



JEOC BRIEF

January 25, 2018

Ohio Department of Education Strategic Planning Work Groups

The Ohio Department of Education has engaged five work groups of stakeholder to assist in the development of their strategic plan. The work groups began meeting in September 2017. The five groups are:

- Standards, Assessments and Accountability
- Student Supports and School Climate and Culture
- Early Learning and Literacy
- High School Success & Postsecondary Connections
- Excellent Educators & Instructional Practices

Each group was assigned the task of contributing to the development of the strategic plan by making recommendations in the areas encompassed by the work group. Work groups consist of stakeholders from different areas of education. As possible, we have listed the entities represented in each committee. In addition to the members listed, in some cases, legislators or their designees were present, but there were at least two groups where we did not see legislators or designees present.

Below is a summary of the work of each group.

Standards, Assessments and Accountability

The committee was comprised of individuals representing different organizations: Ohio PTA, Cleveland College Prep School, OFT, OEA, Hamilton County ESC, Chagrin Falls City Schools, Olentangy City Schools, Bay Village City Schools, Cincinnati Public Schools and the Ohio State University. Also, Senator Manning's Aide, Tim Villari was present at most meetings and some State Board of Education members participated occasionally.

Initially, the group looked at Standards, Assessment and Accountability and did a SWOT analysis. In the SWOT analysis issues around standards that were raised related to the appropriateness of the standards. The group discussed the amount of time devoted to assessments and which assessments would be used for accountability. The accountability discussion centered on the report card. In the meetings that followed, each area was addressed separately, then the group moved toward overall recommendations.

The committee addressed standards for several sessions. Criticism of standards focused on "common core" and "developmentally inappropriate" claims. ODE staff clarified that the standards are no longer aligned with the Common Core, but were rebutted by members who indicated that their local schools were still using common core curricula. Eventually, members began to agree that the problem was more local choice of curriculum and not state standards.

The group heard a presentation by ODE staff on assessments from kindergarten to graduation. They also heard from Neil Gupta about the Assessment Audit tool and how it could be used to aid districts in trimming district-level testing. With ODE staff, the discussion centered on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Members were asked to define the future needs and visions for students, teachers and equity; they cited need for social and emotional learning, authentic assessments, and feedback to parents, teachers and students that is meaningful and timely.

The committee heard a presentation by ODE staff on the Accountability system. Following this, the group discussed the clarity of the purpose of state's assessments. The facilitator focused the discussion on four topics: (1) use of big data, (2) growth mindset, (3) not punitive, and (4) clarity. Members discussed these and other topics like fairness of test items and the widespread use of performance assessment for accountability purposes.

The committee reconvened one more time to put together recommendations for the Superintendent. In this session, each area was reviewed separately. The committee wanted to ensure that social and emotional learning was embedded into the standards. The committee urged the state to provide some professional development on how to make connections across standards and integrate them into the model curriculum. For assessments, there was discussion about the difference between the state's purview (summative) and the desire by districts to have growth measurements. There was no desire to have social-emotional learning assessed at the state level. For accountability, the committee wanted a focus on competency and a balance between achievement and growth. For the non-academic factors, the committee discussed several options but did not agree on one.

Student Supports and School Climate and Culture

This committee consisted of members from institutes of higher education, organizations and schools. The following were represented: Amherst City Schools, State Support Team #4, Ohio University, Clermont ESC, Dayton Independent Consultants, Oylar, Cincinnati City Schools, Southwest City Schools PTA, OASBO, Wright State University Health, Tri-City Career Technical Planning District, Reynoldsburg City Schools, and an ITC.

The committee heard presentations from other committee members and ODE Staff that explored Social and Emotional Development, Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), Trauma Informed Instruction, the State Health Improvement Plan (ODH), Community Learning Centers, and much more.

The committee identified priorities, methods, and actions or tools for both student supports and school climate and culture. For student supports, the committee identified the following needs: align programs to support social and emotional development which can be done using PBIS, ensure children stay in school using a variety of strategies that meet the local needs, rethink the school as a community hub by establishing best practices for promoting high quality partnerships that support the needs of students, and improve family engagement.

For climate and culture, the committee identified a need for a positive climate that supports all children, with all adults on the same page, that is transparent and fair, and involves parents and the community. The methods and approaches identified by the committee were to use surveys for all parties to understand where the school climate is, pay attention to race and gender ratios to ensure everyone has someone they can relate to in the school, and create standards for cleanliness. From these the committee determined that there is a need to track a school's needs, collect school data, create partnerships with community, and involve students and families in the decision making process.

