

Good Friday afternoon! I hope this update finds you doing well – especially after what proved to be a hectic week with delays and cancellations. In true Ohio weather fashion, though, we see temperatures around 40° today after -10° just a few days ago! After two intense winters I'll gladly take what we've encountered thus far into the new year.

This week I have chosen to focus on “big picture” items rather than highlighting specific achievements or events in the school. With the relatively recent passage of the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) at the federal level, the search for a new state superintendent getting underway, and (finally) the release of *some* report card data from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) there is much to cover.

State Report Card

For those who glanced at the news this morning you might have noted that the ODE has released *partial* report card results for schools. Traditionally these results are supposed to be released prior to or just after the start of the school year so schools can utilize the data to form their instructional plan for the year. However, with the switch to yet another testing system the data was, once again, delayed. The positive side of things? The initial data for our school indicates high marks in both of the released areas – K-3 Literacy and High School Graduation rates.

The Courier reported that our school, among a handful of other county schools “didn't get a grade at all ...because they have too few struggling readers to count.” I would clarify this as not giving the entire picture. It is not simply that we have “too few struggling readers”; rather it is that of all of our readers in those grades who have varying levels of reading ability our staff has ensured that they obtain the skills necessary to be at or above grade level in reading. According to the ODE the specific reason we did not receive a grade is that because less than 5% of our students were “struggling readers who were not on track”. If we had had more than 5% of our students in this situation we would have received a grade – which would actually mean that we're not doing the best we can do for our students. So, in the crazy world of the State Report Card our “NC” and “NR” ratings are actually the best grade you can achieve (at least in this specific area). A little confused? Trust me, I've expressed our dissatisfaction to the state with the sometimes-hard-to-understand-grade-card which does not adequately tell the entire story.

Conversely, we did receive a grade (A) in the area of high school graduation (an “NC” or “NR” in this area would be unlikely and would have the opposite meaning – it would indicate that you have very few students graduating!). Along with our “A” in graduation we also received a composite score of 22 on the ACT which is well above the state average and that of many schools in Ohio.

Every Student Succeeds Act

With No Child Left Behind (in accordance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) up for either reauthorization or replacement the current administration has signed the ESSA with claims that it will provide the solution for building stronger schools and ensuring all students succeed. I must provide the caveat that a quick search of the internet may provide summaries and analysis of the law, but until the states review, digest, and implement the law any detailed analysis or presumption of the laws effects is conjecture, at best. What the act proclaims to provide is less federal intrusion into education and, in turn, more state control. The act also claims that it will encourage states to set high standards, maintain or increase accountability, and achieve a balance of maintaining annual state assessments without overburdening the schools and students with unnecessary testing. All of this certainly sounds wonderful – in fact, it appears to appease almost all the commonly heard complaints about the past decade of education reform. In my humble opinion, I believe the act is best approached with “cautious optimism”. That is, No Child Left Behind sounded great when first introduced, but it was soon bemoaned as overly burdensome with its numerous unfunded mandates, too much testing, and unrealistic goals. Will the ESSA provide improvement? Will the federal government really decrease their role in state and local educational decisions? What will the testing look like for Ohio? We've

already had 3 different testing solutions from the state – will there be yet another solution or will we maintain our course? I'd like nothing more than to tell our staff, students, parents, and community what the ESSA entails and how it will affect us but, unfortunately, only time will tell – stay tuned.

State Superintendent Search

With Dr. Ross' leaving his post a few weeks ago Ohio has set about the search for the next state superintendent. In an era where education has become politicized and problematized more than ever this search is an imperative one. With ESSA in place and the potentially positive (or negative) impacts yet to be seen a leader who can transverse the bridge between legislators, community, and schools is key to a successful educational outcome in Ohio. To that end, I thought I'd share with our community a survey published by the search firm – I hope you'll take a few minutes to share your opinions. The survey is anonymous and will end on January 27th.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XM7JHYQ>

Good luck!

Finally, good luck to the boys' basketball team as they take on Van Buren in the Hive tonight! Saturday is packed with events...good luck to our youth basketball players, cheerleaders in the Mindi Justice Competition, District Honors Band/Choir Rehearsal and Performance, and the Junior High Wrestlers!

Have a great extended weekend and, don't forget, the previously scheduled 2 hour delay on Tuesday, January 19th has been postponed.