



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.

Failure to enforce cellphone ban policies has potential consequences

An Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) spokeswoman recently noted that a state law requiring schools to adopt policies generally banning cellphones does not include a reporting requirement.

“Ohio is a ‘local control’ state – meaning local schools and districts have authority to make operational decisions at a local level, including decisions regarding the details of the school policies they adopt and how they are enforced,” the spokeswoman said in an email to *Gongwer News Service*.

However, she also suggested that failure to meet requirements of the cellphone policy law could result in licensure-related consequences for administrators and educators who must follow all state laws.

Academic intervention proposal debated

Legislation (SB 19) unanimously passed by the full Ohio Senate in November is now under consideration by the House Education Committee. The bill would require districts and schools to provide evidence-based academic intervention services, free of cost, to students who demonstrate a limited level of skill in state assessments in math or English language arts or diagnostic assessments in math.

House Education Committee Chair Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Ashtabula) shares concerns over low statewide proficiency rates raised by Senate Education Committee Chair Andy Brenner (R-Delaware) who sponsored the bill.

Some members of the committee expressed concerns regarding the cost associated with implementation of the bill – characterizing it as an unfunded mandate. A fiscal note produced by the non-partisan Legislative Service Commission suggests that the costs “could be significant but are highly uncertain.”

Senator Brenner told the committee that he would be willing to consider tapping into the state’s rainy-day fund if resources are needed to ensure teachers have appropriate curricula and training to instruct in math, consistent with state spending on professional development as Ohio shifted to the “science of reading” approach to literacy instruction.

Substitute foster student bill under consideration

A substitute version of legislation (HB 25) aimed at better supporting students in foster care is under consideration by the Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee.

Under the bill, the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) would be required to work with other state agencies to encourage the sharing of best practices, require public schools to designate a local foster care education liaison, and require a foster family navigator in each building to serve as the primary point of contact to support students placed in foster care.

“As House Bill 25 evolved, we made intentional changes,” said Representative Dontavius Jarrells (D-Columbus) — a co-sponsor of the legislation. “We moved away from a single program (the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program) and focused on building something stronger and more lasting. The Fostering School Success Act creates clear points of support inside every school system so foster youth are not left to navigate instability on their own.”

Resources support practical, responsible AI integration in classrooms

Ohio is preparing students for an artificial intelligence- (AI) driven future by integrating AI into Ohio's Learning Standards. A new package of resources helps teachers build AI skills across subjects in alignment with Ohio's Computer Science and Technology Standards. The resources offer practical tips for using AI across subject areas, while promoting digital citizenship, critical thinking and ethics.

The Student AI Usage Model, found within the resource package, provides clear guidelines for responsible classroom use, covering tasks like brainstorming, editing and group projects with a focus on honesty and transparency while using AI.

[Click here](#) for more information.

Bill aimed at protecting youth from AI-assisted self-harm

Members of the Ohio House Technology and Innovation Committee recently heard from sponsors of bipartisan legislation (HB 524) that would prohibit the development or deployment of any artificial intelligence (AI) model or application that encourages users to engage in any form of self-harm or in harming another person.

The bill would authorize the Ohio Attorney General to investigate alleged violations of the law and allow courts to impose penalties of up to \$50,000 which would be used to support the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Fund.

The bill's sponsors urged the committee to take swift action to keep young Ohioans safe, saying that at least four Ohio children have used AI to write suicide notes.

The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation's chief executive officer said that more Ohioans of all ages are relying on AI for therapy and mental health care. While tools like 988 and investment in suicide prevention have brought the number of deaths down, AI can still encourage young people to harm themselves.

President Donald Trump issued an executive order to prevent state governments from enforcing AI laws and Congress is considering several pieces of legislation to regulate AI chatbots, making the state legislation's future uncertain.

Vaccine exemption transparency bill under consideration

Members of the Ohio House Health Committee are considering legislation (HB 561) that would require pre-K-12 schools, when notifying parents about childhood immunizations required by existing law as a condition of continued admission or enrollment, to also provide notification of the law's exemptions.

"Right now, parents are being lied to," Representative Melanie Miller (R-Ashland) — one of the bill's sponsors — said in an interview with *Gongwer News Service*. "They're being told that this is mandatory and it's not. The law is very clear what those exemptions are."

Several members of the committee have raised concerns regarding the bill noting that MMS vaccines are not controversial and that many have spoken against the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recent revisions to vaccine guidelines. Concerns were also raised regarding the proposed repeal of an existing law that allows schools to deny admission to unvaccinated children during an epidemic.



Plan to require career exploration discussed

The Ohio Senate Education Committee is considering a plan aimed at ensuring that students have early access to information on job skills and opportunities.

Senator Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield) is developing a plan to require school districts to offer instruction in career exploration at some point during middle school.

"Any time between sixth to eighth grade, students must complete a half-credit unit that includes exposure to 16 Ohio career clusters, hands-on learning, interest and aptitude assessment, at least one career coaching session, beginner-level financial and life planning, professional soft skills, and creating an academic plan," Senator Koehler said.

It also requires that plans reflecting students' strengths, interests and academic and financial goals before high school be developed.

The plan was partially inspired by Springfield City Schools which gives career aptitude tests to eighth-grade students and connects them with "navigators" in high school to help them identify career pathways that are a good fit.

