

Education Update

To: LWVO
From: Joan Platz
Education Update for March 29, 2010

1) 128th General Assembly: The Ohio House and Senate are on spring break from March 29, 2010 through April 9, 2010.

*Joe Walter took the oath of office to become State Representative for the 47th House District on March 24, 2010 replacing Peter Ujvagi. Representative Walter is the Director of the Lucas County Emergency Management Agency. Former Representative Ujvagi resigned from the House to become an administrator for Lucas County.

*The Office of the Secretary of State certified on March 26, 2010 a referendum petition from Letohiovote for the November 2010 ballot. The petition asks voters to repeal a section of the state budget (Am. Sub. HB1) that authorizes the Ohio Lottery to install video slot machines at the state's seven horse racetracks.

2) Legislation Recently Passed: The Ohio House and Senate approved last week the following bills, which will be sent to Governor Strickland to sign into law:

-Sub. HB462 (Sykes) Capital Re-appropriations: Makes capital re-appropriations for the biennium ending June 30, 2012 and certain capital appropriations.

-SB155 (Carey) State Agency Biennial Audits and Budget Corrections:

The bill does the following:

- *requires that the costs of all biennial audits of state agencies be charged to the state agency being audited
- *alters the allocation of the proceeds of the existing fee on the sale of new tires in order to provide funding for the Soil and Water Conservation District Assistance Fund
- *increases the maximum amount of the annual soil and water conservation district subsidy
- *permits individual taxpayers to direct the state to transmit an income tax refund directly to certain accounts
- *allows the use of the state on and off triggers for state extended unemployment benefits using the total unemployment rate and the payment of high-unemployment period benefits if the benefits are federally funded
- *modifies the computation of payments for career-technical education for certain school districts for fiscal years 2010 and 2011
- *modifies the effective date of certain changes to the Uniform Public Securities Law made in Am. Sub. H.B. 1 of the 128th General Assembly
- *establishes that the final maturity for a port authority revenue bond must not be later than 45 years after the issuance of the bond rather than 40 years
- *makes changes to the eTech Ohio clearinghouse
- *transfers the Louvee Theater Project from Rio Grande Community College to Ohio University
- *redirects certain capital appropriations, modifies appropriation intent language, and declares an emergency.

*The Ohio House approved the following bill last week:

-HB377 (Garrison) Election/Initiative Petitions: Prohibits persons who have been convicted of or pleaded guilty to an offense involving identity theft, forgery, or fraud from witnessing or circulating election petitions, and requires the circulator to be notarized.

*The Ohio Senate approved the following bill last week:

-SB192 (Cates, Seitz) School Transportation: Permits non-Civil Service school district boards to terminate positions of district transportation employees for reasons of economy and efficiency and to contract with independent agents to provide transportation services.

3) News from Washington D.C.

*Race to the Top: U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan will announce Phase 1 winners of the U.S. Department of Education's (U.S. DOE) \$4.35 billion Race to the Top competition during a press conference call with reporters at 1:30 PM on March 29, 2010. A press release announcing the winners will be posted on the U.S. DOE's website, <http://www.ed.gov>, at 1:00 PM EDT Monday.

*The U.S. Department of Education announced on March 22, 2010 that New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, Ohio, and Indiana will be receiving federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) to help struggling schools improve academic performance. The grants are part of the \$3.5 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Ohio will be receiving \$132 million, which will be distributed to eligible school districts through a competitive grant process. To be eligible schools within a school district must be identified as "persistently lowest achieving" and agree to implement one of four school improvement models: Turnaround, Restart, School Closure, Transformation.

An additional \$545 million for SIG will be awarded to states in the 2011-12 school year, and the Obama Administration has requested an additional \$900 million for the program in the 2011 budget.

Ohio's grant application and the list of persistently lowest achieving schools in Ohio are available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/summary/index.html>.

*The U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, chaired by Senator Blanche Lincoln, approved on March 24, 2010 "The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010". The bill re-authorizes childhood nutrition programs and increases enrollment in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs; improves the nutritional quality of meals served at school; and requires the development of national school nutrition standards for foods sold in schools. For more information please visit <http://ag.senate.gov/site/news.html>.

4) School Funding Advisory Council Subcommittees to Meet: The Subcommittees of the School Funding Advisory Council, Superintendent Delisle chair, will meet on April 1, 2010 from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Ohio School Boards Association, 8050 North High Street, Columbus, OH.

