schools to meet the needs of all students, coupled with thoughtful guidance about goals, can unleash the benefits of local creativity in the cause of common, equitable outcomes.

Meanwhile, the United States has been imposing more external testing—often exacerbating differential access to curriculum—while creating more inequitable conditions in local schools. Resources for children and schools, in the form of both overall funding and the presence of trained, experienced teachers, have become more disparate in many states, thus undermining the capacity of schools to meet the outcomes that are ostensibly sought. Sahlberg notes that Finland has taken a very different path. He observes:

The Finns have worked systematically over 35 years to make sure that competent professionals who can craft the best learning conditions for all students are in all schools, rather than thinking that standardized instruction and related testing can be brought in at the last minute to improve student learning and turn around failing schools.

PASI SAHLBERG, 2009, P. 22

Sahlberg identifies a set of global reforms, undertaken especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, that Finland has not adopted, including standardization of curriculum enforced by frequent external tests; narrowing of the curriculum to basic skills in reading and mathematics; reduced use of innovative teaching strategies; adoption of educational ideas from external sources, rather than development of local internal capacity for innovation and problem-solving; and adoption of high-stakes accountability policies, featuring rewards and sanctions for students, teachers, and schools. By contrast, he suggests:

> Finnish education policies are a result of four decades of systematic, mostly intentional, development that has created a culture of diversity, trust, and respect within Finnish society in general, and within its education system in particular.… Education sector development has been grounded on equal opportunities for all, equitable distribution of resources rather than competition, intensive early interventions for prevention, and building gradual trust among education practitioners, especially teachers.
>
> PASI SAHLBER, P. 10

Equity in opportunity to learn is supported in many ways in addition to basic funding.

Finnish schools are generally small (fewer than 300 pupils) with relatively small class sizes (in the 20s), and are uniformly well equipped. The notion of caring for students educationally and personally is a central principle in the schools. All students receive a free meal daily, as well as free health care, transportation, learning materials, and counseling in their schools, so that the foundations for learning are in place. Beyond that, access to quality curriculum and teachers has become a central aspect of Finnish educational policy.

IMPROVING CURRICULUM CONTENT AND ACCESS

Beginning in the 1970s, Finland launched reforms to equalize educational opportunity by first eliminating the practice of separating students into very different tracks based on their test scores, and then by eliminating the examinations themselves. This occurred in two stages between 1972 and 1982, and a common curriculum, through the end of high school, was developed through-out the entire system. These changes were intended to equalize educational outcomes and provide more open access to higher education. During this time, social supports for children and families were also enacted, including health and dental care, special education services, and transportation to schools.

By the late 1970s, investment in teachers was an additional focus. Teacher education was improved and extended. Policy makers decided that if they invested in very skillful teachers, they could allow local schools more autonomy to make decisions about what and how to teach—a reaction against the oppressive, centralized system they sought to overhaul.

This bet seems to have paid off. By the mid-1990s, the country had ended the highly regulated system of curriculum management (reflected in older curriculum guides that had exceeded 700 pages of prescriptions). The current national core curriculum is a much leaner document—featuring fewer than 10 pages of guidance for all of mathematics, for example—that guides teachers in collectively developing local curriculum and assessments. The focus of 1990s curricular reform was on science, technology, and innovation, leading to an emphasis on teaching students how to think creatively and manage their own learning.

There are no external standardized tests used to rank students or schools in Finland, and most teacher feedback to students is in narrative form, emphasizing descriptions of their learning progress and areas for growth. As in the NAEP exams in the United States, samples of students are evaluated on open-ended assessments at the end of the second and ninth grades to inform curriculum and school investments. The focus is on using information to drive learning and problem-solving, rather than punishment.

Finland maintains one exam prior to attending university: the matriculation exam, organized and evaluated by a matriculation exam board appointed by the Finnish Ministry of Education. Although not required for graduation or entry into a university, it is common practice for students to take this set of four open-ended exams that emphasize problem-solving, analysis, and writing. Teachers use official guidelines to grade the matriculation exams locally, and samples of the grades are re-examined by professional raters hired by the matriculation exam board. Although it is counterintuitive to those accustomed to external testing as a means of accountability, Finland's use of school-based, student-centered, open-ended tasks embedded in the curriculum is often touted as an important reason for the nation's success on the international exams.

The national core curriculum provides teachers with recommended assessment criteria for specific grades in each subject and in the overall final assessment of student progress each year. Local schools and teachers then use those guidelines to craft a more detailed curriculum and set of learning outcomes at each school, as well as approaches to assessing bench-marks in the curriculum. According to the Finnish National Board of Education, the main purpose of assessing students is to guide and encourage students' own reflection and self-assessment.

Teachers give students formative and summative reports both through verbal and narrative feedback. Inquiry is a major focus of learning in Finland, and assessment is used to cultivate students' active learning skills by asking open-ended questions and helping students address them.

