



# CHARTER SCHOOL RESOURCES NEWSLETTER

July 2025

## **RAA hosts All Schools Meeting July 30**

Richland Academy of the Arts is pleased to welcome its sponsored schools at the **All Schools Meeting, July 30 in Mansfield.**

One representative from each school must participate, but all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, board members and operators) are welcome to attend for a day of learning and community.

Scheduled for 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., the day will include a presentation on the **state budget bill (including school funding provisions)** recently passed by the Ohio General Assembly and signed into state law by Governor Mike DeWine.

Lunch will be provided, and those in attendance will have opportunities to win prizes for their schools.

To register, email the names of attendees to [shughes@richlandacademy.com](mailto:shughes@richlandacademy.com)

## **State biennial budget bill signed into state law**

The Ohio House of Representatives and Senate reconciled the differences in each chamber's vision and funding for the state biennial that began July 1. The \$90.5 billion dollar budget not only funds a multitude of state programs but also includes many policy provisions.

For the first time in more than 20 years, the state budget bill was passed without receiving a single vote by Democrat lawmakers who felt excluded from the process, saying that deliberations were limited to the Republican-controlled executive branch and Republican legislators.

Among the most debated issues throughout the five-month process was school funding.

The bill includes about \$8.46 billion in Foundation Funding, which supports traditional public schools, public charter schools and private school vouchers, in fiscal year 2026 and about \$8.73 billion in fiscal year 2027.

Highlights of the legislation of particular interest to charter school (referred to as "community" in state law) stakeholders include:

### **Funding:**

- The Fair School Funding Plan (aka Cupp-Patterson) remains in place using FY 2024 statewide average base cost per pupil in FY 2026 and FY 2027;
- Codifies the equity supplement that pays site-based community schools but decreases per pupil funding to \$500 in FY 2026 and \$400 in FY 2027;
- Provides a base funding supplement equal to a school's enrolled ADM for the fiscal year times \$27 in FY 2026 and \$40 in FY 2027;
- Requires DEW for FY 2026 and FY 2027 to calculate an existing site-based community school's disadvantaged pupil impact aid by using a weighted count of economically disadvantaged students equal to the sum of the economically disadvantaged ADM reported for the school for FY 2025 multiplied by 75% for FY 2026 and 65% for FY 2027, and the directly certified economically disadvantaged ADM for the fiscal year multiplied by 25% for FY 2026 and 35% for FY 2027;
- Establishes a separate threshold special education cost pool for community and STEM schools to partially reimburse costs for special education that exceed \$27,375 for students in special ed categories 2-5 and \$32,850 for students in special ed category 6;
- Codifies the Quality Community and Independent School Support program which requires DEW to pay schools up to \$3,000 per fiscal year for each student identified as economically disadvantaged and up to \$2,250 in each fiscal year for other students; and,
- Codifies the provision of law requiring DEW to annually pay \$1,000 for facilities for each student enrolled in brick-and-mortar community schools in each fiscal year.

### **Quality designation:**

- Significantly expands the criteria schools must meet to be designated as a community school of quality (providing more paths to achieving the designation).



*Continued on pg. 2*

## Beyond the budget bill

As the Legislature worked feverishly to pass the state biennial budget bill (H.B. 96) before the June 30 deadline, House and Senate committees held hearings on various bills, including those of interest to K-12 education stakeholders.

Prior to the Legislature's summer recess, the House Education Committee considered: **H.B. 304**, which would allow students to use club sports or other athletic activity to fulfill the high school physical education requirement and to require recess time for K-8 students; and, **H.B. 322**, which would require schools to administer the Presidential Fitness Test ended in 2012.

The Senate Education Committee considered: **H.B. 57**, regarding school policies on the administration of overdose reversal drugs; **H.B. 114**, which would make age requirements for kindergarten admission by allowing students who have reached age 5 by the start of a school year to enroll; and, **H.B. 127**, which would permit schools to withhold directory information and to remove directory information from the public record.

## Biennial budget bill — con't

### **Universal K-3 diagnostic assessment and kindergarten readiness assessment:**

Requires DEW to adopt a diagnostic assessment for reading, and requires DEW to approve a list of up to five diagnostic assessments aligned with the academic standards for each of grades K-3 for both reading and math.

### **Absence intervention and truancy:**

- Repeals the requirement that districts/schools assign habitual truants to an absence intervention team and adopt a prescribed absence intervention plan. Instead, requires districts/schools to adopt a policy in consultation with the juvenile court;
- Defines "chronically absent" as missing at least 10% of the minimum number of hours required in the school year;
- Removes a requirement that districts/schools prohibit the grade level promotion of a student that has been chronically absent; and,
- Eliminates the timeline under which a school district attendance officer must file a complaint in juvenile court against a truant student and instead requires a complaint only if it is determined that the student is not making satisfactory progress in improving attendance.

