

April 30, 2012

Good Afternoon,

As you enter May, I know that your pace will quickly accelerate with all of the year-end events and activities you will be attending, culminating with graduation. As hurried as the final weeks of school seem to be, they also offer us an opportunity to witness first-hand just how much of a difference our teachers and schools have made in the growth of children during the school year. I encourage you to take your own personal moment to reflect on the children we serve and all they have accomplished this year. The work we do is not without its challenges -- and neither are the changes we are facing -- but it is always gratifying when we keep student accomplishments in the forefront. So pause and reflect before the whirlwind begins.

Last week, Ohio's Race to the Top (RtT) Early Learning Challenge Grant team met with federal officials and representatives of all nine states that were awarded the grant in December. You may recall that Ohio received \$69,993,362, the full amount requested and the most of any of the nine states selected. Funding will be used to improve the quality of programs that serve high-needs children from birth to five years. It also will help carefully measure the results of programs among agencies that serve young people. Ultimately, it should improve the readiness of children who start kindergarten in our schools.



Pictured with U.S. Education Secretary Duncan are, from left, Marcia Egbert with the George Gund Foundation; Stephanie Siddens and Barbara Weinberg from ODE's Office of Early Learning and School Readiness; Anne Harnish from the Governor's Office of Health Transformation, Michelle Albast with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

To learn more about Ohio's Early Learning Challenge grant activities, click [here](#).

Thank you on behalf of Ohio's children for all you do. Make it a great week.

Sincerely,

Stan W. Heffner

**Note:** Below are news items of interest to all superintendents and principals. Please share these items as appropriate with other suggested educators who will benefit from the information.

**For School superintendents and treasurers** – Please assign staff person to review upcoming Autism scholarship requests, Medical questions related to upcoming statewide assessments addressed, Rules clarified regarding the testing and accountability of foreign exchange students, Regents to host LiftEd conference May 2

**For curriculum directors, teachers and school counselors** – Comments on draft standards for three subject areas due May 4, Girl Aggression Interventions is May 2 webinar topic, Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week resource kit available

***For School superintendents and treasurers***

***Please assign staff person to review upcoming Autism scholarship requests***

Beginning in May, the application process for the state’s Autism scholarship program will be processed through a new online system that also supports the Jon Peterson Special Needs scholarship. Students will apply for the Autism scholarship through an approved provider through the SAFE system.

As applications are submitted, they will become available to the student’s district of residence for review. At least one SAFE account holder in each district will need to be assigned the role of *Reviewer- Autism*. This role will enable them to review autism scholarship applications and to receive email notifications from the system.

Instructions on how to complete the scholarship application review process will be emailed to current SAFE account holders who are designated as special education staff. In addition, ODE will periodically send information to the person assigned the SAFE role of *Reviewer-Autism*. Information about the program can be found by visiting the ODE Home page and using Autism Scholarship as the search criteria or emailing [autismscholarship@education.ohio.gov](mailto:autismscholarship@education.ohio.gov).

***Medical questions related to upcoming statewide assessments addressed***

With the arrival of the next testing cycle, questions concerning medical participation waivers continue to arise. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) recognizes that there are circumstances when it is not possible for the entire student body to participate in assessments. For this reason, USDOE allows states to exclude, for accountability purposes, students who “...cannot be assessed at any time during the testing window due to a significant medical emergency (e.g. a student is hospitalized due to an accident).” For the purpose of calculating the participation rate, a student experiencing such a significant medical emergency is eligible for a participation waiver.

Since a significant medical emergency is not foreseeable, medical waivers are, by nature, requested and evaluated annually. USDOE allows states to define those circumstances that represent a significant medical emergency. Ohio considers a significant medical emergency as a circumstance that occurs immediately preceding or during the testing and make-up window, that interferes with a student participating in assessments, and for which no alternate arrangements can be made to assess the student.

It is important to differentiate between a “medical emergency” as described above and a “medical condition.” A “medical condition” is a situation in which a student has an ongoing illness. For a student with an ongoing medical condition, a school and/or district still is obligated to educate and appropriately assess the student – whether it be pursuant to an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 Plan. The determination to place a student on an IEP or on a 504 plan does not exempt the student from participating in statewide assessments and such a student is not eligible for a participation waiver.

Please direct questions concerning medical participation waivers to Jackie Seward at (614) 387-7570 or [Jackie.seward@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Jackie.seward@education.ohio.gov)

***Rules clarified regarding the testing and accountability of foreign exchange students***

Based on numerous inquiries about the administration of the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT) to foreign

exchange students, the Office of Assessment provides the following information to clarify how these students are to be considered in the accountability system:

- All foreign exchange students are required to take all OGT sections if they are in grades 10, 11 or 12 and previously have not passed all the tests. There is one exception to this rule. If a foreign exchange student is classified as limited English proficient (LEP), and if the student has been in a U.S. school for fewer than 180 days, state and federal rules allow the student to be exempt from taking the reading and writing sections of the test. This student is still required to take all other OGT sections (mathematics, science and social studies).
- Any 10<sup>th</sup> grade foreign exchange student enrolled in a U.S. school for fewer than 180 days will be included in the school's and district's Annual Yearly Progress participation rate calculation for the OGT mathematics and reading tests, unless the student is exempt from taking the reading test because of LEP status.
- A foreign exchange student in any grade will be excluded from his or her grade's accountability calculations for proficiency, as long as the student has been in a U.S. school for fewer than 180 days and does not plan to obtain an Ohio diploma.
- A foreign exchange student who has been in a U.S. school for 180 days or longer and a foreign exchange student who plans to graduate from an Ohio school will be included in the appropriate school- and district-level proficiency calculations based on the grade level of the student.

Please direct any questions to the Office of Assessment at (614) 466-0223.

#### ***Regents to host LiftEd conference May 2***

LiftEd: Collaborating for Student and System Success is a free one-day conference hosted by the Board of Regents on May 2 in Columbus. Educational leaders are invited to explore innovative strategies that will help increase the number of Ohioans that earn a college degree and help prepare potential employees for the workforce demands of Ohio's knowledge economy.

Dennis Jones, president of the National Center on Higher Education management Systems, will be the keynote speaker. For more information, click [here](#).

#### ***For curriculum directors, teachers and school counselors***

#### ***Comments on draft standards for three subject areas due May 4***

The draft Academic Content Standards for Entrepreneurship, Financial Literacy and Non-Career Technical Business have been posted on the ODE financial literacy [Web page](#). Please feel free to review the draft standards and provide comments by May 4 using the survey link on the page. ODE will use this feedback to help refine the new content standards.

#### ***Girl Aggression Interventions is May 2 webinar topic***

The Ohio Department of Mental Health, in partnership with ODE, is hosting a free webinar about girl aggression interventions on Wednesday, May 2, from 3 to 4 p.m. This webinar is part of a series of Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (Anti-HIB) events designed to provide resources for families, schools and communities. It is open to 100 participants who register on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration opens 30 minutes before each program. The webinar will be recorded and posted online after the event. Registration and links to archived webinars are available [here](#).

#### ***Children's Mental Health Awareness Week resource kit available***

*Caring for Every Child's Mental Health* is the theme for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week from May 6-12. In conjunction with the recognition, the Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH) is offering a resource kit for Ohio schools, families and communities. It contains information and resources about children's mental health, promotes awareness and suggested activities. To find out more, see the Featured News section on the [ODMH Web page](#).

ODE is interested in your thoughts about how EdConnection fulfills your information needs. Please send any comments or suggestions to [Superintendent@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Superintendent@education.ohio.gov).

*Follow our new Facebook page for Ohio families by clicking [here](#).*

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