In a Finnish classroom, it is rare to see a teacher standing at the front of a classroom lecturing students for 50 minutes. Instead, students are likely to determine their own weekly targets with their teachers in specific subject areas and choose the tasks they will work on at their own pace. In a typical classroom, students are likely to be walking around, rotating through workshops or gathering information, asking questions of their teacher, and working with other students in small groups. They may be completing independent or group projects or writing articles for their own magazine. The cultivation of independence and active learning allows students to develop metacognitive skills that help them to frame, tackle, and solve problems; evaluate and improve their own work; and guide their learning processes in productive ways.

IMPROVING TEACHING

Greater investments in teacher education began in the 1970s with the expectation that teachers would move from three-year normal school programs to four- to five-year programs of study. During the 1990s, the country overhauled preparation once again to focus more on teaching diverse learners higher-order skills like problem-solving and critical thinking in research-based master's degree programs. Preparing teachers for a research-based profession has been the central idea of teacher education developments in Finland.

Prospective teachers are competitively selected from the pool of college graduates—only 15 percent of those who apply are admitted—and receive a three-year graduate-level teacher preparation program, entirely free of charge and with a living stipend. Unlike the United States, where teachers either go into debt to prepare for a profession that will pay them poorly or enter with little or no training, Finland made the decision to invest in a uniformly well-prepared teaching force by recruiting top candidates and paying them to go to school. Slots in teacher training programs are highly coveted and shortages are virtually unheard of.

Teachers' preparation includes both extensive course-work on how to teach—with a strong emphasis on using research based on state-of-the-art practice—and at least a full year of clinical experience in a school associated with the university. These model schools are intended to develop and model innovative practices, as well as to foster research on learning and teaching. Teachers are trained in research methods so that they can "contribute to an increase of the problem-solving capacity of the education system." (Buchberger and Buchberger, p. 10)

Within these model schools, student teachers participate in problem-solving groups, a common feature in Finnish schools. The problem-solving groups engage in a cycle of planning, action, and reflection/evaluation that is reinforced throughout the teacher education program and is, in fact, a model for what teachers will plan for their own students, who are expected to incorporate similar kinds of research and inquiry in their own studies. Indeed, the entire system is intended to improve through continual reflection, evaluation, and problem-solving at the level of the classroom, school, municipality, and nation.

Teachers learn how to create challenging curriculum and how to develop and evaluate local performance assessments that engage students in research and inquiry on a regular basis. Teacher training emphasizes learning how to teach students who learn in different ways, including those with special needs. It includes a strong emphasis on "multiculturality" and the "prevention of learning difficulties and exclusion," as well as on the understanding of learning, thoughtful assessment, and curriculum development. The egalitarian Finns reasoned that if teachers learn to help students who struggle, they will be able to teach all students more effectively and, indeed, leave no child behind.

Most teachers now hold master's degrees in both their content area and in education, and they are well prepared to teach diverse learners—including special-needs students—for deep understanding, and to use formative performance assessments on a regular basis to inform their teaching so it meets students' needs. Teachers are well trained both in research methods and in pedagogical practice. Consequently, they are sophisticated diagnosticians, and they work together collegially to design instruction that meets the demands of the subject matter as well as the needs of their students.

In Finland, like other high-achieving nations, schools provide time for regular collaboration among teachers on issues of instruction. Teachers in Finnish schools meet at least one afternoon each week to jointly plan and develop curriculum, and schools in the same municipality are encouraged to work together to share materials. Time is also provided for professional development within the teachers' workweek. As is true in many other European and Asian nations, nearly half of teachers' school time is used to hone practice through school-based curriculum work, collective planning, and cooperation with parents, which allows schools and families to work more closely together on behalf of students. The result is that:

"Finnish teachers are conscious, critical consumers of professional development and inservice training services. Just as the professional level of the teaching cadre has increased over the past two decades, so has the quality of teacher professional development support. Most compulsory, traditional inservice training has disappeared.

In its place are school- or municipality-based longer term programs and professional development opportunities. Continuous upgrading of teachers' pedagogical professionalism has become a right rather than an obligation. This shift in teachers' learning conditions and styles often reflects ways that classroom learning is arranged for pupils. As a consequence of strengthened professionalism in schools, it has become understood that teachers and schools are responsible for their own work and also solve most problems rather than shift them elsewhere. Today the Finnish teaching profession is on a par with other professional workers; teachers can diagnose problems in their classrooms and schools, apply evidence-based and often alternative solutions to them, and evaluate and analyze the impact of implemented procedures." (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 155)

The focus on instruction and the development of professional practice in Finland's approach to organizing the education system has led, according to all reports, to an increased prevalence of effective teaching methods in schools. Furthermore, efforts to enable schools to learn from each other have led to "lateral capacity building": the widespread adoption of effective practicesand experimentation with innovative approaches across the system, "encouraging teachers and schools to continue to expand their repertoires of teaching methods and individualizing teaching to meet the needs of all students." (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 167)

A Finnish official noted this key lesson learned from the reforms that allowed Finland to climb from an inequitable, mediocre education system to the very top of the international rankings:

Empowerment of the teaching profession produces good results. Professional teachers should have space for innovation, because they should try to find new ways to improve learning. Teachers should not be seen as technicians whose work is to implement strictly dictated syllabi, but rather as professionals who know how to improve learning for all. All this creates a big challenge . . . that certainly calls for changes in teacher education programs. Teachers are ranked highest in importance, because educational systems work through them.

