

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE REPORT CARD STUDY COMMITTEE  
ON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
OHIO SCHOOL REPORT CARDS**

Laura Kohler, President, State Board of Education  
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ohio Department of Education  
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Chairman Blessing, Chairman Jones, and members of the Report Card Study Committee, my name is Paolo DeMaria and I am the Superintendent of Public Instruction. I am joined today by Laura Kohler, who is the current President of the State Board of Education. We are pleased to share with you a set of recommendations for improving the Ohio School Report Cards.

**BACKGROUND**

In response to concerns from stakeholders about the report card that arose during the ESSA and state strategic plan development processes, the State Board of Education established a workgroup to study the issue and make recommendations. This workgroup, which took the form of an expanded Accountability and Continuous Improvement Committee, included representatives of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Ohio School Boards Association, Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, Ohio Education Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education, Ohio Parent Teacher Association, and Ohio Educational Services Center Association. The group reviewed each element of the report card and considered requirements under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Ohio Revised Code. The committee identified and reviewed dozens of previously identified issues and options.

The recommendations developed by the workgroup and adopted by the State Board in November 2018 were guided by these design principles, which we share with this committee since part of your charge is to identify design principles:

- **Fair:** Perhaps the most common complaint about report cards is whether they fairly portray the performance of the school or district. Report cards need to be fair.
- **Honest:** Report cards need to be able to honestly differentiate between schools and districts that are performing well and those that are not. They need to be an honest portrayal of what is happening.
- **Reliable and Valid:** Report cards should provide information that consistently measures the concepts intended to be measured.
- **Clear and Easy to Understand:** While the measures may be complex, the public facing communications should be clear, easy to understand, and simplified.

The State Board's work on report cards also coincided with the adoption of a strategic plan for Ohio's education system. *Each Child, Our Future* is Ohio's shared plan for ensuring each student is challenged, prepared and empowered for his or her future by way of an excellent prekindergarten through grade 12 education. One of the strategies in this plan called for refining the state's accountability system to be a fairer, more meaningful process.

## **PURPOSES OF THE REPORT CARD**

The State Board's workgroup also recognized that the Ohio School Report Cards are designed to meet multiple purposes. The group identified these as the most important:

- 1) Support the state's interest in gauging its education system's performance: the state has a legitimate interest in knowing how well its education system performs and report cards help the state to identify excellence as well as underperformance.
- 2) Advance equity: a well-designed accountability system can help shine light on inequities based on specific student characteristics such as socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, disability, or English language competency.
- 3) Communicate to parents and community: report cards can provide communities with information related to aspects of the preparation of students for student and answer questions about whether students are learning foundational skills and knowledge.
- 4) Support school and district improvement efforts: report cards can drive discussions about the causes of underperformance and the strategies and actions that can lead to improvement. When combined with local data, the data provided by the report card system becomes the basis for a continuous improvement process that builds on areas of success and identifies targeted plans to address challenges.
- 5) Report card purpose: state report cards are not meant to replace local data, but instead should complement local data sources. They are intended to be an annual, summative snapshot of performance, rather than being formative.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I would now like to provide a summary of the main recommendations made by the State Board. Additional details are included in the official recommendations document that has been supplied to this committee for your review and consideration.

### ACHIEVEMENT COMPONENT

The Achievement component has two parts – the performance index and the Indicators Met measure. The Indicators Met measure has inherent weaknesses. The most significant is that the measure does not differentiate between schools that are close to meeting or far from meeting the indicator target. Therefore, the Achievement component should rely solely on the performance index. The Indicators Met measure should be eliminated as a graded measure. Data about the percentage of students performing proficient or better on state assessments should continue to be reported but not graded. For comparison purposes, reporting should also include similar districts and state level data.

### IMPROVING AT RISK K-3 READERS COMPONENT

The Board believes that the current K-3 Literacy component is easily misunderstood and can be misleading. Report card users often believe it is a measure of literacy performance for all K-3 students when in fact it is intended as a portrayal of efforts to improve outcomes for struggling readers. Some schools may have a small number of students struggling with literacy, while the vast majority of students are succeeding – but the current measure only reflects the struggling students. Making sense of this measure can be challenging.

The State Board recommends that the K-3 Literacy measure be eliminated. If an early literacy measure is desirable, it should be the Promotion Rate which measures the percentage of students meeting the literacy requirements for promotion to the fourth grade. This should include comparisons to similar districts and the state average.

## PREPARED FOR SUCCESS COMPONENT

The Board believes the Prepared for Success measure has promise, but the current structure does not sufficiently value various accomplishments that reflect preparation for success. Its tiered structure adds confusion and makes debatable differentiations between various student achievements.

The Prepared for Success measure should be refined to include additional measures of college, career and life preparedness (for example, military enlistment, ASVAB, CLEP, CTAG, career prep program credentials, Ohio Means Jobs Readiness Seal, etc.). Additionally, the dual tier structure of Prepared for Success should be restructured into a single tier that provides similar credit for all measures (for example, a credit-worthy score on the AP and successful completion of a College Credit Plus course with a grade of C or better would have the same weight as remediation free status on the ACT or SAT).

## PROGRESS COMPONENT

The Board recognizes the importance of having a growth measure as a component of an accountability system that focuses on equity. Schools and districts that are challenged meeting the needs of students who start behind should be given credit for helping students make progress. At the same time, measuring growth is complicated and Ohio's current system can be difficult to communicate. Translating the measure into a letter grade is also challenging. The Department convened a Value-Added Technical Advisory Group, which made legislative recommendations on technical details such as number of years of data, interpretation of the gain index, and revising the grade scale. This report is attached as an appendix to the State Board's recommendations document.

In summary, the Board and the advisory group recommend:

- 1) The use of one-year value-added for accountability purposes while reporting multi-year value-added for the additional benefit of viewing larger trends.
- 2) Eliminating the subgroup demotion, which has since been amended by House Bill 166.
- 3) Eliminating the Value-Added Rankings required in Ohio Revised Code 3302.21(A)(2).

## OVERALL GRADE

The Board and Committee spent much time discussing the use of A-F letter grades throughout the report card, as well as for the school or district overall grade. The Board recommends the elimination of all A-F letter grades for the report card and adopting an ESSA-compliant dashboard while still maintaining high expectations and aspirational goals.

The Board also realizes that computations would be necessary in order to meet the federal requirement for "meaningful differentiation." Therefore, we acknowledge that there would still need to be an approach to generating numeric values for each metric and designing a manner by which the various components roll up to a numeric value that allows for the differentiation of low performing schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

It should be no surprise that these recommendations are closely aligned to the recommendations from BASA and others. The State Board of Education values the contributions of teachers, administrators, and parents, all of whom have been represented both on our and BASA's workgroups. We value building consensus and arriving at a shared determination of the education policies needed to ensure the success of Ohio's students. We are committed to working with your committee to achieve that end. At this time, we are happy to answer any questions that you might have.