The following subcommittee will meet from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM:

-Traditional Public/Community School Collaboration Subcommittee, chaired by Dr. Renee Middleton: Barbara Mattei-Smith, ODE Associate Director of School Options and Finance, will present information about how community schools are funded.

The following subcommittees will meet from 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM:

-Special Needs, chaired by Robin Essman: The subcommittee will receive information from the following newly appointed members of the subcommittee: Dr. Jan Osborn, representing the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities; Ann Sheldon, representing the Ohio Association for Gifted Children; Thomas Babb, representing Constellation Schools; and Dr. Roger Saurer, from the ESL Advisory Committee, Copley-Fairlawn City Schools.

-Education Linkages, chaired by Dr. Adrienne O'Neill: Christina Siracusa, ODE Assistant Director of Budget and Planning, will continue a presentation about funding for Career-Technical Education. Sarah Luchs, Associate Director, ODE Office of Career and Technical Education, will present information about Early High Schools.

-Regional Variation, chaired by Dr. Richard Murray: Craig Burford, Executive Director OESCA, will continue his presentation about the historical and statutory context of Ohio's Educational Service Centers.

The subcommittee will also receive information about Regional Service Providers/ funding sources and governance models; open enrollment; and discuss questions for Howard Fleeter regarding differing costs of doing business.

-Learning Environments, chaired by Rick Petrick: The subcommittee will receive presentations and discuss "Perspectives on Teacher Compensation in Ohio." Presenters include Joan Kuchcinski, Program coordinator, Toledo Review and Alternative Compensation System (TRACS); Tim Bollin, Qualified teacher practitioner, TRACS; Fritz Fekete, Director of Information Systems, Research and Collective Bargaining, OEA; and representatives from the Ohio School Boards Association, the Ohio Association of School Business Officials and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

For more information about the meetings of the School Funding Advisory Council, please visit <http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/SFAC/ODESFAC.aspx?page=673>.

5) NAEP Reading Results Released: The National Assessment Governing Board, David Driscoll chair, released the 2009 results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading for 4th and 8th grade on March 24, 2010.

NAEP, known as the "Nation's Report Card", is the only "nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the U.S." since 1969. NAEP assesses student achievement in a variety of subjects, and compares achievement between states, districts, and student demographic populations. The NAEP results for mathematics were released in October 2009 and those for the arts in May 2009.

The NAEP reading assessment in 2009 is based on a new reading framework that emphasizes student reading comprehension on informational and literary texts, including poetry, and assesses the ability of students to draw conclusions and evaluate arguments.

The NAEP assessment in reading began in 1992. Student achievement is categorized as "basic", "proficient", or "advanced" and is based on the representative samples of 178,800 4th grade students and 160,900 8th grade students.

According to a news release by the National Assessment Governing Board, the reading scores of 8th graders averaged 264 (on a 500 point scale), which is only 1 point higher than 2007, the last time that the reading test was administered to students. Student scores were higher this year in Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Kentucky, Missouri, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Utah.

The NAEP scores for 4th grade students averaged 221, which is the same as 2007. Student scores were higher in Kentucky, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia, but scores decreased in Alaska, Iowa, New Mexico, and Wyoming.

For eighth grade 75 percent of students performed at or above the basic level; 32 percent achieved at or above the proficient level; and 3 percent achieved at the advanced level in 2009, which is the same level of performance as in 2007 and 1992.

Percentile scores for eighth grade are higher for students at the 10th and 25th percentiles (lower performing students) and middle performing students (at the 50th percentile). Scores are higher in all racial-ethnic groups, but gaps between White students and Black and Hispanic students are not significantly different from those in 2007 or 1992.

For fourth grade the percentages of students achieving at or above the basic, proficient, and advanced levels are the same in 2009 as in 2007, but higher than in 1992.

- 67 percent of students achieved at or above the basic level
- 33 percent of students achieved at or above the proficient level
- 8 percent of students achieved at the advanced level.

Scores for students at the 10th, 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile did not differ from 2007, but were higher than 1992. There are no significant changes in scores across racial categories, and the gap between White and Black group scores decreased in 2009 compared to 1992.