Important reminders

Richland Academy of the Arts encourages school governing board members to visit its website to review resources including policies, annual reports, newsletters and other important information.

[Click here](#) to access the Community Schools section of RAA's website.

RAA will host a public records and open meetings training session on April 16 at 6 p.m. The session meets the statutory requirement that charter school board members receive the training annually.

To participate virtually, please send an email to shughes@richlandacademy.com. Please provide the email addresses for all who choose to participate and a link will be provided as the meeting date approaches.

High court to clarify teacher termination law

The Ohio Supreme Court has been asked to determine whether school boards can disregard witness credibility determinations made by referees during the teacher termination process.

An appeal to the Supreme Court was filed after the 11th District Court of Appeals ruled against a teacher regarding a district's decision to fire her over allegations that she allowed students to vape in her classroom.

The defendant argues that the district erred by rejecting a hearing officer's recommendation that she be restored to her position after two students retracted their statements that they witnessed students vaping. A third student's allegations were "replete with inconsistencies and demonstrable untruths."

Bill would require school child protection liaisons

Two legislators are developing a plan to ensure that every public school in Ohio designates a child protection liaison to manage cases of suspected child abuse.

The bipartisan proposal pays tribute to 13 year old Kei'Mani Latigue whose body was found in an abandoned house in Toledo after she was murdered by her father.

It would also expand Ohio's Uniform Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System to include real-time notifications and response deadlines and require public children services agencies to enter reports of child abuse or neglect into SACWIS immediately.

"Every day, educators, caseworkers, law enforcement officers and judges work to safeguard children from abuse and neglect," said Representative Darnell Brewer (D-Cleveland), a co-sponsor of the legislation. "But far too often, the system meant to protect them is fragmented. Critical information is being delayed, notifications are missed, responsibilities aren't clear."

State superintendent update

As previously reported, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Paul Craft will resign from his position by July 31.

Fifty-two individuals applied for the job, including two who were among Craft's co-finalists when he was selected in 2023. The State Board recently announced that its members will interview six candidates. Four of the six currently serve as district superintendents, one is a former superintendent who now serves as a program specialist with the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) and one most recently served as a DEW senior executive director.

The U.S. Department of Defense recently announced that Craft, an Ohio Army National Guard veteran, will oversee Defense Education Activity serving more than 61,000 children of military service members and civilian employees. He will focus on "parental transparency, high expectations for students, superb teachers, and rigorous curriculum."

Supreme Court rules in deleted video case

The Ohio Supreme Court has ruled against a public records requester who sought statutory damages, court costs and attorney fees when a school district was unable to provide a video of a board meeting that was accidentally deleted.

The majority opinion cited the attestation of the district's IT director that the video had no audio due to a technical error. It was accidentally deleted when removed from the district's YouTube channel.

The court found that the plaintiff was not entitled to damages under a statute requiring public offices to produce requested records because evidence showed that the video in question no longer exists.



Districts fight bill that threatens state funding

Opponents say they will fight legislation (HB 671) introduced by Representative Jamie Callender (R-Concord) that would require the Department of Education and Workforce to withhold state foundation funding from entities seeking legal action against the state.

The bill, assigned to the House Finance Committee, was introduced against the backdrop of a coalition of more than 330 Ohio school districts suing the state over private school voucher expansion.

Although the legislation will not be considered by the Senate until passed by the House, Senate President Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) acknowledged to reporters that there is “some frustration” among members of the Senate Majority Caucus that school districts are using state funds to challenge Ohio’s voucher programs in court.

Court finds STRS members breached fiduciary duties

A Franklin County Common Pleas Court judge ruled that two members of the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) board – Rudy Fichtenbaum, who served as chair, and Wade Steen – violated fiduciary duties and are prohibited from ever serving on the board again.

Both men were found guilty of violating their duty by seeking to relinquish billions of dollars in assets to the third-party investment company QED.

The ruling comes nearly two years after Governor Mike DeWine revealed that he received allegations of an attempted “hostile takeover” of the fund serving 500,000 active and retired teachers and the Ohio Attorney General’s Office accused them of participating in a corruption scheme.

The judge also noted that STRS “lags significantly behind other public pension systems” in terms of performance and cost-of-living adjustments for beneficiaries while staff received performance incentive pay.



Bill aimed at better protecting crossing guards and students

Two members of the Ohio House of Representatives have introduced legislation (HB 690) to impose stricter penalties for endangering school crossing guards and students.

The bill is in response to a news report that 225 crossing guards across the country were hit by motor vehicles over the last decade.

It would authorize school crossing guards, while performing official duties, to direct, stop or otherwise control traffic to ensure the safety of a pedestrian using a crosswalk. It would also prohibit a person from knowingly failing to obey a lawful order by a school crossing guard and from knowingly harassing, threatening, intimidating or interfering with a school crossing guard.

ODNR film showcases natural wonders

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is bringing the great outdoors into K-12 classrooms throughout the state with *Ohio: Wild at Heart* – a free, 45-minute film.

Educators can visit ODNR’s website to fill out a brief form to access the film. Internet access is required. There is also a free educator guide that can be downloaded to help relate the themes and topics covered in the film to Ohio’s education standards.

Narrated by Ohio State football legend Archie Griffin, the film takes viewers on a journey through Ohio’s natural wonders in all four seasons and spreads the message of conservation success like the reintroduction of bald eagles.

[Click here](#) for details.

