

Ohio Education Association: STATE BUDGET TALKING POINTS (HB 153)

July 5, 2011

In a tough economy, with Ohio facing a major budget deficit, we must focus on the essentials. Nothing is more essential than funding a high quality education that prepares our children for good jobs and careers.

- The budget disinvests in public education by reducing overall funding to school districts. Local communities will experience larger class sizes, reduced course choices and less individual attention for students in nearly every district in Ohio.
- Contrary to reports from the Governor's office, the vast majority of school districts will actually lose money over the biennium because of the non-replacement of federal dollars, significant reductions in tangible personal property (TPP) tax revenue "hold harmless payments," loss of utility tax reimbursements and less special education and gifted funding.
- The significant funding cuts in the Governor's budget "passes the buck" to local school districts, which will be under increasing pressure to raise taxes to provide basic education services.
- The school funding formula used to determine school district level funding is not linked to any analysis of what school districts actually need to provide high quality education programs for students.

SB 5 Provisions In the Budget: The budget includes a number of provisions related to the teaching profession that were the same or similar to some language contained in Senate Bill 5. This includes instituting performance-based pay, changes in evaluations and seniority rights. The aspects similar to SB 5 that are included in the budget are:

Teacher Compensation - Requires teachers in districts which receive RttT funds to be paid according to a "performance-based" schedule.

Evaluations - Requires at least 50% of teacher evaluations be based on student academic growth. Evaluation policy supersedes future collective bargaining agreements.

Layoffs – Prohibits giving preference based on seniority in determining the order of layoffs or in rehiring teachers when positions become available again, except when choosing between teachers with comparable evaluations.

Language that is the same or similar to provisions in Senate Bill 5 should not be in the budget. The voters will have the opportunity to repeal Senate Bill 5 in November. Adding portions of SB 5 to other pieces of legislation circumvents the voice of voters in the "citizens' veto."

Evaluation Talking Points

- Basing teacher pay primarily on test scores punishes teachers for circumstances beyond their control. Standardized tests were never designed to measure teacher performance and cannot be applied consistently.
- Those districts that signed on to RTTT voluntarily agreed to address the issue of student performance linked to teacher evaluation through the collective bargaining process. Creating a “one-size fits all” evaluation framework with half of the evaluation based on student performance undermines collaboration and silences the voices of the teachers and administrators who are the experts who should be designing evaluation systems.
- Evaluations should be developed in cooperation with teachers rather than exempted from bargaining. Passing a “top down” state mandate undermines local collaboration and buy-in that is the basis for RTTT and will lead to success.

Merit Pay Talking Points

- It’s bewildering to see unproven merit pay included in a budget for tough economic times that has our public schools facing a nearly \$3 billion decrease in overall funding for the next two years.
- Gov. Kasich must address the essentials first ...like making sure Ohio students have the courses, textbooks, facilities and highly qualified teachers to help them prepare for the jobs and careers of the 21st century.
- OEA is opposed to any form of merit pay or pay for performance or pay that is conditioned or tied to student outcomes (such as test scores) or employee evaluations subject to the employer’s discretion for the following reasons:
 1. Student outcomes such as test scores have been shown through research to be unreliable and invalid indicators of educator performance.
 2. Funding shortages frequently limit or place a quota on the number of educators who can receive pay for performance even if they met eligibility requirements.
 3. Current evaluation systems are riddled with subjectivity and do not provide a fair and valid assessment of educator performance.

Value Added Talking Points

- There is substantial agreement, based on strong evidence, that value-added data should be restricted to appropriate DIAGNOSTIC purposes that support instruction and student learning. The power of value-added tools lies in their potential to help educators make sound decisions to improve student learning. The test scores, from which value-added data are derived, are only one source of information about the performance of students.
- Educators must be instructed on the interpretation and use of value-added data.
- Schools must be prepared to provide the appropriate teaching and learning conditions, including interventions, to foster the academic growth of all students.
- Policy makers must be willing to fund appropriate student intervention services in the school community, as well as in the classroom, to close student achievement gaps.
- Family and community members will need assistance in learning how to interpret and use value-added information and other tools to assess student progress and school performance.
- It is inappropriate to use value-added data as the basis for high stakes decisions about schools, students or teachers, including decisions about teacher evaluation and/or pay.

Charter School and Voucher Expansion: The budget bill greatly expands vouchers and charter schools. HB 153 removes the cap on charter schools in “challenged” school districts, increases the number of EdChoice vouchers by more than 400%, and creates a new statewide special education voucher program.

With limited resources, Ohio should focus on funding and improving the schools that 90 percent of Ohio’s students attend. Instead, this budget proposes a massive expansion of charters and vouchers that will lead to further funding reductions for traditional public schools. Charter schools must be held academically and financially accountable to protect students and Ohio taxpayers.

- 45 percent of charter schools receiving rankings remain in academic emergency or academic watch. \$266.6 million in state aid payments flowed to low performing charter schools in the 2009-10 year (source: OEA analysis of ODE data).
- Voucher programs are offered to a limited number of students yet drain resources from the majority of students in public schools. There is no evidence of improved student performance to warrant an expansion of voucher programs.
- Under current law, all school districts are required to find ways to serve students with special needs—either by providing the services required under an IEP or contracting with another provider.

School Transportation Outsourcing: The budget contains language that would facilitate the outsourcing of school transportation services in local and exempted village school districts. The OEA opposes the outsourcing transportation services as it raises numerous safety and cost concerns.

Higher Education: Decrease overall funding for higher education by \$440 million over FY 12/13 from FY 11 amounts (\$270 million cut in FY 12 and \$170 million cut in FY 13).

Investment in higher education is critical to preparing our students for good jobs and moving Ohio’s economy forward. However, this budget substantially reduces overall higher education funding.

Department of Developmental Disabilities (DD): Reduces subsidy payments to Ohio’s County Boards of Developmental Disabilities by 38%, a reduction of \$25.6 million in fiscal year 2012.

While other line items within the DD Department were spared, subsidy payments to County Boards of DD were slashed by 38%. This large reduction in funding puts services to over 80,000 developmentally disabled students at risk and passes the buck to local taxpayers to make up the difference.