



The Sponsor Connection

A NEWSLETTER BY CHARTER SCHOOL SPECIALISTS
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Latest Update on Ohio's School Report Card

A statewide group of education leaders reconvened recently in Columbus to further study changes to Ohio's school report card, with some proposals possibly being considered in the November/December "lame-duck" session.

Concerns with the report card include the value of the state tests it is largely based on, whether it should focus more on year-over-year growth than pure achievement scores, and whether it offers the right mix of deep data for educators while being understandable for parents.

Rep. Mike Duffey of the Columbus area, who has taken a leadership role in refining and improving school report cards over the past couple of years, has argued that school districts should be accountable for how much they grow the student each year, which is something school districts can control. The problem with the "student growth" approach, however, is Ohio educators and politicians are not in broad agreement on whether the state's existing measure of growth (or "progress") is a valid one. Rep. Duffey has cited multiple concerns with the calculations, the inability to compare it to other states, and the lack of transparency around the measure.

The state workgroup's July report made firm recommendations in several areas, but it said measuring student growth is complex and would be revisited this month. The report included an eight-point appendix solely about measuring growth, including themes about the underlying tests, inconsistent results between different types of tests, how important growth is, and how hard it is to explain to the public.

The workgroup, an outgrowth of the state school board, made recommendations months ago, such as eliminating A-F letter grades and certain achievement and early literacy measures. The coming election of a new governor and legislature is a complicating factor, but the group will continue to meet.

Meanwhile, last spring, House Bill 591 aimed to replace the state report card with a "dashboard" presentation of test data and other metrics. The bill had committee hearings in the state House, but it did not proceed to a vote. Bill sponsor Mike Duffey

said the legislature is considering changes to high school graduation law for the lame-duck session, and some pieces of his bill could be incorporated there.

Duffey said he hopes for a more holistic review of the report card system. He said too much of the report card is based on students' pure achievement on state tests, which is affected by whether they were academically behind before they ever walked through a school's doors.

Meanwhile...

The state school board has supported major changes to Ohio high school graduation requirements for the Class of 2022, and began discussion of potential emergency changes affecting current high school juniors and seniors.

If the state legislature approves the long-term system, students would be able to earn a diploma by showing skills in a variety of ways, rather than just tests, in five areas - English, math, technology, other academic subjects, and leadership/social development.

For example, in the model unanimously approved by the state board's graduation committee, a student might meet the English requirement via a state test, but meet the math standard via their GPA in school classes and qualify in their other subjects and leadership via a deep project called a "culminating student experience."

State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria said the idea is to give students a variety of ways to show what they know and not manufacture test constraints that do students a disservice.

But of more immediate concern is the Class of 2019. Under current state law, those high school seniors must meet state test standards to graduate - either 18 of 35 points on end-of-course state tests, or remediation-free scores on the ACT or SAT, or a passing score on the WorkKeys exam, coupled with approved job credentials.

Those standards were first applied to the Class of 2018, but when concerns were raised about constantly changing tests and comparatively low passage rates, the state legislature approved one-time graduation options if those Class of 2018 students met certain bars on attendance, class GPA, work/service hours, or a senior project.

The state school board has recommended extending the Class of 2018 options a few more years until the complete new system comes on line. But the state legislature has balked, some saying the 2018 options are too lax.

As always, we will keep you apprised of developments.

The Future of Community School Funding

The conversation over the level of school funding for community schools is finally beginning to heat up. A legislative study committee has taken up the issue. Various advocacy groups are pushing hard for changes. And when the next Governor assumes office in January 2019, he will be faced with a system that vastly underfunds public community schools relative to what traditional district schools receive. The time

has come for change, and future issues of The Sponsor Connection will keep our readers informed of such developments.

We told you in our September Sponsor Connection that Rep. Andy Brenner, who is currently serving his fourth term in the Ohio House of Representatives, and is Chairman of the House Education Committee, sat down with the Ohio Coalition for Quality Education (OCQE), a pro-community school group, about the future of community school funding. Here is the second part of that interview, in which Rep. Brenner discusses HB 102, his "Money Follow the Child" legislation.

