

Well, it appears that most of the area farmers have been able to get into the fields after a crazy few weeks of weather! As they harvest the crops and the weather turns a bit chillier this weekend we are officially two weeks into autumn. Our football team is coming off a great victory over Riverdale and will take on Van Buren later this week (don't forget to wear your pink to support breast cancer awareness). In the meantime, volleyball will host McComb tonight and Ottoville on Thursday. Our soccer teams will travel to Ada (boys') and Bluffton (girls') on Thursday evening. On Saturday the boys' soccer team will host Lakota, while the girls' soccer team travels to Allen East. Good luck to all!

The main reason for this early "Friday Update" is that tomorrow, Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, staff, administration, parents, and students will join together for a "Walk-In" to bring awareness to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the opportunities it provides for beneficial education reform. As part of that effort I thought I would share one of the handouts we'll have for the attendees. If you're available at 7:30am tomorrow please come join us at door B1 (the connector between buildings)!

### **Why should I care about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)?**

Federal legislation (and associated federal dollars) drives education and educational reforms. Going all the way back to the 1983 report by the federal government, "A Nation at Risk", the government has focused on blaming schools for our societal shortcomings. While I do not hesitate to state that schools have a huge impact upon our society, the course that the federal government has taken to place schools as the main problem is not the path to positive change. When schools are saddled with unfunded mandates and end up changing course every few years when a new idea rolls around the government, effectively, hamper the education we can provide to our students.

Despite the above claims, there is no denying that all stakeholders (educators, legislators, business, parents, community, and students) want what is best for our kids. The issue is how we arrive at "what is best" and who determines this goal. Is the federal government better situated than our board of education, staff, and community members to decide what is best for students in our community? Is the testing craze initiated by No Child Left Behind (and reinforced by Race-to-the Top) having a positive impact on our students? Is "education" measured only by content knowledge and not also by becoming a responsible, well-rounded citizen? If the answers to those questions are "no" then you should care about ESSA because whatever form it takes will shape education for at least the next several years.

**Please note that all of the situations described below are *allowed* for in ESSA but you must speak up to policy makers to ensure they are included in Ohio's specific ESSA Waiver!**

### **What opportunities does ESSA provide for change?**

#### **Testing**

While ESSA still requires testing in grades 3-8 and once in high school (like No Child Left Behind), the "high stakes" associated with those tests are mitigated. It minimizes the impact of a one-time test to measure what students have learned. While the tests are still present, schools have more freedom to use nationally recognized tests they believe in (and are reliable, unlike recent state efforts at standardized tests). Additionally, because we could use tests that make sense and teachers will actually get to see our individual student results in a timely fashion we can use the information to inform and revise our instruction for each student! Finally, because we can use tests that make sense for our staff and students, overall testing time may decrease as there would be less need to "double-up" on testing in certain areas to meet both local and state requirements.

One additional interesting piece of information...under ESSA schools may be able to utilize student work portfolios as opposed to a one-time test to demonstrate what they have learned. While this may mean more work for educators it makes sense because it incorporates what they have done all year and does not take time from direct instruction like current testing measures do.

### **Growth vs. Proficiency**

Under NCLB and RttT proficiency in a subject was all that mattered – regardless of where a student started. ESSA finally recognizes that some students learn at a different pace from others and, moreover, may start school with a different foundation than others. If, for example, a student started the year at 40% proficient but grew to 79% proficient by the end of the year, that is a significant gain; however, under the current regulations that student would still have been considered a failure in a subject area because they did not meet a certain passage/proficient rating. ESSA provides more weight to growth ratings for schools so they can focus on growing and improving students rather than rushing them along to try to reach an unrealistic goal and missing out on developing a deep understanding of the content.

### **Report Card**

Under current state and federal law Ohio is required to have an accountability system (i.e. Report Card). ESSA, however, provides some leeway in how and what is reported in this accountability system. We have never shied away from accountability; we have, however, voiced opposition to accountability that does not provide a clear and complete picture. There is more to education than just one test. We continue to provide an education that graduates our students at a rate far above the state average. An amazing percentage of our students go on to post-secondary education. Our staff provides an educational environment that pushes our special education students to be extremely successful. However, as the state currently measures our success they do not give full weight to these categories, nor do they acknowledge that the Report Card is greatly flawed in many ways. The Cleveland Plain Dealer (see article link below) is the most recent to report that the current Report Card demonstrates a clear link between income and achievement. This is not to say that students cannot overcome this; in fact, in many areas our students do achieve higher than like-category peers. Nonetheless, when you look at the overall measure of the Report Card it is not measuring what we need it to measure and could be significantly improved through ESSA reform efforts.

[http://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/index.ssf/2016/09/see\\_how\\_closely\\_ohio\\_school\\_re.html](http://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/index.ssf/2016/09/see_how_closely_ohio_school_re.html)

### **Who should I contact?**

The Ohio Department of Education is charged with writing the ESSA Waiver but they are certainly influenced by the State Board of Education and our legislative representatives. If you only contact one or two people I would encourage you to contact the legislative representatives, especially Senator Cliff Hite (though I should note that based on individual addresses your representatives may be different). Both Mr. Hite and Mr. Sprague have been very open to hearing from us on this topic and, moreover, they are generally in favor of common sense education reform. The more your government hears from you about what you want the more likely they are to support this effort!

Ohio House of Representatives ..... Robert Sprague  
[robert.sprague@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:robert.sprague@ohiohouse.gov)  
614-466-3819

Ohio Senate..... Cliff Hite  
[hite@ohiosenate.gov](mailto:hite@ohiosenate.gov)  
614-466-8150

Ohio State Board of Education Representative ..... Ann Jacobs  
[Ann.jacobs@education.ohio.gov](mailto:Ann.jacobs@education.ohio.gov)  
419-229-9800

Ohio State Superintendent ..... Paolo DeMaria  
[superintendent@education.ohio.gov](mailto:superintendent@education.ohio.gov)  
877-644-6338

Ohio Department of Education ESSA Survey Link ..... <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OhioESSA>  
or visit <https://education.ohio.gov/>