



**Ohio 8 Coalition Interested Party Testimony**  
**Ohio Senate Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee**  
**David Romick, President, Dayton Education Association and Ohio 8 Coalition Co-Chair**  
**May 25, 2017**

Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Sykes and the members of the Senate Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee. On behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you our testimony on the K-12 components of the State Operating Budget. My name is David Romick and I serve as the President of the Dayton Education Association and Co-chair of The Ohio 8 Coalition. The Ohio 8 Coalition districts serve nearly 200,000 students, more than 11% of the state's total student population.

In the interest of time I will limit my remarks to the following four priorities; 1) school transportation, 2) graduation requirements, 3) Ohio's draft Every Student Succeeds Act implementation plan, and 4) Third Grade Reading Guarantee promotion scores.

**School Transportation**

Since 2012, The Ohio 8 Coalition has been testifying, in both chambers, about ways that school transportation policy and law could be modified to meet the needs of all Ohio's students, not just those within the Ohio 8 districts. In fact, our recommendation to convene a workgroup to help address the diverse issues of school transportation was included in the previous operating budget. Unfortunately, the workgroup has never been convened. We believe that convening this workgroup is critical if sound transportation policy is to be formulated. Why? Because fixing transportation for one type of school or district and not for the others does **nothing**. We must fix this for **all children** to allow all districts to meet their charge of getting children to school safely and in an efficient and timely manner. From our concerted effort on this issue, we know that this is something all schools rural, suburban, urban, traditional public or public charter schools, regardless of location, agree upon. The Ohio 8 Coalition has data and the expertise to answer nearly any question related to transportation funding and operational challenges. We are anxious to leverage our collective expertise to address focusing on the following four issues and related recommendations as a starting point.

*a. Bell schedules*

The Dayton Public Schools transportation department is responsible for transporting students to 61 different school buildings every day. More than half of these schools (31 to be precise) are charter, private or parochial schools operating outside the jurisdiction of Dayton Public Schools. Because state regulation prohibits transportation departments from setting standard times to begin and end a school day for non-public or charter schools buildings, these schools can have 31 different start or end times. This does not include the start and end times for the

district operated schools. The result is a system that is nearly impossible to achieve efficient routes, use of equipment, and most important of all, reducing the amount of time children spend on the bus.

*b. State reimbursement vs. costs*

State funds to support student transportation have not kept pace with actual costs of aging bus fleets, maintenance, and fuel. Currently, none of The Ohio 8 Coalition school districts are reimbursed for what they actually spend to transport students. Transportation expenses range from \$4,422,890 in Canton to \$51,772,367 for Columbus. The range of state reimbursement to school districts for transportation costs begins at \$3,286,092 in Canton and goes up to \$36,799,481 in Columbus. Under the provisions that exist in the current budget proposal, the gap in funding will likely grow wider.

*c. Excise tax*

The existing motor fuel/excise tax that supports reimbursement for student transportation amount has remained at 6 cents for several years. When the excise tax was established, factors such as the increased use of highways and the added responsibility to transport students to public, charter, private and parochial schools, were unknown and unaccounted for.

*d. Special education supplement*

One areas of significant growth school districts are making is in the area of servicing students with special needs. We desire to create equitable, safe learning environments, whether on the bus or in the classroom, for all students we serve. Except in cases of physical or emotional safety, school districts are integrating transportation services for students. But we also have a responsibility to ensure that students with special needs receive the assistance they need to ride the bus to and from school. This additional assistance may come through equipment or by the hiring of personnel. Maintaining the special education supplement is critical to providing equitable services for all students.

*Transportation Recommendations*

- Leverage Ohio 8 Coalition national expertise by moving the transportation work group from the previous operating budget into implementation phase.
- Eliminate the bell schedule restriction
- Increase the K-12 reimbursement rate for all school districts
- Revise the excise tax to better reflect the realities of school transportation in 2017
- Maintain the special education supplement even when students are mainstreamed

**Graduation Requirements**

Along with many other partners and districts throughout the state, The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned about the anticipated graduation rate for the class of 2018. Currently, forty percent (40%), or 347,053 students scored below proficient on one or more of the required tests for graduation, with nearly fifty percent (50%) of test takers in Mathematics scoring below proficient.

The Ohio 8 Coalition is committed to ensuring that our students are held to high standards so long as those standards are both rigorous and realistic and believes the State Superintendent's workgroup recommendations will ensure Ohio's students are both held to high academic standards and have expanded opportunities to demonstrate college and career readiness. The alternative pathways are outlined in my written testimony.