OCQE: You said HB 102 will have 100% of school funding follow the students. How would your bill accomplish that?

Brenner: My bill is all about money following the student and deregulating education. Presently, Ohio has a two-tiered funding system that is overly complicated, is not helping students and is failing miserably. The beauty of HB 102 is its simplicity, transparency and predictability.

It transitions from utilizing local school levies, which pits local school district funds against charter schools and other public-schools, to a system where the state supplies 100% of the funding to all traditional public, and charter schools. It would 'level the playing field' for all public schools.

With 100% of the funding following students, families will have the power, not bureaucrats. At last, parents will have the power to choose the best education option for their children.

OCQE: What else would HB 102 do to make school funding more efficient?

Brenner: My bill would eliminate all caps and guarantees that exist for some districts. Currently, caps suppress state revenue when districts enroll more students and shields them from losses when their student enrollment declines.

If a school district is growing, it will receive more money. On the other hand, if a school district shrinks, it will receive less funding. This means that boards of all schools will have the opportunity to make decisions based on the actual students enrolled in their schools.

OCQE: How would HB 102 effect categorical funding of students?

Brenner: Funds for students will continue to be layered, just as it is now. There will be more funding for gifted, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. For instance, if you have a child who is supported by the Autism Scholarship and receives \$27,000 per year for tuition, they will continue to receive the same amount of funding.

OCQE: More than two decades ago, in the DeRolph v. State of Ohio (1997) decision, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that Ohio is overly reliant on taxpayers to fund public education. How would HB 102 be viewed by that court decision?

Brenner: My bill will make the system fair, equitable, and most importantly would comply with the DeRolph decision.

OCQE: How would HB 102 address the problems of student transportation?

Brenner: Through a long overdue 'regional' transportation model. It would require educational service centers, or a similar entity, to transport students on a regional basis. My bill would redirect transportation funding to another entity rather than school districts.

Regionalizing and consolidating transportation would save millions of dollars and assure that EVERY student has fair and predictable access to public transportation of their school of choice.

OCQE: What is the next step to make HB 102 a reality?

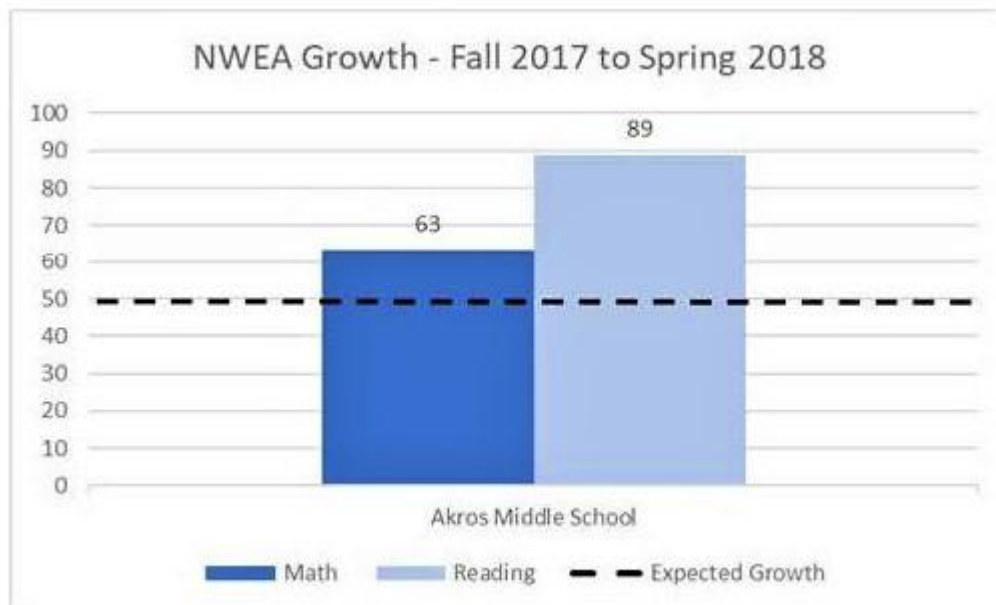
Brenner: Everyone complains about our current system of funding -- school districts, the Ohio Supreme Court, public charter schools and Ohio families. It's time that we begin the conversation of school funding now. Ohio voters will make the ultimate decision on HB 102. But, it's time that we place our emphasis on funding and supporting children, not buildings!