For Ohio: Overall the average scale scores for eighth and fourth grade students in Ohio were higher than the national average.

In fourth grade the average scale score dropped from 226 in 2007 to 225 in 2009. 71 percent of students achieved at or above the basic level; 36 percent at or above the proficient level; and 9 percent achieved at or above the advanced level, which was an increase over 2007.

In eighth grade the average scale score increased from 268 in 2007 to 269 in 2009.

80 percent of students achieved at or above the basic level; 37 percent achieved at or above the proficient level; and 3 percent achieved at or above the advanced level.

The report is available at <http://nationsreportcard.gov/>

6) Students in Urban Centers Improve Achievement: The Council for Great City Schools, Michael Casserly executive director, released on March 22, 2010 a report entitled "Beating the Odds: Analysis of Student Performance on State Assessments and NAEP". The report analyzes the academic progress of 65 urban school districts in 37 states and the District of Columbia between 2006-2009 on state assessments in fourth and eighth grade math and reading and on the Trial Urban District Assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

According to the report urban students are showing measurable test-score gains in reading and math, and achievement gaps are also closing on state assessments. Students are also making gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in both grades four and eight in math and in reading in grade four.

"The percentage of fourth graders in large cities who scored at or above proficient in math rose to 29 percent in 2009 from 24 percent in 2005, and to 24 percent from 19 percent in eighth grade. The jump is considered statistically significant when compared with NAEP scores in public schools across the nation."

"In reading, the percentage of fourth graders in large cities who scored at or above proficient jumped to 22 percent in 2007 from 20 percent in 2005, and was stagnant in eighth--grade scores at 20 percent in 2005 and 2007, matching a zero increase nationally as well."

The report notes that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C. school district outperformed public schools nationwide in fourth-grade math on NAEP, and Austin, TX out-performed public schools in eighth-grade math.

The report is available at <http://www.cgcs.org/publications/achievement.aspx>.

7) Connecticut Court Rules on School Funding: The Connecticut Supreme Court released its decision in the case, Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) v. Rell on March 22, 2010.

According to the press release, "The Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that all Connecticut schoolchildren have a constitutional right to an effective and meaningful education. In reaching one of its most important and fundamental decisions in thirty years, the Court stated that, "the fundamental right to an education is not an empty linguistic shell" and must meet "modern educational standards." The Court said these standards must prepare students to "participate in democratic institutions," "attain productive employment," and "progress on to higher education."

The CCJEF filed the lawsuit four and a half years ago. With this decision the plaintiffs can move forward in a lower court to determine whether or not the State of Connecticut is providing all students with a constitutionally adequate education.

The CCJEF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit coalition of parents, municipalities, local boards of education, and statewide education associations. Working with the Yale Law School Education Adequacy Clinic the CCJEF seeks to achieve an adequate and equitable funded PK-12 public education system. For more information please visit http://ccjef.org/wp-content/uploads/ccjef_press_release_on_supreme_court_decision_3_22_10.pdf

8) Bills Introduced:

HB472 (Lundy) Textbook Affordability Act: Enact the "Textbook Affordability Act" with respect to college textbook sales.

9) STEM to STEAM Makes Education Week: The March 9, 2010 issue of Education Week includes a commentary by Joseph Piro, Associate Professor, School of Education at Long Island University's C.W. Post Campus, entitled "Going From STEM to STEAM: The Arts Have a Role in America's Future, Too".

The article supports adding the arts (the A to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) to make STEAM) in order to support efforts to increase student achievement and support the U.S. economy.

According to the article, "That arts education has not enjoyed a growth in status is somewhat surprising. Empirical evidence continues to accrue showing that involvement with the arts leads to measurable cognitive gains. Studies probing the positive effects of music instruction on verbal memory and spatial skills, for example, have been very promising. Training in a musical instrument has also been demonstrated to enhance both verbal ability and nonverbal reasoning, and involvement with visual art has seemed in research to intensify students' observational powers and analytic prowess. Other outcomes often mentioned in studies as a result of arts involvement are better questioning skills, more-focused periods of intense concentration, and greater understanding that problems can have multiple answers."

The author goes on to say, "If creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking-all touted as hallmark skills for 21st century success-are to be cultivated, we need to ensure that STEM subjects are drawn closer to the arts."

To read the article please visit <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/03/10/24piro.h29.html>.

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