#### *Alternative Pathway One*

- Requires students to take all required high school courses; take all required end-of-course exams (EOCs) and retake once any math or English exams on which they scored only one point.
- Students must also meet two of the following criteria:
  - Senior-year attendance rate of 93%
  - 2.5 senior year GPA, based on taking at least four full-year courses or the equivalent
  - Completion of 120 hours of work experience or community service, as defined by the district
  - Earning three or more credits in a College Credit Plus course
  - Successful completion of an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) and earning a score on the related exam that's sufficient to earn college credit
  - Scoring at least a three on three sections of the WorkKeys exam, for nine total points
  - Earning an industry-recognized credential or group of credentials approved by the State Board of Education worth at least 3 points.

#### *Alternative Pathway Two (Career Technical)*

- A diploma will be issued for those who achieve the following:
  - Complete all required high school courses
  - Take all required EOCs
  - Complete a career-technical training program approved by the Ohio Department of Education that includes at least four vocational-technical courses
  - Achieve at least one of the following:
    - A score of proficient or better on the average performance across all EOCs or test modules (WebXams) for the career-technical program;
    - Earn an industry-recognized credential or group of credentials approved by the State Board of Education and worth at least 12 points; or
    - Show successful workplace participation agreed to by the student, school, and employer/supervisor, documented with records or 250 hours of experience and evidence of written positive evaluations from the employer and school.

#### *Recommendation*

The Ohio 8 Coalition recommends the adoption of the alternative pathways designed by the State Superintendent's workgroup.

## **ESSA**

One of the foundational propositions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) at the end of 2015, was the intent to give states and local school districts more control over how learning takes place and how performance is measured in their state, districts, and schools. While there were a few bright spots in the implementation plan proposed by ODE, such as the improvements related to English Learner identification, The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that the unique opportunities afforded under ESSA were largely ignored in deference to the state's existing approach under NCLB. Although the Ohio Department of Education is continuing to make revisions to the state implementation plan, the Ohio 8 Coalition has yet to see substantive changes that are responsive to the concerns of stakeholders. The Ohio 8 Coalition has and will continue to engage ODE leadership and staff related to the final state implementation plans in an attempt to find common ground.

## **Third Grade Reading Guarantee**

In October of 2016, the Ohio Department of Education adjusted the promotion scores for the alternative assessments for the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Their intention was to align the promotion scores on the alternate assessments to the state's English Language Arts (ELA) assessment.

The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that the jump in the scores is too significant for any type of district for a single school year. Additional concerns exist related to when these promotion score changes were announced and enacted- after the start of the school year. As such, students and educators were months into the school year before being made aware that the bar would be shifting significantly.

The chart in our testimony outlines the change in promotion scores for the previous and current school year for alternative assessments. As you can see the MAP and Terra Nova promotion score increased significantly.

Overall we believe that it is critical the expectations for students are well known by educators and districts before the start of the school year. Understanding these expectations before the start of school allows us to focus our attention on quickly and accurately identifying students needing additional support. Early intervention, rather than retention is key to student success, and we work diligently in our districts to identify students who are reading below grade level as early as possible. Within the Ohio 8 Coalition students have access to a wide variety of interventions including summer and extended learning opportunities, winter and spring break reading activities, small-group instruction, family engagement and literacy activities and events, and ongoing teacher professional development. This is just a sample of what our districts, schools, and educators are doing to support early intervention and support for students. Retention often causes students who are separated from their friends to become depressed and develop low self-esteem. Additionally, students who are retained sometimes develop behavior challenges as they age. For the school and district, retention can cause issues with enrollment, content area delivery, grade level/gender equality and licensure/reading endorsement credentialing challenges.

*Alternative Assessment Promotion Scores*

<b>Test</b>	<b>2015-2016 Promotion Score</b>	<b>2016-2017 Promotion Score</b>
Iowa Assessment	171	176
Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP)	186	196
Terra Nova 3	566	617
Renaissance Learning STAR Reading Third Grade Reading Proficiency Assessment	NA	959 (Reported in the new STAR unified scale)

*Recommendations*

Require ODE to publish the following no later than May 31<sup>st</sup> of each year:

- Promotion Score Changes
  - The scores used to determine the equivalent level of achievement for on the assessment prescribed to measure skill in English language Arts expected at the end of third grade;
  - The scores that demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on alternative standardized reading assessments selected by ODE; and
  - The results of linkage studies that ODE used to determine the scores.
- NWEA MAP Transitional Promotion Score
  - For the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, a student who scores 190 or higher on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress alternative standardized reading assessments shall be considered to have demonstrated an acceptable level of performance to be promoted to fourth grade.
- Terra Nova Transitional Promotion Score
  - For the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, a student who scores 609 or higher on the Terra Nova alternative standardized reading assessments shall be considered to have demonstrated an acceptable level of performance to be promoted to fourth grade.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations. We look forward to continuing to help in any way we can as the budget process continues and I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.

[The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to help shape state education policy