

To: LWVO

From: Joan Platz

Education Update for September 1, 2008

1) 127th General Assembly: The Ohio House and Senate are not meeting this week. There are "if needed" sessions scheduled for Tuesday, September 16, 2008; Wednesday, September 17, 2008; Tuesday, September 23, 2008; and Wednesday, September 24, 2008. Some legislative committees have been meeting throughout the summer. The General Assembly is expected to resume a regular schedule after the November 4, 2008 election.

-Ohioans were saddened last week to learn of the death of U.S. Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones from Cleveland. A memorial service was held on August 30, 2008 in Cleveland.

Governor Strickland has announced that a special election will be held on November 18, 2008 to select a replacement to complete the term of Congresswomen Tubbs Jones. A primary election will be held, if needed, on October 14, 2008.

-The next "Conversation on Education" will be hosted by Governor Strickland on September 3, 2008 from 4:00-5:30 PM at Youngstown State University, Kilcawley Center, Chestnut Room, One University Plaza. Governor Strickland has held "Conversations" throughout the summer in Columbus, Akron, Cincinnati, Dayton, Cleveland, Zanesville, Chillicothe, Lima, Marietta, and Toledo. The last scheduled "Conversation" will take place in Mansfield on September 15, 2008. These conversations are "by invitation only", but the public has the opportunity to participate through watch parties and through live and delayed broadcasts of these events. Watch parties will be held for the Youngstown meeting at the following locations:

Trumbull County Educational Service Center

Contact Phone : 330-505-2800, ext. 117

Contact Email : vicki.giovangnoli@neomin.org

Location : 6000 Youngstown Warren Road, Niles

Date : September 3, 2008

Time : 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Columbiana County Educational Service Center

Contact Phone : (330)20424-9591 ext 131

Contact Email : avaughn@ccesc.k12.oh.us

Location : Columbiana County Educational Service Center

Date : September 3, 2008

Time : 4:00 - 5:30

For a list of dates and times where you can watch the broadcasts, please visit:

<http://www.conversationoneducation.org>

A second round of education forums hosted by the Governor's office will be held later in the fall of 2008. These forums will focus on financing education in Ohio. The governor plans to introduce his education reform proposal in early 2009.

2) Federal Higher Education Act Approved: President Bush signed H.R. 4137, the Higher

Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA), into law on August 14, 2008. This law reauthorizes and revises the 1965 Higher Education Act, which expired five years ago. The last major revision of this act was made in 1998.

In general, lawmakers have worked to improve access, affordability, and accountability of postsecondary education institutions in the reauthorized version of HEOA, and have approved other legislation, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (September 2007) to address the student loan issue.

HEOA reauthorizes several current programs; authorizes new grant programs; increases federal oversight for higher education; and requires institutions of higher education to be more transparent. According to a press release from the U.S. House, Committee on Education and Labor, HEOA does the following:

- Encourages colleges/universities to limit price increases and provide more information to the public about costs, scholarships, and grant programs
- Increases accountability for student loan programs
- Simplifies the federal student aid application process
- Expands access to college for low-income and minority students, and continues support for the TRIO and GEAR UP college readiness programs
- Increases college aid and support for veterans and military families
- Ensures equal college opportunities for students with disabilities
- Addresses issues of campus safety and disaster readiness plans

There are also several provisions that impact teacher preparation programs. These include Teacher Quality Partnership Grants to improve the quality of pre-service preparation; a grant program called Preparing Teachers for Digital Age Learners; support for the Augusta F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence; a grant program called Preparing General Education Teachers to Teach Students with Disabilities; the Adjunct Teacher Corps; graduate fellowships to prepare faculty in high need areas at colleges of education; support for the Early Childhood Professional Development and Career Task Force; and initiatives to increase the accountability of teacher preparation programs.

For more information about HEOA please visit the following sites:

Thomas

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.R.4137>:

Press Release from the U.S. House, Committee on Education and Labor

<http://edlabor.house.gov/micro/coaa.shtml>

Summary of HEOA from the Council on Exceptional Children

<http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=10491&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>

3) Update on the State Budget: The September 2008 issue of "State Budgeting Matters" by Richard Sheridan from the Center for Community Solutions, summarizes the bleak state of Ohio's economy in the first months of FY2009, and suggests some options for state leaders to consider as they debate how to keep the FY09 budget in balance, and how to prepare the state budget for FY2010-2011.

According to the article, Ohio's operating budget may be out of balance by the end of FY09 by as much as \$1.8 billion, rather than the projected \$733 million often cited by state leaders. The Strickland administration has already taken steps to balance Ohio's FY08 budget by reducing spending, optimizing unspent accounts, accelerating revenue collections, and rescheduling disbursements. To balance Ohio's budget in the future, however, state officials will need to make "difficult" decisions that may include reducing state government services; exhausting reserves such as the rainy day fund; closing tax loopholes, broadening the tax base, or raising tax rates. Several states have already implemented these options. For example, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Massachusetts, and Alabama have raised taxes and eliminated tax expenditures to increase state revenue to cover projected deficits.