Representative Brenner's bill can be a real game-changer. The beauty of the HB 102 funding system is its simplicity, transparency and predictability. It would allow all families the freedom to choose schools that meet the educational needs of their children and state dollars would follow. Charter Schools Specialists will continue to keep you apprised of this bill and all others that have a direct impact on the schools we sponsor.

Hats Off to Akros Middle School

Dave and Susan Dudas founded their first school, Edge Academy, a high performing public elementary charter school located near downtown Akron. As the children approached middle school age, happy parents pleaded with the founders of Edge to build a middle school. From that request of those highly supportive parents, Akros Middle School was established.

Under the leadership of Faith DeCesare, Holly Piskula and Raymond Leek, Akros has become an essential education provider for Akron students. Akros utilizes NWEA Map, a nationally normed set of tests to gauge achievement and student growth. NWEA is a highly respected national testing organization and, unlike Ohio, is stable with their methodology and have reference groups comprised of millions of students across the nation. Their NWEA Map Tests demonstrate that Akros Middle School is delivering strong levels of student growth in both Math & Reading.



Akros Middle School had above projected student growth for Math and greatly exceeded projections for Reading.

Charter School Specialists is pleased to be the sponsor of Akros!

Re-testing of Teachers

We reported in last month's Sponsor Connection that teachers employed by public schools identified as low performing are required to take a test to assess expertise in core subject area(s) taught by the teacher. For the last several years, the requirement has not been in effect due to Safe Harbor, which allowed schools time to transition to new state tests in mathematics and English language arts.

In July, House Bill 216 was passed by both houses of the Ohio Legislature, and the bill was subsequently signed by Governor John Kasich. That section regarding re-testing of teachers was **repealed** in H.B. 216. We apologize for any confusion.

*Cliff Park HS & Oakmont Education: Making a Difference in Springfield.
Springfield News-Sun*

A Springfield charter school that targets dropouts and students who weren't successful in traditional classroom is expanding with a \$1 million project.

Cliff Park High School, 821 N. Limestone St., will have new classrooms and will be able to offer opportunities to students who might not have had those chances before, Cliff Park Director Jeff Waechter said.

The new 7,000 square-foot space will include four new classrooms that will offer students career-tech classes. The hope will be that students can transition into meaningful careers, said Waechter.

"We are very excited to roll out this new project," he said. "We are going to offer a whole new series of career-tech opportunities for our students. They are not going to just graduate with diplomas, they will also graduate with meaningful credentials that will get them a career right out of high school."

Cliff Park is a nationally accredited dropout recovery school in Springfield. The school demolished an abandoned home next door and began construction on an addition to the current building.

Oakmont Education manages Cliff Park High School and other charter schools across the state. Cliff Park is paying for the project without any extra tax dollars, Waechter said.

Cliff Park will focus on offering career training in construction and electrical fields and even a start into the nursing field.

"We looked at Department of Labor statistics that tell us in our local area what jobs are most needed," he said. "We looked at what our students can do, and we matched them together. We don't want to give someone training and there be nothing for them in Springfield."

The school has partnered with Clark State for its State Tested Nurses Aid (STNA) program. In May, the school posted on its Facebook page asking the community and its students what they thought would be good programs to offer in the new wing of the school.

Fields like construction, photography and nursing were mentioned.

The school currently serves 180 students right now, Waechter said.

"It's a fair number, and there are always people in the community that we are trying to reach out to," he said. "With this new building, we will be able to really reach out to more students and let them know that there are options for them. It may not have worked out at a traditional high school or a homeschool, but there are still options available for them."

Springfield has a high need for a good dropout recovery school, he said. The school wants to be a positive force to advance students' lives, Waechter said.

"Springfield has a very high drop-out rate," he said. "We have a very meaningful purpose here at Cliff Park that we take very seriously as a staff here. We don't want kids and students wandering the streets kind of hopeless. We want to help lift up the community, lift up the students and the people here."

Charter School Specialists, 40 Hill Road S, Pickerington, OH 43147

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