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## **Board to Board, November 2013**

*Board to Board is an outreach effort, intended to keep local school board members apprised of important education-related issues, as well as the work of the State Board of Education.*

The State Board of Education was pleased to hold our November meeting in conjunction with the Ohio School Boards Association's (OSBA) Capital Conference. Thanks to OSBA for being gracious hosts and thanks to those of you who came to watch our meeting proceedings, and participate in our Rural, Urban and Suburban breakout sessions on Monday afternoon. We realize the work we do impacts local board members and it was a pleasure to speak with and see so many of you at the conference.

Some highlights of our November meeting include the following:

### **Operating Standards for Gifted Rule**

The Board's Achievement Committee discussed proposed amendments to Rule 3301-51-15, Operating Standards for Gifted Rule. The rule addresses elements such as identification, placement, written education plans, services and accountability.

The committee engaged in an extended discussion focused on revisions made to the rule since the October 2013 Achievement Committee meeting based on feedback received.

The Committee moved forward to the full State Board of Education a Resolution of Intent to adopt the amended rule at our December 2013 meeting.

### **Postsecondary Enrollment Options**

Our Capacity Committee heard a presentation from ODE staff regarding various aspects of Dual Enrollment programs including the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program, and how they work.

Staff also presented changes to these rules that had been requested by Committee members when the proposed rules were reviewed at the October Capacity Committee meeting.

The rules had originally been proposed to be amended in order to align them with H.B. 59. The Committee voted to recommend to the full Board the adoption of the proposed rule changes.

### **Operating Standards Revision**

As I shared with you in September, the recently passed Budget Bill contained language that instructs the State Board of Education to formulate Operating Standards in a way that focuses on the needs of individual students.

As a result of the legislation, the Board formed a committee and has begun to collect stakeholder input in order to revise Ohio's Operating Standards in a way that focuses on student outcomes instead of district inputs. The committee believes input, from stakeholders like you, is critically important in the process.

To help facilitate public input, the committee has created an email address to receive suggestions and feedback ([operatingstandards@education.ohio.gov](mailto:operatingstandards@education.ohio.gov)). To view the progress of the revision process, a [website](#) has been created that includes each rule, revision drafts and other meeting documents. I will continue to keep you updated about this important work.

### **Straight A Fund Update**

As you know, Ohio's school leaders responded enthusiastically to the Straight A Fund. A total of 420 organizations submitted 570 applications requesting a total of \$868 million. This year's grant pool is \$100 million.

Last Friday, the Straight A Fund Governing Board met to review the results of the first round of scoring, focused on fiscal sustainability. A key requirement of the Straight A initiative is that funded programs can continue to live on once the grant money is used.

The majority of grant proposals had solid financial plans that convinced the Governing Board that the proposed programs met this requirement. I'm pleased that most applicants took to heart this essential component of the Straight A plan.

The Straight A Board expects to make final recommendations for final funding at its Dec. 6 meeting. Those recommendations will go to the Controlling Board for final approval Dec. 16. As you can imagine, this will be a very tough and competitive process.

If your proposal was not selected to move forward to the programmatic scoring stage because it failed to meet financial sustainability requirements, here is some information about the process that should help you answer questions that may come from district staff and community members:

- Each applicant received three separate reviews by your peers from across the state and country who have experience in school finance, financial forecasting or related fields. Each scorer was screened by the Ohio Department of Administrative Services to ensure that only high-quality reviewers were selected. Scorers received extensive training on how to review applications. They were required to disclose direct and indirect conflicts of interest to ensure a fair process.
- If the project had ongoing costs, scorers determined if there was a plan to offset those expenses with verifiable and credible spending reductions. They also reviewed how applicants demonstrated the project would sustain itself beyond the life of the grant.
- Each application received a possible score of 0-3. A score of 0 indicated that none of the three fiscal sustainability scorers found the project proposal to be sustainable. A score of 2 or 3 indicated that all three fiscal sustainability scorers found the project proposal to be sustainable.
- Following the scoring, a group of Grant Advisors, made up of former superintendents, treasurers and leaders in the non-profit and business communities, met to review the results. The Grant Advisors agreed that applications receiving a score of 2 or 3 should move to a second round of scoring for a programmatic review. If an application received a score of 1, the Grant Advisors examined the application and either confirmed the conclusion of the scorers, or recommended that they move to the second round of scoring. Those with a score of 0 or 1 were considered not sustainable.

Keep in mind that this is just the first round of Straight A Fund awards. A larger, \$150 million round of grant funding will be available in the spring. If your district's proposal did not make the financial sustainability cut this round, that does not mean it wasn't a great idea, or that—with fiscal revisions—it might not be successful in later rounds of Straight A grant funding.

Watch the Ohio Department of Education [website](#) or our LinkedIn page [here](#) for details on when a new application period will open. You can also review winning grant proposals on the site after they are selected next month. This may help you better understand what a successful application looks like.

Finally, you can get a copy of scorer comments on your application that can help you revise a proposal for resubmission later. To request a copy of your scorer comments, please send an email to [StraightAFund@education.ohio.gov](mailto:StraightAFund@education.ohio.gov).

Again, thank you for all you do on behalf of Ohio's schoolchildren. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

All the best,



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*The State Board of Education has set education policy and directed the planning and evaluative functions of Ohio's public schools, as well as appointed and evaluated the superintendent of public instruction since 1956. The vision of the State Board is for all students to graduate well prepared for success. The State Board is made up of 19 members, including 11 elected and eight appointed members. The chairs of the education committees of the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate serve as ex-officio members.*