



OEA Legislative Watch

March 16, 2012

Mayor Jackson's Cleveland Plan

This week Governor John Kasich asked the State Board of Education to support the Cleveland Plan, as proposed by Mayor Frank Jackson. While originally intended to be a part of his mid-biennial budget review legislation, no legislative language has yet to be submitted for the Cleveland Plan. However, the Cleveland Plan remains a high priority for Governor Kasich. The Plan would only apply to the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD), but Governor Kasich has been clear that he sees the Cleveland Plan as a model that he wants to spread to other Ohio school districts.

In public statements, OFT President Melissa Cropper said teachers are ready and interested in collaborating to improve Cleveland schools, but they have been mostly shut out of this process. This exclusion has occurred despite CTU collaborating closely with the Cleveland schools in the recent past to provide peer review and teacher mentoring, to defer \$25 million in pay increases and to support new policies on transferring teachers and reconstituting school staffs – all measures focused on students.

OEA will follow the Cleveland Plan debate attentively and is working closely with OFT/CTU.

Components of Mayor Jackson's Cleveland Plan:

The following are major policy changes Mayor Jackson is requesting from the General Assembly, as outlined in the Plan report. The report is conceptual in nature and provides little detail. Until legislative language is available, many aspects of these proposals will not be clear.

1) District Autonomy and Flexibility

- Provide CMSD the same waivers and exemptions provided to charter schools.
- Enable CMSD to manage its fiscal assets flexibly, including the sale of real estate.
- Require CMSD to take immediate action with regard to its lowest performing schools.
- Create the Cleveland Transformation Alliance, a public-private partnership charged with ensuring that all components of the plan are implemented based on an agreed upon timeline and measures of success, assessing the quality of all public schools in Cleveland, communicating to parents about school choices, and serving as a watchdog of charter growth.

Do you know that the political process affects virtually everything in your school day?

Take action —
Become an OEA Member Lobbyist

Questions?

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2) Modern Employment Practices

- Eliminate seniority as the sole or priority factor in any employment or assignment decision including reduction in force situations.
- Enable more streamlined and standards-defined dismissal process.
- Empower CMSD leadership to determine contract duration, terms and non-renewal criteria, including establishing a probationary period for all staff.
- Require a differentiated compensation system to attract and retain excellent teachers and principals, aligned to the new teacher evaluation system and with performance as a key, but not sole, factor.

3) District-Charter Partnerships

- Allow the district to share local levy revenues and other assets (including buildings) with high-performing charter schools sponsored by or under contract with the CMSD.
- Allow the district to count enrollment of district sponsored charter schools.

4) Charter Sector Quality

- Provide the Cleveland Transformation Alliance with sign-off authority on new charter authorizations in the City of Cleveland.
- Close loopholes in existing law that allow bad charters to close and re-open under different sponsorship and ensure bad schools are closed permanently, including prohibiting transfer to the Ohio Department of Education for continued operation.
- Require notice for school closures to be made to parents in June, thereby eliminating a “lame duck” year.

5) Fresh Start in Collective Bargaining

- Require the CMSD and contracting parties to begin future negotiations without carryover terms from previous contracts.

6) Targeted Financial Support for the Plan

- Start-up and expansion of new and high-performing school models.
- Implementation of year-round schooling.
- Support for high quality charter schools (i.e., a Cleveland pilot of “Invest in the Best”).
- Introduction of new business systems to support the plan (e.g., per-pupil funding model).

Kasich Previews Policies in Budget Review Legislation

Next week the General Assembly will begin taking up legislation with a number of substantive policy changes. The yet to be introduced legislation is being referred to as the “Mid-Biennium Review” (MBR). Governor Kasich and members of the administration held a press conference on Wednesday, March 14, 2012 to preview some of the proposals. The legislation is expected to contain hundreds of provisions spread out over more than 2,000 pages. Below is a brief listing of the major education-related issues that were addressed by the Governor and in supporting documents.

Taxation: The Governor has proposed an increase in the severance tax rates for oil and gas collection associated with “fracking.” Over the next five years the tax is estimated to generate between \$700 million and \$1 billion. Under Kasich’s proposal, the proceeds of this tax would be used to lower the state income tax rate. Ohio has among the lowest oil and gas tax rates in the country. A responsible increase in the current severance tax is needed so that companies pay their fair share. However, in light of the damaging cuts brought on by Kasich’s first budget, this revenue should be used to restore funding to our schools and local communities.

Budget cuts have resulted in larger class sizes, job losses and fewer learning opportunities for students. The Governor has yet to propose a system for funding public schools in our state. OEA believes that investing in the success of our students and the health and safety of our local communities is a better remedy for Ohio’s economy than a decrease in the income tax which benefits the wealthy far more than middle class families.

Teacher Evaluation: Allowing for teacher evaluations to be conducted by credentialed third-party evaluators rather than school administrators.

Teacher Retesting: Retesting of teachers in traditional public schools that are determined to be ineffective under new teacher evaluation standards.

Third Grade Reading Guarantee: Requiring the development of a reading intervention and monitoring plan for students who are not proficient in reading in Kindergarten through second grade. Students would be retained if they have participated in an intervention plan for two years and are not proficient in reading at the end of the third grade.

School District and Building Report Cards: Establishing a new formula that assigns letter grades (A-F) to school buildings and school districts. This would replace districts and buildings being rated “excellent,” “effective,” etc. The formula would include “new, more challenging standards” and would classify fewer schools as failing than under the federal standards. This would require a federal waiver from No Child Left Behind requirements.

Other Education Provisions:

- Providing “tools to include career awareness and development” in K-12 curriculum.
- “Encouraging the expansion of digital learning” by defining its use and creating standards for blended learning environments.
- Developing new standards for dropout recovery schools.
- Requiring quality assessments of all publically-funded early childhood programs.
- Allowing school treasurers to also function as business managers.
- Merging the State Architect’s Office with the School Facilities Commission into a new Facilities Construction Commission.

OEA Governmental Services will provide additional information on the proposals in the bill once it is introduced and specific language is available.

House Begins Work on Capital Bill

The House Finance Committee has begun to hold hearings on the recently introduced capital appropriations bill (HB 482). The bill proposes approximately \$1.7 billion in funding for new construction, renovation and maintenance of government facilities. Over \$1.3 billion of the funding is in state-backed debt obligations with the rest of the funding coming from cash funds. Over 60% of the funds are dedicated to capital projects for school facilities and higher education. The bill includes:

- \$675 million to the Ohio School Facilities Commission for school construction. The funding will support construction projects in 40-50 school districts over the biennium. \$250 million of the funding comes from license fees from video lottery terminals at horseracing tracks.
- \$400 million in construction projects at public colleges and universities. \$350 million of this figure is to fund a collaborative plan of the 37 college and university presidents.
- \$67 million for renovations and improvement projects at state adult corrections facilities.
- \$14 million for facilities within Department of Developmental Disabilities.
- Slightly over \$1 million for the Ohio School for the Blind and \$1.3 million for the Ohio School for the Deaf.

The bill is expected to be voted out of committee and reach the House Floor by Thursday, March 22, 2012.