



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.

School bus safety legislation likely to be addressed in lame-duck session

A week before the one-year anniversary of a Clark County school bus crash that resulted in the death of an eleven-year-old boy and the hospitalization of 22 others, the sponsor of H.B. 279 met with other legislators and interested parties regarding the bill aimed at improving school bus safety.

Representative Bernard Willis (R-Springfield) told interested parties that he will drop a "dramatically changed" substitute version of the bill he introduced in September of last year when legislators return from their summer recess.

The original bill called for all school buses to install seat belts within five years. Representative Willis removed that requirement after the School Bus Safety Working Group chose not to support it given a lack of evidence that the mandate would improve student safety.

Representative Willis now proposes establishment of a grant program aimed at helping school districts implement safety upgrades deemed most appropriate by local officials – an approach supported by Governor Mike DeWine.

Representative Willis' thinking was informed by a survey conducted by the Ohio Association for Pupil Transportation which is an affiliate of the Ohio Association of School Business Officials. The data suggests that \$50 million would be an adequate level of funding to address districts' immediate needs, with 78 percent of the 137 survey participants identifying school bus cameras as their top priority. Stakeholders have also identified driver recruitment and retention as an area of focus.

The bill's sponsor acknowledged that some lawmakers may want to delay providing districts with additional bus safety funding this year and instead allocate funds through the state's biennial budgeting process which will occur next year.

"I think we'll have to fight for some immediate grant dollars, but I do believe it's going to be something that's fully taken care of either in the transportation or the operating budget next year," he said.



State Board funding gap addressed

With support from House Finance Committee Chair Representative Jay Edwards (R-Nelsonville), the state Controlling Board voted unanimously to release \$4.66 million to close the State Board of Education's projected budget gap.

As previously reported, the State Board faced a significant funding gap after being separated from the new Department of Education and Workforce due to an oversight in the budget bill (H.B. 33) enacted in 2023. In order to generate funds to allow the State Board to fulfill its responsibilities, consideration was given to significantly increasing teacher licensure fees – a solution none were eager to implement given nationwide teacher shortages. Funds were also needed to cover costs associated with the Attorney General's Rapback Program to monitor school personnel criminal records and an increase in the number of referrals to the Office of Professional Conduct.

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OSSC provides a full menu of resources

Schools have access to many resources available from the Ohio School Safety Center.

[Ready-to-use surveys and tools](#)

help assess the status of school safety, engagement and environmental factors. Student groups can use the [student created survey template](#).

Teachers and staff can learn more about mental health and ways they can support students experiencing adversity and distress. OSSC offers several free courses in the [Knowledge District](#)

addressing mental health, de-escalation and emotional regulation strategies, youth suicide prevention and more.

Schools can also contact their [school safety liaison](#) to schedule a free Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention course.

Schools can use OSSC's online form to request a free [Security and Vulnerability Assessment](#) and [tabletop exercise packages](#) to help train staff and students on safety procedures.

Funding gap – continued

"This should get us through our 2024-2025 school year" without raising (licensure) fees," Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Craft said. "Then it will be part of the budget discussion" (for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025).

Ohio School Safety Center takes holistic approach

Five years after the creation of the Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) as a centralized location for school safety support, its 50-plus staff have trained more than 7,000 individuals and hosted four safety summits.

Governor Mike DeWine kicked off the recent Ohio School Safety Summit by encouraging school staff, mental health professionals and first responders to focus beyond the threat of an active shooter to address mental health, automated external defibrillators (AEDs), vaping and bullying in their safety plans.

"We know you plan to deal with that (an active shooter), but we also know there are other things that parents worry about: severe weather, bullying, vaping," Governor DeWine said. "We worry about substance use, human trafficking and many other things, so we are trying to take a holistic approach of what the (Ohio School Safety Center) is doing and how they try to help you."

OSSC has offered in-person and online trainings focused on sexual assault, violence prevention, conflict de-escalation, keeping students safe during after-school activities, suicide prevention, and bystander intervention with CPR and AEDs.

Governor DeWine also noted the success of Ohio's 24/7 anonymous reporting system – the Ohio School Tip Line – which was upgraded last year.

"We see more and more schools using it," he said. "In addition to texting and calling or emailing the tip line, tipsters can now submit tips to the Safer Ohio School Tip Line app and through a webform. That idea came from students who said they were more comfortable doing that."

