

Testimony on the Education Provisions of House Bill 64, the FY16-17 Biennial Budget

Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Education
Senator Cliff Hite, Chair
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David Ehle, Director, Education Management Information System (EMIS)
Ohio Department of Education

Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Sawyer and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Education Management Information System (EMIS) section of House Bill 64. I am David Ehle, director of EMIS at the Ohio Department of Education.

The Ohio Department of Education is committed to ensuring that every girl and boy in Ohio receives a quality education, can read at grade level and graduates college or job ready. Access to high-quality, timely data is critical to support the priorities of the department in achieving this vision for Ohio's students.

The Education Management Information System, as required by section 3301.0714 of the Revised Code, is the primary system for collecting K-12 education data from Ohio's public schools, including community schools. Today I will provide an overview of the system, including the types of data collected, a description of how the data are used, a synopsis of the safeguards in place to ensure the confidentiality of student information and a summary of the system enhancements implemented over the last biennium.

Ohio Education Management Information System – EMIS

First established in 1989, EMIS is the state's primary data collection system for K-12 student, staff, financial, program and course data. EMIS collects demographic and employment data for over 100,000 teachers, including teaching assignments and course codes; demographic, assessment, attendance, program and course data for over 1.7 million students; and data on over 3,500 public educational facilities.

In addition to the basic data collection and reporting functions mandated by both state and federal law, the data collected via EMIS are used to:

- Determine school district eligibility for funding, including the accurate and timely distribution of state and federal payments to support student success and achievement;

- Support the implementation of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, including identifying schools and districts that are struggling to get their students to read at grade level by the third grade;
- Calculate the performance and growth measures necessary for the state’s A-F report card; and
- Hold educators responsible for student growth and performance as part of Ohio’s Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems.

While the collection of data is critical to improving student achievement in Ohio, the department also recognizes the burden that data collection can place on districts and schools. The department annually reviews data collection requirements, eliminates any unnecessary data collection and minimizes the collection of additional data when implementing new educational programs, such as online assessments, which do not require districts to collect or report any additional student data elements. We are supportive of the proposed legislative changes in the governor’s budget bill that would eliminate the requirement for districts and schools to report data and the department’s requirement to post on the report card information related to extracurricular activities in which students participate. This regulatory relief would allow districts and schools local choice and flexibility related to the collection and reporting of these data to their communities.

Protecting the Confidentiality of Student Data

The department understands and respects the concerns related to protecting the confidentiality of the student data it collects and manages. Our commitment to protecting the privacy of individual student education records is evident in the agency’s focus on data governance, centralized data management and information security.

The department’s procedures for protecting the privacy of individual student educational records exceed the requirements of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Ohio is one of only three states that do not collect student names as part of its K-12 student data system. State law prohibits the reporting of a student’s name, address and social security number to the State Board of Education or the Ohio Department of Education within the Education Management Information System.

The EMIS statute requires that unidentifiable individual student information be reported through EMIS via a unique data verification code known as the Statewide Student ID (or SSID). This allows the state to protect student privacy while still being able to compute a graduation rate based on the progress of individual students throughout high school and calculate academic Value-Added and growth measures across school years.

Disclosure of Student Data

The department follows a standard procedure for publicly releasing data to ensure that it does not share “personally identifiable” information about a pupil. This is information that could be used alone or in combination with other information to identify, contact or locate a single student. Information also can be considered personally identifiable if it allows someone to identify a student in context—for example, to identify an individual child with a disability in a classroom where there are only three students with disabilities.

Data that reflects information about a group of students, not individuals, are used for publishing school and district report cards and federal reports. Again, no data are included that could allow someone to personally identify a student. To guard against identification of a student in a group context, such as a classroom or grade, the department does not release data for a group of fewer than 10 students. The

department follows this same practice for public record requests.

The department of education also has established an approval process for formal data requests. Department staff members, including the offices of the chief of staff, chief legal counsel and chief information officer, review all requests for information not already publicly available to ensure that information released is applicable to the needs of the requestor and protects student privacy.

Enhancements to EMIS

In this current biennium, several enhancements have been or are being made to EMIS to promote more efficient, timely and accurate data collection and reporting. These enhancements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Implementation of an application that provides districts with additional tools to review their data, including validating their enrollment for funding. This is especially important when students are being educated by an entity other than the school district in which the student resides, such as a community school or an open enrollment situation;
- Improved technical systems at the department reducing the time required to process the data, thus providing districts with more timely reports for review and more precise feedback on any issues with their data;
- An improved user interface for the EMIS submission and feedback system, enabling district staff responsible for EMIS reporting to complete more of their work in a single, integrated system and with less dependence on Ohio Department of Education processing for their day-to-day work;
- Consolidation of multiple, duplicative sets of reported data into a single, continuous set of data that is being used for both school funding and accountability calculations;
- Providing monthly training for district EMIS staff on EMIS requirements and enhancements to help ensure the reporting of accurate and timely data to the state; and
- Creation of a Data Quality Unit to focus on the continuous monitoring and improvement of the quality and completeness of the data

The Executive Budget (GRF line item 200446) proposes an increase of \$596,000 in EMIS in FY16 and an additional \$50,000 above that in FY17. The department believes that the funding level proposed for EMIS operations will be sufficient to support ongoing maintenance of the system, continued district training, expand upon the Data Quality Unit and upgrade the technology used to compile EMIS data for funding.

Education Technology Resources

The current biennial budget dissolved the eTech Ohio Commission and replaced the commission with the Broadcast Educational Media Commission. Through the dissolution of the commission, the department received three programs: training, technical support and guidance to school districts in applying for federal E-Rate funds; support and guidance related to local school district technology plans; and distribution of the subsidy to Ohio's eight educational technology centers. The governor's budget proposal consolidates the two line items contained in the current budget (GRF line items 200464 and 200465) and moves funding for INFOhio – Ohio's K-12 library consortium (from GRF line item 200426). Funding also is recommended to support continuation of the eTranscript system – a joint project between the department and the Ohio Board of Regents that allows students applying to colleges to submit their high school transcripts electronically and free of charge.

Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Sawyer and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education, this concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.