### **Student cell phone use:**

- Requires districts/schools to adopt a policy by January 1, 2026 prohibiting the use of cell phones by students during the instructional day, except for student learning or to monitor a health concern (with written statement from the student's physician requiring such use);
- Requires public school administrators to include in comprehensive emergency management plans a protocol that addresses student use of cell phones during an active threat or emergency and suspends the bill's cell phone prohibition during an active threat or emergency under the building's comprehensive emergency management plan; and,
- Eliminates the requirement for DEW to develop a model policy for student cell phone use in schools.

### **Public release of state test questions:**

- Eliminates the requirement that a minimum percentage of state assessment questions be made a public record and, instead, requires DEW to determine which questions are made a public record, if any.

### **Artificial intelligence policies:**

- Requires DEW to adopt a model policy by December 31, 2025 to address the appropriate use of AI by students and staff for educational purposes; and,
- Requires districts/schools to adopt a policy on the use of AI by July 1, 2026. Permits districts/schools to adopt the model policy developed by DEW.

### **Youth suicide and prevention and child sexual abuse educator in-service training:**

- Eliminates the option for districts and schools to adopt or adapt curriculum developed by DEW on youth suicide awareness and prevention for use in delivering in-service educator training on those topics, thus requiring districts/schools to develop their own curriculum;

Two significant policy changes are included among the many provisions of H.B. 96:

- Modifying the makeup of the State Board of Education** – from 11 elected and 6 appointed members, to 5 members appointed by the governor; and,
- Modifying the makeup of the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) board**, transitioning from 11 elected members to 3. Additional members will also be appointed by: a designee of the chancellor of higher education; two by the state treasurer; and four investment experts by the governor, House speaker, Senate president, and jointly by the speaker and president. The changes were made against the backdrop of several tumultuous years at STRS and hiring of Steven Toole as its executive director by the current board.

Continued on pg. 3

## In other school choice news

Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program was found to violate the "thorough and efficient" requirement for K-12 education funding in the Ohio Constitution. A Franklin County Common Pleas Court judge ruled against the program but stayed the decision pending a likely appeal.

"Taken together, the evidence presented by the Plaintiffs supports their assertion that, in expanding the EdChoice program to its current form, the General Assembly has created a system of uncommon private schools by directly providing private schools with over \$700 million in funding. This evidence proves beyond a reasonable doubt that EdChoice violates Article VI Section 2 of the Ohio Constitution," the judge wrote.

School Choice Ohio President Eric Frank responded: "... we vehemently disagree with the court's interpretation of Ohio's Constitution and believe the EdChoice program remains a constitutionally sound mechanism to empower families. We are confident of prevailing on appeal ..."

## Biennial budget bill — con't

- Eliminates the option for a school employee to satisfy youth suicide awareness in-service training through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials approved by the governing authority; and,
- Eliminates the requirement that child sexual abuse in-service training for educators be provided by law enforcement officers or prosecutors and instead requires a district board to develop its own curriculum in consultation with public or private agencies.

## Community school contracts and comprehensive plans:

- Eliminates the requirement for each community school to submit a comprehensive plan to its sponsor and, instead, requires the contract between each community school's sponsor and governing authority to include the comprehensive plan's provisions.

## Science of Reading professional development:

- Requires DEW to maintain an introductory training course on the Science of Reading for licensed educators and develop a competency-based training course to update and reinforce educator's skills in the Science of Reading; and,
- Requires each public school teacher, administrator, school psychologist or speech-language psychologist to complete training in the Science of Reading every 5 years.

## Community school transportation consortium:

- Permits the governing authorities of two or more community schools to enter into an agreement to establish a consortium to provide or arrange transportation to and from school for students enrolled in participating schools; and,
- Requires DEW to calculate and make payments to a consortium as if it were a community school.

Governor Mike DeWine signed H.B. 96 into state law on June 30, with some provisions (primarily funding) becoming effective immediately and others (primarily policy) becoming effective in 90 days.

He vetoed 67 provisions, including: making local school board races partisan; requiring individuals under 18 years of age convicted as adults to be committed to a Department of Youth Services facility rather than a Department of Rehabilitation and Correction facility; prohibiting local school boards from entering into supplemental benefit arrangements to pay employee contributions to the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) on behalf of superintendents and principals, and paying employee contributions to the School Employees Retirement System (SERS) on behalf of treasurers; and, placing "vague" restrictions on public libraries in an effort to regulate the placement of certain materials within a public general circulation library.

## DEW deputy director appointed, confirmed

Last month, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) announced its recommendation for the appointment of longtime educator and superintendent Dr. Diane M. Allen as the first deputy director of its Division of Primary and Secondary Education.

Allen most recently served as superintendent of Marysville Exempted Village School District, leading the district since 2012. With more than two decades of experience in education leadership, she is recognized for her focus on student-centered learning, strategic planning, and preparing students for real-world success. Her efforts have been instrumental to accelerating achievement, workforce development, and wellness to prepare students for success.

Her appointment to the position was approved by the Senate, as required under state law, on June 12. She will assume her new role on July 9.

She joins DEW Director Stephen Dackin's leadership team, along with previously approved Deputy Director of Career-Technical Education and Workforce Jeremy Varner.

