

More Fun From Columbus – Makes Retirement Even Sweeter!!!

Tom Moscovic – Legislative Chair

Cursive by 5th Grade is the Law

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio students officially must learn cursive. A bill signed into law by then-Governor John Kasich last year has gone into effect, mandating schools in the state to teach students to write legibly in cursive by fifth grade.

Under Amended Substitute House Bill 58, the Ohio Department of Education must include supplemental materials in cursive handwriting in the English Language Arts Model Curriculum.

The bill states students need to be able to print letters and words legibly by the third grade. By the end of the fifth grade, children must know how to write in cursive.

The bill went into effect on March 20.

It also states that the new instructional materials shall be added to the curriculum no later than July 1 and are to be updated periodically.

The writing curriculum's implementation will be overseen by the Ohio Department of Education.

Ohio Falls Short of Fair Funding for Schools (A Summary)

The Ohio Supreme Court ruled more than 20 years ago that the state's school-funding system was so unfair that it violated the Ohio constitution. And yet a system that adequately and fairly funds public education in Ohio has eluded more than a generation of lawmakers and governors in this state.

So expectations were high for a recent effort led by State Reps. Bob Cupp (R., Lima) and John Patterson (D., Jefferson). Their working group of school superintendents and treasurers collaborated to come up with what they call the "Fair School Funding Plan."

The reform plan would base funding on what it actually costs to educate students, what taxpayers can afford, and what local districts believe will work in their communities, they said. Their challenge is large because not only is Ohio school funding still unfair, it also has been stagnant for all districts for years.

Particularly squeezed since the 2008 economic crisis, state aid to districts has not even kept pace with inflation. This has made districts even more reliant — not less — on property taxes for funding.

For this reason, it is welcome that the plan calls for an overall increase in school funding statewide. That proposed boost of 10.5 percent will amount to an additional \$1.1 billion in state aid for districts for the biennium.

What does not quite add up is that while the reform plan would deliver large increases for suburban districts, **it would provide flat funding for the state's largest and neediest districts, including Toledo, Cleveland, Dayton, and Youngstown. Toledo Public Schools would continue to receive about \$179.5 million annually and \$8,240 per student under the new plan.** By contrast Maumee City Schools would see annual state funding grow from \$4.79 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$6.17 million in fiscal year 2021. In Toledo 40 percent of people live below the poverty line. One in four children suffers from hunger. There are more homeless students than in any other Ohio school district. And 80 percent of the children who show up for kindergarten are behind before they even start school.

Of course, more funding to schools is not a magic-bullet fix for what ails cities, like Toledo. Dense and systemic poverty cannot be fixed with the best-funded schools in the world. And yet adequately funded schools are necessary for communities with these struggles. Any school-funding formula that can call itself "fair" must account for the income disparity between Ohio's big, urban, and largely poor districts and their wealthier suburbs. If there is any aspect of the current funding formula that the state gets right, it's that relatively poor districts get a boost.

Toledo Public Schools must be able to pay teachers top dollar to attract talent. The district must be able to fund innovation — such as Superintendent Romules Durant's themed academies — to give students the best opportunities.

A "more fair" funding system that shifts state aid away from struggling districts to affluent neighbors is failing..... **HOWEVER.....**

School Funding Overhaul May Get Delayed Two Years, Lawmakers Say

Ohio legislative leaders say the new school funding formula introduced to much fanfare this spring by state Reps. Bob Cupp and John Patterson may not be the way Ohio funds its schools the next two years. Speaker of the House Larry Householder told Gongwer News Service last week that the Cupp-Patterson plan still “needs a lot of work,” that may not be achievable by the June state budget deadline. Householder, a Republican from Glenford, 40 miles east of Columbus, added that he has “very big concerns” about the plan’s impact on high-poverty school districts.

OEA Working with Two Former Teachers to Repeal State Takeovers

House Bill 154 Gets First Hearing in House Education Committee on April 2

Two former teachers now serving in the Ohio House of Representatives - Joe Miller (D-Amherst) and Don Jones (R-Freeport) - have introduced bi-partisan legislation that would *repeal* the disastrous law that allows the state to takeover local school districts that are deemed to be in trouble. HB 154, which has 29 bi-partisan co-sponsors, would *restore* local control to school districts.

A strong push by OEA to get HB 154 introduced with broad bi-partisan support means this *repeal* bill is well-positioned to be approved by the Ohio House of Representatives. OEA members will be advocating for passage of HB 154 at the OEA Lobby Day in Columbus on April 9.

Reps. Joe Miller (D) and Don Jones (R) will urge their colleagues to repeal the failed state takeover law when they deliver bill sponsor testimony in the Ohio House Education Committee on April 2. Rep. Joe Miller represents Lorain City Schools, one of the three districts already taken over by the state (the other two are Youngstown and East Cleveland).

By repealing the state takeover law, the Miller/Jones bill would dissolve all existing Academic Distress Commissions and appointed CEOs. Local control would be returned to elected school boards. The collective bargaining restrictions in the state takeover law would be repealed.

State takeovers of local school districts are hurting students and the communities in which they live. When state officials and appointed managers are running local school districts, it lowers student and educator morale, undermines local engagement, and impedes progress.

State takeovers are based on misleading state report cards and excessive testing that severely penalize students in poverty. Instead of harmful state takeovers, HB 154 will require F-rated school buildings to develop school improvement plans that are locally designed and locally implemented.

HB 154 – Ohio House Votes 83-12 to Repeal State Takeovers (May 2,2019)

Yesterday the Ohio House of Representatives voted 83-12 in favor of HB 154(Jones-R/J.Miller-D), which would repeal state-mandated Academic Distress Commissions and restore control of local school districts to elected school boards.

The current state takeover law (HB 70 – 131st General Assembly) provides no citizen oversight through elected school boards, no voice for classroom teachers and has been bad for our kids.

“The OEA has always believed that silencing the voices of educators and local officials in determining the best ways to improve student performance was ill-conceived,” said OEA President Becky Higgins.

“Educators want to be able to advocate for their students and we are very pleased that House lawmakers have taken the first step toward replacing the current law. We look forward to working with Senate members to complete this important task.”

State government has already taken away local control from Youngstown, Lorain and East Cleveland schools. In the next two years, if current law is not changed, state government could take away local control from Dayton, Columbus, Canton, Mansfield, Lima, Toledo, Ashtabula, Euclid, North College Hill and Painesville schools.

HB 154, which has strong bi-partisan support, also includes accountability measures that require school districts that have an F-rated building to set up school improvement teams.

No more Academic Distress Commissions. No more CEOs. No more state takeovers.

Rate Your State: (Teacher Salaries)

National Avg. Starting Salary¹ **\$39,249**

National Avg. Salary² **\$60,477**

Teacher Pay Gap³ **79¢** on the dollar

Per Student Spending⁴ **\$12,602**

OHIO

Avg. Starting Salary¹ \$35,923

NATIONAL RANK # 37

Avg. Salary² \$58,000

NATIONAL RANK # 17

Teacher Pay Gap³ **84¢** on the dollar

Per Student Spending⁴ \$11,713

National Rank # 25