



CHARTER SCHOOL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER

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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.

Debate on Third Grade Reading Guarantee retention continues

The State Board of Education continues to consider a resolution in support of legislation (H.B. 497) to eliminate the requirement to retain third grade students who fail to demonstrate proficiency in reading. The resolution states that the board is "committed to addressing this statewide literacy crisis" but points out that mandated third grade retention has failed to achieve its goals.

There are, of course, those who support the legislation and the resolution, as well as those who are in opposition. Those who support the policy change point to data showing that only 14 percent of the average 3,628 students who are held back each year achieve a proficiency rating after completing a second year of third grade, and that the mandate disproportionately impacts Black and economically disadvantaged students.

Those who oppose elimination of the retention mandate testified before the State Board in opposition to the resolution, urging them to instead work with policy makers to develop a comprehensive, strategic approach to improving student literacy.

The State Board's Legislative Committee voted unanimously in favor of the resolution but dropped plans to seek emergency consideration and a vote from the full board in October, delaying further action until November.

House Bill 497 has been approved by the Ohio House of Representatives (with a vote of 80-10) and sent to the Ohio Senate for its consideration.

ODE budget request focuses on literacy, workforce readiness

As previously reported, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has been working with the State Board to fine-tune its budget recommendations for consideration in the biennial budget bill to be passed by the Ohio General Assembly next year.

At its October meeting, the State Board voted 14-4 to submit budget recommendations – which include millions of dollars in additional funding for initiatives aimed at helping young readers and preparing students for future careers – to the Ohio Office of Budget and Management.

Included among the recommendations is the addition of \$81 million in general revenue fund spending to pay for literacy coaches and early childhood education program expansion. Additional funding is also recommended to create new career-tech education programs and incentivize work-based learning.

Not included among the budget recommendations is \$40 million in new state funding to continue federally funded tutoring programs that will lapse in the second year of the biennium.



ODE considers ongoing office space needs

Last month, Interim State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Stephanie Siddens informed the State Board of Education of discussions about shrinking the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) footprint as the agency's hybrid work model remains in place.

Under ODE's hybrid work model, executive-level leaders and middle managers must spend 60 and 40 percent, respectively, of their work weeks in the office. Other employees must generally work in the office at least once every two weeks. About one-third of ODE's 657 employees – an increase of about 7.5 percent since September 2021 -- spend some, if not most, of their time in the field. Dr. Siddens cited benefits in terms of productivity, employee satisfaction, worker retention and recruitment, and potential cost savings.

"We pay \$2.3 million each year in rent for this location and so part of what we're doing is having very early discussions about how we may be able to save costs there," Dr. Siddens said.

ODE occupies a seven-story state-owned building in downtown Columbus that also houses the Department of Higher Education.

Focus on attendance extends beyond designated month

September was Attendance Awareness Month, but the challenges associated with chronic absenteeism are year-round!

It's tempting to respond to the problem and associated behaviors among students with punishment. But the Attendance Awareness Campaign notes that a growing body of research shows that punishment isn't an effective approach.

Instead, schools can help educators understand what draws students to school and the causes of absences – helping them improve attendance with proactive, positive, problem-solving strategies. [Click here](#) for an informative Attendance Works post: *The Urgent Need to Avoid Punitive Responses to Poor Attendance*.

The campaign recommends a tiered approach that starts with foundational supports or practices for the whole school. These are followed by prevention-oriented supports for attendance (Tier 1), early intervention (Tier 2) and intensive intervention (Tier 3).

[Click here](#) to access a trove of best practices from districts and schools throughout the U.S. featured in the Attendance Awareness Campaign's webinar series.

Recent data show alarming increases in chronic absence across the country. At least 10.1 million students were chronically absent during the first full year of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), according to data from the U.S. Department of Education. A closer look suggests this is an undercount. Emerging data from a handful of states suggests chronic absence doubled by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Schools invited to join holiday card challenge

The New Hampshire Department of Education, which annually supports the Holiday Cards 4 Our Military-NH Challenge, invites schools from throughout the U.S. to join in sending personalized, signed expressions of respect, caring, and gratitude to U.S. troops, veterans and service families.

In 2003, Dr. Laura Landerman-Garber invited her Thanksgiving guests to write messages to those serving in the military – an informal initiative that has grown over the years and served as the impetus for the formation of a nonprofit corporation, Holiday Cards 4 Our Military-NH Challenge.