(LAUKKANEN, 2008)

Finland has undertaken these elements in a systemic fashion, rather than pouring energy into a potpourri of innovations and then changing course every few years, as has often been the case in many communities in the United States, especially in large cities. And while this small nation has conducted this work on a national level, similar strategies have been employed at the state or provincial level in high-scoring Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and provinces like Hong Kong and Macao in China, also with positive outcomes.

They demonstrate how it is possible to build a system in which students are routinely taught by well-prepared teachers who work together to create a thoughtful, high-quality curriculum, supported by appropriate materials and assessments that enable ongoing learning for students, teachers, and schools alike.

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ESEA Reauthorization

Opportunity Dashboard

BACKGROUND

▸ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) attempted to measure student and school progress based almost exclusively on standardized test scores. These test scores provided only a narrow glimpse into student and school performance and, even worse, the NCLB regime did not drive additional resources to so-called "failing" schools, it used test scores to take resources away from our most vulnerable students and schools. Thirteen years later, the outcome is clear: too often and in too many places, a student's zip code dictates the quality of education available.

▸ NEA is calling for the next version of ESEA to include an "Opportunity Dashboard." The dashboard is comprised of a range of school quality indicators, which will allow leaders to quantify and track the things that really matter when it comes to student success. This will allow parents, educators, and leaders to hold states accountable for providing students with the resources and opportunities fundamental to their success.

▸ It is incumbent upon states to collect and report on these indicators, disaggregated by student subgroup, and quickly remedy any gaps in the resources, supports, and programs provided to students.

Opportunity Dashboard

STUDENT SUCCESS

- *Student attendance (elementary and middle school)
- **Graduation rate (high schools)
- *School climate index (such as bullying intervention and prevention, positive behavioral supports, parent and student surveys, and restorative justice practices)
- *School discipline policies and the disparate impact on students of color, students with disabilities, and students that identify as LGBT
- Appropriate assessment system
- *Students' success in advanced coursework (AP/IB, honors, dual enrollment, college gateway math, science classes)
- Students prepared for college or career technical education certification programs without need for remediation or learning support courses

QUALITY EDUCATORS

- *Students' access to fully qualified teachers, including Board-certified teachers
- *Students' access to qualified paraeducators
- *Students' access to optimal ratios of specialized instructional support personnel (school counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists)
- Students' access to fully qualified school librarians/media specialists
- Quality professional development for all educators, including education support professionals
- Fully funded mentoring and induction support for educators
- Opportunities for job-embedded collaboration
- Percentage of teachers who are teaching outside of their field
- *Percentage of teachers who leave the profession within their first three years
- Educators empowered to make site-based decisions

QUALITY SCHOOLS

- Students' access to modern materials, facilities, technology, books, and libraries
- **Students' access to class sizes that allow for one-on-one attention
- Students' access to health and wellness programs, including social and emotional well-being
- *Students' access to high-quality early education programs
- *Students' access to full-day, five-day-a-week kindergarten
- Family and community engagement
- *Students' access to and success in advanced coursework (AP/IB, honors, dual enrollment)
- **Students' access to fine arts, foreign language, daily physical education, library/media studies, and career technical education

* Data is included in the Office of Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection now or will be soon.
** Data is included in a separate data system.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

▶ Resources still matter. State governments must be accountable for allocating sufficient resources—dollars, curriculum and learning tools, well-qualified educators, and safe, healthy environments for learning—to meet student needs and support meaningful learning.

▶ A necessary first step is for each state to determine the resources needed to meet challenging and rigorous state academic standards and be assured of graduating college and career ready.

▶ Equitable does not mean the same. Equitable means resources according to need. The greater the need, the greater the resources.

▶ Each student should be given the same meaningful opportunity to learn regardless of one's circumstances, and ESEA should measure whether that opportunity is being provided through an Opportunity Dashboard.

July 2015

Link to the ESEA Reauthorization Opportunity Dashboard:
www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA-Opportunity-Dashboard.pdf

Jessica McKay (Mayfield Heights)

OEA Mission Statement

The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

OEA Vision

The Ohio Education Association is the hallmark for excellence in education.

OEA Strategic Priorities

- Build locals' capacity to be more relevant to members.

- Improve the image of educators.

- Build OEA as a member resource for professional issues.

OEA Core Values

These principles guide our work and define our mission. We believe in:

Democracy

The foundation of a strong democracy is high quality public education, which is essential for an educated citizenry.

Collective Action

When we unite as one voice, we are strong advocates for learners and our profession.

Fairness

A high quality education, accessible to all, promotes a fair and just society.

Inclusion

We respect and embrace the diversity of all communities.

Integrity

By holding ourselves to the highest standards, we promote good citizenship and maintain the public trust.

Professionalism

Professional judgment and expertise of educators are critical to student success. Educators deserve the status, compensation and respect due all professionals.

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