

2007-2008 Annual Report and Retrospective Ohio Community Schools

Executive Summary

The Office of Community Schools of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is pleased to submit the sixth annual report on community schools operating in Ohio. This report, in compliance with Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3314.015(A)(3), is offered annually to report on the “effectiveness of academic programs, operations, and legal compliance and of the financial condition of all community schools.”

During the four years of the 2004-2005 through 2007-2008 school years, the number of students enrolled in community schools grew from more than 62,000 to nearly 83,000, an increase of almost 34 percent. Using the same base year, the number of operating community schools of all types rose from 269 to 326. In 2007-2008, 20 new community schools opened, while 13 were closed through actions of the sponsors.

House Bills 119 and 562, enacted by the 127th General Assembly, further influenced the development of Ohio’s system of community schools. These new bills added an additional component deemed necessary to open a new community school. The operator provision requires an agreement be in place between a new school’s governing board and an organization or individual that has operated or managed high-performing schools in Ohio or another state, and is now an element necessary in the design, development, and opening of new community schools. A similar requirement for sponsors of schools outside of Ohio that seek to open schools within the state also became effective during this period.

Legislation that mandates the submission of annual sponsor assurances to ODE prior to the start of the academic year was approved during this period. Also enacted was a requirement that sponsors of unauditable community schools are prohibited from entering into contracts with additional schools until the Auditor of State completes the financial audit for a school previously designated as unauditable.

These additional legislative requirements, when coupled with the landmark school closure legislation in ORC 3314.35 authorized by HB 79 in the 126th General Assembly, strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for community school sponsors and schools. The first schools to be closed due to poor performance will cease operation at the end of the current 2008-2009 school year.