Thanks to support from members of the U.S. Senate and Congress, schools, businesses, religious organizations and a variety of community groups, the initiative continued to grow, reaching those serving in the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard around the world.

In 2019, the card challenge expanded throughout the nation with participants from 45 states sending 175,000 holiday cards to troops. The initiative continued to grow – despite the global COVID pandemic – further expanding to include members of the U.S. National Guard, troops in basic training, and veterans and service families.

Ohio schools are invited to join the effort for the upcoming year-end holiday season. The guidelines are simple: address cards to "Dear Warrior," write a holiday greeting or personal note, and sign with the sender's first name and hometown. Cards can be signed as a group or individually, and participants may send as many cards (8 X 11"-size paper folded in half) as they like. The deadline to send cards is November 18.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the initiative and access participation guidelines.



ACE participation much lower than anticipated

Since established in 2021, only 17,000 individuals have tapped into funds allocated to the Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) Educational Savings Account program included in the last state biennial budget.

Lawmakers allocated federal covid relief funding of \$125 million – to allow 250,000 low-income students to receive \$500 each over the two-year period – to address pandemic-related learning losses. The funds can be used for:

- Before- or after-school educational programs;
- Day camps, including those for academics, music and arts;
- Fees for learning extension centers;
- The purchase of curriculum and materials for home-school families;
- Educational, learning or study skills services;
- Field trips to historical landmarks, museums, science centers and theaters, including admission, exhibit and program fees;
- Language classes;
- Musical instrument lessons; and,
- Tutoring.

Richland Academy of the Arts is an ACE qualified education service provider.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

Educator misconduct referrals, investigations increase

According to the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) recently released Educator Conduct Report, the number of referrals increased by about 18 percent – from 14,739 in 2020, to 17,378 in 2021.

About four out of five referrals were related to applications for licensure reviews. The remaining 20 percent related to citizen complaints, media reports and district requests which increased dramatically – from 100 the previous year to more than 3,200.

“The reason they could come to us could be that the background check needs reviewed, the person answered yes to some of the criminal (history) questions on their application or that there’s a prior pending case with our office,” said Abbie Miller, senior managing attorney for ODE’s Office of Professional Conduct. She also pointed out that in some cases ODE receives multiple referrals related to a single educator or incident from multiple sources.

The number of investigations represents only about one-third of one percent of Ohio’s more than 335,500 educators.

A total of 1,055 investigations – 6.2 percent of all referrals – were opened in 2021, up from 1,018 the previous year. ODE reported 875 dispositions of investigations last year, 405 of which led to discipline.

Miscellaneous criminal offenses were the most common investigations (287), followed by violent criminal offenses (147) and broken contracts (134).

Teachers’ union offers recommendations to address teacher shortage

The Ohio Education Association (OEA) – the Buckeye State’s largest teachers’ union – recently released recommended policy changes made by a team of K-12, early childhood, career center and adult education teachers against the backdrop of “an alarming decrease in staffing” in public schools.

To address the significant challenge faced by Ohio public schools, OEA recommends increasing the minimum base annual salary for teachers from \$30,000 to \$40,000. According to OEA’s salary database, a majority of Ohio districts had starting salaries below \$40,000 in the 2020-2021 school year, with the average starting salary of \$38,942 for teachers holding bachelor’s degrees.

The \$30,000 salary floor was set by the Ohio General Assembly in the state biennial budget bill enacted in 2019 – the first adjustment to minimum K-12 salaries since 2001.

OEA’s recommendations also include:

- Providing compensation for individuals fulfilling student teaching requirements;
- Fully funding Ohio’s new school funding formula (funded for only two years in the current state biennial budget);
- Expanding loan-forgiveness programs;
- Aligning teacher-preparation programs with the realities of employment in the K-12 education sector; and,
- Establishing a statewide database of K-12 job openings.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio’s public school workforce decreased by 21,000 employees from September 2019 to September 2020.

Controversy continues over transgender policy resolution

As previously reported, members of the State Board of Education remain divided over a proposed resolution urging schools and districts to ignore a federal rule interpreting Title IX as banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Last month, the State Board voted 12-7 to refer the proposed resolution to its Executive Committee after four hours of public comment and about one hour of member discussion. Board member Tim Miller made the motion to refer, noting that multiple legal questions surrounding the issue have not yet been addressed.