



FOSTORIA CITY SCHOOLS

Andrew R. Sprang
Superintendent
asprang@fostoriaschools.org

Administrative Offices · 1001 Park Ave. · Fostoria, OH 44830
Phone: 419-435-8163
Fax: 419-436-4109
www.fostoriaschools.org

Sue E. Lehmann
Treasurer
slehmann@fostoriaschools.org

Tera L. Matz
Curriculum Director
tmatz@fostoriaschools.org

Jennifer S. Abell
Director of Student Services
jabell@fostoriaschools.org

David G. Hossler
Dir. Operations/Transportation
dhossler@fostoriaschools.org

House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

House Bill 200 Testimony

April 20, 2021

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in behalf of House Bill 200. My name is Andrew Sprang, and I am Superintendent at Fostoria City Schools.

Fostoria is a smaller district, 1779 students, in northwest Ohio. When looking at our district demographics closer, 70.6% (1255) students are identified as economically disadvantaged, 17.7% (317) students are identified for special education services, and all of our subgroups reported on the district report card have a 94% attendance rate or higher. These data points begin a conversation around challenges that our district faces, but also the overall mindset that our students want to be in school.

Our vision at Fostoria City Schools is Inspire. Succeed. Leave a Legacy. The students and staff work every day to make this a reality. However, under the current Local Report Card system we are left with a feeling of no matter the growth, it is never quite enough. Accountability is key to success in any profession, and we embrace this challenge on a daily basis. With the current system being centered around a series of tests it is difficult to demonstrate or accurately reflect the impact of educating the whole child, which is the driving force behind the state of Ohio's strategic plan for education.

Over the past eight years as superintendent, I have had the privilege of working with staff and students in order to help our district grow. There are many positive trends in our district, but they are overshadowed by the results of a series of tests that may not hit a benchmark number and ultimately end with a D or an F on the Local Report Card. I would like to take a few moments to highlight some of these accomplishments that we have had in Fostoria:

- 17 out of 21 tested indicators have a net positive growth over the past 4 years
- The performance index has also grown in this same 4- year timeframe
- Gap closing over the past 4 years has increased 52%.
- Our 4 year graduation rate has improved by 13% over the past 4 years

- 3 out of the past 4 years the elementary building has earned the Momentum Award for exceeding expected growth on the Progress Component.

One may ask why are these data points important. The answer is that education is about making progress. Education is not, nor should it be, about having all of the answers at one set point in time. Humans, young and old, all learn at different rates. Under the current Local Report Card there are conflicting messages that districts are left to defend with their communities, families, and staff. To the communities and families that we all serve there is an understanding of testing indicators as they have been the hallmark of the LRC over the years. Whether it is hitting a benchmark of 80% or an overall letter grade, this is what is familiar. However, if that is all that is focused on the narrative of the improvements listed above is lost. For the staff they are looking at the progress being made and while the goal is still out there to be completely attained, they are guiding our students and district in a positive direction, this is the message that is lost in a D or F rating. It is difficult to have a discussion with a group of staff who have earned an award from the state, and then have to say that we still didn't accomplish enough. The narrative around schools and accountability needs to be on growth. Did the student improve from where they began over the course of their educational experience? This does not necessarily need to be defined in the scope of one year, but could be across several years.

Accountability, progress, meeting the standard, all are important, but not to the point of labeling a district, or taking away credit for progress that is being made. HB 200 provides an opportunity to provide districts information about performance. There is also an opportunity to demonstrate the true progress being made by school districts in order to prepare our next generation of leaders. For our staff and students, recognition publicly for their hard work and improvements is key to maintaining these positive trends. Labeling a district with a D or an F with little recognition of growth is demoralizing to all involved. School districts are then left with the challenge of retaining both students and staff in the schools that have provided leaders, and created legacies for generations.

To conclude, I acknowledge the challenge of accountability and improvement is real, and pledge that we do not back down from these challenges. I ask that we all work for the common goal of creating schools and systems that provide accurate analysis of strengths, areas for improvement, and a means to get there that is fully supported. There is no doubt that if lawmakers, school districts, and communities all listen to one another and work together we can all help our students Inspire. Succeed. Leave a Legacy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and share part of the story for Fostoria City Schools.