



**STEPHEN D. DACKIN
NOMINEE FOR DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE**

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Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Education Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Steve Dackin, and I am Governor DeWine's nominee to be the Director of the Department of Education and Workforce.

I'd like to begin by addressing my prior service as the Superintendent of Public Instruction. As you are likely already aware, I was appointed by the State Board of Education in May 2022 and resigned in June 2022 after being made aware of the Ohio Ethics Commission's concerns with my appointment. After consulting with the Commission, I decided to resign without taking any compensation to avoid being a distraction from the important work for the then Department of Education. I cooperated with the Commission, and the matter was resolved through a settlement agreement that is public.

Now, eighteen months later, I am excited for the opportunity to serve Ohio as the Director of Education and Workforce. I want to focus my time with you today discussing the amazing opportunity that lies ahead pending Senate confirmation. I appreciate the confidence Governor DeWine has shown in me in putting forward my nomination for this position. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working with the DeWine-Husted administration and members of the General Assembly to transform Ohio's K-12 education system into one that engages students in their learning and prepares them for successful careers in Ohio's growing economy. The budget bill made significant steps in this direction. Ohio is focused on raising literacy achievement, accelerating learning opportunities in literacy and mathematics, preparing students for success through workforce readiness experiences, supporting student wellness efforts and removing barriers to learning. Historic education investments made in the state budget are advancing the work of these Future Forward Ohio priorities. Additionally, the newly restructured Department of Education and Workforce will elevate the importance of career-technical education for all students, regardless of their path after high school.

I have spent more than 40 years working in education. I began my career as a classroom teacher in Elida Local Schools and Upper Scioto Valley Local Schools. I served as principal of Elida High School and Reynoldsburg High School here in central Ohio. I also worked as a curriculum director for Westerville City Schools before serving as assistant superintendent

and superintendent of Reynoldsburg City Schools. Later, I was the Superintendent of School and Community Partnerships at Columbus State Community College. I also served as chair of the Youth Committee of the Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio.

All of these roles have shaped my thinking as an educator, particularly with respect to the nexus between our school system and workforce development. In the past, education and workforce development have often been treated as separate matters, with little collaboration between schools and the business community. This is counterproductive. Our educational system should support our state's employers and economy.

When I was superintendent of Reynoldsburg City Schools, the district developed one of the nation's largest science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) pipelines, which served more than one-third of the district's students. We transformed our large, comprehensive high school into four college and career academies, each aligned to clusters of careers that are important to Ohio's economic development plans. The new academy structure led to the school becoming one of five U.S. high schools highlighted by the United States Department of Education's Redesigning High Schools Initiative in 2013. At Columbus State Community College, I led partnerships and initiatives originating from the Central Ohio Compact, a regional strategy with the goal of increasing the percentage of central Ohio adults who obtain postsecondary degrees or credentials.

This is the vision I have for Ohio's K-12 education system. Every child has a fundamental right to a quality education, and the following actions are crucial to realizing that goal:

- Great teachers and principals make an extraordinary difference, and all children deserve access to both. We must ensure all schools hire, keep, and support the most talented and caring teachers and principals possible.
- Every family should be able to choose from various high-quality educational options. Educational opportunities and, consequently, futures should not be predetermined by zip code.
- We must see education as our nation's greatest asset and embrace Governor DeWine's call to action around literacy to ensure the success of our children. This means leveraging community resources to serve Ohio's children and ensure they have the skills to read at or above grade level as they move through their preK-12 educational journeys.
- We must strive to make sure high school graduates enter the workforce job ready. Creating authentic partnerships between the business, civic, higher education, preK-

12, and philanthropic communities gives our young people the experiences, knowledge, and skills to earn a living wage as they leave high school.

- Finally, we must build partnerships between community organizations and parents to help children who are experiencing issues affecting their well-being. Children must be safe and supported to meet their academic and career goals.

Today's students are fortunate in the number of opportunities they have to design their own educational pathways. Students can pursue an industry-recognized credential program and take College Credit Plus coursework. They can participate in work-based learning and earn the OhioMeansJobs-Readiness seal. They can tailor their high school math classes to their future career plans through the Department's High School Mathematics Pathway Initiative. They can learn science concepts in their career-technical education courses.

Part of our job as educators and leaders is to help students navigate these pathways and find the ideas and work that excite them. I am passionate about bringing resources and partners together in this effort. We need schools, businesses, and communities to challenge each other to think creatively about the future of education, develop deep connections, and really invest in each other.

The Department of Education and Workforce needs to be a role model for this type of collaboration. The agency is poised to be integrated into so many exciting workforce development initiatives taking place at the state level and within the DeWine-Husted administration. All of our education providers – traditional school districts, community schools, nonpublic schools, dropout prevention and recovery programs, and two- and four-year colleges – need to be involved because they are all finding ways to meet students' unique needs.

If confirmed, I commit to engaging stakeholders, including the General Assembly, in thinking boldly about our education system. I look forward to the opportunity.

Thank you for your time today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.