



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.

2024-2025 Report Cards: A look statewide

In September, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) released 2025 Ohio School Report Cards which, as has historically been the case, show mixed results.

Districts and schools received overall ratings of 1 to 5 stars in half-star increments based on ratings in up to six components: Achievement; Progress; Gap Closing; Early Literacy; Graduation; and (for the first time) College, Career, Workforce and Military Readiness.

Now part of the DeWine Administration (rather than an entity reporting to the State Board of Education), DEW is focused on four core priorities: literacy, learning acceleration, student wellness and workforce readiness.

Reading is the foundation of all learning, and Ohio continues efforts to help ensure that students have the tools and support to become strong, confident readers. Last year, there was a slight dip in English language arts proficiency rates – from 60.9 percent in the two previous school years, to 60.4 percent.

“While English language arts proficiency dipped slightly, the Performance Index on Ohio’s State Tests in English language arts reached a five-year high,” the *Summary of Ohio School Report Cards 2024-2025* states. “As schools adjust to new materials and instructional practices aligned to the Science of Reading, brief shifts in performance are a normal and expected part of the process.”

Like other states across the country, Ohio continues to focus on accelerating learning and closing gaps resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2024-2025 report cards show that math proficiency is on the rise, with improvement at nearly every grade level. Overall proficiency in math reached 55.3 percent, up 1.8 points from the 2023-2024 school year and 2.3 points from 2022-2023.

Strengthening supports for students’ well-being and addressing barriers to consistent attendance are central to ensuring academic progress.

Chronic absenteeism continued to decrease statewide to 25.1 percent – the third consecutive year of declining chronic absenteeism which peaked in the 2021-2022 school year.

For the first time, state report cards include College, Career, Workforce and Military readiness as a rated component (for high schools).



Chronic Absenteeism Rate



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State Board functions with lean staffing levels

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Craft recently told members of the State Board of Education that his team is functioning with just 58 staff, well below the 75 positions originally planned for when the Legislature separated the agency from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (previously known as the Department of Education).

The largest number of staff (25) work in the board's Office of Professional Conduct, which, in fiscal year 2025, received 23,533 referrals, opened 1,253 investigations and completed 1,175 – opening 1.5 times more cases than are closed each week.

Remaining full-time staff work in educator licensure and effectiveness (21), IT and customer support (8) and leadership and board support (4).

"It's been impressive to watch this team – given the constraints we have – continue to do the job for the students of the state of Ohio," Craft said.

Report cards – continued

Last year, more graduates earned industry credentials, college credit and technical skills, with 61.4 percent of students graduating last year meeting at least one of Ohio's 11 readiness measures, up from 56.3 percent in 2023.

"Meaningful progress happens when we understand where growth is needed and where success can be amplified," DEW Director Stephen Dackin said. "We must act with urgency to ensure every student is equipped with the knowledge and life skills they need for the future. The Ohio School Report Cards are never an end point, but a building block for data-driven decisions that guide where to focus state and local resources, and, most importantly, how best to support Ohio students."

[Click here](#) to access the *Summary of Ohio School Report Cards 2024-2025* report and other report card resources..

National testing data raises concerns

Results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show lower achievement among American students in multiple subjects with only 35 percent of seniors reaching the "NAEP Proficient" benchmark in reading for 2024 and only 22 percent in math. The analysis also revealed that only 31 percent of eighth grade students were proficient.

"Those results are sobering," said National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Acting Commissioner Matthew Soldner in a statement. "The drop in overall scores coincides with significant declines in achievement among our lowest-performing students, continuing a downward trend that began even before the COVID-19 pandemic."



U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon also weighed in, noting that American students are testing at historic lows across the nation.

"At a critical juncture when students are about to graduate and enter the workforce, military, or higher education, nearly half of America's high school seniors are testing at below basic levels in math and reading," she said. "Despite spending billions annually on numerous K-12 programs, the achievement gap is widening, and more high school seniors are performing below the basic benchmark in math and reading than ever before."

Ohio awarded nearly \$105M to expand high-performing charters

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) recently announced that Ohio has been awarded nearly \$105 million in federal grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

The 2025 Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant totals \$55.5 million to support the growth of high-performing charter schools across the state over the next five years. It will be used to replicate successful school models and expand existing schools that have demonstrated strong academic outcomes.

Emphasis will be placed on supporting schools in communities with limited access to quality school options, including those with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

The State Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG) totals \$49.2 million in matching funds to help high-performing charters address facility costs. Priorities include supporting: schools located in areas where a significant number or percentage of public schools have been identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; geographic areas where a large proportion of students perform poorly on state academic assessments; and communities with high concentrations of low-income students.



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Appeals court rules in favor of charter manager

The 8th District Court of Appeals recently ruled in favor of Accel Schools Ohio's motion to dismiss a lawsuit involving public records (personnel files) held by private entities.

By a vote of 3-0, the court ruled that the lawsuit should have been dismissed by the lower court because it lacks jurisdiction in public records cases involving limited liability companies and other private entities.

"The plain language of the statute expands the jurisdiction of the Court of Claims to include denial of access to public-records cases, in spite of, or without taking into account, whether the public office or the person responsible for public records is an office or employee of the state or a political subdivision," Judge Emanuella Groves, wrote for the majority.

"The primary question in this case is whether the Court of Claims has subject-matter jurisdiction to hear the case, and we must answer that question in the negative."

Grants – continued

House Education Committee Chair Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Ashtabula) joined U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon at a press conference in Columbus to announce the awards.

