



CHARTER SCHOOL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER

December 2022

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Community Schools*

MISSION

Richland Academy of the Arts' authorizing mission is to provide the oversight, monitoring, technical assistance, resources and leadership needed and wanted by its sponsored schools for them to provide their students with superior academic opportunities while maintaining sound financial viability without violating their autonomy.

VISION

Our authorizing vision is to be the sponsor of choice for community schools in Ohio. By not limiting imagination, we will honor developmental abilities and the growth of the whole child. We will cultivate communities who believe children need to grow up experiencing the arts and contributing back to their families and communities.

Lame duck session busy for Senate Education Committee

In a recent interview with Gongwer News Service, Senate Education Committee Chair Andy Brenner (R-Delaware) indicated that a top priority is holding first hearings for all bills referred to the panel.

Another key priority is seeking ways to boost participation in the Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) Educational Savings Account program. Only 17,000 students have enrolled in the program which provides up to \$500 each for programs aimed at addressing pandemic-related learning losses – far below the 250,000 for which funding was allocated.

“I think that part of the problem is people don’t know about it,” Senator Brenner said. “And when they find out about it, they realize, OK, this is cumbersome to get from point A to B.”

To participate, parents/caregivers must establish OH|ID accounts and provide evidence that their family incomes are below 300 percent of the federal poverty level.

School funding likely a priority in 2023 state budget

Among the speakers at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce’s post-election Impact Ohio conference was Representative Bill Seitz, who serves as the House majority floor leader. He shared his prediction that strong Republican majorities in both chambers of the legislature will likely lead to members’ “unachievable ideas” including significant tax cuts.

What he expects to be a priority as legislators tackle the next state biennial budget next year is “robust debate” over continued implementation of the new K-12 funding strategy, often referred to as the “Cupp-Patterson” plan, introduced in 2020. It also seems likely, he said, that Senate leadership will push to expand school choice and voucher programs.

“I believe there is an opportunity to meaningfully increase school choice and voucher programs throughout the state, while at the same time fully funding the Cupp-Patterson school funding formula,” he said.



ODE overhaul proposed

Proposals to overhaul the structure of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the role of the State Board have surfaced periodically for many years. ODE is unique in that it is not a part of the governor’s cabinet. It reports directly to the State Board which is not always aligned in its thinking with legislators, who have much greater authority over K-12 education policy.

The most recent proposal comes in the form of S.B. 178, which states the General Assembly’s intent to enact legislation to reform the functions and responsibilities of the State Board of Education, the superintendent of public instruction and the Department of

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National Endowment for the Arts Big Read offers grants

Arts Midwest is now accepting applications for the 2023-2024 National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Program.

The Big Read is a community engagement opportunity with grants for up to \$20,000 for community-wide reading programs focusing on one of 15 available books.

Organizations eligible for the grant include school districts, institutions of higher education, libraries and more.

Past grantees have a proven track record of successfully engaging their audiences through the power of literature and stirring a passion for reading that persists year after year. They also have developed meaningful and lasting partnerships with other organizations in their communities.

The deadline to apply is January 25, 2023.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Big Read application process.



ODE overhaul – continued

Education. It's currently a placeholder bill void of detail, but its sponsor – Senator Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin) – recently told Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee members that it will call for creation of a Department of Education and Workforce with a cabinet-level director appointed by the governor and subject to Senate approval.

“Both (divisions) will be headed by deputy directors who sit on the Governor’s Executive Workforce Board,” he said. “As the titles suggest, the Division of Primary and Secondary Education will include K-12 education, as well as preschool, while the Division of Career Technical Education will create and implement programming to better educate students about career-tech graduation options as well as various in-demand career opportunities, and oversee existing career-oriented education for students.”



Under current law, the State Board is responsible for hiring the superintendent of public instruction while the General Assembly is empowered to change the duties of ODE and those of the board.

Senate Bill 178 would maintain the State Board’s authority to hire the superintendent, who would serve as its secretary and as an advisor to the director of the restructured agency. Teacher licensure, educator misconduct cases and school territory transfers would continue to fall under the authority of the State Board.

“All other duties currently under the purview of the State Board of Education will be assigned to the new Division of Primary and Secondary Education,” Senator Reineke said. “Duties that deal with career tech will be assigned to the Division of Career Technical Education.”