Governor DeWine encouraged those in attendance at the summit to share their ideas about additional ways to support school safety.



K-12 policy among topics addressed at NCSL conference

Policy issues of importance to K-12 education stakeholders were among the many topics addressed at the recent Legislative Summit hosted by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) in Louisville.

Highlights included a session by author and education researcher Ulcca Joshi Hansen who said she sees three types of schools: the "modern-day factory model" (driven by core academics and standardized testing and focused on "managing young people" rather than helping them develop skills to manage themselves); those that "bolt things on" (like social-emotional and project-based learning but fail to reflect on what is known about human development or learning); and, "human-centered, liberatory" education that allows students to "go out into the world" to explore their interests and build connections in their communities."

She encouraged legislators to develop a new infrastructure to develop a system of accountability and assessment of schools that opt for the human-centered, liberatory approach and to visit schools that are "doing work differently."

The CEO of the National Center of Education and the Economy also spoke, encouraging policymakers to invest in teachers, against the backdrop of a changing technological landscape.



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Teacher-prep literacy audits timeline tightened

As previously reported, legislators have emphasized the importance of state colleges of education meeting the mandated shift to teaching the science of reading.

Against that backdrop, Ohio Department of Higher Education Chancellor Mike Duffey recently announced that the agency will accelerate its audits to ensure compliance by the end of the year – tightening the two-year audit timeframe provided for in the budget bill (H.B. 33) enacted in 2023.

The agency has chosen a vendor to perform the work but is still negotiating the terms of the contract.

Under the provisions of H.B. 33, the chancellor is tasked with revoking approval of programs that do not comply with the mandated shift to teaching the science of reading (with a ban on the instructional approach known as “three-cueing”).

NCSL – continued

“A future that’s being rapidly reshaped by AI and other technologies demands significant shifts in teaching and learning, and it demands reimaging time, space and staffing,” Vicki Phillips said.

Summit participants also discussed the “unprecedented” growth in teacher pay in recent years which, according to the director of NCSL’s education program, has caught up with the private sector.

In 2023 and 2024, nearly 200 bills addressing special student populations – the most of any education topics – including special education, English-language learners and at-risk students have been introduced in state legislatures.

A panel discussion featuring three education think tank executives noted that our education system has failed to fully correct COVID pandemic learning losses, challenging state lawmakers to “think big” in their efforts to support full recovery.

Funding from the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Act helped schools support students in many ways, but those funds are set to expire in September.

Leading the panel was Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos (D-Washington) who noted the importance of providing students with hands-on experiences and other opportunities for them to learn how to apply classroom skills in the real world. She also said schools should focus on a new three “Rs” – academic relevance and rigor, and relationship building – beyond reading, writing and arithmetic.

State Senator Andy Brenner (R-Delaware), who chairs the Senate Education Committee, was among the attendees.

Deadline for free access to Zearn Math extended

The deadline for schools serving students in grades K-8 to opt in to free access to the top-rated math learning platform Zearn Math – and free training for teachers and leaders – has been extended to September 30.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Zearn Math and [here](#) to access a short form to opt in.



Resources available

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) has worked to increase educators’ capacity to collaborate in the process of selecting and implementing high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) to help students acquire the knowledge and skills to be successful through a standards-align instructional foundation.

To support these efforts, Ohio has developed **high-quality instructional materials rubrics** aligned to Ohio’s Learning Standards. [Click here](#) to access rubrics in these content areas: computer science and technology, fine arts, mathematics, physical education, science, social studies, and world languages and cultures.

DEW has also added materials to the approved list of **reading intervention programs**. [Click here](#) to access the list and [here](#) for information regarding timeline updates and supports for districts and schools in selecting materials.

Webinar addresses leadership for sustainability

Attendance Works’ Attendance Awareness Campaign will host *Leadership for Sustainability: Superintendents Making a Difference* webinar September 25. Superintendents will share how they are achieving reductions in post-pandemic chronic absence in different types of communities. Speakers will share top strategies, lessons learned about equipping schools to take a data-informed approach, how they have gained support from strategic partners, and how they are sustaining their efforts over time. These examples will show what is possible with leadership from superintendents. [Click here](#) to learn more and register.