

(e.g. content specific vocabulary and comprehension skills). Even the youngest students should be supported in their literacy achievement through context-related experiences that build content-based vocabulary and other subject knowledge.



Equity: A kindergarten student who enters the classroom lacking basic learning (including literacy) and social skills starts behind his or her peers and faces dramatic challenges to catch up. This can start a cycle of inequity. Access to high-quality early learning opportunities can break the cycle.



Partnerships: Success requires the support and collaboration of parents, caregivers and families and the education system (especially the early childhood education community). Likewise, community partners who have interest in the healthy development of children, such as libraries, after-school programs, cultural institutions, health care providers, businesses, philanthropy and the faith-based community, are essential.



Quality Schools: As Ohio works to increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities, more schools are likely to support younger learners. It is important that early learning opportunities are linked seamlessly to K-12 schools to ensure coherence and a smooth student transition.

High School Success and Postsecondary Connections

In high school, each child should see the relevance of his or her learning, be exposed to practical, real-world work settings and begin to define his or her future.

High schools set the stage for a student's future success. As students grow and mature, most begin to see they are becoming responsible for their own lives. Unfortunately, many students struggle with the transition that comes after high school. Some do not graduate from high school. Others leave their postsecondary experiences before crossing the finish line to a credential, certificate or degree. Those who go straight into the workforce often lack the skills and dispositions required for success. Strategy 10 seeks to change this by maximizing the high school experience.

STRATEGY 10: Ensure high school inspires students to identify paths to future success, and give students multiple ways to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for high school graduation and beyond.

Too often, high school reflects a checklist of classes, extracurriculars, test scores and experiences that leave some students wondering and wandering. Ohio has many great high schools, including its career-technical education centers. Students in these schools learn through career exploration. They take college courses. They receive personalized and customized learning that synchronizes with their passions and interests. They move outside the boundaries of the school building into work-based experiences. Students engage and manage their own learning. Ohio needs more high schools like this.

Focusing on careers: Choosing a "path" does not mean that a student makes a career choice that cannot change. It means gauging a student's interests and passions, based on what a student enjoys and is good at, and identifying aligned fields that might interest them. Giving each student an opportunity to focus on careers will require teachers, staff and partners to understand career exploration. It also means that, when possible, instruction should be infused with connections to careers so that students can see the relevance of what they learn. Some high schools apply a career theme across the entire school.

Advancing successful models: There are many models of redesigned middle and high schools that can contribute to a more successful learning environment. Ohio has Early College high schools, STEM and

STEAM schools, project-based learning high schools, Expeditionary Learning high schools, International Baccalaureate high schools, Global Awareness high schools and more. The Department of Education should collaborate with key stakeholders to help identify and disseminate models for high school that can be used to inspire transformation.

Expanding work-based learning experiences: Helping students connect to business is key to high school improvement. Students who participate in work-based learning gain valuable, relevant skills and often can discern whether particular professions are a good fit. They gain insight from business mentors who can help them achieve a deeper understanding of various career areas. Many of Ohio’s innovative high school principals have established partnerships with local businesses to enrich students’ experiences.

Honoring and promoting career-technical education: Career-technical education continues to face a stigma, which harms student opportunity. Ohio needs to tackle this cultural bias head on. Students who enroll in career-technical education programs and earn industry credentials are poised to directly enter the workplace or go on to two-year or four-year colleges—whatever they may choose.

Expanding paths to graduation: Ohio can help schools formulate student-focused plans to ensure that graduates possess the habits and dispositions necessary for success after high school (refer to the Possible Attributes of a High School Graduate framework in the Appendix). The following suggestions could inform such plans:

- Emphasize equity and access;
- Start early to identify career and postsecondary aspirations and counsel students how best to stay on a path to excellence;
- Push and challenge students to reach rigorous levels of knowledge and skill acquisition;
- Identify learning options—including career-technical experiences, work-based learning, project-based or case-based learning approaches and others—most appropriate for students’ success;
- Validly, reliably and consistently measure how students demonstrate competency and mastery;
- Use rubrics to gauge student progress and assess performance;
- Consider a robust portfolio of measures, including end-of-course, ACT/SAT and demonstration-based measures (for example, capstone projects); and
- Expose students to relevant concepts and work-based, experiential learning.