The article concludes with the following statement:

"Regardless of when the state finally recognizes the need to once again re-balance the FY 2009 budget, and regardless of whether it addresses the problem through the use of further budget cuts, use of budget reserves, or a combination of the two, what the state did in 2004 to reform its tax structure will make it virtually impossible to balance the next state budget without finding a way to increase revenues. Ohio's fiscal problems are likely to become worse in the next, and succeeding biennia, because of those tax actions, as well as the fact that it is likely to feel the lingering effects of the current recession on state finances for several more years."

To read the article please visit <http://www.communitysolutions.com/> The Center for Community Solutions is currently conducting a study on possible spending and revenue options for the FY2010 state budget and the effect of the 2004 tax changes on Ohio's budget and economy. The progress of this research will be included in future "State Budgeting Matters" reports.

4) Local Report Cards Released: Ohio students in grades 3-12 continued to improve overall on state achievement tests and the Ohio Graduation Exam, according to a press release issued by the Ohio Department of Education on August 26, 2008. The ODE released the 2007-2008 Local Report Card data to the media on August 25, 2008, and the public on August 26, 2008. The Local Report Card provides information to the public about how well students are performing on state assessments and other indicators in school districts and schools, including community schools, based on four criteria:

- State Indicators - 30 possible indicators in total, including student achievement on state assessments; graduation rate, and attendance rate.
- Performance Index - Measures the achievement of every student and how "well" they performed -- such as advanced, accelerated, proficient, basic, and limited -- on state assessments.
- Value added measure - This measure is calculated for schools with grades 4-8 in reading and

mathematics, and recognizes that districts and schools may be making significant academic progress even though they may have not met the standard for student achievement.

-Adequate Yearly Progress Goals - This federal measure of progress is computed using data on student achievement in math and reading; test participation rate; attendance rate; and graduation rate, for the following ten student groups: All Students; Native American; Hispanic; White, Non Hispanic, Limited English Proficient; Black, Non Hispanic; Asian/Pacific Islander; Multi-Racial; Economically Disadvantaged; and Students with Disabilities .

Private schools, even those receiving public tax dollars through Ohio's Cleveland Scholarship Program, the Autism Scholarship Program, and Educational Choice Scholarship Program, do not receive Local Report Cards.

Overall Ohio's public schools are improving, but the addition of the new value added component to the report card makes comparisons with last year difficult, because the value added component can affect the overall rating of a school or district. The number of school districts rated effective or above increased this year, and no school district received an academic emergency rating. Ohio's graduation rate also increased to 86.9 percent. However, some school buildings have slipped this year. The number of schools in academic emergency increased from 182 to 234. The break down for charter schools shows that out of 247 schools with report cards, 103 are rated in Academic Emergency; 56 Academic Watch; 61 in Continuous Improvement; 18 Effective; eight Excellent, and one school is Excellent with Distinction. (Source, ODE printout of charter school results.)

The new addition to the Local Report Card, the "value-added" measure, shows how much educational progress students have made in one year. 45 percent of districts showed more than expected growth; 23 percent met expected growth; and 32 percent showed below than expected growth.

Achievement gaps still persist, however, among the ten "groups of students" in some schools and school districts.

According to Superintendent Zellman, "While our tests show overall progress, we must continue to improve our state's education system. " Zelman said. "We need to have high expectations for all students and explore a new generation of standards, assessments and accountability that reflects the real-world knowledge and skills our students need to thrive in the ever-shrinking world."

To read the press release please visit

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=155828229572675981>

To access the report cards, please visit the ODE website at

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDefaultPage.aspx?page=1>

5) Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll Released: The 40th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (PDK/Gallup Poll) of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools was released on August 20, 2008. The poll is conducted annually by Phi Delta Kappa International, an association of

education professionals, and the Gallup organization, and assesses what Americans think about their schools and national education policy. William Bushaw is executive director of PDK International and co-director of the PDK/Gallup poll with Alec Gallup, president of Gallup Poll.

This year the poll asked questions about the presidential elections, national education standards, federal funding for public schools, the best way to measure student achievement, how U.S. schools compare with schools in other countries, and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Some of the poll results are summarized below. To read the full results of the poll, please visit www.pdkeducationpoll.org

Summary of Poll Results

-NCLB: "When it comes to NCLB, the national education law enacted in 2002, there's been relatively little change in Americans' knowledge of the law and their opinion about it during the past three years. Only one in four Americans believe the legislation is helping schools in their local communities. And if a school is labeled as failing under the law's accountability standards, equal numbers of Americans would blame the law as would blame the school."

The majority (54 percent) of the public still know very little or nothing at all about NCLB.

A greater number of public school parents believe that examples of student work (36 percent) and teacher observations (24 percent) are more accurate measures of student achievement than test scores (20 percent) or teacher grades (15 percent).

"Over 40 percent of the public believes the next president should change the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) significantly, while a quarter would like to see the law expire. Sixteen percent would like to see NCLB extended without change."

-COMPARISONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES: "Americans believe that U.S. high school students compare favorably to students in other developed countries in terms of their creativity and problem-solving abilities. However, Americans are less confident that the reading and writing skills of American high school students compare favorably to students globally, and they believe that high school students in other countries rank much higher in mathematics and science skills than American students."

-NATIONAL STANDARDS: "Americans are warming to the idea of national education standards, but they believe state-level education leaders should work together to develop these standards. 50% said they prefer national standards, and 46% said they prefer state standards. Interestingly, when substituting the words "common expectations" for standards, 62% favored one set of expectations nationwide, while 36% favored common expectations set by each state."

-FEDERAL FUNDING: "Americans favor an increased use of federal funds to finance public schools and also to support young people who have the desire and academic ability to attend college. 37% said they would like to see federal taxes fund public schools, 35% said state taxes, and 20% said local taxes. And 86% favored more state and federal assistance for students who

have the ability and desire to attend college but not enough money."

"Although a greater proportion of the public thinks the best way to finance public school is through federal taxes, they prefer for local school boards (46 percent) to have the greatest influence over what is taught in schools instead policymakers at the state (30 percent) or federal (20 percent) levels."

-FUNDING SCHOOLS: "The percent of adults who feel a lack of school funding is the biggest problem facing public schools dropped from 22 percent to 17 percent in the past year despite the downturn in the economy. However, funding is still the public's greatest concern and is ranked above discipline, overcrowding, fighting, drugs, good teachers, and standards."

-VOUCHERS: 44 percent of respondents support, and 50 percent of respondents oppose allowing students to attend private schools at public expense. This is an increase in the percentage of respondents who support vouchers compared to the results in 2007. (39 percent support and 60 percent oppose in 2007.)

-CHARTER SCHOOLS: 51 percent of respondents favor charter schools; 35 percent oppose charter schools and 14 percent "do not know". This is a decrease in support for charter schools compared to 2007. (In 2007 60 percent favored charter schools; 35 percent opposed charter schools; and 5 percent did not know.)

-COLLEGE CREDIT IN HIGH SCHOOL: "Americans increasingly believe that our young people should not only finish high school, but that many of them will need some college instruction - instruction that they believe can and should begin in high school. 87% said they favor allowing students to earn college credits while still in high school."

-STANDARDIZED TESTS: "Americans are losing faith in standardized tests and believe there are better ways to measure a child's academic and other skills. 32% believe that examples of student work are the most accurate measure of a student's achievement, and 25% believe teacher observations are most accurate."

-TEACHER QUALITY: "Americans favor national teacher certification, teacher career ladders, and incentives for teaching in "high need" schools, but they are almost equally split on whether teacher's salaries should be linked to student standardized test scores. 70% said teachers should be paid higher salaries to teach in schools that are in need of improvement."

6) News from the ODE: For information about conferences, services, and programs sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education, please subscribe to "Tools for Teachers", an e-mail service from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) at toolsforteachers@ode.state.oh.us.

-The 2008 Ohio School Improvement Institute will be held November 20-21, 2008 at the Columbus Renaissance Hotel. The Institute is sponsored by the ODE, the Ohio Board of Regents, High Schools that Work, Ohio College Tech Prep and Career Development, and will explore the theme "Stepping Outside the Box—Moving our Learners Forward." For more information please visit

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1022&ContentID=53077&Content=53920>

-The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund has developed an interactive tool entitled, "How Ohio Government Impacts You" to engage students in real-life government lessons. The CD-ROM includes instructional videos, charts about Ohio government, and frequently asked questions about the Buckeye state.

Links to many state government departments and services are also included. To learn more about this tool please visit <http://www.ohioimpact.org/> For specific questions, or to obtain hard copies of the CD-ROM, please contact Project Manager Anne Nelson at anelson6@columbus.rr.com.

-Ohio students again outperformed the national average on the ACT with an average score of 21.7 compared to the national average of 21.1. Ohio also saw an increase in the number of students taking the exam with a record number of 88,103 students this year. For more information please visit

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=713379585632411193>.

-Applications are available for 2009 Ohio Teacher of the Year award. School districts, community schools, and chartered nonpublic schools may submit up to three applications to nominate pre-kindergarten through grade 12 teachers for this recognition. Nominees must be outstanding classroom teachers who are engaged in the direct teaching of students, and plan to continue in an active teaching role. For more information please visit

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=527&ContentID=4538&Content=31174>. The deadline for applications is September 30, 2008.

-Ohio's eight public television stations, eTech Ohio, and the Ohio Department of Education are partnering to co-facilitate a video contest for students. The sixth annual eTech Ohio Student Video Contest will recognize outstanding student achievement in the use of video production technologies while meeting Ohio's academic content standards. Student videos must be submitted by November 12, 2008, to local PBS affiliates. For a list of PBS affiliates and contact information, please visit <http://www.etech.ohio.gov/conference/awards/svc/>

7) Bills Introduced:

-SB3 (Cates) School Performance Ratings: Revises the performance ratings for school districts and buildings.

-SCR 29 (Morano) Memorializes the Congress of the United State to review the allowance of mercury as an ingredient in vaccines and take legislative action to ensure that there is no risk of harm.