Early Learning and Literacy

This committee was comprised of a variety of folks engaged in early learning and development. The groups represented were: Van Wert City Schools, Montgomery County ESC, Nationwide Children's Hospital, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, Groundwork Ohio, Action for Children, Upper Arlington City Schools, Knox County ESC, Massillon City Schools, Copley-Fairlawn City Schools, Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools, Office of the Governor, Cincinnati Public Schools, and Hilliard City Schools.

The facilitator working with this committee had them simultaneously work on developing four general areas that would become their priorities: (1) direction and commitment, (2) collaboration and coordination, (3) deepening learning and literacy and (4) securing accountability and improvement. These four areas were the basis for the four priorities, around which recommendations were offered. The four priorities are: (1) Better understanding of the impact of and the collective responsibility for early learning and brain development, (2) strengthen a comprehensive, balanced and evidence-based early learning and literacy accountability system that supports continuous improvement, (3) better collaboration around critical transition points, prenatal to third grade, and (4) strengthen quality and connection of the implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices for the success of each child.

There was general agreement within the committee that work needed to be done in early learning and literacy and that there was already good work going on in Ohio. In the SWOT analysis there were more strengths and opportunities identified than weaknesses or threats. The group seemed to collectively acknowledge that the work was spread across several agencies and the idea of a single agency was mentioned, but not promoted as a suggestion or strategy. However, it was clear that committee members were aware that the data on this topic are not in one easily accessible place for Ohio.

In the area of clarity and collective responsibility, the recommendations are: (1) to engage early with parents about brain development and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) emphasizing that SEL is as important as numeracy and literacy, (2) create a single early learning strategy that is over all agencies, (3) increase access to and use of relevant data systems and evidence-based practices, and (4) address growing mental health issues through improvement science.

In the area of accountability for continuous improvement the recommendations are: (1) provide an annual profile of the state of early learning in Ohio, (2) strengthen the KRA, (3) update the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), (4) strengthen alignment between ELDS and K-12 standards, preservice education and professional development using evidence-based practices and curriculum, and (5) use Step Up To Quality validation study as a baseline and repeat every two years to monitor progress.

In the area of more and effective collaboration, the committee recommends: (1) build collaborative PD strategies and structures, (2) establish a process to evaluate evidence-based practices and PD (P-3), (3) increase collaboration between ODE, ODJFS and Ohio's hospital network, (4) develop teams of school staff and PTAs to provide targeted resources to families, (5) engage local governments, and other community members to develop community-based strategies to increase collaboration, and (6) coordinate with pediatricians and hospitals to identify children at high risk of learning problems.

In the area of literacy for life, the committee recommends: (1) statewide, public, pre-K education, (2) use of evidence-based practices in literacy, and (3) connect families to evidence-based supports.

High School Success and Post-Secondary Connections

The committee included many in career tech education and seemed, initially, to focus on career technical education topics. The committee wants High School Graduates to have (1) a work-based learning experience, and (2) 12 college credits, leading to (3) a post-secondary credential, leading to (4) a high wage, high growth, high demand job, leading to (5) future education plans (BS, e.g.), if desired.

The committee has concerns that Career Tech Education (CTE) has a stigma, that mothers do not want their children pursuing CTE on the basis that the work gets them physically dirty, that it is difficult to market CTE as “opportunity” the way that colleges do, and that schools steer students away from CTE to retain the funding and because most educators do not have personal experiences with CTE.

The contract facilitator reoriented the committee to some generalizable attributes of a future Ohio high school graduate as a list of at least 12 entries including foundation knowledge and skills, resiliency/grit/work ethic, social emotional learning, adaptability, curiosity, and creativity. The discussion of these topics took a turn when the conversation was redirected toward new, possible graduation requirements that seem to align with demonstration of skills that would be acquired through CTE, an approach pertinent to graduation eligibility for CTE students. Committee panelists would sometimes engage in the notion that local assessments – mostly performance based assessments – might be a good solution. Then the committee members might back away particularly when reminded by a panelist that all students need skills in numeracy and literacy and that short cuts that tend to relieve the schools of instruction in these areas might permanently disadvantage students.

