



Department of Education

Mike DeWine, Governor
Dr. Stephanie K. Siddens, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dec. 3, 2021

Dear President Shadd:

Thank you for your recent submission of a proposed academic improvement plan and subsequent revisions pursuant to [Ohio Revised Code 3302.103](#). State law requires the state superintendent of public instruction to review the revised submission within 30 days of receiving it. The revisions I requested on Oct. 27, 2021, to the academic benchmarks and improvement strategies have been incorporated into the updated plan. Based on the revisions, the Youngstown City School District academic improvement plan is approved.

The plan outlines the key strategies and related benchmarks to ensure the long-term success of students in your district. In my review of this plan, I focused on the proposed academic benchmarks to ensure they represent ambitious, achievable goals while also looking for evidence of stakeholder input and effective improvement strategies.

The Ohio Department of Education recognizes districts have had to work even harder to support students as a result of pandemic-related challenges. At the same time, it is important that we continue to have high expectations for student success. The benchmarks are designed to determine whether, after three years of implementation, the district is making sufficient progress on long-term goals to justify the continued implementation of the plan rather than reverting to the oversight of an Academic Distress Commission. The approved plan ensures that all summative three-year benchmarks are set no lower than pre-pandemic levels.

In the revision request, I asked for the district to increase expectations of benchmarks in the three-year plan to at least pre-pandemic levels and to clearly state the long-term success goals in the context of these improvement goals. The updated plan addressed both requests to maintain high expectations for all students.

A few important notes:

- **1. Literacy:** While the literacy goal using the Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI) Assessment has been established (p.8), the district must submit a request to modify the improvement plan and annual targets after complete baseline-year data is available. This amendment, once submitted, should reflect high expectations for students. The Department's literacy team is well-versed in this assessment and will assist the district in designing an amended target.
- **22. Graduation credits:** The current benchmark goal is incomplete (p.54). The district must submit a request to modify the improvement plan and set annual targets after complete baseline year data is available.

- **23. Diploma seals:** The current benchmark goal is incomplete (p.57). The district must submit a request to modify the improvement plan and set annual targets after complete baseline-year data is available.
- **24. Expansion of career-technical education (CTE):** While the expansion of CTE with seventh- and eighth-grade scholars has been established (p.59), it is noted and expected that the district may submit a request to modify the improvement plan and annual targets after complete baseline-year data is available.
- **Note about interpretation of “passing tests:”** the plan makes multiple references to passing tests. The Department confirmed in an email by the district board President Shadd on 12/1/21 that the district interprets passing to mean “proficient or higher” on relevant tests. If the district intends other interpretations, it must request to formally revise the plan.

[State law](#) outlines the requirements moving forward as the district begins to implement the plan. The following table provides key dates and milestone activities for implementation and evaluation of the plan.

Key Milestones	Summary of Activity
Preparation Dec. 3, 2021 - June 30, 2022	District may begin preparing to implement plan.
Implementation July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023	Plan is in effect. At the end of the year, district provides an annual report to the State Board of Education.
Implementation July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024	Plan is in effect. At the end of the year, district provides an annual report to the State Board of Education.
Implementation July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025	Plan is in effect.
Evaluation June 30, 2025	District is evaluated by the State Board of Education to determine if the majority of academic improvement benchmarks were met.
One Year Extension 2025-2026 school year	One School Year Extension Permitted: If the district improves but does not meet at least a majority of the academic improvement benchmarks, the district board of education may apply to the State Superintendent for an extension of one school year to continue implementing the plan.
Extension Evaluation June 30, 2026	First Year Extension Evaluation: After first year extension, district is evaluated by the State Board of Education to determine if the majority of academic improvement benchmarks are met.

<p>One Year Extension 2026-2027 school year</p>	<p>Second School Year Extension Permitted: If the district does not meet at least a majority of the established benchmarks at the end of the extension, the district again may apply to the State Superintendent for an extension of one school year to continue implementing the plan.</p>
<p>Final Review June 30, 2027</p>	<p>Final Review of Plan After Two Extensions: After last extension, State Superintendent determines if the majority of academic improvement benchmarks are met.</p>

The Department will work with the leadership of the State Board of Education on expectations for the timing and format of the annual report, which will include a district presentation to the State Board. The Department will provide more information on the Board schedule as it becomes available. The academic improvement plan represents an important strategic commitment to the long-term success of students. In addition to the annual reporting requirements, I expect that district leadership will provide regular status updates to the district board of education, and that any such updates are shared with the State Board of Education.

As always, please continue to engage your state support team as you make adaptations to your plan and embark on implementation. Your state support team is available to assist your district leadership team using the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) to develop and align your improvement infrastructure (district leadership teams, building leadership teams and teacher-based teams). State support teams also have expertise in early literacy, early learning and school readiness, positive behavioral intervention and supports and special education. In addition, state support teams can assist with building capacity to support your plan goals.

The Department also stands ready to assist and provide additional information. Please contact Marva Kay Jones at marva.jones@education.ohio.gov to coordinate any follow-up requests.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Siddens, Ph.D.
Interim State Superintendent of Public Instruction

cc: CEO Justin Jennings, Youngstown City School District