

Education Update

To: LWVO
From: Joan Platz
Education Update for September 29, 2008

1) State News: The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Chancellor Eric Fingerhut of the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) forwarded to the Office of Budget and Management last week proposed budget reductions in FY09 to comply with Governor Strickland's September 10, 2008 order to reduce state spending by an additional \$540 million, or 4.75 percent. This order is the second issued by Governor Strickland to reduce state spending. The Governor ordered \$733 million in cuts in January 2008, which brings the total amount reduced from the FY08-09 budget to \$1.27 billion.

The Ohio Department of Education was directed to reduce its FY09 budget by \$25.9 million; the Ohio Board of Regents by \$22.2 million; the Ohio Arts Council by \$532,625; and the Ohio School for the Blind and Ohio School for the Deaf by \$868,716.

The following education related budget items are exempt from these cuts: school foundation program; pupil transportation; gifted education; special education enhancements; career/technical education enhancements; Ohio College Opportunity Grants; Ohio Instructional Grants; state share of instruction; school facilities; and tax relief, such as the Homestead Exemption, property and tangible tax reimbursements.

According to a document available on the ODE web site, most of the ODE line items are reduced by 4.75 percent to obtain the \$25.6 million in reductions. However, there are several being cut by more than 4.75 percent including School Management Assistance; the Ohio Educational Computer Network; School Improvement Initiatives; Literacy Improvement Professional Development; Accountability Report Cards; Child Care Licensing; Educator Preparation; and Ohio Core Support. The line item experiencing the largest amount of reduction is Auxiliary Services (\$6.445 million), although it falls within a 4.75 percent reduction.

According to a budget document available from the Board of Regents, the budget reductions for the Ohio Board of Regents fall into the 4.75 percent range.

The reductions to the FY09 budget will go into effect on October 1, 2008, but do not affect the budget requests state agencies and departments have submitted for FY10-11.

To see the list of budget reductions for the ODE please visit <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=690&ContentID=7099&Content=56100>.

2) Superintendent Search: The State Board of Education, Jennifer Sheets president, has scheduled executive sessions on September 28, 29 & 30, 2008 to narrow the candidates to be considered for the position of Superintendent of Public Instruction to replace the current superintendent, Dr. Susan Tave Zelman. Dr. Zelman has accepted a position as senior vice president for education with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and intends to start her new job on November 3, 2008.

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The Columbus Dispatch reported on September 27, 2008 the following candidates, who will be considered by the State Board for the superintendent position during their executive sessions: Michael Johnson, superintendent of the Bexley City Schools; Deborah S.

Delisle, superintendent of the Cleveland Heights - University Heights School District; Patricia Brenneman, superintendent of the Oak Hills School District; Donna Durno, executive director of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pittsburgh; and Catherine Cross Maple, deputy secretary of education for the New Mexico Public Education Department.

3) National Update: The 110th Congress returned from recess on September 9, 2008. Congress had planned to adjourn on September 26, 2008 until the global financial crisis developed. Instead, lawmakers continued to work over the weekend on a \$700 billion package to support the banking industry, and approved HR 2638, which funds government programs and agencies at FY 2008 levels until FY2009 appropriations can be approved. The House approved HR 2638 on September 24, 2008, and the Senate on September 27, 2008. HR 2638 extends funding for federal departments and agencies at 2008 funding levels through March 6, 2009, and also contains FY 2009 appropriations for the Departments of Defense (DOD), Homeland Security (DHS), and Veterans Affairs (VA). According to a status report on this bill, it has been cleared for the White House.

4) Conference Scheduled: The Ohio Center for Law Related Education will host on September 28 & 29, 2008 its annual Law and Citizenship Conference called "Race to the White House: 2008 Elections." The conference provides teachers and administrators with opportunities to gather information, hands-on activities, and lesson plans about the November 2008 election, aligned to Ohio's Social Studies Standards.

For more information please visit <http://www.ocltre.org/front.htm>

5) Education Organizations Support Community Involvement Agenda: A coalition of over 120 organizations announced on September 25, 2008 support for the "Community Agenda for American's Public Schools", an action plan that promotes partnerships and shared responsibilities among public schools, families, communities, institutions of higher education, and agencies to support student achievement. These partnerships may include school-based health centers, high-quality preschool programs, internships, job training opportunities, expanded use of schools as community centers, and the involvement of community members in schools. The organizations agreed that schools should become centers of their communities to promote life-long learning and ensure that students are not only ready for school, but have opportunities throughout their lives to learn, work, and participate as productive citizens in their communities.

The Community Agenda partners will be developing policies and legislation to support their goals, and have invited the White House and Congress to begin a national conversation on their agenda.

