

Superintendent's Weekly Wrap-up: Nov. 7-14, 2014

State Superintendent Ross Talks Pre-K, Testing Review; Board OKs Budget with Early Childhood Funding Boost

State Superintendent Richard Ross spoke of the importance of early childhood programs and K-3 literacy for student success and described state efforts to address concerns about a testing pile-up Tuesday during an address on education policy before attendees at the Ohio School Boards Association Capital Conference.

Ross' remarks on preschool programs preceded continuation of the State Board of Education meeting Tuesday, where members were scheduled to vote on the FY16-17 budget recommendations, which included calls for successive \$10 million annual increases for state-funded preschool slots.

The budget request would increase the "early childhood grants and technical assistance" line item from FY15's level of \$45.3 million to \$55.3 million in FY16 and \$65.3 million in FY17. Those funding levels would expand the state-funded preschool programs enough to serve about 16,000 children in half-day slots, versus approximately 11,000 served now. ODE has expressed interest in aligning funding with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services child care programs to leverage half-time slots into full-day slots.

Other items of note included in the budget request include a reauthorization of the Straight A Fund at \$150 million per year, pending discussions with the fund's governing board on their recommendations, and a \$500,000 boost in funding for the Education Management Information System to increase data integrity efforts.

"You can't separate early childhood from literacy," Ross said during his address Tuesday, where he and ODE staff reviewed recent development and upcoming initiatives, from new graduation requirements to the Straight A Fund to potential lame-duck developments.

On testing, Ross said Gov. John Kasich and the General Assembly have asked him to submit a report by Jan. 15 on the amount of testing and how it can potentially be reduced.

Ross said the department has been surveying local districts to establish the current testing baseline and is finding a "huge" amount of testing driven by local decisions rather than required by the state.

"Combining, consolidating, collaborating on these assessments is something we're looking at," he said.

But Ross said some level of assessment is necessary for accountability. "We need a yardstick ... because the students in the great state of Ohio need to compete for jobs everywhere," he said.

One development in the vein of testing reduction that ODE staff shared Tuesday was the unofficial approval they've received from the U.S. Department of Education to allow middle school students to skip grade-level math assessments if they're in Algebra I, allowing them to take just the end-of-course exam for that class.

Source: Focus Education, a service of Hannah News Service.

Four Members Walk Out in Tense School Board Meeting on '5 of 8' Rule - Plans to drop specific staffing ratios in an rewrite of Ohio's school operating standards dominated State Board of Education proceedings for a second day Tuesday, with several people signing up to testify.

The new proposed standards, rewritten with the stated goal of increasing local flexibility and removing duplication and outdated language, would eliminate the so-called "five of eight rule." That rule requires that for every thousand students schools hire full-time employees to fill at least five of the following eight positions: counselor; library media specialist; school nurse; visiting teacher; social worker; and elementary art, music and physical education teachers.

The new standards instead insert the following statement: "Educational service personnel are credentialed staff with the knowledge, skills and expertise to support the educational, instructional, health, mental health and college/career readiness needs of students."

John Richard, an associate superintendent at the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) who staffs the Operating Standards Committee, said the rule had become outdated, noting the inclusion of the "visiting teacher," a position created decades ago to instruct very ill or pregnant students.

Board member Sarah Fowler, vice chairwoman of the Operating Standards Committee, noted the elimination of "five of eight" coincided with an expansion of the list of "education service personnel" recognized in the beginning of the operating standards.

As she did Monday, Terhar emphasized the need to give local boards of education flexibility and to trust that they have the best interests of their students at heart.

Individuals addressing the board on the topic Tuesday included representatives of school management, school nurses, counselors, teachers unions and several others.

The full board is not scheduled to vote on the proposed operating standards until December, with the rules only going into effect after then completing the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review process.

Source: Focus Education, a service of Hannah News Service.

HB 629 seeks to limit the amount of state-mandated testing - House Bill (HB) 629, introduced by Rep. Andrew Brenner (R-Powell). HB 629 seeks to limit the amount of state-mandated testing. The bill would:

Limit testing to no more than four hours per year per subject and grade level. Excluded from this requirement is the third-grade reading guarantee assessment, the nationally standardized assessment that measures college and career readiness and end-of-course substitute examinations.

Allow a district or school to administer the kindergarten readiness assessment all at once or in portions at different times so long as it is administered in its entirety no later than Nov. 1.

Require the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to determine which components of the resident educator performance-based assessment can be used as part of the Ohio teacher evaluation system.

Require ODE to develop a table of assessments that may be used for multiple purposes. The table must include achievement assessments, diagnostic assessments, end-of-course exams, substitute exams, student growth measure assessments and other assessments. This table is to be made available to districts and schools.

