

Legislative Staff For Your Reading Pleasure

By Tom Moscovic

State Report Card Grade 2018-19

Lake County

Fairport Harbor - D

Kirtland - B

Madison - B

Mentor - B

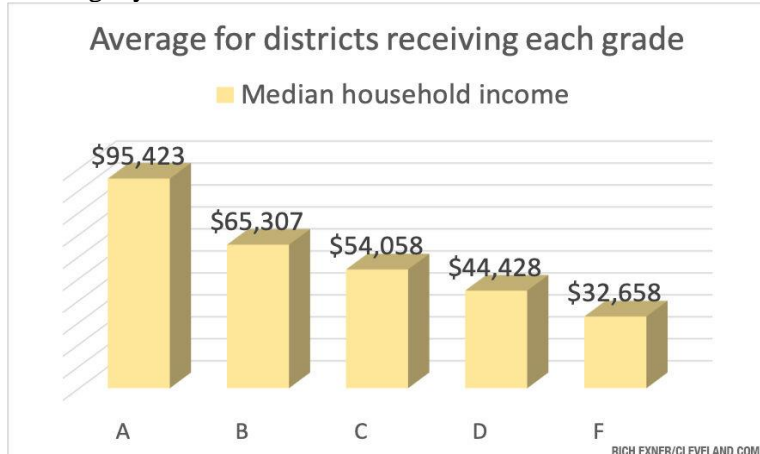
Painesville - D

Perry - B

Riverside - C

Wickliffe - C

Willoughby-Eastlake – C



STRS FUN FACTS:

STRS Ohio is celebrating its 100th year of existence. The longest paid service retiree has been receiving a benefit for fifty years. She has had a relationship with STRS Ohio for 85 of our 100 years of existence. She taught for 35 years and has received a benefit for 50 years.

We have 198 recipients age 100 or older - 170 females and 28 males. This number is down from 216 last year.

140 of those are service retirees - Individuals who actually worked in the system

51 are beneficiaries of service retirees

5 are survivors of an active teacher

2 are disability recipients

There are 125 who are age 99. This number is up from 115 last year.

The oldest recipient is age 107 (born September 1911) This member is receiving a service retirement benefit that began in March of 1976 and a Joint & Survivor benefit that began in November 1997. She retired at age 64 after 25 years of service in 1976 with a final average salary of \$5,494 and a \$217 per month benefit that has increased to \$800 per month. She began receiving a joint survivor annuity at age 86 in 1997 at \$545 per month which has grown to \$1029 per month.

The longest paid recipient is a survivor who began receiving benefits in September of 1954 at age 21 at \$50 per month which has increased to \$337 per month. She has been receiving a benefit for more than 64 years.

The longest paid service retiree is 106 years old and has received a benefit for 50 years. She retired in July 1969 at age 56 with 35 years of service. Her original benefit was \$410 per month and is now \$2,259 per month.

We had two members retire this year with 40 or more years of service. Both members are age 76 born in October 1942. Both retired from city school districts. One member began at a salary of \$8,750 per year and finished at \$82,500 while the other began at \$6,500 and finished at \$67,000.

Active Members

We have 21 active members with 50 or more years of service. This number is up from 16 in 2018.

We have 173 active members with 40 or more years of service. This number is up from 146 in 2018.

The member with the most years of service is age 81 and has 59.8 years of service credit. This member began working in 1959 at \$4,120 per year and earned nearly \$78,000 this past year.

The oldest full-time member is age 89 with 30 years of service. This member began his teaching career at age 59 and is a university professor.

We have 11 members in the Defined Contribution Plan with an account balance exceeding \$1,000,000.

Ohio may cut benefits for future state employees as part of public pension fix

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio's largest public-pension system might cut benefits for future employees, under a plan that's under consideration.

The board for the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System is weighing raising the retirement age and cutting benefits for all employees hired in 2022 or later.

In a different proposal to save money on health-care costs, the OPERS board is considering shifting future retirees who haven't yet qualified for Medicare into the Obamacare marketplaces, while giving them money to cover the premiums. The OPERS board this week also voted to freeze pensioners' automatic cost-of-living increases for 2022 and 2023.

All the changes are meant to strengthen the pension system, which is short \$24 billion of what it needs to fund its total obligations. The cost-of-living freeze, for example, would save OPERS an estimated \$3.4 billion, officials said.

The non healthcare-related moves would require further approval by state legislators, who last took major action to cut state employee pension benefits in 2013.

Mike Pramik, an OPERS spokesman, said pension system leaders are preparing for what's expected to be a tougher future investment climate.

"It's a lot more uncertain over the next few years, or at least that's what everyone's telling us," he said. "So we need to plan for that."

OPERS, which represents about 516,000 active and retired state employees, is Ohio's largest public-employee pension system. Its investment holdings are worth \$87.8 billion, making it one of the largest pension systems in the country.

Under the changes under consideration, a new, non law-enforcement hire would have to wait until they're 62 and have 35 years of service credit before they could retire and receive their full pension benefits. That compares to an equivalent new hire now, who has to work until they're 55 and have 32 years of service.

