

## **Response to 2015-16 Ohio Report Card By Local Superintendents**

The Ohio Department of Education released the 2016 Report Card for all Ohio school districts on September 15. The report represents a multitude of measurement components, including achievement, progress, gap closing, graduation rate, and others.

The public schools of our area fully support high educational standards, quality measurement systems, and accountability to our local community. The challenge, however, is keeping up with Ohio's accountability system described by the Department of Education as "in transition." Those in the field would more aptly describe the state's measurement system as a running target, the complete opposite of sound educational practice and what is good for students.

Before ODE releases report card results, it is imperative for residents and community leaders to understand the massive changes in the state's accountability system in order to keep a healthy perspective on the district report card.

Educators and community members of our area will likely struggle to comprehend how the performance of high achieving school districts in our area could somehow plummet in just six months since the release of the last Ohio Report Card in February. Our students, teachers, and administration are focused on both growing and achieving, this has not changed.

Four major factors have specifically contributed to the reason most school districts will likely see a drastic drop in local report card ratings for 2016.

Online assessments. The previous pencil/paper testing format in Ohio has been replaced with online assessments. While districts were initially given the option to choose online or paper/pencil format, most made the necessary technological upgrades to successfully administer the state's required tests online. Online testing comes with its own set of problems such as technological glitches, lack of bandwidth, and user error, all of which adversely impact student results. As an example, Ohio's third graders are expected to read an extended passage on a computer or Chromebook, and then type a three paragraph essay in response to what they have read. This means, keyboarding skills must be introduced, understood, and used appropriately by third grade students.

Three tests in three years. Ohio's students have been subject to three different tests in three years. Previously, all students in grades 3-8 took the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) in Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Ohio then moved away from the OAA to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) for the 2014-2015 school year. Most recently, PARCC was disbanded and replaced by American Institutes of Research (AIR) for 2015-2016. Expecting students to navigate three different types of tests in three years on the same learning standards is like having an official change the worth of a football touchdown in the middle of a game, a decision resulting in immediate frustration for players and spectators alike.

Increased cut scores. Individual students must earn a certain cut score on the state assessment to be considered proficient in each tested area (ex: 6th grade math). In 17 of 31 tested areas, the individual cut score required for students to achieve at the proficient level increased from the 14-15 school year to the 15-16 school year. For instance, a 6th grade student in 2016 needed to score 70% higher on the

Math AIR assessment than a student taking the Math PARCC assessment in 2015. These increases of cut scores, combined with the continued test changes has made it impossible for districts to understand what the needed level of mastery is.

Increased percentages. In order for a district to “meet” the state indicator for a particular grade and content area (ex. 6th grade social studies), the state requires a certain total percentage of students to score proficient or higher in that tested grade and subject. The state increased percentages in 22 of 27 tested areas from the 14-15 school year to 15-16 school year. In other words, 21% more 6th grade students were required to score proficient on the social studies assessment in 2016 for the district to meet the indicator. Area educators accept increased expectations to earn the “met” indicator. Our educators question, however, the 21% arbitrary increase expected in one year.

Our local school districts find solid merit in each of the changes of the measurement system outlined above, especially if each were properly and individually implemented. The running target of implementing them all at one time leads to skewed results and misrepresentation of the real learning and achievement of our students and the real progress of our schools. As stated by Paolo DeMaria in a webinar on September 14, districts should not “jump to conclusions” around these Achievement Measures and “Improvement does not necessarily show up on the report card.” As educators we take great pride in our craft and know that our communities will continue to support their local schools as we work through this mandated change.

Respectfully submitted by the Washington County Superintendents.