Finally, the committee thought that it was most important to have a defined set of graduation requirements that students could depend on when entering ninth grade and while there may be a much better set of requirements than those for the class of 2018, it was not clear how to put completely different approaches in place until after 2021.

Excellent Educators and Instructional Practices

This committee consisted of members from school districts and other educational entities or organizations. These included: Lake Erie West ESC, Lancaster City Schools, Putnam County ESC, Columbus City Schools, Hamilton County ESC, State Support Team #14, KIPP Columbus, Southwestern City Schools, Oberlin City Schools, Cleveland Metropolitan City Schools, Cleveland State University, Medina County ESC, and Muskingum University.

The committee began with the working vision statement and the statement that state goals should be significant, measurable, time-based, and outcome-focused. The committee saw a presentation by Katherine Prince called “The Future of Learning: Redefining Readiness”. This presentation emphasized the importance of teaching skills associated with social-emotional development to make children more employable in the future.

The committee did a SWOT analysis on how the state is currently performing on providing excellent educators. The committee identified teacher preparation programs as a strength, and traditional professional development as a weakness. Threats included job security, competitive compensation, state funding challenges, and access to alternative pathways to becoming a teacher.

The committee expressed concern about teacher shortages and teacher induction processes. The committee also acknowledged the problem of salaries, but seemed unable to agree on what a solution might look like. The teacher shortage issue was about local availability of the teachers sought (by specialization, e.g.). The teacher induction process was about needing a process that included good mentoring, but the group was supportive of the revised Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA, with just one assessment).

The committee also discussed the need to have a year-long clinical experience in preservice programs. The committee felt that this would require a legislative change and that the year-long experience should be paid by the host district (not at full salary) to help students cover cost of licensure. Some on the committee felt that this was unfair to teacher aides who are hired by districts. According to one member many are licensed teachers who can't get jobs. The committee also considered a recommendation to provide district-specific human capital reports. The discussion centered on what data to include and for what purpose. Committee members suggested that looking at teacher retention and where teachers go who leave the district might be helpful in such a report. The committee discussed the idea of establishing a teacher-leader role. Committee members identified unions as a potential barrier to this idea, but praised the idea of distributed leadership and differentiated licensure. The Toledo Participatory Action Research (PAR) program as an example of best practices in teacher-leader development.

The committee identified five goals to which they would add strategies in the future online work. The five goals are: (1) to increase the number of teachers in underrepresented groups who are completing prep programs and getting licensed, (2) to increase the percent of new educators who are effective or highly effective, (3) to decrease the percentage of students who have ineffective teachers, (4) to improve the accuracy of the evaluation process, the quality of instructional materials and the personalization of professional development, and (5) to increase the percent of highly effective teachers who are retained in district.

Summary

Each group began with a plan to have six meetings to determine their recommendations to ODE. However, many have met more than six times. The table below shows the meetings that JEOC is aware happened.

Standards, Assessments and Accountability	Student Supports and School Climate and Culture	Early Learning and Literacy	High School Success & Postsecondary Connections	Excellent Educators & Instructional Practices
Sept. 28, 2017	Oct. 5, 2017	Oct. 10, 2017	Oct. 10, 2017	Oct. 9, 2017
Oct. 5, 2017	Oct. 19, 2017	Oct. 23, 2017	Oct. 23, 2017	Oct. 23, 2017
Oct. 19, 2017	Oct. 26, 2017	Nov. 13, 2017	Nov. 9, 2017	Nov. 6, 2017
Nov. 2, 2017	Nov. 16, 2017	Nov. 27, 2017	Nov. 28, 2017	Nov. 20, 2017
Nov. 16, 2017	Nov. 30, 2017	Dec. 13, 2017	Dec. 5, 2017	
Nov. 30, 2017	Dec. 14, 2017	Jan. 23, 2018	Dec. 12, 2017	
Dec. 14, 2017	Jan. 11, 2018		Jan. 9, 2018	
Jan. 18, 2018				

The ODE staff indicated that each group would submit a set of recommendations to the department and they would put them together to form a full draft plan. ODE expects to share the full draft plan with members of the working groups in mid-February. In mid-March ODE will begin a stakeholder engagement series of 10 regional meetings around the state. Dates and locations will be announced soon. These meetings will occur between March 14 and April 5. Then, the ODE plans to release the plan on April 30th.