Equity: Students who struggle academically have unique challenges in pursuing postsecondary success. With a strong focus on understanding and meeting each student’s needs, and personalizing the high school experience, all students can transition successfully to life beyond high school.



Partnerships: Partners are essential to expanding learning opportunities during the high school years. Students in their teens can be effective interns and often crave community service opportunities that expose them to real-life experiences.



Quality Schools: High school is an important transition point in a student's life. As students mature and begin to contemplate young adulthood, high schools must collectively support students in exploring interests, developing aspirations and understanding the realities of existing and thriving in the real world.

Implementing *Each Child, Our Future*

This plan is the first step in a journey. The real work, and the biggest challenge, is to follow through with meaningful implementation. The same principles that guided the development of the strategic plan will steer implementation, and Department of Education leaders commit to the following principles:

USE A PARTNERSHIP-BASED APPROACH. Implementation is stronger when carried out collaboratively by stakeholders. The State Board and Ohio Department of Education employed a partnership-based approach to develop *Each Child, Our Future*, and it proved an effective way to garner stakeholder investment. Going forward, the Ohio Department of Education will continue to convene partners—including parents, caregivers, students, educators, higher education representatives, business and philanthropy leaders, state legislators and others—to collectively develop action plans aimed at implementing the plan components, especially the 10 strategies. When possible, these action plans will build on work already underway. For instance, the Ohio Department of Education recently commenced several advisory groups focused on refining the state’s accountability system (refer to Strategy 6) and identifying future graduation requirements (refer to Strategy 10). Some implementation actions could happen quickly, while others may take more time. Some can occur as part of the Department of Education’s regular course of activity, and others might require law or rule changes.

EMPHASIZE SUPPORT SERVICES MORE THAN COMPLIANCE. This strategic plan presents an exciting opportunity to reshape the work of the Ohio Department of Education. The plan will lead to some agency restructuring, guided by the question, “**How can the Department provide the best possible supports to schools, districts and educators so they are best positioned to challenge, prepare and empower each child in Ohio?**” Ultimately, the objective is to align efforts across the agency in a coherent way that supports schools, districts and educators for success. Of course, compliance is not going away. There are still important compliance-related obligations that must be met, but those will not be the driving focus of the agency.

USE DATA TO INFORM IMPROVEMENT. The Ohio Department of Education will pursue data sources and data-sharing agreements that will be used to establish a baseline for the plan’s stated goal. In addition, new data collection may be needed. Caution should be exercised when considering new data collection sources and methods to avoid adding unnecessary burdens and to protect student privacy. The Department will work closely with other state agencies and national data organizations to identify appropriate data sources. The Department also will establish intermediate progress indicators that gauge the extent to which the education system and students are on track to meeting the goal. Ideally, Ohio would have interim measures at various points over the course of a student’s educational experience (preschool, elementary grades, middle grades, high school grades) that show progress and accomplishment. In some cases, the state can rely on traditional measures of proficiency in certain content areas, but such measures are not sufficiently robust in terms of what this plan promotes. At the same time, leaders recognize it will take time to fully develop meaningful and appropriate metrics that speak to all plan dimensions, especially the four equal learning domains.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL. This plan was not developed to be a prescriptive mandate. The intent is to inspire and inform discussions about what is happening in schools each day. It is meant to support action in the name of continuous improvement. It is meant to bring schools and districts together to address shared needs and challenges and identify multiple approaches to achieving excellence. This plan embraces the idea that there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

ENGAGE KEY STATE-LEVEL PARTNERS. The State Board and Department of Education will continue to work with the governor, state legislature, key policy influencers and other stakeholders.

UNDERSTAND THAT SUCCESS RELIES ON LEADERSHIP OF LOCAL SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS. Just as the State Board and Ohio Department of Education committed to the above implementation principles,

local school leaders and educators should review the following questions as they consider how this plan might impact their work.

