

March 19, 2012

Good Afternoon:

On Wednesday, Governor Kasich unveiled his Mid-Biennium Review of the budget. As expected, it contains several reform plans in which ODE will be asked to play a prominent role. The plans will increase the rigor of standards and raise learning expectations for students. This includes revising the state and local report cards to an A-F letter grade system, adding flexibility to the teacher evaluation system and expanding digital learning opportunities. Additionally, there are new standards for dropout recovery schools and career connection components to be incorporated into the model curriculum. Another initiative is a strengthening of the "third grade reading guarantee," which will require the development of a reading intervention and monitoring plan for students who are not proficient in reading in kindergarten through second grade. Click [here](#) for a fact sheet on all of these proposals from the Governor's Office of 21st Century Education.

Ohio is on the path to a new generation of online assessments that is linked to the content standards for English and mathematics. These are being created by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a coalition of 24 states working together to build common assessments. On March 20, ODE will receive the Technology Readiness Tool from PARCC and pilot it with a few districts during March and April. The tool will then be released statewide in May. Throughout the entire implementation process, ODE will provide district-level training and support. If you have any questions or comments on the new Technology Readiness Tool, please email the dedicated account: OhioTRT@education.ohio.gov.

I realize that you have participated in other surveys about technology available at the district level. This tool is different in that it will gather, or inventory, the technology that is available now at the individual school level. This information is essential for PARCC as it develops the new assessments. It will aid in setting the minimum technical requirements and help developers as they write new assessment items. Please watch for a message that I will send to superintendents when we are ready to release the Technology Readiness Tool to your districts.

Last week, ODE co-hosted the first of 13 *Start Ready, Graduate Ready* forums with the State Board of Education, the Ohio Educational Service Center Association, and the Ohio School Boards Association. We invite members of your school community to attend one of these evening sessions being held across the state in March and April. Dates are available on this [flyer](#).

Finally, I want to congratulate Superintendent David Estrop, the staff and students in the Springfield City School District, who were featured in the March 15 issue of *Education Week* for their innovative virtual learning programs. The article highlights single-district online learning programs, which were the fastest-growing sector of virtual learning in the United States in 2011. This article is available to online subscribers and in hard-copy version. To see a preview of the article, click [here](#).

Thanks for your continuing efforts on behalf of Ohio's children. 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 – Reminder – Please update building safety and floor plans; Application period opens for Safe and Drug-Free Sustainability Plus Grant

For curriculum directors, administrators, teachers and counselors – USDOE tool helps monitor FAFSA information

For school superintendents and treasurers

Reminder – Please update building safety and floor plans

ODE and Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine urge Ohio school officials to make sure each school building's floor plan and safety plan are up-to-date and filed, [as required by law](#). The information in these plans can save both time and lives in a school emergency.

Plans need to be updated at least every three years, or sooner if changes occur. The Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) enters the information into the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway (OHLEG) system, so that any Ohio law enforcement officer can access them quickly.

Please email copies of your plans to the BCI at SchoolPlans@OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov. Hard copies of the plans may be mailed to the Attorney General's office at: School Digitization Project, The Ohio Attorney General's Office, 150 East Gay Street, 18th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215.

Application period opens for Safe and Drug-Free Sustainability Plus Grant

ODE's Office of Family and Community Support is offering an opportunity for applicants to develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan to address student discipline, non-academic needs and school safety plans.

Ohio public school districts, educational service centers, and career-technical centers are eligible to apply. Recipients of the Safe and Drug-free Schools Sustainability Grant (awarded July 22 – Sept. 30, 2011) are not eligible for the SDFS Sustainability Plus Grant.

The Safe and Drug-Free Sustainability Plus Grant offers eligible applicants the opportunity to:

1. Review their local discipline data and non-academic needs;
2. Identify school and community partners;
3. Develop a comprehensive sustainability plan addressing student discipline, non-academic needs and school safety plans;
4. Offer a positive school climate and a system of learning supports;
5. Purchase an evidence-based prevention program to address identified needs.

The application deadline is **April 16** at 5 p.m. To view the grant application and frequently asked questions, please click [here](#).

For curriculum directors, administrators, teachers and counselors

USDOE tool helps monitor FAFSA information

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has released a new tool that will help high school counselors and school leaders by giving them a resource to monitor Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completions and help students access higher education.

School officials can now track FAFSA submission and completion statistics at individual high schools on

the [FAFSA Completion website](#), which will help them ensure that their students are filling out the FAFSA and therefore are able to determine their eligibility for federal student aid – a key factor in families' college decisions.

The information on the website will be updated every two weeks, so educators will have reliable data to track FAFSA submission and completion and gauge their progress in increasing FAFSA completion. School officials can determine their school-wide FAFSA completion rate by comparing the number provided by the FAFSA Completion Tool with the number of seniors in their high school.

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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