

December 18, 2012

Greetings:

For most of you, this is a hectic week filled with holiday programs, concerts and other festivities. For the community of Newtown, Connecticut, it is now filled with terrible pain and sadness. There are no words to comfort students, families, teachers and the community during this unimaginable tragedy. I know you join me in keeping them in our thoughts and prayers for strength during this season.

Not unlike earlier this year when tragedy struck close to home here in Ohio, last Friday's news once again forced the thought, "Could this happen in my district?" To support your efforts to keep your students and staff safe, [here](#) is information from Ohio's 2012 Safe School Summit held last summer. Please recall that your school district is required by law to have a school safety plan. Please take the time necessary to review and update your plan in cooperation with local law enforcement, emergency responders and mental health partners in your area. Protecting the safety and welfare of students statewide is paramount. Thank you for your continued efforts in ensuring that faculty, staff, parents, guardians, safety and emergency personnel, and other community stakeholders are actively involved in developing, refining and practicing the plans necessary to keep kids safe at school.

As 2012 comes to a close, I have three items I wish to share with you this week to keep on your radar.

First, as I mentioned in my message in the Nov. 26 edition of *EdConnection*, beginning in September 2013, the Praxis educator tests and assessments used currently for initial licensure will be replaced by a new series of tests developed by the Evaluation Systems Group of Pearson. This change brings with it the opportunity to overhaul educator standards to ensure future educators have the skills needed to prepare our children for the demands of college and careers.

To do this, we are seeking about 600 Ohio educators and college faculty to review the standards and validate the new tests. Your recommendation of one or more educators to participate in this process is critical to developing meaningful standards and tests. **You will be receiving an email request for recommendations directly from Pearson in the near future. I encourage you to begin compiling recommendations now.**

While we're talking testing, we are aware of a great deal of interest in learning more about how Ohio will transition from the OGT to the new assessments. This week, ODE staff is working on a blueprint for the transition. While it is still in the early stages of development, this framework is on track to be completed early next year. Stay tuned for more details.

Also, HB 555 passed in the Senate and now awaits Governor Kasich's consideration and signature. In addition to providing the framework for developing A-F report cards, the bill contains a few changes to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Currently, there are two sets of teacher credentials required, based on the students served. A reading endorsement or a passing score on a reading instruction test is required for any teacher with a student on a reading improvement and monitoring plan. A teacher with a student retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is required to be "high performing" as determined by their performance reviews and student data.

HB 555 expands the options teachers can use to demonstrate their ability to provide reading instruction to students reading below grade level. Any teacher with a student retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee or on a reading improvement and monitoring plan must have been actively engaged in the reading instruction of students for the previous three years, and meet at least one of the following criteria:

For the 2013-2014 school year, the teacher must:

- Hold a license with a reading endorsement and attain a passing grade on the corresponding assessment for that endorsement;
- Have completed a master's degree program with a major in reading;
- Be rated "above Value-Added," as defined by ODE, for the last two years; or
- Demonstrate evidence of a credential earned from an ODE-approved list of research-based reading instruction programs.

A school district or community school that cannot supply the number of teachers needed to meet the 2013-14 requirements of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee can submit a plan to ODE. Details on these plans will be provided to you soon.

For the 2014-2015 school year and thereafter, the teacher must:

- Hold a license with a reading endorsement and attain a passing grade on the corresponding assessment for that endorsement;
- Have completed a master's degree program with a major in reading;
- Be rated "above Value-Added," as defined by ODE, for the last two years; or
- Attain a passing score on a rigorous test of principles of scientifically research-based reading instruction selected by a competitive bidding process and approved by the State Board of Education.

The bill becomes law 90 days after the Governor signs it. This allows us time to provide you with summaries and resources on the new items.

Finally, since most districts begin their breaks at the end of this week and will not return until sometime after the New Year, the next edition of *EdConnection* will be published on Jan.7.

Thank you for all you do for Ohio's children. Have a great week and a wonderful holiday break!

Sincerely,

Michael L. Sawyers

Approaching deadlines or important dates mentioned in previous editions of *EdConnection*

- 12/21** Speak Up Ohio survey closes Dec. 21 ([12/10/2012](#))
12/31 Early Literacy and Reading Readiness grant application deadline ([11/05/2012](#))
Current window for eTPES closes ([11/26/2012](#))
Web-Based Recruitment System user survey deadline ([11/26/2012](#))

For School superintendents and treasurers

Ohio School Districts Earn AP Honor Roll Status

Thirty-seven of Ohio's 614 public school districts earned a spot on the 3rd Annual AP District Honor Roll for increasing access to Advance Placement (AP) courses and at the same time increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP exams.

According to AP administrator The College Board, the number of AP tests taken by Ohio public high school students grew by 6.7 percent last year and 35.6 percent during the past five years. The number of students earning scores high enough to qualify for college credit grew by 9.2 percent last year and 43.2 percent in the past five years.

The number of African American students passing AP tests grew by 24.4 percent last year and 61.6 percent in the last five years. Growing minority participation is a key goal.

Achieving both of these goals is the ideal scenario for a district's AP program because it indicates that the district is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are likely to benefit most from rigorous AP course work. More than 90 percent of colleges and universities across the U.S. offer college credit, advanced placement or both for a score of 3 or higher on an AP Exam — which can potentially save students and their families thousands of dollars in college tuition.

The complete 3rd Annual AP District Honor Roll, including Ohio, can be found [here](#).

BASA to hold winter regional meeting in January

The Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) will host five regional “Winter Update” meetings during January. ODE senior staff will be on hand to provide the latest information on many key issues including, but not limited to, HB 555, Ohio teacher evaluation, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and the transition to the next generation of assessments. Click [here](#) to find the date for the location near you and how to register.

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

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