Under S.B. 178, the structure of the State Board – 11 elected members and eight members appointed by the governor – would remain unchanged.

“Our staggering remediation rate and student achievement data shows our kids are falling behind, and it is evident that the current structure is not accountable for our kids’ education or their futures,” Reineke continued.

Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee Chair Andy Brenner (R-Delaware) has indicated that he plans to hold multiple hearings on the bill before year-end, and Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) plans to bring S.B. 178 to the floor of the upper chamber by year-end.

Representative Gayle Manning (R-N. Ridgeville), who chairs the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, said in an interview with Gongwer News Service that she has only heard rumors about the legislation and hasn’t yet read it. Although Senate President Matt Huffman has discussed the education department overhaul proposal with some House members, he has not yet discussed it with Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima).

Representative Cupp referred to the potential restructuring of ODE as “a discussion that’s been going on, I would say, for decades.”

“The question is what is the best way to operate the education department, and some states have all appointed boards, some states have all elected boards, some states have a mix like Ohio does, and, to tell you the truth, almost all of them don’t work very well anyway, so I’m not sure there is a good way of doing it,” the speaker said.

“Here’s the problem as I see it,” the Senate president said. “The state school board is made up of part-time people who get paid very little ... who have no staff.” That, he said, makes for “an almost impossible job.”

State Board continues debate on transgender policy resolution

As previously reported, the State Board of Education has struggled to reach consensus on a proposed resolution in support of Attorney General Dave Yost’s lawsuit over federal rules to interpret Title IX as banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

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**Look for
Stronger
Connections
Grant
application early
2023**

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) received a federal allocation of \$35 million to provide students with safe and healthy learning environments that prepare them for success. The award is part of the Stronger Connections Grant program authorized under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments are associated with students' improved academic achievement and emotional well-being and reduced disciplinary actions.

The Stronger Connections Grant is a supplement to the Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment program. Local education agencies that meet specific criteria indicating they are "high need" for school health and safety are eligible to receive funds through a competitive process.

ODE will seek stakeholder feedback regarding proposed program criteria, grant eligibility and the draft application in the coming weeks, and will make the grant application available by early 2023.

Transgender policy resolution – continued

In October, the board's executive committee – comprised of board leaders and committee chairs – voted 5-2 in support of Yost's legal challenge. The resolution calls on the Ohio legislature to "safeguard the inviolable rights of parents, the innocence of children, the rights, privacy, safety, and opportunities of women and girls in schools and athletics."

The resolution also requires the state superintendent of public instruction to write a letter to Ohio's 600+ districts informing them of the board's opposition to the proposed federal rules. According to board member Mike Toal, the letter is intended to provide a baseline of knowledge about the lawsuit to inform decisions regarding local policies.

The resolution is expected to be considered by the full board at its December meeting.

State Board supports elimination of mandatory reading retention

At its November meeting, State Board of Education members voted 18-1 in support of a resolution encouraging legislators to repeal the law requiring automatic retention of third grade students who fail to demonstrate proficiency on the English language arts assessment.

The resolution does not express support for specific legislation – like H.B. 497 passed by the Ohio House of Representatives in June – but rather focuses on the end goal: elimination of the retention requirement. It also stresses the importance of continuing to provide adequate resources, supports, interventions and parental notifications for students who do not achieve grade-level reading proficiency.



Election brings changes to State Board roster

Following the November election, the State Board will welcome three new members. Longtime Democratic lawmaker Teresa Fedor, who resigned from her Senate seat in October, and Katie Hofmann, a union-backed retired Cincinnati Public Schools teacher, replace two outspoken conservative members of the board. Tim Miller, who was appointed by Governor Mike DeWine to fill a vacant elected position, was defeated in November by Tom Jackson in a three-way race.

STRS seeks increase in employer contributions

Against the backdrop of debate over legislation to increase employer contributions to the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund, the State Teachers Retirement System's (STRS) board recently voted to ask lawmakers to do the same for teachers.

The board's action authorizes staff to lobby not for a specific percentage increase, but rather as a starting point for assessing the legislature's appetite for an increase to the current rate of 14 percent, which has been in place since 1984.

Based on discussions of increases for law enforcement officers and fire fighters, STRS will likely face an uphill battle at the Statehouse.

**BEST WISHES FOR A SAFE & HAPPY
HOLIDAY SEASON!**

**From Richland Academy of the Arts
Community School Division**