- Are we working in our community to explore ways to increase access to quality early childhood experiences? Do we have strong relationships with early childhood providers whose students will be in our classrooms?
- Have we addressed issues of teacher excellence including recruitment, induction, feedback, professional development and retention?
- Have we addressed issues of academic rigor, quality instructional practices, excellent curriculum and the four domains?
- Have we addressed challenges we may face with school climate and culture?
- Have we developed effective partnerships with the broad range of partners who could support student success?
- Do we have a clear understanding of what we are striving for—and, if not, where can we go to see it?
- Have we thought about and developed our own continuous improvement action plan for addressing areas described in this plan? Are we committed to the plan and working to implement it? Are we analyzing data to guide us in identifying underperformance and its causes?

What every school and district chooses to do will look different. For best results, schools and districts should not focus on everything all at once. They can choose to start with any number of elements. The only choice that is not valid is the choice to do nothing. The State Board and the Department are committed to being strong and supportive partners to each district in the interest of continuing our journey to achieve the vision of ensuring that each child is successful and ready to create the future of our communities, our state and our nation.

Appendix

Glossary

In progress

Possible Attributes of a High School Graduate

To help school districts across Ohio think through their own frameworks for determining what their successful high school graduates will look like, educators and employers who developed this plan consulted national research to create the following list. It is intended to both provoke and support local thinking and action.

- **Foundational knowledge and skills**—The graduate will have command of basic skills in *mathematics, English language arts* and *technology*—the building blocks that enable future learning. Specific to technology, the graduate will understand its global impact and use it to design solutions, communicate ideas and share information.
- **Well-rounded content**—The graduate will have exposure to social studies, sciences, languages, arts and physical education.
- **Critical-thinking and problem-solving skills**—The graduate will demonstrate strong decision-making skills, know how to analyze issues and approach complex challenges.
- **Resiliency, grit and work ethic**—The graduate will demonstrate follow-through and have the wherewithal to “stick to” challenging problems until a solution is identified.
- **Communication—oral and written**—The graduate will be an effective communicator who can clearly articulate his or her thoughts verbally and in writing.
- **Engaged citizens**—The graduate will productively contribute to society and engage in the democratic process (for example, vote on a regular basis).
- **Cultural awareness**—The graduate will hold a world perspective that values and respects diversity and the establishment of meaningful relationships.
- **Collaboration and teamwork**—The graduate will cultivate skills necessary to work with others and understand cooperation and compromise.
- **Adaptability and agility**—The graduate will exercise flexibility when necessary and seek to continuously learn and process new skills.
- **Social, emotional and interpersonal skills**—The graduate will express and manage his or her emotions and establish positive and rewarding relationships with others.
- **Curiosity, discovery and growth mindset**—The graduate will ask thoughtful questions, dig deeply into issues and understand that improvement results from his or her own learning.
- **Gathering information and discerning that information**—The graduate will be intentional about receiving information from multiple, reliable sources and making sense of that information.
- **Innovative and creative**—The graduate will think differently about problems—considering multiple angles of approach—and integrate skills and knowledge across disciplines to identify solutions.

In Ohio, the state determines standards (see [Ohio’s Learning Standards](#)) for what students should know and be able to do. The state also identifies the minimum requirements a student needs to graduate. Local schools lead in identifying the skills and knowledge—or attributes—that their graduates should possess, as influenced, in many cases, by their regional economies and workforce needs. The framework of attributes is a model designed to help schools think through their own locally developed lists of attributes.

This framework is aligned closely to the [OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal](#). The OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal is a formal designation students can earn on their high school diplomas signifying their personal strengths, strong work ethic and professional experience. The framework of attributes includes the professional skills contained in the OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal, plus an emphasis on the academic skills required for future success.

Direction from the State Board of Education

In July 2017, the State Board of Education identified the following 12 priorities to guide development of the strategic plan. These priorities were shared with the stakeholders and partners who came together to develop the plan.

MEETING THE LEARNING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ALL STUDENTS.

