

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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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 accountability provisions of House Bill 64. I am Chris Woolard, and I am the senior executive director for the Center for Accountability and Continuous Improvement at the Ohio Department of Education.

My role within the department is to oversee the offices that determine how well schools and school districts are performing and, when necessary, to provide support to those schools and districts that are not meeting our expectations for what Ohio's students deserve. This support comes in many forms, depending on the individual school or district need.

Ohio determines how well schools and districts are performing through the state's accountability system. This includes the Ohio School Report Cards issued for over 600 school districts and nearly 4,000 school buildings. The report card has changed significantly over the past two years. In 2013, at the direction of the General Assembly, the department launched a new A-F report card for districts and schools to better communicate their performance to parents and taxpayers. The new, annual report card is hosted on an interactive website and is a great source of public information.

Like a student's report card, the A-F report card includes several graded components that, when looked at as a whole, paint a clear picture of how effectively a school or district is helping its students to learn and grow. The grades include measures that identify how much students are growing from year to year and how well they are achieving overall. The grades also include measures related to on-time graduation rates and the performance of subgroups of students. The department has received national acclaim for the new report card, including recognition from the Data Quality Campaign and the Education Commission of the States, which commended Ohio for providing such an important tool to parents and community members.

Still, we are looking to improve the report card each year. This includes gathering feedback from parents and stakeholders to help improve the report card design, as well as adding additional data and information for families and communities.

In 2014, a new letter grade was added to judge how well students improve in reading from kindergarten through grade three. It is called the K-3 Literacy Improvement measure. While this measure is related to student performance on early literacy, the K-3 Literacy Improvement measure does not specifically include the number of third-graders reading at grade level. Rather, this measure reflects the annual improvement that our young readers are making in their kindergarten through third grade years. This focus on improvement allows districts to highlight the progress that their students are making towards becoming proficient readers, regardless of where they start out. Our focus on grade level reading is paying off and Ohio's students and teachers have risen to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee challenge. Nearly 96 percent of last year's eligible third-graders met the state's reading criteria for promotion to the fourth grade.

While the K-3 Literacy Improvement measure is a great tool to show how students improve year to year, the measure does not currently focus on how well students can read at the end of third grade. The governor's budget adds a new graded outcome measure to show how well schools are doing to ensure students can read by the end of the third grade and move on to the fourth grade on time. Together, the K-3 Literacy Improvement measure and the new outcome measure proposed in House Bill 64 will give parents and taxpayers a more comprehensive look at the progress schools and students are making in the area of early literacy.

The budget also includes an increase in funding to expand the performance management tool that is already a part of the report card. This is a new feature on the report card, but it has the potential for much more. The performance management system will be a data analysis tool specifically designed for district leaders to examine expenditures in relationship to student performance. This may include data on types of expenditures, by school, with the ability to compare to other districts. This expansion will allow district leaders to find and replicate cost effective practices in other districts just like their own.

As the department continues implementing the new report card, a few small technical issues have emerged and the budget contains proposals to address these concerns. These proposals include streamlining how student growth is included on the report card and technical changes based on the experiences of producing the existing K-3 Literacy Improvement measure.

To account for the transition to new state tests, the report card will go through a one-year transition period. Similar to Ohio's previous testing transition over a decade ago, the release of the report card for the 2014-2015 school year will be delayed until January 2016. This one-time delay is needed because of the extra time it takes the test vendors to process student results.

Additionally, the new state tests set higher expectations. This will require the State Board of Education to set new targets for one of the achievement grades on the report card: the Performance Indicators grade. The budget contains the necessary provisions to transition these targets to match the new tests over three years.

In the executive budget proposal, Gov. Kasich seeks to strengthen education across Ohio. In addition to the report card, the governor's budget increases funding through the report card's funding line to support Ohio's teacher evaluation system. House Bill 64 expands funding to allow teachers to use state

tests to measure student growth in the same way it is measured on the report card. This will improve the quality of teacher evaluations while reducing the need for additional testing in many high school subjects. In total the executive proposal recommends appropriations of \$6.9 million in each year of the biennium (GRF line item 200439) to ensure all of the program activities discussed above are successfully implemented.

Gov. Kasich's budget initiatives build on our previous work by streamlining the report card, expanding it to include critical information and making teacher evaluations more efficient. These provisions will give parents the information they need to make the best choices for their children. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.