Among the diverse organizations endorsing this initiative are the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the Public Education Network, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National School Boards Association, the National PTA, the National League of Cities, the Afterschool Alliance, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care, the YMCA, the United Way, etc. The Institute for Educational Leadership, Coalition for Community Schools, Martin Blank director, is facilitating this initiative. For more information please visit http://www2.co.multnomah.or.us/County_Human_Services/SCP/files/080915final_CommunityAgenda.pdf

6) Report on Restructuring Schools Released: The Center on Education Policy, Jack Jennings president, released a report on September 23, 2008 called "A Call to Restructure Restructuring: Lessons from the No Child Left Behind Act in Five States" by Caitlin Scott. This report examines the "restructuring requirement" of the No Child Left Behind Act, and provides information about how restructuring is being implemented in five states: Michigan, California, Maryland, Ohio, and

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Georgia. Information for this report was gathered through reviews, interviews with state officials, and case studies of 19 school districts and 42 schools during the 2007-2008 school year. The Ohio schools that participated in this study were East High School, East Technical High School, and Marshall High School (Cleveland Metropolitan School District); John P. Parker Elementary School, Reese E. Price Elementary School, and Taft Elementary School (Cincinnati Public Schools); Newman Elementary and Malabar Middle School (Mansfield City Schools); and Mount Vernon Middle School (Mount Vernon City Schools).

According to the findings of the report, the number of schools entering restructuring status has grown by 50 percent in one year and now totals 3,500; many schools remain in restructuring status; the "any other option" category is the most popular restructuring option being used in states; replacing staff has unintended consequences; state support for schools in restructuring status varies; and the federal government provides little guidance about how to improve persistently struggling schools.

The CEP makes the following recommendations in the report:

- Policymakers should expand the federal options for restructuring and encourage states to create state-specific strategies.
- States need to step up efforts to monitor restructuring implementation to ensure that schools actually implement the actions in their restructuring plan and learn more about what works.
- Federal and state officials need to consider policies to address schools that remain in restructuring.
- Unless certain criteria are met, restructuring schools should not choose to replace staff, and states should not recommend this option.
- States and districts should work to help maintain student achievement in schools that exit restructuring.

To read the report please visit

http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document_ext.showDocumentByID&nodeID=1&DocumentID=248

7) More Reports About College Readiness:

oA report released by Child Trends on September 16, 2008 called "A Developmental Perspective on College and Workplace Readiness", by Laura Lippman, Astrid Atienza, Andrew Rivers, and Julie Keith, identifies critical gaps in the criteria used by colleges and employers to determine the competence of young applicants.

According to the report, "This report seeks to widen the road to success for high school students. It also provides a sense of the degree to which research in each field indicates a need for each competency. The competencies needed are organized into five domains of youth development: physical, psychological, social, cognitive, and spiritual."

The report recommends that criteria for college readiness include healthy behaviors, avoiding risky behaviors, positive mental health, resilience, a strong work ethic and moral character, social competence, and creativity. Criteria for workplace readiness should include positive mental health and resilience, social support, and having a sense of purpose to cope with fluctuations in the labor market and workplace. Youth development criteria should include specific communication skills needed by employers, and the ability to reason.

To read the report please visit

http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_09_15_FR_ReadinessReport.pdf

oThe National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), Kimberly Johnston president, issued a report on September 23, 2008 called "The Report of the Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admissions". According to this report there are many concerns and debate about the role of standardized tests, such as the ACT and SAT, in determining college and university admissions. Several postsecondary institutions have now adopted "test-optional"

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admission policies as a result. A Commission was formed by the NACAC to review research and develop recommendations for admissions policies. The Commission states in the Executive Summary, "This Commission wishes to emphasize at the outset that a "one-size-fits-all" approach for the use of standardized tests in undergraduate admission does not reflect the realities facing our nation's many and varied colleges and universities. These institutions differ greatly in size, selectivity and mission. At some, standardized tests are important predictors of students' academic success, while at others, they add little compared to high school grades."

The report includes several recommendations to be implemented by federal and state governments, school districts, colleges and universities, the NACAC, and other stakeholders. For example, the report recommends that the federal and state governments develop a "college readiness assessment mechanism" that is aligned with students' coursework in high school, and refrain from using admission tests "as measures of achievement for accountability purposes."

Universities and colleges should conduct independent, institutionally
- specific validity research on admission tests, and research the impact and access to test preparation on admissions.

High schools should provide test preparation "as part of a continuum of college preparatory activities" which includes other informational 'coursework,' such as information about financial aid eligibility, familiarization with the college application, overview of the college application and admission timeline, essay writing assistance, parent/family involvement, and other services.

The NACAC should provide information about validity studies and test preparation and coaching to its members annually, and include guidelines in its Statement of Principles of Good Practice for test score use.

For other stakeholders the Commission recommends ending the use of PSAT scores as the sole criterion for eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship, and "move toward practice that can be condoned by accepted standards for test score use"; cease using SAT or ACT scores as a measure of institutional quality; cease using SAT or ACT scores as a measure of institutional financial health; and urge the College Board and ACT to conduct "usage audits" for their test products to ensure the proper use of admission tests.

The full report is available at
<http://www.nacacnet.org/NR/rdonlyres/FE4E1899-653F-4D92-8629-86986D42BF5C/0/TestingComissionReport.pdf>

8) Bills Introduced:

SB364 (Stivers) Permits school districts, STEM schools, and chartered nonpublic schools to excuse Junior ROTC students from the high school physical education requirement.

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