They also would have to set aside 11% of their salary to fund their retirement, compared to the current 10%.

The OPERS board was briefed on the potential changes this week. Pramik said they may vote to ask the state legislature to adopt the changes later this year.

Gov. Mike DeWine Announces Ohio School Safety Center to Combat Violence, Mass Shootings

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Gov. Mike DeWine signed an executive order Wednesday to create a new office that will focus on school safety – trying to head off mass shootings, other forms of violence, deaths by suicide and self-harm.

The Ohio School Safety Center is set to open Thursday with seven permanent employees from the Ohio Department of Public Safety under which the new division will fall. More could be hired.

Parents and educators can find resources at the website: saferschools.ohio.gov. Also unveiled was a tip line that will take calls or texts: 844-SAFEROH or 844-723-3764.

The Republican governor said that this was part of his 17-point plan to reduce gun violence and increase mental health treatment in the wake of the Aug. 4 mass shooting in Dayton, where nine people were killed and others injured.

The office staff are expected to operate the website and tip line. They will expand use of software and analysis to scan social media for school threats, determine their seriousness and share the information with local schools and law enforcement. A spokesman for DeWine later said that they are looking for key words, since many mass shooters upload manifestos before they engage in violence.

DeWine said he's not trying to usurp local efforts, but enhance them and make statewide resources available. For instance, the office will help with school safety plans if necessary.

DeWine said that the public's help is essential for its success.

"That's what we have to do to protect each other," he said. "We have to have citizen involvement."

A March incident in Morrow County recently came to light in which two first-graders in Highland Local Schools removed a gun from a case in a district office. One of the students is the grandson of the district's transportation director, who underwent training to have the weapon as part of the district's concealed carry policy. The story has gone viral.

On the topic of whether there should be a statewide law covering policies that allow guns in schools, DeWine said: "What my position is, going back to Ohio attorney general, is these are local decisions."

DeWine said there are state recommendations for courses that people should take before carrying weapons in schools if they are not school resource officers. The recommendations are not in state law, he said.

Teacher Health and Wellness Act (H.R. 4221).

Washington, DC – Representatives Tim Ryan and Mike Bost introduced the Teacher Health and Wellness Act (H.R. 4221). This bi-partisan legislation provides support for teachers by creating a pilot study at the National Institute of Health aimed at reducing teacher stress, increasing teacher health, and ultimately boosting student achievement.

High levels of stress are adversely affecting teachers' health. Teachers with high levels of stress are less effective in raising student achievement than their healthier peers. According to a 2017 Educator Quality of Work Life Survey by the American Federation of Teachers and the Badass Teachers Association, 61 percent of educators and schools staff find their work "always" or "often" stressful. It's significantly higher than workers in the general population, who report that work is "always" or "often" stressful only 30 percent of the time. Stress affects the physical health of teachers which compromises teaching performance and negatively impacts student well-being.

Phi Delta Kappan Poll Results That'll Shape the 2020 Education Debates

The cusp of every new school year is an education poll-apalooza. That's when we get the two major annual polls on K-12 education—providing the best window we have into how the public is thinking about schools and schooling. In early August, *Phi Delta Kappan* released its [51st annual poll](#) on public attitudes toward public schooling. Then, a few weeks ago, *Education Next* released its influential [annual survey](#) (full disclosure: I'm an editor at *Education Next*). The surveys were rife with provocative findings; today, I'll highlight four that'll play an outsized role in shaping the 2020 election season education debates.

Americans love their local schools but are ambivalent about schools in general. It's a long-standing axiom that, just as the public hates Congress but loves its local congressperson, so too are people critical of the nation's schools but high on their own. Parents love their kids' schools but, more generally, Americans are high on their local schools. Sixty percent of Americans in the *Ed Next* poll give their community's schools an A or a B—while just 8 percent give them a D or an F. These numbers are consistent across the board. Sixty percent of Democrats and 61 percent of Republicans give their local schools an A or a B. The numbers are broadly consistent across income and racial groups. At the same time, Americans are less enamored of U.S. schools as a whole. Just 24 percent of Americans give the *nation's* schools an A or a B, while 53 percent give them a C and 22 percent a D or an F.

The takeaway: Once again, the public is likely to take issue with candidates or advocates who suggest *their* community's schools are "failing" or need to be "disrupted"—though the same voters may well be receptive to the suggestion that schools *somewhere else* may need stronger medicine. As always, good luck to those seeking to negotiate that fine line.

