

# 2019 Legislative Platform Highlights



## OSBA Legislative Platform

The purpose of the OSBA Legislative Platform is to state publicly OSBA's positions on a variety of issues facing public education. The platform conveys to legislators, policymakers, the public and the media where OSBA stands and guides OSBA's advocacy efforts. Each item in the platform has been approved by at least 75% of the voting delegates in the OSBA Delegate Assembly, where every member board of education has a vote. For the full version of the 2019 Legislative Platform, visit [www.ohioschoolboards.org/platform](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/platform).

## OSBA Division of Legislative Services

OSBA develops, communicates and advocates the perspective of school governance teams. To fulfill our mission of effective advocacy, staff represent boards of education before the state legislature, the State Board of Education, the governor's office, Congress and other state and federal agencies. Contact OSBA's legislative services team at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA.



## Ohio School Boards Association

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*OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.*

# Students and learning

The education of Ohio's public school students is OSBA's top priority. Every child can learn, and every child will learn if the conditions are right. The key component to establishing the right educational environment is the relationship among students, parents, the school district and the community. Each needs to be accountable for sharing in the process.

OSBA believes that all students must have equal access to a high-quality education that prepares them for higher education or career entry. Every student must be provided with challenging instructional programs presented by competent and caring teachers in a safe and supportive setting.

## State report card

Reports of school district quality should provide accurate reflections of district, staff and student achievement. Publication of district and school report cards must be accurate, fair and credible. Reports should be communicated to the public in a clear and concise manner.

*OSBA supports legislation that*

- Makes the overall rating on the state report card a meaningful indicator of the quality of a school district.

## Drug addiction prevention

Drug addiction is a national, state and local crisis. The rate and incidence of heroin and other opioid abuse among Ohioans is staggering. Local school districts are called upon to educate students and families about the tragic consequences

of drug addiction. It is essential that we provide students with information, skills and supports to help them abstain from such harmful behaviors and their consequences.

*OSBA supports legislation that*

- Provides new and additional dedicated funds to assist schools in the battle against drug addiction, heroin and other opioid abuse.

## Student and school employee safety

Student and school employee safety is the paramount concern for school districts. Ensuring a safe learning and working environment is a shared responsibility among school board members, school employees and community members working in collaboration with lawmakers, law enforcement, mental health and security experts in determining how best to provide a safe environment within our districts.

*OSBA supports legislation that*

- Provides for enhanced mental health services and substance abuse treatment so that all individuals, including children, have sufficient access to these services.
- Increases access to school safety measures, including but not limited to, school resource officers (SRO), school safety infrastructure and other security measures designed to protect students and staff.
- Provides for training for school employees and enhanced coordination with law enforcement agencies and first responders to ensure appropriate responses to incidents of violence in schools.
- Provides full funding for the items above.

*OSBA opposes legislation that*

- Mandates the implementation of any safety and security measure that is not fully funded by the state.
- Mandates any security measure to be implemented without the approval of the local school district board of education.





# School governance

The cornerstone of public education in Ohio is locally elected boards of education that exercise local control in establishing policy and governance of their public schools while remaining accountable to the citizens who elected them. Local control includes control over financial matters, curricula and educational programs, personnel, school calendars and educational priorities based on the unique needs of local communities.

## Academic distress commissions

*OSBA supports legislation that*

- Fully includes locally elected boards of education and district administration in the decision making process.
- Provides for the composition of the commission and review team to reflect the demographics (geographic, economic and social) of the school district.
- Provides transparency in the way district commissions are formed and chaired and provides a transparent understanding of the goals and purpose for the work of the distress commissions.
- Provides clear accountability measures for the commissions, the districts and CEOs appointed to the district in collaboration with the locally elected board of education.
- Places a focus on student achievement.
- Provides supplemental or additional funding for implementation of commission work.
- Places an emphasis on identifying and seeking the input of community services agencies.
- Repeals Amended Substitute House Bill 70 (131 GA).

## Locally elected boards of education

Control of the public school system by locally elected board members produces an educational system designed

to meet the needs of the community's children. The locally elected school board provides citizens with a direct means to influence local education policies, programs, costs and outcomes.