"My impression is they're looking to give us flexibility with the funding they're providing," she said in an interview with *Gongwer News Service*. "And it sounds like they're taking that really seriously when it comes to reviewing the regulations within the federal Department of Education."

House, Senate education committee chairs name priorities

In an interview with *Gongwer News Service*, House Education Committee Chair Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Ashtabula) and Senate Education Committee Chair Senator Andy Brenner (R-Delaware) named ensuring that state reading instruction requirements are being met statewide as a key priority.

Senator Brenner said some districts are "still resisting" the Science of Reading approach to teaching.

"I would like to see more rigor on the implementation and making sure it's being implemented properly," he said. "If that means giving more authority to the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) to oversee that, then maybe we need to do that."

Representative Fowler Arthur wants to ensure DEW has "every tool in their toolbox" to support districts, schools and teachers and said that English language arts (ELA) proficiency levels from recently released state report cards are "unacceptable."

Both lawmakers agree with DEW staff that the slight dip in ELA proficiency (from 60.9 percent to 60.4) is likely the result of implementation of the Science of Reading – a new approach for many districts and schools.

The two also indicated that they will serve on a student transportation working group established through the budget bill (H.B. 96) passed in June.

Senator Brenner said he will also continue to work on plans requiring schools to provide evidence-based academic intervention services, free of cost, to students who demonstrated a limited level of skill in state assessments in math or ELA. He indicated that he will also continue to consider closure requirements for all consistently underperforming schools.

Any time-sensitive issues may be amended into a bill (H.B. 114) on kindergarten admission age requirements under consideration by the Senate Education Committee since returning from the Legislature's summer recess.

In the coming weeks, the House Education Committee will hold hearings on bills introduced earlier this year when the primary legislative focus was on passing the budget.

A resolution (H.C.R. 22) likely to be addressed would encourage K-12 students to read the U.S. Declaration of Independence during the 2025-2026 school year in celebration of its 250th anniversary.

Lawmakers review statewide attendance and literacy data

Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) staff recently provided an overview of Ohio School Report Card results to members of the House Education Committee.



PHOTO CREDIT: Capitol Square Review & Advisory Board

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DEW releases dyslexia screening results

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) recently released the results of student dyslexia screenings conducted in the 2023-2024 school year. One-third of K-12 students in Ohio were identified as at-risk based on Tier 1 screening, and about half (52 percent) were identified based on a Tier 2 intervention-based diagnostic.

The analysis found a “high degree of alignment” between the percentage of students identified as at-risk and the results from reading diagnostics and state English language arts assessments.

“There may be no greater purpose for an education system than to provide all leaders with effective evidence-based instruction to build language and literacy knowledge and skills so they can enjoy full lives of learning and success,” DEW’s report states. “Ohio is committed to supporting an education system that prioritizes the language and literacy of all learners.”

Attendance, literacy data — continued

Legislators expressed concern over a slight dip in statewide proficiency rates in English language arts – from 60.9 percent in the 2023-2024 school year to 60.4 percent last year.

DEW Chief Integration Officer Dr. Chris Woolard noted that schools were implementing the Science of Reading approach to literacy in the 2024-2025 school year, suggesting that lawmakers avoid drawing conclusions about the lack of progress.

DEW’s chief of literacy reported that Ohio is “seeing more improvement in those (150) schools” in which 95 state-funded literacy coaches were placed.

Lawmakers also discussed the statewide rate of chronic absenteeism – 25 percent – which fell for the third consecutive year.

Asked by Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Ashtabula), who chairs the House Education Committee, if the causes of chronic absenteeism were due to medical conditions, family issues or transportation problems, Dr. Woolard responded “all of the above.”

“It’s really hard to pinpoint one thing,” he said.

Chronic absenteeism rates down, but still persistently high

The 74 Newsletter recently reported that chronic absenteeism nationwide, which hit a record high in 2022, has dropped modestly – by about five percentage points – but remains higher than pre-pandemic levels.

The average rate dropped from 28.5 percent in 2022 to 25.4 percent in 2023 and 23.5 percent in 2024.

In related news, Ohio – one of more than a dozen states to commit to reducing chronic absenteeism by 50 percent by 2029 – was featured in a recent Attendance Awareness Campaign update. The Buckeye State will use a comprehensive strategy rooted in prevention, partnership and purpose. [Click here](#) to access the Ohio case study.

AG warning: comply with trans bathroom, sports laws

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost recently sent a letter to the Princeton City School District following accusations that one of its employees offered parents advice on how to “skirt state law banning boys in girls’ sports.”

The AG sent the letter in response to a video posted on social media by Accuracy in Media (AIM) – a Washington, D.C.-based conservative nonprofit which the district said “appears to have been edited in a way that misrepresents a months-old conversation.”

The letter served to remind the district that the law prohibits “individuals of the male sex” from participating on female sports teams and using bathrooms, showers and locker rooms designated for girls and women.

In response to Yost’s reminder, the district’s superintendent, G. Elgin Card, wrote a letter to district families assuring them of compliance with state laws and informing them that officials are “investigating to understand the full context” of the video.

In other related news, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled a federal lawsuit against the Bethel Local School District for allowing transgender students to use facilities consistent with their gender identities moot with the passage of S.B. 104 last year.

“We can no longer enjoin the School District from maintaining the bathroom policy because the policy no longer exists, and defendants are prevented by state law from reinstating it,” the judge wrote. “And plaintiffs cannot have a legally cognizable interest in stopping a policy or practice that already ceased. Thus, plaintiffs’ claim for injunctive relief is moot.”

Following dismissal of the lawsuit, those challenging it still sought damages which were rejected by the court.