Parents support stricter school discipline by 10-to-1. School discipline has been making headlines due to concerns that the rate at which minority children are disciplined may be a product of racist attitudes, implicit bias, or institutional racism. This has fueled a search for alternative disciplinary approaches like "restorative justice" and efforts to limit suspensions. Yet, the *PDK* findings suggest the public is lukewarm on such efforts. Fifty-one percent of K-12 parents say school discipline is not strict enough, while just 4 percent say it's too strict. More than 60 percent of teachers say discipline in their school isn't strict enough. In fact, while concerns about discipline are often presented as a civil rights issue, *PDK* found that nonwhite parents were *more* likely than white parents to favor automatic suspensions for something like a student "accidentally bring[ing] in a folding knife that's classified as a weapon." It appears that black and Latino parents are particularly concerned about whether discipline is administered fairly and *also* about discipline being too lax. The takeaway: Parents, of whatever ethnicity, are far more supportive of strict school discipline than one might imagine from listening to D.C. policy advocates. These parents are likely to be skeptical of proposals seen as undermining school discipline and will have an appetite for disciplinary measures regarded as effective and fair.

Parents prize academics over Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)—and it's not close. While many SEL proponents have been admirably insistent that their effort must keep academics front and center, plenty of SEL enthusiasts seem less than certain on that score. Meanwhile, the public's position is clear: They believe academics need to come first. When asked how much schools should "focus on student academic performance versus student social and emotional well-being" in the *Ed Next* survey, respondents opted for academics by a 2-to-1 margin. Across parents and teachers, all ethnic groups, and both Republicans and Democrats, more than 60 percent of respondents said academic performance mattered most. The takeaway: To the extent that the push for SEL is seen as an effort to downplay academic instruction or excuse a lack of student learning, it's going to encounter headwinds.

Support for increased teacher pay varies with how much the public knows about teacher pay. A series of strikes across the land has elevated attention to teacher pay. These efforts have generally encountered substantial public support. Seventy-two percent of *Ed Next* poll respondents said teacher pay should be increased or greatly increased, while just 3 percent thought teacher pay should be trimmed. In an interesting complication, though, *Ed Next* once again (as it has for several years) asked respondents how much they think teachers earn. Respondents generally underestimated current teacher pay by about 30 percent. When told how much the average teacher actually earns in their state, the public was still supportive of higher pay—but by a more modest margin. Support for a pay increase declined from 72 percent to 56 percent, falling from 83 percent to 64 percent among Democrats and from 60 percent to 43 percent among Republicans. The takeaway: There's broad support for calls to raise teacher pay, but in part this is because the public thinks that teachers earn a lot less than they do. When the actual figures are shared, support softens—and falls to less than 50 percent among Republicans. Proposals to boost teacher pay have real appeal, but teachers and their allies will do well to take care not to overstate their case—or else they risk inviting blowback.

It promises to be a lively year ahead, with a wealth of proposals offered up by governors, presidential candidates, and advocates. For most, their success will depend on how they resonate with parents, educators, and the voting public. So, I guess the acid test awaits.

U.S. Minority Students Concentrated in High-Poverty Schools: Study

(Reuters) - Segregation in U.S. public education has concentrated black and Hispanic children into high-poverty schools with few resources, leading to an achievement gap between minority and white students, a nationwide study showed on Tuesday.

Stanford University Graduate School of Education professor Sean Reardon and his team crunched hundreds of millions of standardized test scores from every public school in the United States from 2008 to 2016 to reach their conclusions.

The findings reinforced previous studies illustrating that poverty, linked to continuing segregation, is a key mechanism accounting for racial disparities in academic achievement.

"If we want to improve educational opportunities and learning for students, we want to get them out of these schools of high-concentrated poverty," Reardon said in presenting his findings at Stanford on Tuesday.

"Part of the reason why we have a big achievement gap is that minority students are concentrated in high-poverty schools, and those schools are the schools that seem systematically to provide lower educational opportunities," he said.

African-American and Hispanic students tend to score lower on standardized tests than white students, and closing that achievement gap has posed a persistent challenge for educators.

The U.S. Supreme Court in its landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that racial segregation was a violation of the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment.

In the decades that followed, public education officials wrestled with how to integrate schools in the face of opposition by residents and politicians in many regions.

This history became a point of contention between Democratic presidential candidates during a televised debate in June, when U.S. Senator Kamala Harris criticized former Vice President Joe Biden for his 1970s opposition to court-ordered busing to reduce segregation.

In a working paper released on Monday, Reardon and his team compared different levels of racial disparities between schools in New York City and those in Fulton County, Georgia, to explain how segregation affected student performance.

The school attended by the average black student in New York City over a recent span of eight years had a poverty rate 22 percentage points higher than that of the average white student. There researchers found white students performing 2-1/2 grade levels above black students on average.

By comparison, the average black student attended a school with a poverty rate 52 percentage points higher than the average white student's school in Fulton County, where an achievement gap of four grade levels separated black and white students.

Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles and not affiliated with the Stanford study, endorsed the methodology Reardon's team used but said its findings reveal only part of the picture.

"It's really misleading to talk about whether race or poverty is most important, because a lot of the poverty is caused by race, and that's something that people need to keep in mind," Orfield said.

For instance, discrimination against minority parents is a factor in why those families are more likely to struggle with poverty, Orfield said by telephone.

The Stanford research data is publicly available at the website edopportunity.org.