Extend the availability of paper-and-pencil state assessments through the 2015-16 school year.

Require ODE to study and report to the General Assembly and the governor on the impact of online testing on student performance by June 30, 2015.

Require ODE to conduct a comprehensive survey of the capacity and readiness of each school district for online administration of the assessments. The survey is to include information about hardware, software, bandwidth, technical support, security requirements, training for teachers on administering the assessments and training for students on taking the assessments.

Require ODE, no later than June 30, 2015, to compile and present the findings of the survey to the governor; chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Education Committees; and the State Board of Education. The report is to include results of the survey conducted under this section and a detailed implementation plan to address any issues or problems identified in the survey.

All information in this article was current as of Oct. 30, 2014. Over the next several weeks, the legislature will be moving quickly.

Source: Ohio School Boards Association

Ohio House Works on Lame Duck Legislation – The Ohio House Education Committee held hearings and amended several pieces of education-related legislation, as the lame duck session got under way. House bills 228 and 343 have received the most attention to this point. HB228 would set limits on the length of student assessments, extend the paper and pencil assessment option through the 2015-16 school year, require ODE to study the cost of paying each school district a funding guarantee, and more. HB343 includes: provisions regarding end-of-course science exam flexibility; student absence requirements; a proposal to repeal the minimum teacher salary schedule; a requirement that the 3rd grade reading OAA be administered in both the fall and spring of the current school year; a requirement that the State Board make recommendations by November 2015 regarding the extension of safe harbor provisions; and much more. Also, HB303 and HB304 are due to be amended and possibly voted on this Monday. HB303 addresses student religious expression restrictions and HB304 requires schools to give students who wish to conduct a meeting for the purpose of engaging in religious expression the same access to school facilities as student secular groups.

Source: Educational Service Center of Central Ohio

OFFICE OF TEACHING & LEARNING

Progress Reports – Mid quarter progress reports will be distributed on November 21.

Parent Resource – *Columbus Parent* provides a “Go-To-Guide for Central Ohio Families. The site and publication offer news, where to go, what to do, why to buy, and a variety of guides: <http://www.columbusparent.com>

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Observing Veterans Day at HTHS – Veterans Day honors America’s veterans for their patriotism and willingness to serve for the common good, and it provides students with the opportunity to examine the meaning of civic ideals. [Ohio law](#) requires that each school devote at least one hour or one standard class period on or around Veterans Day, Nov. 11, to an observance that conveys the meaning and significance of the day. HTHS teachers and students honored veterans by discussing the history of Veteran’s Day, as well as its significance.

The Social Studies Department lessons ranged from Power Points on the history of Veteran's Day, displaying of militaria, composing tweet messages to the Veteran's including special recognition to their family and friends, to tours of Ohio to analyze monuments that depict the accomplishments of veterans, including inviting in honored guests, to exploring and analyzing the creation and evolution of the national day of observance, from President Wilson's Proclamation in 1919, Congressional recognition in 1926, and finally a national law signed by President Eisenhower in 1954. To cap off the lessons, letters and cards of appreciation were also presented to high school teachers who sacrificed for peace and freedom.

A Special Thank you to Mr. Ford for visiting and sharing his personal experiences while serving our country during the Vietnam War.

HAMILTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle School Canned Food Drive - The middle school student council held a two week canned food drive. All collected food was donated to a local food pantry for the second year in a row. Middle school students donated a total of 560 canned goods/boxed food this year! Mrs. Knorr's AIM class raised the most canned goods, totaling 169 cans! The food pantry was very thankful for our donation that will go towards feeding the hungry on Thanksgiving!

Honoring Veterans - The NJHS at Hamilton Middle School found a creative way to honor veterans on Veteran's Day. Names of veterans were collected and written on stars along with the branch of the military that they served. Then a flag was created using red and white handprints for the stripes. The field was covered with the stars honoring the veterans. It is in the main hall near the office for everyone to see.

HAMILTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Families, Friends And Students Attend 1st Quarter Honor Assemblies - This past week, over 400 students were honored at the first quarter Honors Assemblies. Families and friends were in attendance to support and celebrate their student's achievements. Congratulations to all the students who were present. Click [HERE](#) to view pictures from all assemblies.

Ancient Mesopotamia Comes Alive In The Sixth Grade - Students in 6th grade Social Studies had the opportunity to independently study Ancient Mesopotamia in depth. Students were given the chance to choose different assignments on a Tic-Tac-Toe grid. They were given nine possible assignments in which they could choose any three to complete. All assignments were associated with how rivers made civilizations stronger, customs and daily life of Mesopotamia and technology/inventions created at that time.

HAMILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Veteran's Day – On Tuesday, HES celebrated Veteran's Day. Each class/grade level learned about Veteran's Day in a manner appropriate to their age group. The following is one excellent example from Mrs. Forrest's Class.

On Veteran's Day, Mrs. Forrest's 3rd grade class spent the morning learning about our Armed Forces and the importance of Veteran's Day. Students brought addresses to school of Veterans that they knew or with whom they had close relationships. The class then wrote letters to the Veterans thanking them for their service. The class ended up writing over fifty letters to be sent across the country to acknowledge the hard work and bravery of those who are serving or have served!

More Interdisciplinary Lessons – Last week's wrap-up highlighted an interdisciplinary pumpkin lesson from Ms. Turner's class. Interdisciplinary lessons are designed to integrate academic content from a variety of subjects into one lesson. These lessons typically help students retain a great deal of information because they are very detailed, hands-on, and involve real-world examples. Below are three additional examples of this style of instruction.

Mrs. Gibson's class spent several weeks learning about "Westward Expansion." They learned about the Oregon Trail, Pony Express, Transcontinental Railroad, and the Erie Canal. As they finished their unit, they talked about how pioneers moving west changed the lives of the Native Americans. To end the unit, Mrs. Gibson collaborated with Mrs. Nunn, our art teacher, to help students make their own buffalo hide. Students looked at pictures of Native American drawings on buffalo hides and either drew an important scene from their life or geometric drawings similar to how the Native Americans might have decorated their hides.

Ms. Wagner's first grade class did a science, technology, engineering, and math (S.T.E.M.) lesson using gummy pumpkins and toothpicks. The students worked in partners and became problem solvers and engineers when given the challenge to build a tower. The students had a friendly competition to see which group could build the tallest tower. The winning tower was just over 7 inches tall! Way to go first graders.

In Mrs. Archer's and Mr. Mylar's physical education class, students played a game called the Three Little Pigs. They were asked several questions about the story, Three Little Pigs. These questions covered a number of language arts concepts, such as setting, plot, summary, and citing examples from the text. Then, students played the game. Students took turns being pigs and wolves. The wolves tried to knock down the pig's houses, while the pigs protected them. The geometric concepts involved in building the houses also reinforced math indicators.

HAMILTON PRESCHOOL

Parent Teacher Conferences - We had a great turnout for our first two parent teacher conferences. Over 120 families participated in our two-night event. Assessments, academics, attendance, and overall adjustment to the structure and routine of the preschool were some of the topics discussed with parents. Please contact your child's teacher if you were not able to make it to this round of conferences. Conferences will be held again in the spring. We thank the Preschool Families for their support and participation in all activities at the Preschool! This is a wonderful class of students!

A Week of Learning About Our Imagination! - A new themed week for the Preschool to help kick off our Scholastic Book Fair week and Parent Teachers conferences. This week was all about learning being to be creative and playing make believe!

- Wednesday - Bring you favorite fairy tale book to share!
- Thursday - Wear a shirt that has words on it!
- Friday - Dress as your favorite fairytale character!

The kids loved this week and so did and we learned that dreams really do come true!

DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

Chromebook Learning Fun - Mrs. Denutte's math classes at Hamilton Elementary have been using Chromebooks to enhance skills and make learning fun with the ST Math program and Google Classroom, which are used to reinforce math skills previously introduced in class. Mrs. Denutte explains, "ST Math is a self-paced program that illustrates math concepts through colorful animations. Text is limited in the ST Math program, which makes it appealing to students of all ability levels. Best of all, ST Math is presented as a video game to students, which reaffirms how learning math can be fun and inviting to all students."

In addition, the Chromebooks have given students a chance to explore their Google Apps accounts by being linked to an online classroom. In Google Classroom, students are beginning to take math tests online in preparation for future computerized standardized (PARCC) assessments. Currently, students are completing weekly multiplication fact tests on the computer."

The Chromebooks were purchased with funds from the Math Matters grant, a partnership with the Fairfield County Educational Service Center.

DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS

Rangers Football Represented Well on *Associated Press* Division II All-Central District Teams - The Rangers football program had several members receive post-season recognition by being named to the Division II All-Central District Football Teams. Congratulations to the following Rangers on their recognitions:

1st Team:

- Dillon Hawthorne
- Deric Phouthavong
- Christian Swauger

2nd Team:

- Xavier Harris
- Aaron Williams

Special Mention:

- Patrick Robinson
- Josh Sweet

Honorable Mention:

- Erick Juarez
- Brandon Marable
- Houston Palmer

UPCOMING EVENTS

[See what's happening in our district this week!](#)

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