- 1. *Prioritizing equity.*** The Strategic Plan must focus on strategies that meet the learning needs and aspirations of *all* students, especially students of poverty, students with disabilities, English learners, and other students who face unique challenges. These tend to be students who, due to barriers beyond their control, have not reached their potential for learning. They require targeted supports to be successful and, like all students, benefit from strong teacher-student relationships, differentiated instruction, developmentally appropriate methods, culturally informed practices, and personalized-learning approaches.
- 2. *Ensuring students have foundational knowledge and skills.*** The Strategic Plan must promote the importance of students acquiring essential knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies—all of which serve as cornerstones for lifelong learning.
- 3. *Accommodating all students' learning and growth needs and aspirations.*** Beyond foundational knowledge and skills, the Strategic Plan must address students' learning and growth needs through a well-rounded education. This includes, among other things, the development of social-emotional competency, learning and innovation skills, information and technology skills, and life and career skills. These skills will help students identify their passions and chart their futures.
- 4. *Celebrating learning.*** The Strategic Plan must promote learning approaches that actively engage students through discovery, creativity, and exploration. This will capitalize on students' strengths, passions, and interests and fuel their curiosity and desire for more learning.

ENSURING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS (TEACHERS AND LEADERS) WHO KNOW HOW TO MEET THE LEARNING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ALL STUDENTS.

- 5. *Supporting effective educators who achieve results.*** The Strategic Plan must acknowledge the impact of excellent teachers and leaders, who research shows are the greatest contributors to student success in schools. It must promote policies and practices that ensure an abundant supply of effective teachers and leaders (and other personnel – psychologists, counselors, support staff, etc.) who are collaborative, empowered, prepared and developed to nurture student growth and boost student accomplishment.

FOSTERING ENGAGING, SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS THAT MAXIMIZE STUDENT LEARNING.

- 6. *Fostering environments that maximize student learning.*** The Strategic Plan must identify and promote strategies to help students overcome barriers to learning and build teacher and leader capacity to support those strategies. Strategies should include reducing stress, addressing experiences of trauma, implementing restorative discipline practices, and meeting physical, social, and emotional needs. Strategies promoted in the Strategic Plan should seek to assure that students are educated in safe, supportive, nurturing, challenging, emotionally secure, and engaging environments.

7. **Advancing quality in- and out-of-school learning opportunities.** The Strategic Plan must identify ways to promote access to opportunities that enrich the student learning experience during the school day, after the school day, and beyond the traditional K-12 school experience (including, but not limited to, opportunities for students to participate in community service, internships, mentoring, and after- and out-of-school experiences).
8. **Promoting evidence-based, innovative learning practices.** The Strategic Plan must support school districts in promoting and implementing innovative and evidence-based learning practices, including, but not limited to, the integrated use of technology and authentic, real-world, experiential learning and project-based learning.

MAINTAINING AN EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND FAMILIES.

9. **Prioritizing early learning.** The Strategic Plan must recognize the value and return on investment of early learning. It must identify strategies that advance high-quality, developmentally appropriate, hands-on early childhood and preschool opportunities for students. It must promote collaborations with parents, caregivers and community partners that emphasize the importance of early learning.
10. **Striking partnerships to deploy integrated supports.** The Strategic Plan must promote and encourage schools to partner with parents, caregivers, community members, and organizations to help maximize learning and support student opportunities and accomplishments. These supports can address students’ basic needs or more specialized conditions (e.g., nutrition, vision/hearing, health care, career exploration, workplace learning, etc.) that have an impact on learning and life.
11. **Emphasizing collective stakeholder impact.** At the state and local levels, the Strategic Plan must recognize the power of collective impact and seek to leverage all elements of society—including critical partners such as parents, caregivers, community and faith-based organizations, businesses, state legislators, etc.—in a shared commitment to the continuous improvement of the education system and the lives of children.
12. **Measuring progress.** The Strategic Plan must commit to a robust set of reliable measures that provide students, parents, caregivers, educators, and communities with clear feedback and an understanding of important trends that can be used to continually enhance teaching and learning.

Partners Who Contributed to the Development of the Plan

More than 150 partners had a direct hand in developing this plan. Those partners, listed individually below, include teachers and school leaders from preK-12, higher education representatives, parents, business leaders and employers, philanthropy, community leaders and others. This plan would not be possible without their dedicated engagement over the last seven months.

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