*OSBA supports legislation that*

- Maintains locally elected school boards, which exemplify representative government.



# Finance

Stable and adequate funding is essential to a sound educational system. OSBA supports the creation and establishment of an adequate and equitable funding system for Ohio public schools. The association believes that this is a constitutional responsibility of the General Assembly, with oversight from the courts. The association pledges to work with the governor and members of the General Assembly to create such a funding system.

## Base-formula amount

The provision and funding of a thorough and efficient system of common schools are the responsibilities of the state of Ohio. In practice, the funding of public education is a shared responsibility of the state of Ohio and the local community. The capacity of local communities to generate revenue varies widely across the state. Without the state providing sufficient funds for all, some children will be denied the right to an

adequate education. Local communities must retain the ability to exercise discretion in offering educational programs that exceed the defined level of an adequate education.

*OSBA supports legislation that*

- Establishes a process for determining the components and costs of a high-quality education.

## Categorical parity

Each child has unique needs, and many students require additional services that demand more resources from our local school districts. Because of the wide disparities in the capacity to generate local revenues that exist across school districts, additional state revenues must be made available to ensure that children with special educational needs are served appropriately.

### *OSBA supports legislation that*

- Establishes that the state, in addition to determining the cost of a high-quality educational program, must determine the additional costs necessary to provide services to students with special educational needs, such as students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and students who require career-technical education or gifted educational services.

## Educational service centers funding

Educational service centers (ESCs) serve as a vital link and partner in the educational process. Governed by locally elected boards of education, ESCs are considered to be school districts under state law and as local education agencies under federal law. ESCs provide a wide variety of direct and support services, including curriculum development, staff development, technology assistance and special education services to the public school districts they serve, as well as shared services with other governmental bodies. ESCs save the state of Ohio and school districts money through cost-effective, collaborative ventures that expand equitable access to resources and maximize operating and fiscal efficiencies. Despite diminishing levels of state financial support, ESCs have maintained high levels of service by becoming more entrepreneurial in their operations.

### *OSBA supports legislation that*

- Provides an adequate funding mechanism for ESCs that provides for inflationary growth.
- Requires state funding for facilities to be part of the ESCs' funding formula.

## Pupil transportation

Pupil transportation presents a significant challenge for many districts. In many areas of the state, students would face great challenges in getting to school were it not for the option to ride a school bus. Rural districts often encompass a large geographic area but have low-density populations. Funding for transportation services should incentivize efficiencies and account for specific circumstances among districts.

### *OSBA supports legislation that*

- Provides sufficient funding for every child who rides a school bus and rewards schools for efficiency.
- Incentivizes school districts to transport students residing within one to two miles of their school and to provide transportation for high school students.
- Fully compensates districts for the transportation of students to schools which are not part of the district.
- Operates separately from the education funding formula to ensure districts actually receive the state transportation levels to which they are entitled.
- Limits the requirement for public school districts to provide transportation to only those days that are synchronous with the public school district adopted calendar.
- Fully funds districts for the cost of transportation of special education students, foster children, and homeless students who receive transportation accommodations.

## School bus purchase and transportation reimbursement

Because safe and reliable pupil transportation depends on the availability of mechanically sound vehicles, locally elected boards of education rely upon scheduled state reimbursement payments to maintain their transportation fleets.

### *OSBA supports legislation that*

- Reinstates state funding for bus purchase reimbursements and operating expenses.
- Makes a state appropriation to replace all buses that are more than eight years old and do not have the latest safety features.

## Tax abatements

Tax abatements siphon critical funding away from public school districts, leaving local taxpayers to make up the difference.

### *OSBA supports legislation that*

- Requires that locally elected boards of education be involved in all discussions and decisions regarding tax abatements.
- Grants locally elected boards of education the authority to enter into negotiations to receive compensation for lost revenues with entities granting abatements and with businesses receiving abatements.
- Grants locally elected boards of education veto power if, in the board's judgment, the abatements adversely impact the district.
- Prohibits a township, municipality, or county from imposing a unilateral tax exemption upon a school district.